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Irregularities in The Grammar of the English Language: Blindspots for Pedagogical Attention in ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

Scholars and researchers have shown much concern over the years about the poor performance of students at all levels of educational system in Nigeria. Many factors have been identified as being responsible for students' deficiency and poor performance in English. The most common ones are: absence of a vigorous and robust language policy that should inform the totality of the English language curriculum, inadequate teaching materials, teachers' lack of relevant educational qualifications and experience, lack of teaching facilities among others. This paper looks beyond the identified challenges by examining the blind spots that teachers hardly take cognizance of, which could be responsible for students' deficiency and poor academic performance in English, and non- proficient use of the language for other specific purposes. The paper specifically traces the irregularities that characterize English to the influence of a diverse group of the Anglo- Saxon and Anglo-Norman languages from which some words were borrowed into the English language. The paper therefore surveys the inherent irregularities within the grammar of English at the levels of verb/ tense forms, plural systems, orthographic and phonological patterns. The paper, thus, proffers functional approaches for teachers of English to address these challenges for effective teaching and learning of English in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Irregularities, grammar, English Language, Blindspots, pedagogical, ESL Classrooms

Introduction

The English language is unequivocally significant as the language of instruction in practically all the subjects in the school curriculum from the upper primary to the tertiary level in the Nigerian

educational system; apart from the very elementary level of schooling, English is the medium of instruction and a subject in the curriculum. Such is the significance attached to the subject that a student's performance in it is inextricably connected to their



overall success level in the educational system. Thus, students' performance in English plays a major role in determining their eligibility for promotion to the next class in the primary or secondary school or for admission to the higher institution of learning because a minimum of credit pass in English is needed (Ojetunde, 2010). Adegbite (2005) opines that the mastery of English holds hopes for individual Nigerian learners because of its key functions in social, political and economic growth of the nation.

It is therefore obvious that English language programme is a compulsory programme from the basic to the higher educational level. Students must meet the programme in every phase of the educational system in Nigeria. As English is the medium through which the concepts in education are expressed and acquired, then it is a primary instrument for human development in Nigeria (Audu, Omonike and Ogunode, 2021). Adegbite (2005) stresses that to function effectively as a fully-integrated member of the society, the Nigerian learner requires an appropriate degree of competence that is most comparable to that of the native speaker. Based on this assertion, Audu et al (2021) opine "it is essential that in all stages of learning the language is adequately taught because it is believed that proficiency in English is tied to the quality of its teaching".

It is however disheartening that despite the high premium placed on the language in our school system, the level of competence expected at all

levels of education has not been attained (Akere 1990). Scholars such as Adebileje and Akinola (2020), Ogundele, Olanipekun and Aina (2011); Kolawole (2004), Nnyigide and Anyaegbu (2020) confirm this assertion by tracing the sources of the problem to certain shortcomings in the school system, especially the secondary school where the foundations of English learning for academic and communicative purposes are supposed to be laid. This deduction is confirmed by the annual reports of the poor performance of many Nigerian students in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), General Certificate in Education (GCE), Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB), etc.

In most cases, factors adduced to the poor performance or failure rate in English as reported by Ojetunde (2010), Adebileje et al (2014) Audu et al (2021) are inadequate funding of English language programmes, insufficient professional English teachers, inadequate instructional facilities, poor capacity development programme for English language teachers, poor teaching methods, sociological and environmental factors. It is worthy of note that far beyond these challenges, the inherent structural irregularities within the English language have posed problems to learners and users of English. Thus, to grapple with the unconventional patterns at various levels of the English language description, especially within the grammar of English where incredibly inconsistent and confusing structures



of English feature prominently, is a challenging task, which in most cases, impedes teaching and learning of the language. This paper therefore aims at examining these irregularities especially at the levels of verb/tense forms, plural and concord systems, orthography and phonology, and presenting functional approaches for effective teaching and learning of the English language by specially paying attention to these irregularities. It is hoped that this could also go a long way in minimizing poor performance in English and improve students' communicative competence.

Methodology and Framework for the Study

The paper is conceptual in nature and it begins with the origin of the language, and the various challenges it had in its formation stages through invasions, wars, among others. It also gives breakdown of the different stages of the language formations with samples of inconsistencies both at the structural, orthographical and phonological levels. It, however, focuses on the description of pedagogical strategies stemming from a theoretical framework that has evolved out of second language learning research. Some of these are the PPP, TBL and Gupta's suggested strategies.

The Influence of the History of the English Language on its Structural Irregularities

English as a globally recognised language has a long and complex history influenced by other different European languages in terms of its vocabulary, grammar and

pronunciation. It is a Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of Germanic, Dutch/ Flemish, Frisian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic languages. These languages descended from one parent language, a dialect of Indo-European, called Pro-Germanic (Oyeleye, 2003). Germanic is one of the language groups which is usually divided into three regional groups: East (Burgundian, Vandal, and Gothic), North (Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Swedish and Dutch) and West (German, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, and English (Potter and Crystal 2024).

The English language was dated back to the 5th and 6th centuries when Germanic tribes from Northern Germany and Jutland settled in Britain, modern-day English, Scotland, and Wales. The assimilation of Germanic tribes into Celtic-speaking Britain led to the development of Old English or Anglo-Saxon. English, during those periods, was called Old English or Anglo-Saxon with very strong Germanic influences though it varied in structure slightly from the German language from which it evolved (Linford & Waters, 2023). Obasi (2018) observes that English has throughout its history accumulated words from different sources which started with the early invasions by Vikings and Normans, and continued with the embracing of the renaissance and the adoption of foreign words through trading and colonial connections. Until the Normans' invasion, English was primarily Germanic. The Normans brought their native French language, thus, through the invasion; the Anglo

Saxons adopted a large amount of French and Latin vocabulary into their language, resulting in another change in the word structure and syntax of English.

Through the adoption of French and Latin into English, it became the language of the noble and the educated. Scholars such as Baugh and Cable (2002), Singh (2005), Pink and Thomas (1974) have attributed the inconsistencies and irregularities to the array of historic origins of the English language. The Modern English spelling was fixed around 15th century through the creation of the printing press, a manual machine which gave the language the opportunity of standardization, thereby setting the English letter sounds and its syntax to a subject-verb-object order (Linford and Water 2024). The standardization process also led to anomalies and inconsistencies in the spelling. Obasi (2018) is of the view that spelling reform that occurred at various times in both Britain and the United States has further complicated the pattern, despite the initial desire for simplification, as there are many noticeable differences between American and British spellings, which in the real sense, add to its inherent difficulties (e.g. *labor/labour; realize/realise; parlor/ parlour; analyze/analyse; traveler/ traveller ; meter/ metre*, etc.

Although English is Germanic in origin, Modern English is a blend of Norman, French, Latin, Greek, Dutch influences (Linford & Waters, 2024). In the course of the years, English words have been slowly simplified

from the inflected variable forms found in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Russian and German to invariable forms. For instance, in English only nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs are inflected. For verbs, if the Modern English word *ride* is compared with the corresponding words in Old English and Modern German, English now has only 5 forms for the irregular (*rides, ride, rode, riding, ridden*), whereas Old English *ridan* had 13 and Modern German, *reiten* has 16 (Potter and Crystal 2024). With English having only 5 forms for irregular verbs, there are still variations in the forms of irregular verbs such as we have in verbs like , *cut,cuts, cut, cutting, cut; put, puts, put, putting, put; split, splits, split splitting, split*; also, there are irregular comparison of adjectives .e.g. *good, better, best; well, better, best; bad ,worse, worst; and adverbs; badly, worse, worse; well, better, best; little, less, least*, etc. and formation of foreign plural nouns: *alumnus /alumni, nucleus/nuclei, radius/radii, terminus/ termini, syllabus/syllabi*, etc.

With this inherent irregularities and inconsistencies that characterise the English language as a result of various historical factors, teachers and learners of English are bound to commit errors in an attempt to select and use the right option out of different patterns available in the language. The onus is now on the teacher of English to make deliberate effort at identifying and describing these irregularities for effective teaching of these patterns within the grammar of English

Irregularities in the Grammar of English

The word *irregular* is normally used in linguistic analysis to characterise language phenomena which somehow deviate from other phenomena that are subsumed under a law (Erik & Han, 2007). In the Modern English, for instance, the two terms, regular and irregular, can be explained under two rules:

Rule A: The pattern of Modern English *a dog: dogs* is regular because it follows the following rule: the singular of Modern English nouns is formed by the addition of a zero-ending, and the plural by the addition of an - (e)s-ending.

Exception: The pattern of Modern English *a mouse: mice* is irregular because it is not subsumable under Rule A.

Grammarians make irregular a default category in relation to regular categories. However, this view point does not capture the knowledge native speakers have of their own language, a knowledge that regards both patterns as equal phenomena empirically because both are equally acceptable and functionally valuable. For non-native speakers, there have not been sufficient empirical explanations to prove the relevance of exceptional patterns in English grammar. . Another set of unexplainable patterns is the plural nouns with vowel change: goose-geese; tooth-teeth. Evidently, the only reliable source is to look at the tradition (the origins) the irregularities sprang from. Thus, special attention needs to be paid to

them by learners and speakers (Yang, 2005).

Irregularities at the Level of Nouns

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) are of the view irregular plural are by definition unpredictable and have to be learned as individual items. In many cases where foreign words are involved, it is helpful for learners to know about pluralization in the relevant languages particularly Latin, Greek and French which are believed to have had a lot of influences on English.

For instance, on the pattern of nouns of Greek origin which normally end in *-is*, the correct plurals can be inferred. e.g. *axis-axes; basis-bases; crisis- crises; diagnosis-diagnoses; ellipsis-ellipses;- parentheses; thesis-theses; hypothesis-hypotheses;- synopsis*. Also, for, nouns that end in *-on* in the Greek language, the foreign plural ends in *-a* as in *criterion-criteria, phenomenon- phenomena*.

French nouns borrowed into English with *-e(a)u* retain the French *-x* as the spelling of the plural, beside the commoner-*s*, but the plurals are almost always pronounced as regular, /z/ irrespective of the spelling, e.g. *portmanteau-portmanteaux/portmanteaus; bureau-bureaus; tableau-tableaus; plateau-plateaus*.

Nouns of Latin origin that end in *-ex* and *-ix*; *index-indices or indexes; cortex-cortices; vertex-vertexes or vertices; appendix- appendices*. Those end in *-us* normally pluralize by getting *-us* replaced by *-i* as in the following examples: *alumnus- alumni; fungus-fungi; stimulus- stimuli; uterus;*

uteri; *memorandum-*
memorandums/memoranda;
curriculum-curricula; *medium-*
mediums/media; *stratum- stratus/*
strata; *forum- forums /fora*; *datum-*
data/ datums, etc. *Datum* when used
in calculating figures that deal with a
piece of information or fact, it is
countable while the plural is *data*.
Thus, as a singular non-count noun is
widespread, and the technical
singular *datum* is rather rare (Quirk
et al, 1973).

Irregularities at the level of Verbs

The English verb past tense is the
best-known case of irregularity. Of all
English verbs, about 120 are irregular,
the rest are regular (Yang, 2005)
while Ogbulogo claims irregular verbs
are up to 200. Regular verbs in
English form their past tense forms
by adding *-ed* or *-d* along the line of
play- played. They are called irregular
verbs because their past and past
participle forms cannot be predicted
from their base form. Here are a few
examples as presented by Ogbulogo
(2009) and Park (1995).

- 1.) Those that do not change their
base forms; Base form / Past Tense/
Past Participle. e.g. *hurt hurt/ hurt*;
shed/ shed / shed; *quit /quit/quitted /*
quit/quitted.
- 2.) Those in which the first vowel is
changed in both the past and past
participial forms. e.g., *cling/clung /*
clung; *feed/ fed /fed*; *shoot/ shot /shot*;
grind/ ground/ ground.
- 3.) Those in which the first vowel is
replaced or and *-en* is added for the
past participle. e.g., *freeze/ froze/*
frozen; *choose/ chose/ chosen*; *bear/*

bore/born(e); *hide/hid/hidden*;
weave/wove/ woven.

- 4.) Those in which the vowels of all
forms are replaced. e.g.
begin/began/begun;
drink/drank/drunken;
shrink/shrank/shrunk;
stink/stank/stunk.

- 5.) Those in which the first vowels of
the past are replaced and those of the
participle retained and *-en* added. e.g.
rode/ride/ridden; *stride/*
strode/stridden; *smite/smote/smitten*.

- 6.) Those in which the first vowel is
replaced only in the past form but is
retained in the past participle and *-en*
added. e.g. *slay/slew/slain*;
blow/blew/blown;
shake/shook/shaken.

- 7.) Those in which the last consonant
is replaced. e.g. *bend/bent/bent*;
lend/lent/lent; *rend/rent/rent*;
build/built/built.

- 8.) Those in which vowels and
consonants are replaced .e.g.
catch/caught/caught;
teach/taught/taught;
seek/sought/sought.

- 9.) Those in which *-t* is added to the
base without deletion of the last
consonants .e.g. *spell/spelt/spelt* or
spelled; *spoil/spoilt* or *spoiled/ spoilt*
or *spoiled*.

- 10.) Those in which the past tense
forms are regular but the past
participial forms add *-en*. e.g.
saw/sawed/sawn; *sew/sewed/sewn* or
sewed; *sow/sowed/sown* or *sowed*;
swell/swelled/ swollen or *swelled*;
lade/laded/laden.



Ogbulogo (1990) and Park (1995) observe that some verbs that have the same base forms but different past and participial forms often pose a lot of problems because they can express different meanings as illustrated in the following sentences:

The *burned* animal looks awful. (processive)

The *burnt* animal looks awful. (stative)

The regular past participle form focuses on the durative and deliberate process of burning to which the animal was or has been subjected while the irregular form focuses on the non-durative state in which the animal find itself after having been burnt or burned. In other words, the meaning conveyed by the verb is heavily stative for the irregular variant while it is heavily processive for its regular counterpart.

It should be noted that the dichotomy between processive and stative meaning can also be translated into a dichotomy between more or less deliberate intent on the part of the subject on which the action in question is effected as can be illustrated in the following pair of sentences:

The tree fell.

Peter felled the tree.

The irregular *fell* conveys a far less deliberate or purposeful intent on the part of the subject than does the regular *felled*. *Fell* with its zero suffix possibly implies much less duration and much less deliberateness than *felled* with its regular suffix-*ed*.

Also, the verb *hang* has two sets of the past tense and past participial forms. For the process of fixing something on top of the wall hanger or tree, the following forms are used:

Base form-*Hang*; Past tense-*hung*;
Past participle-*hung*

To express the process of killing, we have the following:

Base form-*hang*; Past tense-*hanged*; Past Participle- *hanged*

Find/ found could also pose difficulty to learners based on the fact that both the past tense and past participial forms of find is found if it is used in the sense of searching for something or somebody.. e.g. I have found my book. However, if it expresses the idea of establishing a church, a school or a hospital, the past and past participial forms are *founded/ founded* .e.g. The school was *founded* in 1964. There are lots of these patterns which often pose challenges to learners and speakers of English such as *lie/ lied /lied*= the process of saying what is not true; *lie/ lay/lain*= the process of taking a rest; *lay/laid/laid*= which could refer to the process of placing things on top of an object or on a surface; it could also mean the process of laying eggs.

Irregularities in Orthography and Pronunciation

Another notable area of irregularities in the English language is orthography and pronunciation. This majorly is attributed to the multiple historical



antecedents of the language; this notwithstanding, it is a great concern to effective teaching and learning process. According to Obasi, English has words borrowed from over 120 languages. It is therefore not out of order to conclude that these irregularities stem out of the complicated historical roots of the language; some of which included the influence of the Germanic, the Greek, and the Latin languages, some words are even without clear sources. Parts of these historical backgrounds also included the invasion of the Vikings and the Normans, the infusion of the classical languages during the Renaissance as well as the foreign words introduced by trading and colonial links.

Spelling, call it orthography, is vital for several reasons; one is that to communicate effectively, one needs to be able to spell correctly, especially as a writer. The written words must be clear and correctly spelt to attract meaning. Also, in our contemporary society, anything short of accurate spelling is unacceptable. It is believed to be an act of illiteracy or ignorance.

The major contending issue here however is that inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the English orthography and pronunciation is a major concern to the learning and teaching of the English language.

Let us attempt a little of these inconsistencies:

Consider the /sh/ sound in the following words. They are produced differently:

Sugar
Passion

Champagne
ambition,
ocean. ‘

Also, some spellings are the same but pronounced differently.

ough

rough (uff)
 plough (ow)
 through (oo)
 hiccough (up)
 cough (oof)
 thought (aw)
 lough (och)
 loughborough

ear

Fear
 Bear
 Early

aid

Paid
 Said

omb

Tomb
 Comb
 Bomb

ew

few
 sew

oo

book
 fool



	poor	sea
ove		see
	glove	There is also the case of long /e/ sound that manifest differently in different words: Few examples are mentioned below;
	drove	
ch		
	chemistry	seat,
	chair	ceiling,
	chamber	siege,
	champagne	machine,
oes		key,
	shoes	people
	goes	
	does	
Words with different spellings pronounced the same		
	/aʊə/	As Obasi (2018) rightly observed, the 26 alphabets of English can't represent the over 43 sounds with one distinct symbol. This is confusing, and a learner might have difficulties pinning down the sounds correctly to a spelling. He argues that it is an indication that the spellings can't be used as reasonable guides to pronunciation.
	hour	
	our	
	/hɪə/	Sc and sk are another sounds that are sounded the same, but written differently. Sk as in skate, and sketch, while in scale and scorn have sc.
	hear	
	here	
	/ðeə/	Silent words are uncountable, and you begin to wonder, why they are not sounded and of what value are they in the words. Examples of silent letters include:
	there	
	their	
	/i:/	b in comb, climb and debt
	week	
	weak	
	/rait/	k in knife, knee, knock
	right	
	write	
	/si:/	c in scene, science, scissors
		h in hour, honour, honest, annihilate, ghost, rhythm, exhaust, exhibition, exhort etc.



g in gnash, gnaw, sign
 n in damn, hymn, column
 gh in night, through, taught
 l in palm, salmon, yolk
 u in biscuit, building, tongue
 w in wreck, knowledge, sword
 p in psalm, psychiatric, psychology

Other silent consonants include

yolk
 island
 wrong
 subpoena
 asthma
 yacht
 handkerchief
 often
 daughter
 plumber
 Christmas
 Feign
 Write
 Numb

Another are the vowel sounds,
 Consider /ue/ and /ei/.

/ue/ is written as go, show, bean, sew,
 does, though, and depot

/ei/ manifests in hey, stay, make,
 made, freight and great.

/Sc/ as used in muscular and muscle
 is pronounced different. S in muscle
 and sk in muscular.

Same is the ch in arch and architect. K
 for architect and s for arch. A lot of
 inconsistencies that this medium
 would not be

According to research, the language
 was first corrupted during the
 reinstatement of English as an official
 language of England in the 15th
 century. It suffered a great setback in
 the hands of foreign printers during
 the bible wars of the 16th century. In
 spite of all this, there has been no
 serious organised attempts to remedy
 these accidental and deliberate
 manipulations of the alphabetic
 principle that could help regulate the
 speech sounds in an easy manner in
 the language.

Suggested Pedagogical Strategies to teach English as a Second Language in Nigeria

Different scholars have suggested
 different strategies in the teaching of
 the English language, especially as a
 result of these inconsistencies and
 irregularities discussed above (Gupta,
 2019; Agbatogun, 2013; Vygotsky,
 1978). However, the importance of
 English to a nation like Nigeria could
 not be underrated. It is the nation's
 official language, the language of
 politics, commerce, education, among
 others; and it is essential for
 successful communication in the
 public space. As a result, it is
 therefore expedient that it has to be
 taught properly so as to have effective
 speakers and users of the language.
 According to Agbatogun (2013), the
 tutor needs a pedagogical content
 knowledge of the language before
 he/she can teach effectively. He/she



must need to evolve a strategy to effectively help the learners to understand. However, for the purpose of this paper, we shall discuss three of these strategies: PPP, TBL and Gupta's (2019) strategies.

PPP is the conventional Presentation Practice Production, which is regarded as the traditional lecture method most teachers adopt, especially as it is the easy way out to teach a large class. PPP is also regarded as an elegant or well-designed method of setting the groundwork for language learning in an ESL classroom. The approach consists of three parts:

First Part (Phase I)

At the level of this step, the teacher actively communicates the new language item to the students. The step is known as the Presentation stage. As he does this, the students pay close attention. The instructor then uses pertinent examples to demonstrate proper usage so that the students can understand it.

Second stage (Phase II)

At this stage, the teacher uses questioning, workbooks, relevant replacement tables, reading activities, among others. If the language item is accessible, dramatisation is also employed to reinforce the new language item. It is the Practice Stage.

Third Stage (Phase III)

The Phase III is also known as the Production Stage: The teacher uses questions that force the students to produce and utilise the new language

item in the expected manner in order to get them to produce their own instances of the item, either in spoken or written form.

The PPP strategy is simple to apply regardless of the size of the class and does not require advanced pedagogy. In big classes, the PPP technique is practical, easy to use, and intuitive for teachers. However, it has been agreed that it falls short of helping students to write and speak English fluently in an ESL context.

TBL is Task-based Learning, and it is based on constructivism, which involves the Social-Cultural theory promoted by Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Halliday's (1978) Meta-Functions of Language; and theories related to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Citing Vygotsky and his associates, Gbenedio & Osa-Omoregie (2019) assert that language is not the product of 'isolated' learning but rather a communal event. They claim that youngsters, who engage in discussion with others in their environment, especially, develop their own personalities.

It is believed that this social viewpoint is crucial and should never be overlooked when learning a language. In reality, when we learn a language that is different from our first language, we can only fully grasp the social dimension of that language through deep communication and relationships with other individuals who use the language. Through meaningful engagements and interactions with users of the language, one will achieve actual use

of the language, as interaction is more important than content in the development of language competence and fluency.

Constructivism's tenets, gave rise to task-based learning (TBL) in language instruction, and according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), language is essentially a means of meaning-making; its instruction can be structural, functional, or interactional. They add that lexical units are essential to language; and that dialogue (conversation) is the cornerstone of language acquisition. The deficiency observed in PPP method, such as teacher-centeredness, emphasis on accuracy at the expense of fluency, and limiting learners' exposure to learning opportunities, among others, led to the development of the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach.

The strategy (TBL) views language as a collection of discrete, separable parts that may be taught individually (Ellis 2014). It is a learner-centred approach that promotes collaboration between educators and students in the creative knowledge-building process, whether language learning or other subject areas. Its foundation is the utilisation of tasks as the central idea of education and planning. The approach is centred on giving students meaningful assignments to complete while utilising real language (Richards and Rodgers 2012).

By encouraging learners' real language use before focusing on the language form, learners' communicative talents are given prominence (Jeon and Hahn 2006).

Tasks are always actions in which the learner uses the target language for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to obtain an outcome, according to Willis (1996).

Tasks can help students utilise a second language in a meaningful way (Willis and Willis 2012). Tasks, whether completed in groups or pairs, are recognised to offer a variety of advantages to language learners in the classroom. Some of these advantages include:

- i. The strategy empowers students to experiment with any language they know—or believe they know—in small groups or pairs without worrying about making a mistake or receiving criticism in front of the class
- ii. It allows them to see how others communicate concepts or meanings, which increases their propensity to correct one another instead of picking up on each other's mistakes.
- iii. It also encourages students to use language cooperatively and meaningfully while focusing on creating meaning rather than merely using words to impress;
- iv. and finally, it gives learners the opportunity to try out communication strategies like checking understanding, paraphrasing to understand an unknown word, reformulating other people's ideas, and supplying words and phrases to assist other speakers.

Another way to help learners master the language accurately is Gupta's (2019) strategies for effective teaching of the English language in Nigeria. Gupta suggested seven



strategies, and these strategies, we believe, will be suitable to effectively teach English and take care of the irregularities and the inconsistencies in the learning of the language. They include,

1. knowing your students and motivating them to learn the language;
2. creating a welcoming conducive classroom environment for learning;
3. building background knowledge on what they know in their original language and linking it to what they want to learn in the new language;
4. providing a comprehensible input by building vocabulary
5. ensuring frequent opportunities for Interaction and discussion;
6. using multiple modalities during instruction, and
7. conducting ongoing review and assessment.

Conclusion

So far, the paper has been able to chronicle the possible reasons for the inconsistencies and irregularities in the tense forms, plural systems, orthography and sound patterns of the English language. However, these inconsistencies pose a great challenge to learners, as they bring about confusion and in the end affect their productions. This paper has however suggested the adoption of Gupta's 2019 strategies for effective teaching of English in Nigeria, as well as Vygotsky's 1978 Task-based Learning (TBL), which will help them to focus on not just mastering the language, but interacting with its

users for acculturation and practical use.

Recommendations

Honestly, the challenge of inconsistencies and irregularities in orthography and pronunciation of English may not be totally overcome in a second language learning situation, but to an extent they can be reduced to the barest minimum.

First, it is important the speakers of the language think towards a reform that will bring about a correlation between orthography and pronunciation. This is almost nearly impossible, especially as the damage looks beyond repair, but for the good of the language and to the benefit of the learners, a step has to be taken in this direction. A reform becomes expedient especially as writers such as Obasi (2018), Muhammad (2013) etc. support such reforms.

There is also the need to synergize pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary in the curriculum. These three should no longer be treated separately. Synchronising them will help the learners to, at the earlier stage, take them as one and prepare for the challenges ahead.

Also, reading can be of great help. Reading is a reflective process, and through it, the learner would be able to reflect as he reads and be conversant with most of the irregular forms in the language. He/she will become familiar with them and become conscious his/her usages.

We also recommend the use of spelling bee competition, as this will enable the learners to be familiar



with the words of the language, their spellings and pronunciation.

Finally, the teachers and learners need to be intentional in the teaching as well as the learning of these irregularities (by the learners). It seems obvious there is no way out, but through consciousness and being intentional by both the teachers and the learners, the irregularities might be understood and easily learnt.

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