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Inflectional Process And Errors In English And Hausa Languages: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT
The paper discusses inflectional process in English language and compare it with Hausa language. The process involves words changes and modifications in the forms of the words. The changes include that of number (singular and plural noun), possession (ownership), tense (verb) and auxiliary. It highlighted many ways to inflect words which make the words change form not class of the words. The paper compares and contrasts the two languages in the inflected formation of words. Also, the errors students may likely commit in the process of inflection of words. English relies largely on suffixation, while Hausa makes use of both affixation and internal vowel alternation. The paper identifies typical errors such as incorrect plural and possessive forms, tense inconsistencies and omission or misuse of aspect. This is as a result of negative transfer from Hausa to English or from the overgeneralization of English inflectional rules. The finding reveals both languages share the basic function of inflection for grammatical relations. The study recommends use of comparative and contrastive approaches in teaching and learning of English language as a second language.
Keywords: Inflection- Inflectional Process- Errors- Language- Comparative Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Inflection is the process of modification or change a word undergoes to express different grammatical categories and meanings. The expression is done with an affix. It expresses one or more grammatical categories and the inflected form of a word often contains both a free and a bound morpheme. A free morpheme usually stands by itself as a word while a bound morpheme cannot stand alone (Geoffrey and Svartvik, 2005; David, 2000; Angus, 1986). Example, 'chair' is a noun that is inflected for number – plural is 'chairs'. Chair is free because it could stand alone while the suffix –s is bound because it cannot stand alone as a word. The two morphemes form the inflected word 'chairs'. In a particular language, example English, when a particular word class is subject to inflection (modification), there are generally one or more standard patterns of inflection that words in that class may follow. Words which follow such a standard pattern are said to be 'regular', those that inflect differently are called 'irregular'.

Inflectional Process in English and Hausa Language

Number is a feature of nouns, demonstrative pronouns and personal pronouns. Example, book-books, this-these, she-they. It is also shown through concord with singular or plural forms of the verb; for example: She cooks rice every week. Most nouns in English have a singular form which denotes one person or thing and different plural forms which denotes more than one (Geoffrey and Svartvik, 2005; David, 2000; Angus, 1986).

There are regular and irregular nouns and their formations differ in many ways. The regular plural of noun is usually formed by adding-s or -es to the singular (base); and the formation is done through spelling changes, and the change in the quality of the vowel sound. This means regular noun inflection takes- 's' in the plural formation and does not change the category of the noun class. The plural and person suffixes are therefore, syntactically relevant in the formation of acceptable sentences (Ingo, 2002; David, 2000).

In the formation of plural nouns, both regular and irregular, count or non-count; certain noticeable alterations do occur to the singular form - a slight change. Example, a change or addition of a vowel or a consonant or a change in the very core of the pluralized word. Example, Wife - wives. Stimulus-Stimuli, man-men, child-children. A plural is signaled not only by the attachment of the anomalous morpheme –ren but also by, a change in the quality of the vowel sound i.e. /ai/ to /i/ in children.

There are other ways English form plural nouns such as: nouns usually ending in -s already, or in -ch, -sh, -x, -o obey the general rule and add -es. Example, gas-gases, church - churches, box-boxes, mango - mangoes. Nouns ending in - ay, -ey, -oy, -uy, add –s. For instance, day - days, monkey - monkeys, boy - boys, guy - guys. Similarly, nouns ending in -y change the - y to –i, then add –es; example, lady -ladies, duty - duties, leaf - leaves, half -halves. The exceptions are chief-chiefs, roof - roofs, piano - pianos and some nouns do not have plural number. They include mass nouns or uncountable nouns (milk, smoke, wealth), medical names for illness (malaria, hepatitis), names of branches of study (Archeology, Medicine), irregular plurals (ox-oxen, child-children), Zero plurals (deer, sheep), foreign plurals (basis/bases, syllabus-syllabus/syllabi), compound nouns (Passer-by/passers-by, assistant-director/assistant directors, woman doctor/women-doctors) and Group nouns (bunch of flowers, a series of resolutions) (Geoffrey and Svartrvik, 2005; Huddleston, 1996; Quirk, 1995).

In the English language, the following usually takes singular form: singular nouns ending in –s. Example, news, subject names ending with –ics. Example, linguistics, some proper nouns ending in –s; such as Brussels, names of some diseases and games like measles and arts (Geoffrey and Svartvik, 2005; Quirk, 2004).

It is to be noted that number in inflection signaling singular or plural depends on the inherent property of the lexical item to how it is used in phrases or clauses. Example, nouns that are generally uncountable, may be countable when different types are being considered such as a piece of news, a grain of rice, a drop of blood, a block of wood/ice. Number is usually selected independent of the word and used in accordance with the context. Example:

One series of lecture

Two series of lectures

Some uncountable nouns in the English language are countable in the Hausa language. Example,

English Hausa

Singular Singular plural

Character Hali Halaye

Advice Shawara Shawarwari

News Labari Labaru/Labarai

Students misuse plural in collective nouns such as army, fleet, vocabulary, sheep. The Hausa language usually has collective nouns such as suma (hair), gemu (beard). Sometimes the collective nouns could be made plural when referring to group of such nouns (Jowitt, 1990; Galadanci, 1979).

Errors occur with nouns of the -f or -fe group such as life -lives that is -f changes to v and in other cases not like chief - chiefs, or roof - roofs. Similarly, nouns ending in -s already or in -ch -sh, ay, oy - o and some other syllables or sounds generally obey the rule of addition of -s or -es in some cases while in some not. Example, news, gas, piano, man, foot, bonus, basis, curriculum, goods, trousers. Similarly, singular and plural forms are confused; and some singulars and plurals are unusual. Example, character (a peculiar character/many striking characters), damage (a damage/many damages), series (a series of goods/many series of goods). Naturally, collective nouns require singular verb because it is considered as a single indivisible unit or body; some students use plurality in the application of collective nouns whether singular or plural form (Ozo-Mekuri, 1996).

Learners make errors and mistakes and at first errors were looked upon as evils which hindered the learning process and which had to be eradicated. Today, it is believed that errors are an essential part of the learning process which learners formulate and discard unwanted data encountered. They are not

physical failures but the sign of an imperfect knowledge of the code and the formation rules of different noun inflections of the L1 as well as the L2 and are not yet internalized (Corder, 1979 Fries, 1972).

As Alice (1996) observes; case as the differences between words- the subject of a clause (nominative/subjective case), words that are objects (accusative/objective case) and genetive (possession). Similarly, case is defined as a noun or form of a noun, an adjective or a pronoun that shows its relationship to another word. It also shows possession or ownership and relationship between two or more nouns; and syntactic relationships of the noun and noun phrase as nominative and accusative (Hornby, 2005; Quirk, 2004; Glencoe, 2001).

Case is also used in pronoun - I, he, she, we, they, who, are usually described as being the nominative case; me, him, her, us, them, who(m), are said to be in the accusative case and my, his, her, our, their, as genitive case (James, 1998; Roderick, 1972). Example,

Nominative- The brilliant students opened the book.

Accusative- The book was opened by the brilliant students.

Nominative- He opens the book.

Accusative- The book is opened by him.

The boy applied the medicine. (nominative)

The medicine is applied by the boy. (accusative)

Usually two constructions are used to show possession; the constructions are –of and -s. In the English language, both written and spoken languages are interwoven therefore, in written English the possessive case of nouns in the singular is written with an apostrophe ‘before the -s while in regular plural s' possession is indicated by an apostrophe after the plural- s’. In spoken English, the possessive case of nouns in the singular is pronounced /iz/, /z/ or /s/; the pronunciation depends on the last sound of the noun and in the plural the possessive is usually not pronounced (Geoffrey and Svartrik, 2005; Wilfred, 1996).

An apostrophe, ‟ is usually used to create possessive forms, contractions and some plurals. There are different rules for the formation of possessive case by various languages; Martin (2006), Quirk (2004), Glencoe (2000), Ozo-Mekuri (1996) examine different rules in the English language as follows: addition of -'s genitive to a singular noun and to irregular plural that do not end in –s. Example, Aminu’s car, women's bus. Moreover, nouns connected with people and human activity (the team’s success, Aminu’s speech). Also, Phrases of time (a year's work); some idioms (an arm's length); higher animals (a dog’s life); collective nouns (the nation's security). Possessive is used for regular plurals (boys' drums); some names of classical origin (Euripides' plays, Socrates' wife). In some cases, however, apostrophe-‘s or s’ is used with names that end in -s add either of the two possessives such as one's/Jones' new sport car); abstracts nouns ending in-ss or -ce (for goodness' sake, for conscience' sake).

Another genitive is the -of - noun possessive i.e. the genitive and the -of-construction which is usually used for inanimate and abstract nouns like (the discovery of science, the cover of the book); a process or a change in time (the establishment of the committee, the destruction of the forest); a long noun phrase (the departure of the 4:30pm train for Kaduna). The English language offers a choice on either the use of possessive -s or the -of – construction. Example, what is the ship's name? What is the name of the ship? Martin (2006) and Leech and Svartvik (2002) assert the genitive is used for the subject - verb relation (Aminu's discovery) but the –of- construction is preferably used for the verb -object relation (The discovery of Aminu); the subject relation can also be used by-‘s genitive. Example:

a. The army's defeat by the rebels *or*

b. The defeat of the army by the rebels. The apostrophe is usually omitted when possession refers to inanimate things or objects.

Genders are modifications that distinguish objects in regard to sex. Many nouns used for both males and females are called common gender. With animals, there is one general word for the animal and special words for the male and female. Sometimes, the word for the male animal is the same as the general word or the female’s. Example, lion-lion-lioness; tiger-tiger-tigress (Howard,2008). Gender inflections of nouns show distinction between different sexes as it relates to nouns and pronouns. According to Alice (1996) and Angus (1986), gender is classified into masculine, feminine, common and neuter. In other words, it is male, female, either male or female and neither of the sex or neither

male nor female. English language makes very few gender distinctions and different genders have different endings and categorized accordingly.

Many nouns are equally applicable to both sexes as cousin, friend, neighbor, person and parent. The gender of these is usually determined by the context. Masculine nouns make regular feminine, when their termination is changed to *–ess;* as, prince-princess; hunter-huntress; lion-lioness; actor-actress; author-authoress; heir-heiress. Feminine is formed from masculine by changing the terminal syllable or adding a syllable or word and in a different way. This is irregular gender inflections or modifications. For example, hero-heroine; abbot-abbess; adjutor-adjutrix; cock sparrow-hen sparrow; widower-widow; lord-lady; bull-cow (Gould,2004; Wilfred, 1996).

Similarly, most nouns in English have the same form for male and female and, that is why Geoffrey and Svartvik (2005) considers gender to be masculine, feminine and personal or non-personal. That is why when a human noun is replaced by a pronoun and the sex is unknown, or unspecified, absent or unimportant, traditionally 'he' is used rather than 'she'. Example, Martyr is someone who gives up his life for his beliefs. However, nowadays this bias towards the male term is widely avoided. Each sex is considered and used appropriately.

Quirk and Greenburm (2004) provides ten (10) set of gender classes for both nouns and pronouns. The gender classes are:

i. Masculine – uncle
ii. Feminine-aunt
iii. Dual – doctor
iv. Common – baby
v. Collective – family
vi. Masculine higher animal – bull
vii. Feminine higher animal – cow
viii. Higher organism – France
ix. Lower animal – ant
x. Inanimate – box.

Alice (1996) defines tense as the term used to show relationship between time and other conditions and the form of the verb. Similarly, tense is used to refer to a grammatical category which determines the form of the verb in a sentence with respect to changes in time. The verb form refers to the morphological changes that a verb undergoes (Ozo-Mekuri, 1996). Verb and tense are interwoven, the verb is a word that change its form to reflect tense, person or number and which can occur as the element in a predicate of a sentence. It is the key word in the predicate slot of a sentence.

Tenses are the forms of verb that help to show time. A verb is a word that expresses action or a state of being (Glencoe, 2000). Tense is a set of grammatical forms bearing some relation to the notional category of time. The category of time is common to all mankind and time may be expressed linguistically, and one way in which this is done is by the use of tenses. It should be noted that term 'tense' is restricted to a particular kind of linguistic time expression. Time may be expressed in various ways such as by means of a prefix(ex-president); by means of a word (late prime minister) or by means of other linguistic units (last week; in 1920). Tense here is used to show time-expressions that take the form of a verbal inflection and the verb forms (Ozo-Mekuri,1996; Christophersen,1969).

Many English verbs have five forms: The base, the –s form, (simple present form), the past, (simple past form the-ed1) the –ing (present participle form), and the –ed participle, (the past participle form-the-ed2). Regular lexical verbs have the same –ed inflection for both the past tense and the past participle. Irregular lexical verb forms differ from regular verbs such as:

a. Irregular verbs either do not have a/d/or t/inflection (drank, drinking) or break the rule for a voiced inflection (burn, burnt/t), beside the regular (burned/d/).

b. Irregular verbs typically, but not necessary have variation in their base vowel: find-found-found, write-wrote-written.

c. Irregular verbs have a varying number of distinct forms since the –s and –ing forms are predictable for regular and irregular verbs alike but the variations are in the base (cut, meet, come, speak), verb- simple past (ed) (cut, met, came, spoke) and verb-past participle (cut, met, come. Spoken) (Alice, 1996).

Regular lexical verbs have the following forms:

Verb (v) base Call, like, try.

Verb-ing participle calling, liking, trying.
Verb –s -s form calls, likes, tries.
Verb-ed -past –ed participle called, liked, tried.
Verb -past-ed simple called, liked, tried. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2004; Ozo-Mekuri, 1996). These are regular since we can predict the forms if we know the base of such a verb, and many English verbs belong to those regular class. Most new verbs that are coined or borrowed from other languages adopt this pattern.
1) The base form- work, kick, call, drink, put. The tense use for the base form that is form 1, the present tense for all categories of persons except 3rd person singular I/you/we/they work every day. (V)
2) The –s form (the simple present form) - works, kicks, calls, drinks, puts. This is use for 3rd person singular present tense- He/she/it/works every day. (V-S)
3) The past form (the simple past form-ed)- worked, kicked, called, drank, put. Applicable to all category of persons- we/they/he/etc worked yesterday. (V-ed1,)
4) The –ing participle form (the present participle)- working, kicking, calling, drinking, putting. It is use and function in progressive aspect (be+v-ing). He is working in a moment and in –ing participle clauses- working early, he found him at home. (V-ing)
5) The past participle form (the –ed participle)- worked, kicked, called, drunk, put. This is used in perfective aspect- has/have +v-ed2. He has worked in a palace; passive voicebe+v-ed2- He has worked; in-ed participle clauses- worked early, he had a quick lunch.
The –ing participle and –ed past participle are used differently and vary in the way they are use and whether singular or plural persons as in –ing participle. He is working in a moment. We are working in a moment. For –ed participle, such as; He has worked in the palace. We have worked in the palace. Regular lexical verbs have the same –ed inflection for both the past tense and the –ed participle. Irregular lexical verb forms vary (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2004; Ingo,2002; Ozo-Mekuri,1996). Irregular verbs have a varying number of distinct forms. The –s and –ing inflections are predictable for regular and irregular verbs, some considerable variation are noted for irregular verbs in the base, (v), the past (v-ed1) and the past participle (v-ed2). Some of them like regular verbs, have one common form for the past and past participle as in cut(base), cut(past), cut (past participle); hit, shut, wet. While some have variations in all the forms as in break, breaks, breaking, broke, broken;
Send; spend swear swim tear wake
Sent spent swore swam tore woke
Sent spent sworn swum torn woke (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2004; Ozo-Mekuri, 1996).
Tense uses auxiliary verbs to inflect words to show distinctions between singular and plural as well as the time when an action takes place. Basically, there are two types of auxiliary verbs; primary (do, have, be) and modal (can/could, may /might, shall/should, will/would, must, ought, to, used to, need, dare). Auxiliary verbs permit the contraction that is Contracted negative as well as uncontracted negative such as from can –positive to can't (contracted negative), cannot (uncontracted negative). Need – needn't – need not; Ought to – oughtn't to – ought not to;
-be and -have do also permit the contracted negative even when they are used as main verbs as in- He wasn't there. He hasn't any option. Similarly, when the verb -do is used as an auxiliary, the features of tense or aspect is realized on it rather than the main verb of the sentence. He does not knows his father (wrong).
He does not know his father (correct). He didn't come here yesterday (correct).
He didn't came here yesterday (wrong). He didn't gave it to me (wrong). He didn't give it to me (correct).
The auxiliary verb -have behaves differently from the verb -do. When -have is used as an auxiliary verb, the main verb of the sentence takes the inflection; the past participle form irrespective of the tense form of the verb –have. Example: We have eaten his breakfast. Or He has eaten his breakfast. When the verb (to) -be is used as an auxiliary verb, the main verb of the sentence takes the present participle form (-ing participle). As in the following: He is sleeping. They are sleeping. They were sleeping. I am sleeping. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 2004; Glencoe, 2000; Ozo-Mekuri,1996).
Order of Auxiliary Verbs (Ozo-Mekuri, 1996) classifies as:
Modal Have/ Be (lexical verb/main verb); Might have been/ being washed; Must have be/ to be looking; Would Has been/ being writing/hidden

Auxiliaries are -do -have, -be. DO –has the following forms:
Non negative un-contracted negative contracted negative
Present- do- do not- don't
Does- does not- doesn't
Past- did- did not- didn't
HAVE-Non-negative- un-contracted- contracted negative
Base- have- have not- haven't
-s form- has- has not- hasn't
Past- had- had not- hadn't
-ing form- having- not having
-ed participle- had- (only as lexical verb)
BE- The lexical and auxiliary verb -be is unique among English verb as having eight (8) different forms:
Non-negative- Un-contracted- Contracted

Base	Be		
Present tense 1st person singular am,'m	am not- m not (aren't, ain't)		
3rd person singular is -s	is not	Isn't	
2nd person,1st and 3rd person plural	are-'re	are not-'re not aren't	
1st and 3rd person singular- was	was not	wasn't	
Past tense	2nd person, 1st and 3rd person plural	- were- were not	weren"t

-ing form – being- not being -ed participle -been.

CONCLUSION

The inflectional process seeks the learner to look at spellings and sounds of his/her first language, which include phonetics and phonology; inflections used in noun, possessive, verb and auxiliary compare them to those of English and mark out similarities and differences, and practice them well. The learning environment has to be adequate for learners through favorable social and psychological contact with different elements that help to master the language. These include knowledge and a careful look at the environment in which the word is used, knowledge of the world and previous experience, adequate classroom space, adequate time and place for speaking and writing English at home and at school.

The errors students commit in inflections of nouns, possessive, tense (verb) and auxiliary can be reduced by ensuring the students understand the full meaning of word and its constituents. This is the result of the sum total of experiences which the learner had with the word in the cultural environment in which he has grown up.

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