

INTEGRATED ENGLISH

For the

PRELIMINARY YEAR



A publication of the Department of
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

CHAPTER FIVE
ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION
MAURICE BISONG TABANG

1. CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORD AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS A WORD

To rightly appreciate why a student must necessarily make an appropriate choice of word (or set of words) in any form of expression, an adequate definition of the term 'word' need be made.

A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics view a word as any sound or combination of sounds creating meaningful elements of speech, carrying an idea and capable of functioning as a member of the sentence or a substitute for a sentence.

Simply, words serve as ingredients of sentence formation. Without words, sentence formation would be impossible. According to Christopherson (1980) every word in a language conveys a particular meaning to its user. This demands that students should have a good grasp of the words if the language must be meaningful. A student who is willing to learn the English Language must be ready to learn the words that make up the language; to be perfect in speech, such a student must also use these words, making sure that the pronunciation of the words chosen is accurate.

Speech is man's greatest asset. It allows for a communication of complicated and fresh ideas in all aspects of

human endeavour. It helps in the analysis of man's feelings and thoughts and for easy understanding. All these are impossible without the right choice and use of words.

Dineen (1978) holds that there exists a perfect word for every thought, idea, situation, a word that will allow the reader/listener understand more completely than any other word. This observation reveals that every idea that must be expressed, has the most appropriate ingredients (or words) for its expression. This answers why most students often express distress at choosing words. Most times, while making speeches, some will squeeze their faces with frustration and would sometimes say; "I have lost the right word", or "I am at a loss for words." The word, therefore, is the most vital aspect of language learning.

Criteria for choosing the right word precision and conciseness. The best way of saying what one intends to say is by favouring the use of words in very clear, simple and short sentences, that can easily be grasp by his audience. In thought expression, his ideas need be unique and his manner of expressing such ideas should inspire his audience to listen or read as the ease may be. This is done simply through the right choice of word. Not long and high sounding words, not unwieldy and boring words, but suitable words, intelligently chosen to represent his thought expression.

Verbosity is not a mark of a grasp of the language. Trying to impress person by using terms that are irrelevant to the point of discussion is a mark of imperfection. Where words tend to drag a discussion, or loosen its coherence and therefore adds nothing to its meaning, they should be thrown away. This is

part in consonance with the view of Warner (1961) who says; "good clean language (Spoken or written) should be like a tight rope pulling the meaning tight. There need be no unnecessary slack, no loops or wrinkles that are doing no work of pulling the meaning". This is correct

In the same vein, Boulton (1959) while recounting his experience with some of his students who tended to be rather slovenly in their expressions, Warns;

Don't use words that mean nothing? Don't waffle and pad! Words are supposed to mean something! And be careful how you use words; say what you mean and not something rather like it, or you may end up saying the opposite of what you intend to say.

Like Boulton's students, most students of English Language and use of English classes prefer the use of circumlocution rather than simple words.

'Circumlocution' is expressing a thing in a round-about way. For instance, "place of abode" for 'homes'; 'general increase of prices of commodities and a fall in purchasing value of money' for inflation".

The examples below distinguish between circumlocution and brevity. Consider which is more appropriate and why.

- a. "I really love you"
- b. "Oh my heart, my angel, my entire being is in a furnace of love for you! Shall I be brought to ashes?"

These two examples are supposed to convey the speaker's feeling of love. You will agree that (b) is rather too long, and each segment of the sentence bears the same

meaning, each connoting great love. Example (a) is more straightforward and simple, meant to convey the same meaning as example (b). The student who uses example (b) could have saved himself some time and space and make himself clearer to his audience by simply using the term "love" or "affection" to address his case, without rambling around words.

A. A. Ekpa quoted William Strunk in Ubot and Orisawayi (1988) as having said that:

Vigorous writing is concise and precise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words. A paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that drawing should have no unnecessary lines and machines no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer/speaker avoid all detail and treat his subject only in outline but that every word tell.

Words are like the clothes we put on. A poorly fitting dress does not tell well of its designer or user. So too do badly constructed words tell poorly of our language command.

Words in English are associated with different professions. These may rightly be called 'jargons'. They could be associated with law, religion, advertising, economics sociology, psychology, medicine, and others. The jargons are used when discussing a

associated with each discipline. It would be wrong to use low registers when treating a topic associated with psychology.

EXERCISE 1

You are here requested to discover forty words (and their meanings) associated with each of the above five disciplines. (This should be submitted to your teacher for guidance).

CATEGORIZATION OF WORDS

In English language words are generally divided into learned, familiar and slang. It is the writer or speakers, initiative and good command of the language that will enable him make a choice of which category of words to use. A writer or speaker is at liberty to choose from monosyllables, polysyllables, rare words, technical and scientific words, highly connotative words, slang, colloquialisms, vivid imagery, abstractions, dialect words figurative expressions archaic words, obsolete words; illusions onomatopoeic words and other words with appropriate sounds.

The student, in this regard, must first consider his audience. Is it a group of professionals? Then jargous typical to that profession need be chosen. Is it a group of local farmers or traders? Then not very erudite language need be use. An address a college dons will require a polished language and elegant words. A mistake of one category for the other would render the essence of the address valueless.

Hence slang words are illiterate, breezy and tend towards being colloquial, students should be discouraged from using them and encouraged to use learned words which are rather

literate, formal and fanciful. Familiar words are literate, informal or plain, tending towards semi-formal and is somewhat elegant. This, also, is the language of the educated, devoid of high-sounding and pompous words. It is mere painting of the simple words with fragrance and is easily appreciated and comprehended by any good English language speaker.

The chart below shows the different word categorization.

Learned	Familiar	lang
Valour	Courage	Guts
Minor	Child	Kid
Psychotic	Crazy	Batty/funky
Stipend	Salary Box	
Donate	Give	Shell out
Intoxicated	Drunk	Plastered
Deceased	Dead	Quench
Comestibles	Food	Chop/grub
Ameliorate	Improve	Beef off
Erudition	Learning	Sarvy
Liquidate	Kill	Bumb off

Students are here advised to keep in touch with the dictionary words that are of general purpose, technical words, slang and so on.

Now, write a two paragraph story in pidgin English, and rewrite the passage in what you consider the Standard English make the best choice of words. Wrong use of words in English Language.

As stated earlier, every English word is supposed to serve a purpose, and to create coherence in communication. But

what transpire amongst many students of English is not just the error of using the wrong version of a word like "expect" for "expert", but the usage of an entirely wrong word, due to a confusion about the true and exact meaning the user need. This is predicated on the fact that many English words do share the same meaning, similar sounds and sometimes same spellings with minor difference in alphabets. A word like "break" may have the same sound with "break" but the meanings are different from each other. Also, an action can be "humane" without being "human".

MALAPROPISM or misuse of words need be avoided by students. A student who knows a word, but knows not its correct spelling and usage is bound to malaprop. It is wrong for a student to use "it's" for "its", "alter" for "altar" "plane" for "plain" "this" for "these" etc. Errors such as these are common with homophones (words of similar sound but different meaning and spelling) and homonyms (words that have the same spelling but different meaning).

Poor language construction is characteristic of the present day students. A student once misuse the word "anxiety" for "eager", do you imagine the effect it would have on listeners? Lets look at the example below:

"I am not afraid to take the examination, infact, I am looking forward to the day with anxiety".

This is poor. "Eagerness" would have been better in this situation. The word "anxiety" connotes fear and worry and will not serve as synonym for "eagerness" in this circumstance. Below are some examples of Homophones (or words with similar sounds but different meaning and spelling).

Bale	bail	compliment	complement
Ate	eight	full	fool
Meat	meet	hail	hale
Course	cause	knew	new
Hens	hence	sun	son
See	sea	sail	sale
Sins	since	prays	praise

EXERCISE II

Now look up 50 other words that sound alike, and check up their meanings, proper usage and pronunciations.

VOCABULARY BUILDING

The choice of vocabulary is the most interesting and challenging aspect of communication in English. We have basically three aspects of vocabulary – namely:

1. Expressive or conversation vocabulary
2. Writing vocabulary
3. Receptive or recognition vocabulary

Expressive or conversation vocabulary: As the name implies, these are the words we use in everyday conversation to express ourselves and communicate with people.

Writing vocabulary: The writing vocabulary is usually more than the conversation vocabulary. Since one spends more time, care and effort in composing and constructing sentences in written pieces, the tendency is for the written vocabulary to be more. It is with the written vocabulary that most essays, novels are built.

Recognition vocabulary: This forms the largest in our store of vocabulary. They comprise words that we recognize when we read or converse. The recognition vocabulary are easily understood and appreciated by the reader or listener.

Students are here advised to improve their vocabulary at both the conversation, writing and recognition levels. The most words a student has in his linguistic repeater or store of words, the better equipped he is to express himself effectively and intelligently. Words are the tools in the game of communication. They are not just for fun. Words say a lot about the user. They either give an impression of intelligence or ignorance and illiteracy. They are like the clothes we put on. We design them to fit our social/status. Like clothes, words need be chosen for occasion, depending on the audience, in order to enhance beauty and class.

The most important question an intelligent student should ask himself is; how can I acquire a wide vocabulary and increase my word power. There are diverse methods of learning and acquiring new words namely:

- a. The lexicon method
- b. Reading method
- c. Listening method
- d. Content clue method
- e. Roots and affixes method

THE LEXICON METHOD

This demands that a student look up the meanings, derivations and pronunciations of a new word he comes across.

Every student should possess a standard dictionary for references and should learn at least five new words everyday.

THE READING METHOD

A reading is another way of picking up new words, and seeing how they are used. A student who reads is at an advantage of meeting new words in his process of reading.

A student's store of vocabulary grows at the same space with his reading level. Buzan (1977) enunciate this point when he says that:

The extent of one's vocabulary is an indication of the extent of one's knowledge, which in turn is an indication of the amount of material one has been able to read.

Students are here advised not to read only their text books, but journals, magazines, newspapers and good novels, if they must improve their word power.

LISTENING METHOD

Listening is considered the easiest and best way of increasing ones word power we listen to conversations, seminars and above all the radio and television broadcasting. Buy this method students adds not only to the number of words he can recognize, but also to the number he can use correctly.

WORD-SLIP METHOD

Here a student is expected to cut out small slips of paper of any size that would suit him. As he encounter new words in his reading or listening, bring out one of the slips and write down the newly acquired word, its pronunciation, synonyms and finally its content or how it should be used in sentences.

CONTEXT CLUE METHOD:

In this method, the student is expected to guess the meaning of a difficult word by searching the words around the unknown word. Below are examples of using the words.

1. The sugarcane field was harvested yesterday.
2. The OPEC nations hope to fine more oil fields.
3. The Nigerian students were sent to America to study the aviation field.
4. Maradona is a real star. He can field the ball.
5. The Green Eagles of Nigeria hopes to field her professional footballer for the match.

AFFIXES and ROOTS METHOD:

Root words are simply put, the origin or source of other words in English language. They are the base words, from which other words are derived. We have the Greek, Latin and French roots from which many words in English are coined, i.e. from Angel (Latin) we have archangel.

Affixes on the other hand, are attachments or appendages made to roots. We have two types of affixes –

prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are attached before ([re) the main word (root) e.g. expert, express expand etc.

EXERCISE III

The following are prefixes, match each of them with a root: Arch, ex, half, non, pre, re, over, under, un, vice, dia, hemo, hetero, de, equi, fore, ig, in, im, il, luter.

Suffixes are attachments made at the end of a root word. For example the suffix ment can give us many other words in English – government, cement, augment, lament, torment etc.

EXERCISE IV

The following are suffixes, attach them with appropriate roots: able, an al, ant, ary, ate, ator, dom, en er, ess, fy, less, ment, ous.

CHOOSING GENDER WORDS

The word gender refers to sex. There are words a student should use when the is speaking or writing about the gender of any creature. Below is a list of some of the most commonly used gender words in English.

Feminine	masculine
Aunt	uncle
Authoress	author
Actress	actor
Bride	bridegroom
Bitch	dog

Cow	bull
Duchess	duke
Daughter	son
Empress	emperor

EXERCISE V

Provide the masculine form of the following feminine gender: ewe, goose, girl-guide, heroine, hen, lass, lady, madam, nun, peahen, spinster, she, traitress, vixen, witch.

Choosing sound for creatures and their homes

Creator	sound	home
Bee	buzzes, hums	hive
Bird	sings whistles	nest
Cock	crows	coop
Cow	cows	byre
Dog	barks	kennel
Frog	croaks	croak
Hen	cackles	coop
Horse	neighs	stable
Mouse	squeaks	hole
Owl	hoots	tree
Pig	grunts	sty
Pigeon	coos	cot
People	scream,	cry
Talk	shout	houses
Rabbit	squeals	burrows
Sheep	bleats	pen
Snake	hisses	rocks/caves

EXERCISE VI

Fill in the gap below

NAME OF ANIMAL	SOUND	HOME
Ape	gibbers	_____
Ass	brays	_____
Bull	bellows	_____
Eat	mews	_____
_____	barks	_____
elephant	trumpets	_____
Frog/toad	croaks	_____
Hen	cackles	_____
Lamb	_____	_____
Lion	roars	_____
Parrot	screeches	_____
Spider	_____	_____
Snail	_____	_____
Tiger	_____	_____
Wasp	_____	_____
		shell
		lair
		vespiary

CONNECTIVES OR SIGNAL WORDS

These are words that connect ideas together. If two friends Mr. A and Mr. Z were discussing, and Mr. A tells his friends Mr. Z he is warming up, for the council election coming up in a months time, Mr. Z is likely to tell Mr. A "be sure you do much consultation and campaign" Mr. A takes his friends advises, but, however, despite, inspite of much consultation and campaign he fails the election.

The underline words are the connectives that signal to us the outcome of the election. We have basically four types of connectives.

1. Go connectives/signal
2. Caution connectives/signal
3. Turn connective/signal
4. Stop connectives/signal

GO CONNECTIVES

Connectives, in themselves, have little or no meanings. They are rather used to signal or convey certain messages. Most times connectives overlap. Go signals are coordinating signals which informs the reader or listener that you are about to make an equivalent statement that connects the line of through you have started speaking or writing. For example: if you said to your friend; last semester we were taught psychology and philosophy. The word 'and' connect the two courses. These go connectives are also call sequence signals, since they join coordinate ideas. The following are examples of Go signals/ connectives: and, also, first, second, third, etc, ~~net~~, furthermore, likewise, similarly, in addition, moreover, at the same time, in the same way.

CAUTION CONNECTIVES:

This kind of signals are mainly employed as summary and conclusion signals they include: thus, hence, therefore, in brief, as a result, for this reason, consequently, accordingly, in retrospect, in summation, in conclusion, finally.

TURN CONNECTIVES

These connectives warn the reader that there are about to read a different opinion, a contrary or opposing idea or view from is earlier stated. The most regularly used turn connective is the word 'but' others include "despite, yet, otherwise, however, although, in spite of, on the contrary, nevertheless, notwithstanding, meanwhile, conversely.

STOP SIGNALS

These indicate to the reader/listener that he should stop and pay particular attention to what follows because of its special importance. These reflect a quality or certainty and authority. For example: "There is absolutely no reason for us to embark on a strike action". Other stop connectives are: absolutely, hereafter, whenever, without doubt, without question, significantly.

RELATIONSHIP SIGNALS

These are words or phrases that point to relationships. These signals either point to the relationship of time, space, degree, condition or cause-effect. Example:

1. **Time:** soon, when, while, finally.
2. **Space:** beside, there, here.
3. **Degree:** less, many, all, above
4. **Condition:** if, unless, though
5. **Cause-effect:** so, since, because, that, therefore.