
AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS ON THE INSCRIPTIONS OF KEKE TRICYCLES OPERATORS IN ABA METROPOLIS

ASUOHA, Jephthah C.
Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), Aba

ABSTRACT

This study examined the dominant linguistic errors on the inscriptions of keke tricycle operators in Aba urban with the aim to identifying, analysing and correcting them. A sample of 15 photo pictures taken between August, 2020 and July, 2021 within Aba metropolis by the researcher were collected. The sampled compositions were coded, described and explained using error analysis method. Result shows that almost all components of linguistics like orthography, morphology, syntax, and semantics have been affected. The study identified some causes which triggered these errors like inadequate and educational background, low mental capability, etc. There is need to organise remedial writing course for keke operators in order to improve their writing quality.

KEYWORDS: Error, Error Analysis, Linguistic, Keke tricycle, Inscription, Aba urban

Introduction

Keke tricycle operation as a means of commercial transportation came into Nigeria with the ban on the use of motor cycle by the Lagos State government, under the military administration of Muhammed Buba Marwa (1996-1999). With the introduction of National Poverty Eradication Programme of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the use of keke (keke NAPEP) became more popular as the fastest source of income to many families. Today, keke operation has assumed a more aggressive posture, especially in the hands of unemployed youths who use it as the only means of livelihood.

There are three keke tricycle companies operating within Aba metropolis. The first is called Self Acquired Tricycle Owners Association

(SATO). Its head office is at No. 122 Ehi Road, by Shopping Centre, Aba. It has Comrade Eugene E. Job as the Chairman. The second is Allied Tricycle Integrated Welfare Association (ATRIWA), located along Ogbo Hill Road, before Eziana Police Station, Aba, within All Ngwa Cultural Centre. The third is Tricycle Owners Association of Nigeria (TOAN), with office at Abayi, Opposite Simeon Hospital before Abayi Girls' Secondary School, Aba. This last one has a total number of 2, 600 registered keke as at 25th August, 2020 and, the Chairman is Comrade Ekeneme Kingsley.

In plying their trade, most keke tricycle operators employ different means to attract customers. One of such means is writing on the body of the vehicle. This paper examines linguistic errors on the inscriptions of keke tricycles in Aba metropolis with a view to identifying, analysing and correcting them. The study is relevant because a pry into the language use among a particular group can provide information that would be useful in dealing with such group.

Aba: Enyimba City

Aba is the biggest cosmopolitan city in Abia State of Nigeria. It is popularly nicknamed Enyimba City, a name which derives in one part from its symbol, "*Enyi*" (the elephant) and, on the other from the fact that its inhabitants are well-known for their boisterous lifestyle, economic vibrancy, doggedness in business, creativity and innovativeness, resilience and unyielding spirit. The Aba urban bestrides two local government areas namely: Aba North and South, with other adjoining suburbs like Ekeakpara in Osisioma, Alaojii in Ugwunagbo, and Ehiera in Obi Ngwa LGAs. Aba has a direct road link with Umuahia, the state capital, Rivers, Imo, Akwa Ibom States which makes it the hub of commerce and a beehive of different fascinating activities, industry, trades and money-yielding adventures. Aba is the commercial nerve centre in Nigeria and the whole West Africa, with such renowned daily markets as Ariria International Market, Aba Shopping Centre, Cemetery Market, Ahia Ohuru, etc. A vast majority of the men and women in Aba are engaged in one commercial venture or the other, while only a few are civil servants.

Aba is a burgeoning city because it affords its inhabitants an average economic living standard when compared to other mega cities in Nigeria like Enugu, Port Harcourt, Lagos and Abuja and, this makes it a safe haven for many low income earners to thrive. Thus, it is easy to find many people who are not involved in the ubiquitous buying and selling market transactions engage in some other lucrative businesses like keke tricycle, minibus, taxi, and luxury bus transportations. Despite all these, there is real and pronounced interest, willingness and desire by a reasonable majority of the residents to acquire formal school education and this makes schooling to thrive in the city, almost to the point of becoming another business enterprise.

Background to the Study

Language as one of the most effective and visible forms of human communication involves the use of signs, symbols, speech sounds and writing systems. Writing a language is an intricate exercise and requires some skills because some words can either be misspelled or misused, which affects their meaning. Observations show that there is a passion among keke operators to write inscriptions on the body of their vehicles and, in doing this, many of them fall into errors. Thus, inscriptions on tricycles present an interesting area for academic investigation.

People employ the words of a language in different ways and for various purposes to express their feelings hence language remains the only gateway to people's heart. In the case of keke tricycle operators, they write on their vehicles to attract patronage, make a distinction, for proper identification, expression of personal philosophy and belief and as a brand. Sometimes, such inscriptions appear in a single language or a combination of two different languages. Thus, language as a means of expression and communication between humans remains a valued and valuable asset in keke transportation industry.

The words which people employ to express their ideas and feelings are visible manifestations of their inner thoughts and convictions. But very interestingly, the words of a language take different permutations whether as a single lexical item or a string of words appearing in clausal or phrasal groups, depending on their arrangement in the construction. This affects the grammar of the language, which is concerned with

words, their structure and proper arrangements to form meaningful utterances.

It is a common practice that where the desirable is not available, the available becomes the desirable hence adaptation remains a linguistic device in human communication. Again, since in Igbo worldview, *nkụ dī na mba na-eghere mba nri* (people make use of what is available to them to solve their needs), certain people have come to use language in ways they deem less cumbersome and more beneficial to them rather than what is commonly believed by the native speaker as the correct usage. Thus, the idea of nativisation or indigenisation of language is a nouveaux but burgeoning enterprise in linguistic endeavour. Consequently, most keke tricycle operators in Aba metropolis adopt (and at times combine) different languages to express their views and beliefs about life on the bodies of their vehicles.

Research Problem

At the centre of all human interaction is the word. Expressive words are visible manifestations of people's inner thoughts and convictions. However, the words of a language take different permutations and this affects the grammar of the language. Now, to what extent do keke tricycle operators use the words of a language correctly?

Research Objective

The main aim of the study is to examine and analyse errors on the inscriptions of keke tricycle operators' vehicles in Aba metropolis. The specific objectives are to: (i) find out what motivates keke drivers to write on their tricycles, (ii) identify the flaws on the inscriptions of keke operators (iii) ascertain the influence of such write-ups on the keke operators.

Research Questions

This study is driven by three research questions corresponding to the research objectives.

1. What are the motives for keke operators' writing on their tricycles?

2. What are the linguistic flaws noticeable in these write-ups?
3. What influences do these write-ups have on the keke operators?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Errors: Errors are conscious or unconscious deviations from the target language by the learners or the non-native speakers of a language. Richards et al., (2002) says that errors are the use of a word, speech act or grammatical items in such a way that it seems imperfect and significant of an incomplete learning. For Brown (2007), an error "is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner". He distinguishes an error from a mistake, saying that a mistake is a performance error in which one fails to utilise a known system correctly.

Klassen (1991) sees error "as a form or structure that a native speaker deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use". Thus, an error is a breach of the language and a violation of sets of generative rules for generating what generative grammarians call well-formed sentences. Anagboso (2010, citing Richards, et al., 1992), notes that an error is "the use of a linguistic item in such a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards it as showing faulty or incomplete learning".

Error Analysis (EA): Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics. It is concerned with the compilation, study, and analysis of errors made by second language learners and aims at investigating aspects of second language acquisition. It focuses on errors learners make in the process of learning a second language. It can be defined as the study of language forms deviating from the standard of the target language which occurs during learners' language learning.

Error analysis was propounded by Corder and his contemporaries in the 1970's. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined it as a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms of a language in the production data of someone learning either a second or foreign language.

The study of error is important for two reasons: to point out the problem (diagnostic) and to make plans to solve the problem (i.e. the prognostic (prognostic). Secombe (2000) maintains that EA is quite purposeful for three reasons: to find the level of the learner's proficiency, to obtain information about the common difficulties that the learner encounters, and finally, to find how people learn language. Hinnon (2004) adds that EA is beneficial because it can let the teacher prepare accurate and precise teachings which are suitable for students. The analysis of error helps reveals the types and source of errors which can lead to an accurate way and less time consumption to reduce errors made by learners.

Richards (1992) identified three types of errors namely, the interference errors, the intralingual errors, and the developmental errors. The interference or interlingual error occurs as a result of the influence of the learner's mother tongue (MT). It is the negative transfer of the learner's MT into the TL. Intralingual error occurs within the structure of the TL, and the developmental error is the one made by the learners due to his false assumptions about his TL.

Corder (1973) classified errors into four, namely: (i) omission of some required elements, (ii) addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements, (iii) selection of incorrect elements and (iv) ordering of elements. But, on noticing that his classification is not sufficient to account for error analysis, he adds a linguistic level of errors and subdivides it into morphological, lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.

For Burt and Kiparsky (1972), there are two types of error, viz: global error and local error. Global errors entail misunderstanding of messages and incomprehensible sentences, while local errors are those that are not conspicuously identified. Local errors correspond to Coder's (1973) covert errors. Besides his covert errors, Coder identified overt errors (that is errors that are based on ungrammaticality and inappropriateness). Jowith (1971) identifies idiosyncratic and common errors. Idiosyncratic errors are those displayed in the individual's dialects, while common errors occur in written and spoken English of many learners of a TL.

Error analysis is discussed in applied linguistics with reference to learners of a second language (L₂). The goal is to point out and discuss those linguistic, psychological, or environmental issues that interfere with a learner's attempt to grasp the structures of a new language in formal school setting. However, it is applied here not in the classroom L₂ learner's sense, but to a group of L₂ users that comprise a mix of school leavers (i.e. both ongoing and completed) and those who may not have had proper or any experience of formal education.

Empirical Review

Inscriptions on tricycles present an interesting area of linguistic research. Some studies exist on writing on the older means of transportation such as commercial trucks and luxury buses (Nwagbara, 2013). Mgbemena (2013) did a study of the language use, forms, popular themes and objectives of writing on keke tricycles in three eastern states in of Nigeria – Abia, Imo and Enugu. However, to the best knowledge of the present researcher, there is no work on a linguistic analysis of the inscriptions on keke tricycle vehicles. This paper is set to close this gap by understudying the inscriptions on keke operators' tricycles and identifying the linguistic flaws therein.

Methodology

The population studied is 15 keke tricycle users with inscriptions on their vehicles. This number was selected randomly, without any criteria. The research method used is simple participant's observation and interviews. The data were collected between the months of August 2020 – July, 2021 and the descriptive method of data analysis was adopted. The analysed errors are phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic. The procedure adopted, with some modifications, is that of Ellis (1997) and Hubbard et al. (1996), originally offered by Corder (1973) and requires first, the collection of the corpus, identification of errors, classification, analysis and explanation of the different types of errors and, finally, correction of the error. The analysis of error in this study is done on the basis of the linguistic components or items (phonology/orthography, grammar, and semantics) that are affected by an error.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Sample 1: The god's are not to blame (5048)

This inscription, no doubt, derives from the popular literature book by Ola Rotimi: "*The Gods Are Not To Blame*" (1971), which appeared first as a play in 1968. Olawale Gladstone Emmanuel Rotimi (13th April 1938 – 18th August 2000), was a Nigerian playwright and theatre director – actor, director, choreographer and designer. The book is an adaptation of the Greek classic *Oedipus Rex*, the story centres on Odewale, who is lured into a false sense of security, only to somehow get caught up in a somewhat consanguineous trail of events by the gods of the land.

The error here borders on the use of the apostrophe, precisely, the genitive construction marker '-s', on the word, "gods". The genitive possessive marker '-s' indicates that something belongs to an entity. It could appear in the singular like "Tina's book" or in the plural form like, "the girls' dresses". The error contained here is basically syntactic; an apostrophe is wrongly attached to the lexical item "god" (showing possession), which should not be. However, the mistake can be corrected by deleting the apostrophe and allowing the inflectional suffix marker '-s', attach directly to the noun, god. In this way, the plural idea denoted by the word, 'gods', in its original sense is restored and maintained.

Sample 2: Unity brother's (8167)

This expression is a noun phrase and it is intended to convey the idea of togetherness. Many people of the world believe that unity is strength. Among the Igbo, it is said that "*a nyukọọ mamiri ọnu, ọ gbaa ufufu*" that is to say 'when efforts are pulled together, they yield greater results'. However, while the idea portrayed in this belief holds true, the inscription is linguistically flawed due to some morpho-syntactic errors.

The word 'unity' is a noun and means working together for a common purpose or the quality of being complete. However, it is not properly used here, where it serves to qualify another noun, brother. Therefore, it does not convey the supposed meaning or intended message. Instead, what brings out such intended idea is the adjective 'united' (a derivative from the verb unite), which means joined or closely connected by aim.

There is equally an error in the use of the word 'brother' (which refers to a male who has the same parents as you). The error here is, also, morpho-syntactic in nature. It contains the genitive marker that is an apostrophe "-s" which indicates possession thus changing the meaning or understanding of the word which is supposed to be inflected for the plural form. Given the foregoing, the correct inscription would be "united brothers". Hence, the inscription refers to brothers who are joined together to achieve something or success.

Sample 3: Active brother's (36025)

This inscription has similar problem with the one in data (2) above. The use of the adjectival, 'active' to describe the noun 'brother' here is in order. Adjective in English is used to describe a noun or pronoun and usually comes directly before the word it describes. In such position, it is called attributive adjective. However, an adjective can also come after the word it modifies (John was old), following a linking verb and therefore called predicative adjective. An adjective that follows a noun immediately like 'time immemorial' is called postpositive adjective. However, there is a syntactic error in the use of the genitive possessive construction on the word, 'brother'.

Like already mentioned in sample 2 above, the word brother should have the plural form instead of the possessive feature. This mistake can be repaired by removing the apostrophe and then attaching the inflectional suffix marker '-s' directly to the word, brother. In this way, the plural sense of the word which the writer had in mind is achieved.

Sample 4: A unique website (4777)

It is possible that by using the above expression, the operator wants his customers to know that his style of keke operation is special, digital and internet compliant. However, there is a morphological error on the word "unique", which invariably affects its phonological bent.

The word "unique" (the correct form) means not comparable, being the only one of its kind, unequaled, unparalleled or unmatched. But, with the form "unike", there is a phonological hitch and, with the form deformed, the semantic (meaning) import is bridged.

It is a rule and practice in the English language and grammar that some letters are silent (they are not pronounced) depending on the environment they occur in a word. Such letters present difficulties to the uninformed (L₂ learners), both in speech and writing. Some of these letters include *b, c, e, h, k, n, p, s, u,* and *w*. These are called silent letters.

Silent letters are found in words that are not pronounced and cannot be matched to any specific sound made by a word. They fall into two groups: auxiliary and dummy. The letter 'u' is one of them. It is called a dummy silent letter. Like 'g' in sign, it is inert in 'unique' hence it is an empty letter in the second occurrence, as far as the word *unique* is concerned.

Given the above analysis, it is obvious that the writer did not take note of this feature when writing the inscription on his keke. In actual fact, he wrote what he pronounces or hears being pronounced. So the problem here can be identified both as phonological and morphological. To correct this error, the letter 'u' has to be inserted after the letter 'q' and before the letter 'e', thereby realising the correct spelling of 'unique'.

Sample 5: Are you surprise? (36025)

This is a rhetorical question which by its nature does not necessarily require an answer. This type of scenario usually comes up when something spectacular or astonishing happens. Usually, when a person who is rated as a low achiever or performer accomplishes unexpected feat, it arouses some comments amongst onlookers. If it happens that the individual concerned notices this, he may ask: "are you surprised?" This question can also be asked by another onlooker, though. This seems to be the situation which necessitated this inscription.

However, there is structural or syntactic error. The inscription is wrong grammatically because of the use of the noun 'surprise' instead of the adjectival phrase, 'surprised'. Therefore, the correct form of this expression should be "Are you surprised?"

Sample 6: God is my straight

The human person knows that he has limited powers hence he always looks up to a higher being for assistance. Some find this sought-after

assistance from creaturely things like the heavenly bodies, animals, plants or the universe itself. Others look for other spiritual or cultic powers or even look inwards to themselves. For others still, God is the ultimate source of all powers and strength. This could be the background to this write-up.

However, there is a graphological error that affects the syntactic structure of the lexical item, 'straight'. Straight is an adjective and it means not crooked or bent. Hence, we talk of a straight road, a straightforward presentation, etc. Strength, on the other hand, is a noun. It means the quality or degree of being strong. It also refers to the strongest part of something; that on which confidence or reliance is based.

In view of the foregoing discussions, it is obvious that the writer should have used the word strength and not straight. In other words, he is saying that he depends or relies on God as the source of his energy.

Sample 7: Raign for Jesus (38328)

It may not be very easy to find a context for this inscription. However, looking back at the life and activities of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who came into the world to save mankind and, the promises he made to his disciples (past and present), one can make an intelligent guess. For instance, Jesus once told his disciples that they will sit with him in his kingdom to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Thus, the belief that Jesus as Divine King reigns eternally could be seen as providing the basis for this inscription. Even at this first bet, the expression suffers serious grammatical deformation.

Another option is to look at the expression from the alternative established, that is "reign for Jesus" and, even at this, it still meets strong difficulties of correct or proper understanding. For this alternative to be acceptable, the verb *reign* requires a noun subject to sit at the sentence initial position: "I reign for Jesus". The other and final alternative is to turn the verb "reign" to a gerund or verbal noun. From this perspective, we can correct the expression as "reigning for Jesus". However, the popular saying and belief has always been, "Jesus reigns", but I doubt if our man had this in mind.

Sample 8: Yahweh is greatful

The word "Yahweh" is an Old Testament name for the Israelite God, which some present day Christians also adopt to refer to God. It was a name revealed by God himself to Moses at the burning bush and means "I AM". Originally, it is composed of four Hebrew consonants YHWH (known as the Tetragrammaton), which was unpronounceable. However, the people were prohibited from using it because it was considered too holy; instead they were to use Adonai (Lord). It was in a bid to make the name pronounceable that German Bible translators incorporated the letters of the vowel sounds in adonai to derive *Jehovah*.

Nevertheless, the inscription is heavily laden with serious morphological and syntactic confusions with regard to the word 'greatful'. Looking at the whole inscription, one cannot understand the meaning that the writer wants to communicate. Firstly, there is no English word like greatful. What is available is 'grateful'. The word 'grateful' is an adjective and it means to show appreciation or to be thankful to someone because of something kind that they have done. If we take it that the writer means to say *Yahweh is grateful* (not "greatful", though), to whom can it be said that Yahweh is grateful or thankful for what he has done?

If an adjective in the sense of being grateful should be attributed to God, then the inscription should be Yahweh is gracious. Gracious (adjective) is a word that means kind and warmly courteous, compassionate and forgiving which are qualities ascribed to God. We are left with a third option, which is to think that the writer wanted to express his gratitude or gratefulness to God. In all of these, this inscription is syntactically wrong from the point of view of the improper use of vocabulary and morphologically erroneous due to the incorrect spelling of the one used.

This error can, however, be rehabilitated or corrected to read: "Yahweh is gracious" in case the writer wanted to express how kind and compassionate God is to him. Or, "Yahweh, I am grateful" in which case he wants to express his appreciation for the good things he has received from God.

Sample 9: God can bless any body (5048)

Some people think that God has favourites, but this is not true. Biblical insight, tells us that God is the Father of all and he shows no partiality, but anyone anywhere who does what is pleasing to him, is acceptable (Roman 2:11). The fact that God graciously lavishes his love on all without setting boundaries or exceptions must have influenced this writer. However, while the thought is good, the grammar is bad. The error is morpho-syntactic.

Phonetically, the impersonal pronoun "anybody" appears to be composed of two parts: "any" and "body". When used separately, the determiner "any", in some contexts, refers to each one or all members of a group, saying it does not matter which. In this way, it does not single out a particular individual or make preference to any person. It considers no factors at all and uses no criterion whatsoever. Hence, it appears separate from the noun it precedes like *any person*.

This is a different keg of wine as it relates to the inscription under review. The phrase "anybody" is conventionally written as one word in English grammar. The word means no specific person or all people; anyone. It shares the same grapheme or format with such words as: anyone (pronoun), anywhere (adverb), anyway (adverb), somebody (noun), something (pronoun), someone (pronoun), etc. Hence, the correct expression should be "God can bless anybody".

Sample 10: The Lord is my strenth (1304)

This inscription, no doubt, has biblical background and invariably comes from one who believes in the power of God. Psalm (28:7-8) says: "The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me... The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one". Considering the nature of the job of keke operation (which is full of drudgery and pains) and, armed with the above conviction, it is not surprising that this operator sees in God a helper close at hand in very hard and difficult times. Hence he entrusts his daily activities and travail into the hands of God, seeking strength from him. While this resignation of fate is well motivated and commendable, the grammar is flawed with serious mistakes. There is a glaring

morphological error with the word, 'strenth' that resulted into syntactic anomaly.

This error can be corrected by adding the missing voiced velar stop /g/ sound (phoneme /g/) between the voiced, alveolar nasal sound /n/ and the diagraph /th/ (a voiceless fricative sound /θ/) to derive, strength. The word "strength" is an English noun that means physical energy and power that makes someone strong. It can also refer to an ability which enables a person engage in difficult tasks, face oppositions or deal with unpleasant situations in a brave and determined way.

Sample 11: My tomorrow most be greater dan today (12769)

Human beings are futuristic in nature and character. They are strongly inclined to believing in the future and always look up to better days ahead. Thus, everyone hopes for a better tomorrow. This hope spurs them on to carry on with their daily life's struggles knowing that there is always bright light at the end of the tunnel. This, apparently, forms the basis for this inscription. However, a closer look reveals a lot of errors that are both morphological and syntactic in nature.

In the first instance, the use of the quantifier "most" is wrong and inappropriate. "Most" is a quantifier that refers to the largest number or amount possible and, therefore, cannot apply here. The proper expression to be used is the modal verb "must". The phrase *must* is used to express a strong will that something will happen as one desires. The second error borders on the use of the word "dan" (which is a piginised or nativised) in place of the conjunction "than". The conjunctive phrase "than", is a comparative conjunction that is used when comparing two things that are different to introduce the second thing. In this inscription, the author looks into the future as holding better prospects for him than what he is experiencing presently (at the point of writing) in his life. With these corrections, the expression would read: "My tomorrow must be greater than today".

Sample 12: You people must recieved the day of the just even thou me (10742)

The above inscription appears like a strong command, injunction or at best, warning to the reader. Actually, it may not be easy to point at the

direction this writer is going with this inscription or what informed it. But, with certain hindsight from the scripture that often speaks of the day of the Lord, one can guess that it has a biblical setting. Nevertheless, the inscription contains some phonological, morphological and syntactic errors.

The word "receive" is wrongly used in this inscription, with wrong grapheme/form, "recieved". It is also inflected for the wrong tense "recieved", assuming it is correctly written. However, the correct word "receive", is a transitive verb which means should take an object complement. It is used to express a situation whereby a person gets or accepts something from another person or external source. Receive is the present form while received is the past form of the verb.

Going further, the expression "thou" is no doubt wrongly used. The word "thou" (*old use*) is a pronoun in English and means *you* (in contemporary usage). When used in a construction, it usually appears in the subject or object position of a sentence. However, in this write-up, neither of the usages can apply. From every indication, it is possible that the writer wanted to say "even though", which is an expression used to emphasise that although something happens or is true, something else happens or is true, too.

In the light of the foregoing observations, then, the correct inscription should be: "You people must receive the day of ...even though me". However, one wonders the relationship or connection between this later phrase "even though me" and the antecedent construction.

Sample 13: Talk is free. Who you help? (199)

The above inscription is typical of what one observes among most keke riders in Aba. Most keke operators in Enyimba City hardly care about how you feel and what you think about the things they do. They are so careless and carefree with words that even when they wittingly or unwittingly damage your vehicle, they sarcastically look away as if nothing happened. And, if you dare stop to ask why such behaviour, this is the type of response you will get: "Talk is free. Who you help?" One even carries the inscription: "Shut up! Are you better?" All the same, there is apparent linguistic problem of the syntactic type in the phrases under review.

This inscription appears in two separate short witticisms. The first one says "Talk is free". The word "talk" is a verb and refers to the human ability to express feelings or opinions using the words of a language. Thus, we talk to people about things or something. As such, it can hardly appear at the initial or subject position of a sentence as one observes in this construction. Therefore, it is syntactically wrong where it is placed and, semantically, the meaning is deformed. Rather, the gerundive form of the word should be used which is "talking".

The second phrase: "Who you help?", equally, has a problem. This expression appears as a rhetorical question, apparently asking the unknown or unidentified reader who he has assisted. As it appears here, there is an omission and delimitation of a lexical item. First, the sentence appears to be a Nigerian Pidgin (NP). Stylistically and, to this extent, it can be accepted as a "correct form" of expression.

However, viewed from the prism of a Standard English grammar, one observes that the phrase is badly formed. The question word, "who", which is the subject of the construction should appear in the objective form as "whom". If that is accepted, then, there is a glaring omission of the auxiliary, "did" or the past tense of the verb, "do". Adding up these amendments, therefore, the correct expression will be: "Talking is free". "Whom did you help?"

Now, we consider a few examples in Igbo to see if what is observed in the English language is possible in the Igbo language versions.

Sample 14: Ya diri gi k'isi chere m (11708)

It is not uncommon to notice people who desire that harm or evil befalls others. This is the background to this statement in which the writer is addressing an anonymous listener. The inscription comes in the form of a prayerful wish. The writer is telling his audience to be ready to receive whatever thing (good or bad) they think about him in the same measure.

However, a closer analysis reveals that this statement is beset with some linguistic flaws. Firstly, there is a muddling up of words in the complementiser phrase "k'isi". This phrase has the following components: the complementiser "ka" (as, like, according to), the

impersonal pronoun "i" (2sg, you) and the adverbial "si" (how, way or manner).

Going further, the verb phrase "chere" is morphologically deformed. As it appears here, it means 'to wait'. But, this is not the sense or meaning the writer intends to convey in this statement. To bring out the intended message, the verb "chere" should have possess double vowel sound "e", in the medial position. As there is no diphthong or long vowel in igbo grammar, each of the letters should bear its own tone mark (a low tone on the first letter /é/ and a high tone /é/ on the second). Hence, the proper and correct word should be "chééré", meaning 'think' (perfect tense). With these amendments, the proper reading of the inscription is: *Ya diri gi ka i si chééré m* (Let what you think about me come to you in the same measure). The second person impersonal pronoun should be independent, appearing as the subject of the second clause.

Sample 15: Aka Chukwu diya (SATO A 13057)

Human life is such that everything that happens (that is every effect) must, of necessity, have a cause. In this whole search for a cause, God is often identified as the prime, ultimate and uncaused causer of everything. Therefore, every explanation must be linked back to Him. This is the background to this inscription. However, there is a structural error.

The inscription "Aka chukwu diya" appears in Igbo and, literally means "God has a hand in it", in English. The error, however, is in the phrase "diya". This phrase has two different words: "di" (be) and "ya" (it). But, in this write-up, they are mapped together as one word. To derive the correct meaning of this inscription, the phrase has to be separated hence "Aka Chukwu di ya".

Discussion of Findings

The study analysed the linguistic errors on the inscriptions of keke operators' tricycles. From the interviews conducted, it was discovered that keke operators in Aba who write on their vehicles have some intentions. Some of the reasons include; to attract patronage, express personal belief or philosophy, and make a distinction among others.

Some of the identified ones are to express belief (data 2, 3, 15), personal convictions (data 6, 10), life experiences (data 5), a mark of distinction (data 4), personal philosophy (data 9, 11), etc.

However, it was discovered, too, that most of what these operators write contains some linguistic errors of various dimensions like phonology, morphology, syntax, and of course semantics. Most of the errors point to the fact that a good number of keke operators lack sound educational qualifications. It was observed that some errors were phonological or as a result of confusing the sound of some words, like "straight" (data 6) and "strength" (data 10). The data in (9) and (11) contain heavy syntactic errors, while (4) and (7) are morphologically impaired.

The study noticed the tendency among keke operators to copy what others have written, as could be gleaned from (data 6 & 10). Also, it was discovered that some of these inscriptions have great influence on the operators, like (data 13). Here, it could be concluded from this inscription that such operator will be carefree, less concerned and unserious when his passengers complain.

Many keke drivers are aged men who just want to eke out a living. Due to their age, they are always sluggish on the roads thereby causing traffic buildups and unnecessary gridlocks on the roads. The youth age keke operators are in the majority and, they are very reckless and irritating, with very bad peer influence. This is seen whenever their member is involved in any altercation with other road users. One notices that this set of keke operators clusters around the scene to defend their member not minding whether he is at fault or not. This irrational behaviour portrays them as a group with deficient intelligence, low mentality, undisciplined, with some kind of psychological disorder. More than this, such mob mentality and actions pose serious threat to peace, friendliness and proper adherence to traffic rules and regulations.

Conclusion

This paper examined and analysed the linguistic errors on the inscriptions of keke operator in Aba metropolis. It noted that certain phonological, morphological and syntactical errors which negatively affect the semantic import and by the same token impair comprehension

are as a result of low education attainment by the operators. It proffered some ways to improving the use of keke as a means of commercial transportation in Aba metropolis.

Recommendation

This study recommends that a remedial teaching of the basic grammars of the English and Igbo languages be given to all keke tricycle operators in Aba metropolis.

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