

Innovations

Analysis of Falling Standard of English Language Usage Among Nigerian Journalists

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Abstract

Until quite recently the escalating falling standard in the usage of English Language by Nigerian journalists has received wide condemnation by relevant stakeholders such as: the academia, media audience, and Veterans of the journalism profession. The study was carried out to determine the consequences of the falling standard in journalistic profession and media audience. It emphasized that falling standard in English Language among Nigerian Journalists constitute a problem to both the educated and uneducated readers and consequently lead to lack of patronage of the medium. The Social Responsibility Theory and Gatekeeping Media Theory were used to anchor the study. In-depth interview was used for the study. Responses from the interview conducted show that indeed there exist falling standard in the English Language usage by Nigerian Journalists. The study concluded that Nigerian Journalists must make concerted efforts to ensure that their English Language usage conform to the rules of standard English Language. Based on the conclusion reached it was recommended that: standard English should be taught and used in print and broadcast media organizations; mass communication or journalism departments in tertiary institution should employ tested grammarians-be they journalism or English scholars who should teach students grammar course from their first to final year.

Key words: *Falling, Standard, English, Language, Usage, Nigerian, Journalists.*

1.0 Introduction

Journalists have crucial roles to play in society. They educate the public about events and issues and how they affect their lives. They spend much of their time interviewing expert sources searching public records and other sources of information and sometimes visiting the scene where a crime or other news worthy occurrence took place. After have thoroughly researched the subject, they use what they uncovered to write an article or create a piece for Radio, Television or Internet (Williams Ellie, work.chron.com, June, 28, 2018). The above pivotal roles performed by journalists cannot be achieved without the instrumentality of language. This is why Fosu (2011, p. 55) observed that:

Language is central to journalism as it serves as the main vehicle that drives communication or journalistic imperatives to the consumer.

In Nigeria, most journalistic writings are in English Language. However, until quite recently, the escalating falling standard of English Language usage among most Nigerian Journalists, has and continues

to attract discussions in academic and professional circles. Oguntunase in Nsereka (2013, p. 22) posits that:

Nothing is more destructive of self confidence in a writer than uncertainty in the common and of correct English; and to be caught in a serious grammatical error is to forfeit the confidence of the reader as well.

In spite of this, wrong grammar is so common place in the Nigerian media that one wonders why correct grammatical expressions have been thrown to the winds. Many Journalist do not simply know the rules of English grammar or they choose to disobey the rules thereby becoming ‘arrogant Bahamians’. The journalists concerned ridicule themselves before knowledgeable readers or listeners by committing such bunders as wrong agreements, dangling modifiers, poor sequence of tenses, wrong use of determiners and prepositions as well as other errors bordering on morphology, syntax, semantics, idioms, concord and so on. It need not be said that a communication in public glare cannot afford to be sheddy in speck or in writing.

Language is very germane to human existence. Fawehinmi (2010) says that virtually every society as a matter of fact has a means of interacting with one another at the society level. It goes beyond that when effective communication has to take place from one community to the other. Language to this effect becomes a very paramount phenomena and a useful tool in the hand of the given society. To this effect, language as a means of communication is part of the society. In other words, language is an instrument that could be used or manipulated to bring about the desirable solution to the myriad of human problems. Language and communication are terms which are not related but also inextricable. Language is subsumed under communication. In other words language is one out of the many means of communication. The importance of language as a means of human communication cannot be overemphasized. Adebisi and Ojo (2010), further explains that language is a phenomenon which allows human beings to express their feelings, aspirations, desires and to interact with one another as far as human society is concerned. Halliday (1968) explains that language can be used to convey facts and information.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, it has been observed that most journalists engage in English that is ungrammatical and replete with incoherent expressions not deserving of their noble profession. What could be the possible reason for the falling standard in journalistic writings in Nigeria? It is based on this premise that this study seeks to draw the attention to inadequacies and inaccuracies in English Language usage by journalists in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study was carried out mainly to emphasise the problem of English Language among Nigerian Journalists.

The study has the following objectives:

- i. Identify and examine the causes of the falling standard of English Language usage by Nigerian Journalists.
- ii. Establish the prevalence of grammatical errors in English Language.
- iii. Demonstrate the consequences of falling standard on audience patronage.
- iv. Determine the effects of the identified falling standard in English Language usage by Nigerian Journalists on media organizations.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Responsibility Theory

The study is predicated on the Social Responsibility Theory and Gatekeeping Media Theory. According to (Odozi, 2005), the theory lays emphasis on the accountability of the media to the society. The essence of the theory is that although the media is free, it must accept obligation to serve the society in truth, fairness and honesty. Contributing in the same vein Biagi (2000) as cited in Tsebee (2016), says this theory accepts the concept of a Libertarian Press but prescribes what the media should do. Someone who believes in the Social Responsibility Theory contends that members of the press will responsibly serve the society well if only periodically reminded about their duties.

Collaborating the above views, Wogu (2008: p. 70), states that:

The theory assigns serious responsibilities to the press in addition to certain freedom. In principle, the media can be used by anyone who has an idea to express, but they are forbidden to invade the private rights or disrupt vital social structures or interests. The only serious constraints on them are exercised by community opinion; consumer protest and professional ethics.

This theory is undoubtedly apt to this study because journalists in Nigeria are expected to display high level of professional standards in their writings and often in English Language to the society.

According to Omojuyigbe as cited in Adedjeji (2015:38):

The media occupies a very influential position in society. For this singular reason, its practitioners should make their language usage conform to the rules of the game. Anything different is likely to affect society negatively either in the misrepresentation or misunderstanding.

As noted by Oso (2006), the mass media have become probably the most important social institution in the construction and circulation of meaning in any modern society...for the avoidance of doubt, and to prevent errors in English Language each journalist assumption of duty is assured to be given the style book which takes care of typographical spelling, capitalisation, grammar and other rules in order to assure uniformity and good taste in a particular publication.

The Gatekeeping Media Theory

(Anaeto et al, 2008), explained that the Gatekeeping Theory was propounded by Kurt Lewis in 1947. The basic assumption/principles of the theory include:

1. Media organizations as well as key media professionals act as gates to the flood of information coming in from the larger society.
2. The gate can either be opened to let some kinds of information through for processing and publication; or shut to deny other kinds of information, the opportunity for processing and publication.
3. Gatekeeping sections are governed wither by impartial rules or by gatekeepers with the power to make decisions or to transfer, but that the “power to make decisions or to transfers but that “the power is interdependent on other channel regions and ranges of impartial rules.

This theory too is very apt for this study because reporters and editors are not just educators, but also gatekeepers. The practice of gatekeeping is not merely a matter of accepting or rejecting information but also of processing – that is, modifying and shaping the accepted messages (Nsereka, p. 24). This informs the warming by Idemili (1998, p. 125) that “whatever language is used to communicate to a mass audience, some sort of editing is essential”. Through this filtering process, gatekeepers not only decide what occurrences come to the public awareness but also through the editorial given to the reports of the

occurrence, they influence the ways in which the happenings are perceived (Babatunde, 1988). In this all important functions of process messages for the print or broadcast media, writers and editors have “strong and supple” English words to play with.

Methodology

In-depth Interview was used for data collection. A total number of forty persons (40), ranging from communication scholars, practising journalists, media audience (both print and electronic) and lectures in the Department of English and Literary Studies of University of Abuja were interviewed on the subject of study. The direct face to face interview approach was adopted and interviewees, ten (10) each from the above mentioned stakeholders were purposively selected and a descriptive analysis of the study was given.

Review of Related Literature

Language Pattern and Use in Nigeria

According to Olagunju (2012), language experts and scholars in Nigeria have established the facts that Nigeria is a multilingual nation and has over four hundred indigenous languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been described as the major. This linguistic ecology of Nigeria therefore points to the fact that the country has a great challenge to ensure worthwhile language policy that will ensure national cohesion among different ethnic groups in the country.

The average Nigerian speaks, at least, two languages: the indigenous language and the English language. From various research findings, it has been submitted that Nigerians have higher attractions for the speaking of English language. This situation is reflected in the attitude of average Nigerians to the language choice available to them. This is because in multi-lingua community, language users have tolerance for a language that has:

- i. a considerable national and or international coverage of users;
- ii. a metropolitan or consumption status;
- iii. a considerable numerical strength and some measure of chronic and political power; and
- iv. a sufficiently reliable and codified form.

In Nigeria, English language satisfies all the conditions identified above. In the global interaction and among European languages, English has assumed the status of Language of Wider Communication (LWC). This situation is reflected in the use of the language across nations and nationalities (Babajide, 2001; Oyelade, 2001; Olagunju, 2012).

Journalists in Nigeria: The Challenges of Language and Communication

According to Abati (2006) as cited in Olagunju (2012), Nigerian journalists (news reporters, correspondents, columnists and feature news writers) often hide under the banner of “Nigerianism” in creative sense to write in English language that fall short of the standard as obtainable in Britain. Writings that are ungrammatical and flooded with incoherent expressions are indications that some journalistic writings have failed in their social responsibilities. This is so because apart from the making of news-writing informative, Nigerian journalists are expected to be unclaimed teachers of grammar and acceptable English.

Abati (2006, p.4) observes that:

newspapers are expected to set high standards, they further same as instructional materials that are depended upon young persons seeking to learn English and are in fact used in

schools for the purpose of teaching the language. The fact of this reasoning is that the misuse of English Language in the Nigerian Newspaper attracts the most strident condemnation.

It will seem as if the issue of falling standard in English Language by journalists in a malady bedevilling Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. For instance, Fosu (2011, 55-58) laments that:

...the problem has been that Newspapers in Ghana appear not to really "communicate". Almost all the Newspapers appear to display challenges in English thereby weakening their capacity to appeal and reach their supposed readers news is often presented in faulty, confusing and sometimes complex grammatical constructions that could interfere with reading and understanding.

He further recounts that academia and the media have been bombarded with complaints of poor/or inappropriate English Language in the media. For instance, in an article by Nii Moi Thompson, a renowned and writer and cited in (Fosu, 2011), sums up the numerous cries against poor English Language in the media. He noted that:

For the print media, the overall writing quality is poor... most other journalists seem content with their own badly written stories, thus repeating common mistakes in grammar and spelling and pushing the profession down the tubes (p. 56).

Supporting this position, Fosu (2009, p.222) in an article on English in Tertiary institutions; in Ghana categorized some of the problems uncovered in the media as follows:

grammatical short falls, such as faulty application of concord, tense use, pronoun and prepositional use, article use among others, in speaking and writing, incorrect spelling, incorrect pronunciation and intonation ambiguous sentences that do not communicate well. Faulty sentence structures, wordiness, verbosity; redundant vocabulary etc. that inhibit effective communication, faulty punctuation use. The use of contextually inappropriate linguistic forms and dangling modifications.

Similarly, according to an *allafrica* editorial of 15 September, 2017, the issue of falling standard of English Language usage by journalists in Gambia was captured thus:

The escalating problem of English Language ineptitude among most of Gambian journalists continues to attract discussions in academic circles. This is not a vein criticism of our media practitioners for it is daily manifested in our newspapers. It seems not to be getting any better even though the criticism escalates.

Presentations and Analysis of some poorly written English Language by Nigerian Journalists Errors/Inaccuracies in English Language Usage by Nigerian Journalists

Errors are inaccuracies. Opara (1999) says they are mistakes but form a part of the learning of language. Orisawayi (1995) cited in Opara (1999, p. 82) says:

Errors have a peculiar sneaky behaviour, such that no matter the number of times a pie of work is read through, one cannot rule out the possibility of some mistakes stealthily surviving the revision and proof reading sessions. Errors tend to make the reader under-estimate the effort and care spent in proof reading...

From the foregoing quotation, errors are difficult to completely do away with. Media practitioners should always make reference to Dictionaries and linguistic comments on usage of English when writing. In the Nigerian media especially in Newspaper Journalism, One might come across the following:

Grammatical mistakes, misplaced modifiers, spelling and punctuation mistakes, letter transposition, paragraph transpositions, wrong or misplaced data, tables and charts, wrong pagination, reference numbers and dates, wrong division and unusual spaces between letters or word. Others are faulty amalgamation of words, random full stops or capitalization, lifeless passivisation at the expense of the active voice, verbless sentences that are of no effect, monotonous use of simple constructions, weak and inaccurate sentences and paragraphs, amputated or deformed expressions, unorthodox abbreviations, omission of words or letters. Errors of concord. All other structural and mechanical inaccuracies (Opara, 1999 p.39).

According to Ahmed (2012, p.2):

The use of English in this country is to say the least, unspeakable. Sadly, the media is just one of the greatest culprits. One expects that the media should have the least of grammatical errors, or that the use of English should be, to a large extent, error-free. But the kinds of things we read in the Newspapers, to be honest with you shows the deteriorating situation of the use of English in Nigeria. P. 2.

Corroborating the above view, Kperogi (2009) isolated 10 most annoying Nigerian Media English Expressions as stated below:

1. "Remains deposited at the mortuary". This is almost the standard expression in Nigerian Media English to say that a dead body has been delivered at the mortuary. There are two problems with this expression. First, the word "remain" is too formal for a news story. "Corpse" and "dead body" are the more usual words. And "deposit" is a singularly quaint verb to associate with death, especially in popular usage. There are three principal senses of the word "deposit a bullet in the table." And the third sense is to situate something, that is, to put something somewhere firmly, as in "deposit the suitcase on the bench." It's unclear how this expression sprang in Nigerian media English, but it makes me sick to my stomach.

2. "Hear him," or "in his words." These are not strictly grammatically incorrect expressions; they are just ugly, inappropriate and superfluous verbiages. The convention in journalistic writing globally is to quote a source and acknowledge attribution by writing "(s)he said" at the end of a sentence. Example: "I hope Yar'adua lives long enough to save us from a potentially destructive constitutional crisis," he said. Now, when Nigerian newspaper journalists write "hear him," they are not only being superfluous: they are also being unfaithful to the medium in which they write. We don't literally "hear" people in print; we read them. And to write "in his words" while at the same time inserting quotation marks to those words is redundant. It is precisely because you're quoting your source "in his words" that the sentence is in quotation marks. It's of course, appropriate to write "in his words" in broadcast scripts since they are meant to be read out.

4. **"As at the time of filing this report."** Well, the correct expression, which is actually a fixed prepositional phrase, is "AS OF," not "as at". So, that sentence should read: "As of the time of filing

this report.” This solecism has sadly percolated deep into the conventions of Nigerian English in general.

5. **“Men of the underworld.”** This expression has lost currency in other parts of the English-speaking world. But my gripe with it is that it is a hackneyed, flyblown cliché that evinces the intellectual laziness of Nigerian journalists. Why not simply write “criminals”?

5. “Names withheld.” This expression rankles me to no end. It is not only unprofessional and irresponsible journalism to habitually conceal the identity of the subjects you are writing about (as in, “south-south governor in all oil-rich state [name withheld] is involved in a corruption scandal”); it is also exasperatingly redundant to state that you have withheld name of someone whose name you have not mentioned anyway! It is obvious to any reader that a name has been withheld if it is not mentioned. But what is particularly irking about this practice is that it is used even in reporting stories of crucial public importance. If reporters and editors are not prepared to use names, even where it is legally and ethically safe to do so, why waste ink and space to opaquely hint at them? But the bad news for editors and reporters who practice this imbecile and feeble-minded journalism is that, in media law, not directly mentioning the name of a person or an organization is not sufficient safeguard against legal liability. If a person or a company can prove that there is sufficient material basis for “right-thinking” members of the society to infer that they are the object of a libelous newspaper innuendo, the paper is in the soup.

6. **“Electioneering campaign.”** “Electioneering” and “political campaign” mean the same thing. So “electioneering campaign” is tautologous. It is either electioneering campaign.

7. **“Our story is true in every material particular.”** The phrase “in every material particular” is an archaic legal jargon. It is not used in everyday English in any native variety of the English language.

8. **“Yesteryears.”** This old-fashioned word, which is sometimes used for literary effects, has no plural in both the British and American varieties of Standard English. It remains “yesteryear” whether it is in the singular or plural form. Another word that Nigerian newspapers-and by extension Nigerian speakers of the English language-pluralize against conventional practice is “slang.” The plural is often rendered as “slangs” in Nigeria. In Standard English, however, the plural form of slang does not take an “s”; it is often rendered as “slang expressions.”

9. **“A free-for-all fight.”** This tautologic expression is probably a consequence of the misrecognition of the part of speech of “free-for-all.” It is a noun, not an adjective, and cannot modify another noun. It means a brawl, a noisy fight in a crowd. So, it is sufficient to simply write that there was a free-for-all without adding “fight.”

10. “Not unconnected with.” This expression is not grammatically wrong but is hopelessly hackneyed and pretentious. George Orwell once urged us to laugh the not un-formation out of existence by memorizing this sentence: “A not unblack dog was chasing a not unsmall rabbit across a not ungreen field.”

Furthermore, excerpts below are some of the poorly written English Language by Nigerian Journalists accidently picked for analysis (Udoudo and Neku, pp. 150-162).

Acting Chief Judge of Kwara, State, Justice Suleiman Durosinlorun Kalwu, yesterday advised the National Judicial Council (NJC) to de-emphasize the evaluation of lawyers on the number of contested cases won before such persons are awarded the status of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (The guardian Thursday, May 12, 2011, p.7).

This is the lead of a story, using *de-emphasis* to take the position of a verb. The reporter's inability to differentiate the noun from the verb left him with the application of the prefix "de" to negate (nullify) *emphasis* which, is a noun but used in place of negated "emphasize" *de-emphasize*

The wrong use of the part of speech in the lead of the story is not only capable of causing an indignant reader to stop reading the story but it also exposes the weakness of the reporter and that of the copy editor in English Language.

A sharp rise in the prices of bread in Bauchi Metropolis in Bauchi State has created anxiety in the State Capital, with many resident lamenting that the development brought hardship on their families,

But the State Secretary of the Bread Sellers Association of Nigeria, Ibrahim Mohammed, told reporters that the price increase became necessary in view of a rise in the cost of all ingredients for making bread like flour, water, yeast, sugar and wood.

A student of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University who resides in the State Capital said he was taken by surprise by the increase price of bread. (The Guardian, Thursday, May 12, 2011, p.6.)

This is another story in the same newspaper of the same date suffering from poor handling of English Language in the hand of another reporter. The problem of the story is multiple, ranging from mechanics to poor management of words used. Phrase such as "Bauchi metropolis" "in Bauchi State", "in the state Capital" could have been better managed to give the story economy of words and better grammatical performance. The reporter's inadequacy in English Language is depicted in the use of "many" with singular "resident". The word "development as used in the story seems to lack true meaning although the reader may be able to know what it represents because of its position. The use of the coordinator. The second clause in the second paragraph "the price increase became necessary in view of a rise in the cost of all ingredients for making bread like flour, water, yeast, sugar and wood" falls short of adequate mechanics and is susceptible to meanings different from what the journalist has in mind. For instance, there is no comma (,) between water, and yeast. Also, what is the meaning of "ingredients for making bread like flour, water yeast, sugar and wood"? Does the bread have to be made like flour, water yeast, sugar and wood? "Taken by surprise by the increase in the price of bread", is another clumsiness in the journalist's English words. Indeed, the journalist does not write as a journalist whose duty is to manage words. This lies the concept of conciseness in journalistic writing.

Earlier in his remarks, the Chief Executive Officer, Intergraded Management Resources, Oluwafemi Victor Walsh said the believe in the Nigerian dream led his organization to partner with DAAR Communication to put up the event (The National, August 12, 2010, p.3).

The use of "believe" (verb) to take the position of "belief" (noun) indicates that the proficiency of both the reporter and the copy editor in English Language is questionable. A Chief Sub-editor of The pioneer newspaper once argued that "belief" is used as a noun when it relates to religious issues and "believe" is used as a noun when it relates to non-religious matters. This is a high degree of ignorance of English

Language. Perhaps both the reporter and the copy editor of this story may have same understanding as the chief sub-editor of The pioneer.

The Chief Executive officer of the commission, Dr. Eugene Juwah at a interactive session with journalist yesterday in Lagos said henceforth, it will no longer be business as usual and the commission will put modalities in place to ensure that full compliance of telecom operations to service quality parameters is strictly adhered to.....

He noted that henceforth, regulations and directives of the commission would not only be obeyed but also seen to the obeyed. "since these regulations were products of wide consultation, it is incumbent on the commission to see of their full compliance

(This Day, Saturday, January 22, 2011 p.7).

The major defect in the reporter's handling of English Language in the story is recklessness. Both the reporter and the copy editor are unmindful of tenses, used in the story.

The rule of appropriate use of tenses is not followed. Also the beginning of direct quote in the story does not have an end. The recklessness in the choice of expression leaves the writer in a seemingly confused expression "would not only be obeyed but also to be seen to be obeyed". If the regulations are "obeyed" it is enough. The outcome of obedience will be reflected in the action and people will thus be seen. Regulations can "be seen to be obeyed" but this can be a pretence, not real. The reporter thus does not only sound verbose but also has not managed his words well.

While the presidency... reviewed the contract..., the House is insisting that the project be cancelled out rightly, stressing that it did not follow due process (Thursday, May 27, 2010, p.6).

Like the This Day reporter, this journalist lacks ability to remain consistent with the tense he uses. He dangles between tenses. The use of past tense in the relative clause but present continuous tense in the independent clause shows the journalist is deficient in handling English Language. His jump back to the past tense in the last clause, indicates his non-mastery of the rules of written English

He promised to embarked on urban renewal (Vanguard, Monday March 28, 2011, p.11).

The use of past form of a verb preceded by the preposition "to" to show past tense is a common weakness among many beginning writers. In journalism, this is a grave grammatical weakness since every story has to undergo series of cheeks – from the reporter through the editor, to the proof reader. This is an embarrassing defect.

According to him, the House team would be led by the House leader, Tunde Akogun, himself and the Chairman of Committee on Justice, Henry Seriake Dickson (Daily Sun, Wednesday May 26, 2010, p.4).

The sentence in the story lacks clear, meaning because words are not appropriately managed and positioned. For instance, who is “himself”? if the team has a joint leadership, of three should “according to him” not be dropped so that it could accommodate names of the three in the joint leadership, if necessary? Even when the three may be leaders, it is possible there could be a leader among the leaders, who could be used as the leader of the team to avoid clumsy expression.

Senator Igbeke after his, swearing-in yesterday described his journey to reclaiming his mandate as tortuous, saying, however, that the experience garnered from this struggle had become a lesson to others as well as authenticate him as the representative of the people as well as reinforced his belief, in the judiciary and the media as defenders of defenceless (Daily Sun, Wednesday May 26m 2021, p.4.)

This is unwieldy. It is an unnecessarily too long a sentence. As a result of its unwieldy, nature, the reporter fails to control the tense. For instance, in the reporter’s first “as well as”, “authenticate” is used but in the second “reinforced” is used. There are four strong points in the sentence, each capable of being a sentence. With modifications and combinations of points, the sentence would produce at least two independent sentences. From the few observations above, one can submit with some degree of foundation that almost all print media in Nigeria have problem with English Language in different ways.

*In an article by Bimbo Viyede entitled “Author laments poor usage of English Language among Nigerians and publisher by the Guardian 7th June, 2018, the issue of poor usage of English Language by Nigerian Journalists was succinctly captured thus:
As non-native speakers of English Language, Nigerians across major sectors and particularly programme presenters on radio and Television even comperes, customer service officers, especially at our airports teachers and motivational speakers and preachers required mastery of the language spoken globally to avoid bad influences on their audience and especially the young ones.*

Relatedly, in an article written by Bayo Ogunmupe captioned “POP Errors in English: A guide to good communication” and published by the Guardian 6th August, 2017, the issue of poor usage of English Language by non-native speakers of English Language is highlighted. This article attempts a critical review of the book by Segun Omolayos “POP” Errors in English: Writers beware”. This book unpacks, articulates and examines popular errors writers’ commit in various ways. The book discusses rules often violated by witters and suggests ways to avoid them. It explains why what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. The author emphasizes how to enhance writers’ use of English Language for effective communication. The following examples are paraphrased thus:

On redundancy the author explains it as a phrase clause, sentence or text in any word or group of words considered unnecessary in the sense that it can be removed without detracting the meaning. This means such word or phrase has no function in the sentence, it neither adds value nor meaning. Sources of redundancies rampart. They include tautology, which refers to the repetition words.

Verbosity he says happens when a speaker/writer uses too many words where a few could convey the same meaning. Next comes circumlocution meaning that one is simply beating about the bush. According to the author, grammarians consider circumlocutions dangerous because such words “shut down

readers". Here are examples of circumlocutions: "I agree with the idea" (instead of I agree); during the time that (instead of when) in view of the fact that, (instead of because); within the framework of, (in); "within the context of, (regarding); "for the purpose of" (to); "in order to" (to); "in the event that" (if); "in the field of", (in); "in the year 2012", (in 2012); 'until such time", (until); "and prior to" (before).

Malapropism is another writer's headache. It is the misuse of certain words. This is an amusing mistake speakers/writers make when use a word which sounds similar but with different meanings to the word they wanted to use. Great speakers/Writers appreciate correct choice of words or ideas by noting that the synonyms of the same word will not always convey the same meaning.

This means a speaker/writer must spare no effort to perfect his diction. Here is an example of malapropism: consummation of honey by humans has rules and regulations. Consummation means completion of something, which is why it is not appropriate. Actually, consummation goes with the action of making a marriage complete by having coitus. Consumption which is the appropriate word means the action of eating or drinking something. The above contributions by Omolayo are crucial and commendable and should be meticulously followed by Nigerian Journalists hence most of them run foul of the errors enunciated by him.

Oji (1997) as cited in (Nsereka, 2013) is among the other scholars who have written on the subject. In his article "Nigerian English: An untenable Goal" he is worried that:

although educated Nigerians (including journalists) possess enough comprehension competence to understand any variety of English spoken anywhere. The same cannot be said of them with regard to expression competence. He explains that competence in expression presupposes the ability of the speaker to differentiate between and enunciate the phonemes of language he is trying to master. "It presupposes", Oji add "that he has got a working active vocabulary of the language as well as the syntactic rules" (p. 160).

Factors leading to the falling standard in English Language usage by practising journalists in Nigeria

Udoudo and Neku (2011, pp. 154-160) highlighted some factors responsible for this trend which are summarized as: poor background in English language; examination malpractices; inappropriate assessment of students by examination bodies; unnecessary emphasis on certificates; abuse of new communication technologies and so on.

Supporting this view, Nsereka (2013), enumerated some factors adduced as causes of some grammatical errors to include:

- the contemporary school experience in which grammar has become a casualty.
- Undue interest in journalese among press-men
- Misconception of journalism's emphasis on the economy of words.
- Guessing the meaning of words in their context and
- Mother tongue interference (p. 29)

Results and Discussion

Responses from the interview conducted show that indeed there exists falling standard in the English Language by Nigeria journalists. This is supported by a coterie of presentations of some poorly written English Language by Nigerian Journalists reviewed above.

Findings further indicate a plethora of errors/inaccuracies and grammatical blunders which can easily be detected by those who are considerably knowledgeable in English grammar; who frown and feel perceptively and attitudinally in such a way that is disadvantageous to the corporate image of the media concerned (Nsereka, 2013, p. 39). The danger of the withdrawal of patronage from erring media in the long run should they not improve cannot be discountenanced Readers could dump some print and broadcast media in preference for those who perform better in their usage of English Language.

Further findings indicate that, to readers who are not educated enough to notice errors in the writings by some Nigerian journalists, they swallow corrupt English and possibly help spread it themselves in the belief that the media which gauge the pulse of the society can hardly be wrong. To this extent therefore, journalists may have failed in their social responsibility function to the society.

Conclusion

Language is germane to human existence. Language is one out of the many ways of communication and it can be used to convey facts and information. It is therefore important for journalists to use language especially English language that has assumed the status of Language of wider communication (LWC) appropriately. This is because journalists are expected to be teachers of grammar and standard English.

Apart from some factors which are responsible for the falling standard in English Language by Nigerian journalists in their writings most causes of errors are personal, professional and media management related. The mistakes that arise from there are, therefore, believed to be “the result of poor thinking or no thinking at all” (Mencher, 1983, p. 233).

Every profession as Nereka (2011) puts it has its tools and knows what each does to him. It cannot be debated that one of the most important intellectual tools of the journalist is language competence. Consequently, Nigerian journalists must make concerted efforts to ensure that their language usage conform to the rules of standard English Language so as to minimize the errors and inaccuracies witnessed in most of the offerings by them.

Recommendations

To ameliorate the falling standard of English Language usage by Nigerian Journalists in the print and broadcast media the aforementioned suggestions are made:

- Standard English should be taught and used in print and broadcast media organizations.
- Media partitioners should always make reference to Dictionaries and linguistic comments on usage of English when writing.
- Mass Communication or journalism departments in tertiary institutions should employ tested grammarians to teach students grammar courses from the first to their final year.
- Editors who are the gatekeepers of news in the print and broadcast media should be alive to their responsibilities with a view to ensuring that only the standard messages are sent out for societal consumption.

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