

A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF THE PAST TENSE INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES OF ENGLISH AND YORUBA

Shadiat Folashade Bakare

&

Florence Nne Agwu

Abstract

This paper explores the past tense inflectional morphemes of English and Yoruba to identify the morphological and syntactic structural differences therein. It hinges on the Contrastive Analysis (CA) theory and the qualitative descriptive design while engaging the content analysis methodology, where data are analysed through the language samples of the two languages concerned. From this study, it was discovered that while English indicates the past tense of regular verbs with the marker ‘-ed’, Yoruba on the other hand, employs the main verbs in the language that denotes either the present or past such as “gbe” (carries/carried), “ta” (sell/sold), “je” (eats/ate), “mu” (drink/drunk) and the like, depending on the context of usage. This paper also revealed that while the regular past tense inflectional morpheme of English is a suffix and bound, the main verbs in Yoruba are equally suffixes but free morphemes which are lexicalized to denote past actions. In addition, English in its grammatical rules, contains some exceptions or irregularities that do not conform to the regular pattern (irregular verbs, using suppletive, replacive and zero morphemes), and which may further pose some difficulties to the second language learner. The study therefore recommends that second language learners whose first language is Yoruba should safeguard appropriate erudition and attainment of the right construction and treatment of the past tense inflectional markers of English as they are, to develop their expertise in the language.

Key words: Morphemes, inflectional morphemes, past tense, past tense markers, suffixes.

Introduction

Humans employ language in their various environments to exchange ideas, feelings, thoughts, experiences and information from one point to another, which differentiates them from other types of living things, as it is also crucial to life development and existence. Communication in humans which encompasses a body of sounds, signs or signals, cannot be separated from the words used. Words are components of morphemes, which combine to produce sentences, phrases and clauses in a particular language.

The level of language devoted to the study of how words are combined through the smallest units (morphemes) and the rules guiding the process of formation is Morphology. Correspondingly, morphemes are entrenched in the configurations of a language, which extend to the grammatical rules of that language such as word formation, combination of various tenses and parts of speech, like verbs (that denote past actions as in 'cook', 'bathe', 'jump', 'sink', 'fly', 'look'). Thus, the past tense inflectional morphemes differ from one language to another just like English and Yoruba. These disparities are capable of creating hindrances such as negligence, interference and overgeneralization of rules vis-à-vis those available in the learner's first language (L1), if not appropriately handled.

Theoretical Framework: Contrastive Analysis (CA)

The paper is guided by the Contrastive Analysis (CA) Theory. This theory is very important in the field of Applied Linguistics and was majorly employed in the 1950s and early 1970s to explain why some features of a foreign language were more difficult to learn than others. (Bussman qtd in Agwu 123) defines Contrastive Analysis (CA) as "a linguistic sub-discipline that is concerned with synchronic comparative study of two or more language varieties". Thus, the compared languages may be similar genetically or not.

Historically, the idea of contrasting two socio-culturally linked languages was first investigated in 1945 by Fries who argued that "the most effective materials in foreign language teaching are those that are

based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned- L2, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner- L1” (19). Later, Robert Lado in his *Linguistics Across Cultures* (cited by Adebileje 1), provided a comparative description of English and Spanish on the assumption that foreign or second language teaching can be enhanced by comparing the learner’s native language (Mother Tongue- MT) with the target or second language to be learned. Thus, this translates to the “Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). Here, the learner’s first language pose some difficulties when in contact with a foreign or target language since the learner may realize that there are some features very easy to learn while some other may be extremely difficult. Birdsong affirmed that Contrastive Analysis came on board as a result of errors of interference between L1 and L2 that had been bedevilling second-language learners of English (Olaere 2).

Transfer theory, which originated from “Behaviourism” (a theory of learning anchored on the view that all behaviours are acquired through the interaction with the environment) believes that the language skills or knowledge acquired during the learning of the second language are transferred to the native language and vice versa. Thus, it is the habit of applying rules from one’s first language to the second language. However, as a result of the inadequacy inherent in the transfer theory of language learning, other substitutes were proposed such as George’s “Cross-Association Theory” as well as the new Mark’s and Rebel’s “Ignorance Hypothesis” (Olaere 2). The cross-association theory is said to explain palpable errors of interference concerning redundancy of the L2, while the Ignorance Hypothesis tries to explain the second language errors as a result of the ignorance of the rules in a particular condition. Even though the CA was also criticized as a theory of language learning, its strength and usefulness in the development of teaching materials far outweigh the other alternative theories, which makes it more desirable.

In Contrastive Analysis (CA) therefore, a pair of languages is systematically studied to ascertain or identify their structural differences and similarities. For illustration, it could be a contrast between English

and German but in this paper, it is between English and Yoruba, relating to their past tense inflectional morphemes. Hereafter, it is expected that learning a target or second language would be enhanced by the acquaintance of these constructions, particularly when there are similarities between that language and the learner's native language or mother tongue but hindered where there are differences between them, which is the essential motive of Contrastive Analysis and the crux of this study.

Conceptual Review

This section reviews literature as regards concepts and previous studies associated with the present with the hope of establishing a gap for this paper.

Morphemes

Morphemes are the smallest meaningful linguistic units of utterance or expression in a language that not only have meaning but also have functions. If a morpheme is added or expunged from an utterance, the meaning of such utterance can change or not remain the same. A morpheme is therefore the smallest and basic unit of analysis in a language. Free Morphemes are morphemes that can stand alone without necessarily being attached to another morpheme before they can be meaningful. A free morpheme is a word; it is the root or base form of a word. For example, in the English language, 'sell', 'house', 'work', 'man', 'bird', 'strength', and 'sincere', are free morphemes as they can stand meaningfully alone. Bound Morphemes are morphemes that cannot occur in isolation as they must be attached to other grammatical units before they can be meaningful. Thus, these morphemes cannot stand alone because they are not full-fledged words. Examples are affixes such as: '-er' in 'smarter' (to show degree; comparative of smart); 'un-' in 'unhappy' (to indicate the opposite of happy), 'mis' in 'misfit', 'pre' in 'preliminary'; contractions like 'll' in "He 'll go now"; 've' in "You've been there" and so on.

Nida (100) enumerates some features for the identification and understanding of morphemes which include the following:

1. A morpheme may be a word or part of a word. This means that a morpheme is not always the equivalent of a word. Examples in English are the grammatical units [teach] and [er] in 'teacher'. Both are morphemes but 'teach' can stand on its own but 'er' cannot, for it to be meaningful. Also, 'tea' in the same word is a morpheme and meaningful on its own but cannot be separated from 'ch' (teach) in this regard for it to be associated with the word, 'teach' for its complete meaning. We have words like 'o' and 'mi' in the Yoruba language as “omi” meaning, 'water' as two morphemes, but cannot be separated without the meaning changing or viewed as incomplete as well.
 - a. Morphemes cannot be further divided into smaller units without altering or affecting their meaningful outcome. For example, if a word like 'wait' is divided into /wei/ and /t/, both are morphemes independently but cannot make complete sense. Although, /wei/ may have a meaning which does not correspond to the meaning of 'wait', as /t/ is a meaningless remainder in this case. Thus, /wai/ is not a morpheme as far as the word 'wait' is concerned. In the Yoruba language, a word like 'ilé ' meaning 'house' when divided into /i/ and /lé/ will affect its meaning as each cannot be further divided into smaller meaningful units. Ordinarily, [lé] can stand on its own but with a different meaning (pursue/addition) in this context of the word 'house' as “ilé”. Thus, 'i' cannot be considered meaningful on its own but it is a morpheme as well.
 - b. Certain morphemes have a particular order in which they can occur. For instance, in English, a word like 'broadcast' (broad-cast) cannot be re-arranged as 'cast-broad' without sounding grammatically incorrect to the hearing of a native speaker of English. So also a word like 'àfòpiná': àfò-piná (a creature/fly that hovers around fire or light) cannot be rewritten as 'piná-àfò' without it sounding strange to the native speaker of the Yoruba language. I know that the word “àfo” in Efik language indicates the second person pronoun -'you'.

Therefore, changing the order of some morphemes may also affect their meaningfulness in a particular language.

- c. Morphemes though generally considered to be parts out of which words are formed, do not have to be of a particular length. That means, some may be composed of long words like 'Knickerbocker' (one morpheme) while another may be short but with two or more morphemes. An example can be seen in a word like 'sixteenth': [six] + [teen] + [th] with three morphemes.

Morphemes are further divided into Derivational and Inflectional morphemes. The scope of this paper is the inflectional morphemes, to which the past tense markers belong.

Inflectional Morphemes in English

The inflectional morphemes system in English is considered to be quite “poor” and has “little inflectional morphology” in contrast with other languages of the world. Unlike the derivational morphemes that can be used to create new words in English, the inflectional morphemes only change the form of a word indicating “grammatical function” (Denham and Lobeck 69, 158). For instance, some languages have case morphology (when a noun changes its form to express its grammatical role in a sentence) which is absent in English but used in languages such as German (Kazemian and Hashemi 2). Thus, inflectional morphemes indicate plural, past tense, continuous, participle, comparative, superlative, possession and the concord (3rd person singular) feature of words and sentences. Eight (8) inflectional morphemes in English indicate the form and tense of a word without changing the part of speech or the meaning of the words they are attached to. The base word and the inflectional morpheme work together to enhance the meaning of a word rather than changing its meaning. They also add grammatical information to a word by ensuring that the word is in an appropriate form and the sentence is grammatically correct. This is why it is believed by scholars that inflectional morphemes account for the grammaticality of a sentence and show equally, the syntactic or semantic relation between the words

that combine to form a sentence (Ozoekwe 15). Besides, inflectional morphemes play crucial roles in sentence formation (Amuda and Medubi 17). This further emphasizes the significance of the current study, since the proper grasping of the knowledge of inflectional morphemes will go a long way to minimize to the barest minimum, the difficulties encountered by Yoruba learners of English as a second language. Examples of inflectional morphemes can be illustrated with simple sentences like:

Atim **passes** her tests in school.

They are *passing* by the seaport.

I *passed* my MBBS exams excellently.

Despite the tense difference in the above sentences, the word 'pass' preserves its meaning. Thus, the eight inflectional morphemes of the English language include:

- The Plural Marker -s, -es as in news, roads, horses, potatoes.
- The Possessive Marker 's/s' as in baby's dress, family's will, ladies' bags, children's books, pupils' shoes.
- The Concord Marker -s as in He likes, Mary visits, Zion bathes, Clara works.
- The Past Tense Marker (Regular-'ed' and Irregular-other endings) as in washed, planted, waited, took, bought, flew, bit, thought, awoke.
- The Progressive Marker -ing as in skipping, listening, going, weeding, painting.
- The Comparative Marker -er as in larger, higher, colder, hotter, costlier, better.
- The Superlative Marker -est as in coldest, largest, hottest, costliest, highest, best.
- The Past Participle Marker (Regular-'en' and Irregular as in written, been, swollen, heard, found, sought, taken, seen, grown).

Past Tense Inflectional Morpheme / Marker in English

The English verbs are inflected to develop various forms and the past tense marker 'ed' is one of the eight inflectional morphemes

of the English language. It is used to denote past actions and aspects. The regular verbs end with - 'ed' while the Irregular verbs have other endings using processes of suppletion, replacive and zero morphemes. Examples in sentences are:

- The chef **cooked** some delicious meals today.
- Noam Chomsky **propounded** some theories of English grammar.
- We **waited** for the heavy rain before going further.
- George was **dressed** in colourful attire on his birthday.
- They **benefited** a lot from the country's political crisis.
- The Queen **passed** out last night.
- Our students were **decorated** nicely.
- Mary **performed** woefully in her exam.
- The man **reported** the matter to the police.
- We were so **pleased** with the news.
- The Governor **swore** in the new commissioners.
- John **beat** the strange man last night.
- The snake **bit** the farmer on his way home.
- She **rang** the school bell at exactly 8:00 a.m.
- Who **threw** those apples on the floor?

Past Tense Inflectional Morpheme / Marker in Yoruba

Most scholars agree that Yoruba verbs are not inflected for tense, "whether past or present" (Odunuga; Bamgbose qtd in Lamidi 352) with examples such as: "Ade **gbé** aṣo" (Ade **carries/carried** the cloth; "Àsàkẹ́ **se** oúnjẹ" (Asake **cooks/cooked** the food) depending on the context. Thus, the Yoruba past tense inflectional markers engage lexical morphemes which are the main verbs in the language such as "se" (do/does/did), "mu" (drink/drank), "je" (eat/ate), "gbọ" (hears/heard) in sentences like "Ó **se** idánwò" (S/He **did** the exam); "Wón **mu** ẹmu" (They **drank** some palm wine); "A **je** ẹwà" (We ate beans); "Ó **gbọ** iròyìn nàà" (S/He **heard** the news). Similarly, another scholar (Lamidi 15) opines that inflection in Yoruba verbs can be achieved with the help of auxiliaries and other words. Put differently, this study discovered that main verbs are engaged majorly. Also, adverbs

of time like "láńáá"- yesterday, "lòsàń"- in the afternoon, "l'òsè t'òkọjá"- last week) are equally engaged to indicate the verbal aspect. The reason why we have various examples that can be used to illustrate simple past tenses which include the following:

Pọ́ólú wá lánáá.	Paul came around yesterday.
Ajá gẹ́ omọ nàá jẹ lósàń yi.	A dog bit the boy this afternoon.
Séérà fọ́ ọ lẹ́tí.	Sarah slapped him/her.
Mo mu omi ínú ife nàá diẹ̀.	I drank some water from the cup.
O jẹ gúgúrú lónìí.	You ate popcorn today.
A tà á.	We sold it.
Olukó dé láago méjilá ọsán.	Our teacher arrived at noon.
Oloyè nàá báwa sọ̀rò .	The chief spoke to us.
Màríà gbé idánwò nàá gbági.	Maria performed woefully in the exam.
Adé gbin ọ̀su sí oko rẹ̀.	Ade planted yam on his farm.
Ó so okùn nàá le.	S/He tied the rope tightly.
A gẹ́ àwọn àlùbòsà lati sẹ̀.	We chopped some onions for cooking.
Mo fọ́ àwọn ą̀sọ̀ púpọ̀ láàrọ̀ yì.	I washed many clothes this morning.
A rí dókítà mi lánáá.	We consulted my physician yesterday.
Ó gbá ilẹ̀ nàá.	S/He swept the floor.

Empirical Review

Several works have been carried out on contrastive studies of English and Yoruba Morphology. However, the majority of the works concentrated on the derivational rather than the inflectional morphology. Hence, the significance of the current study. For instance, Babalola and Akande enumerated some linguistic problems of Yoruba learners of English in Nigeria. The study carried out in 2002, affirmed the uniqueness of the English language as the official language of

education, politics, literature, and government (as clearly stated in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria), and a service subject to other subjects (248). Some major varieties of English language and concepts in language teaching such as English as it is used in Britain, America, Canada, and Australia (EMT); English as used in several African countries and parts of Asia (ESL), English as used in other countries like France, Spain, Belgium and many Arab countries (EFL) were analysed, which further confirms English as truly an international language. Worthy of note that many scholars like Afolayan 1979, Banjo 1974, Jowitt 1991 and others have carried out similar studies on Nigerian English. While some of them thought that the British Standard English (BSE) is achievable and should be the aim of every speaker, some were of the view that BSE is unrealistic due to the reason that the English spoken by Nigerian learners had been influenced by their various mother tongues. So, they all examined the English language from the sociolinguistic perspective without looking at other factors such as the educational level of the speakers, social background, environmental idiosyncrasies, occupation and so on.

More so, the study highlights the irregularities inherent in English specifically, to identifying why it seemed difficult to acquire by second language learners in Nigeria. Some of the differences cum problems of both languages enumerated in the work include the absence of corresponding sounds with letters (sound-spelling relationship), like the ambiguity in the sounds and letters /c/ (cell) and /s/ (sell) just like /c/, /k/ and /ch/ for sounds /k/ in 'cat', 'key', 'chaos', 'teach', 'much', 'church' and 'chef' in English which could cause pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, Yoruba has one-to-one link between its spellings and sounds like /i/ in "ìgí" (tree), "ìwé" (book), "ìfẹ́" (love) and the like. Others are the inconsistencies in the Morphology of English (in-/ un-/ il-/ im-: incur, unfair, illegal, improper); syntactic problems (plural morpheme 's-es'-: lady-ladies, calf-calves, foot-feet, news-news, scissors-scissors); tense problem (past tense marker '-ed': kill-killed, go-went, see-saw). Whereas, tense is not indicated by verbs as there is no morphological change but addition in

Yoruba (253) as in “Mo fẹ́ lọ” (I want to go), “Mo ti lọ” (I have gone), “Mo lọ lánáá” (I went yesterday).

Although, the current study discovered that the main verb plays a major role in the formation of the simple past tense in Yoruba without differentiating between regular and irregular verbs as they are contextually realized with examples like “Wón gbé e (They **carried** it) and “Ó **dé**” (S/He/It **came**). They therefore suggested the adoption of a contrastive model of teaching with other teaching procedures like translation, audio-lingual as well as social-communication methods to enhance teaching and learning of the English language.

Lamidi worked on tense as an aspect of agreement relations in English recognising the problem areas of Yoruba learners of English in 2004. He observed that learners may find it difficult to use tense properly in certain contexts such as when a verb occurs as the only verbal element in a simple sentence, or when it occurs as an embedded clause (47). This problem according to him, is a result of the non-inflectional nature of Yoruba verbs and therefore affects the performance of the Yoruba learners of English. He went further in his “Tense & Aspect in English and Yoruba” in 2010 to throw more light on the definition of tense about the time of speaking, as scholars of English grammar had tried to rationalize grammatical tense into specifics. While some classified it as three (present, past and future), others maintained that there are only two (present and past). Some equally posited that both tenses are the present/past and future (Bamgbose 167). The paper observed that while verbs are often inflected for tense in English (as well as number, person and case), it is not so in Yoruba. This can make learners go against some rules of English grammar such as the proper use of present or past tense, tense sequence, verb/aspect forms in reported speech or the recognition of irregular verbs in certain contexts. He opined that Yoruba verbs do not change their forms, though they have person/number features (352) when used in both present and past tense with examples like: “Adé **rí** ejo” (Ade **sees/saw** a snake); “Bísí **fa** Olu” (Bisi **pulls/pulled** Olu) in agreement with this paper.

The paper also established the fact that Yoruba does not distinguish between the third person singular (rule of concord/subject-verb agreement) and other persons especially as the language has no gender identification for verbs and pronouns since verb tenses are usually determined within the context of usage, unlike English. Furthermore, the future marker for Yoruba (máa) and the continuous aspect marker (ń) both signify habitual actions given an example like Tádé máa ń sùn sáá ni. (Tade always sleeps/is always sleeping), Olú ń jó. (Olu is dancing), unlike a distinct progressive tense (-ing) in English. Thus, the learners of English as a target language and who are Yoruba bilinguals may have difficulties using the present form of a verb to realize future meaning and rather, use those terms similar to what operates in the mother tongue or may require additional efforts. Lastly, it is believed that the use of some irregular verbs in English like read, burst, and bite as well as the ambiguity in the progressive aspect, may pose a major form of error and confusion among the Yoruba learners. It was therefore recommended that there is a need for the learners to overcome the interference of the mother tongue by acquiring the general rules for tense and aspect placements in their appropriate contexts instead of generalizing the rules while teachers are to emphasize these areas in their teaching methodologies. Unlike the study, the current paper recognizes the past tense marker as one of the inflectional morphemes inherent in the two languages under study. It concentrates specifically on the similarities and dissimilarities of the past tense inflectional morphemes/markers of both the English and Yoruba languages with various examples highlighting the possible difficulties these contrasts may pose to the second language learner of English.

Taiwo examined inflection in the “Ào” dialect of Yoruba in 2011. The “Ào” dialect is spoken in the north eastern part of Ondo State in Nigeria. The work emphasized the fact that previous studies on Yoruba morphology had focused more on derivational rather than inflectional morphology. This is due to the opinion that major word classes in Yoruba do not have inflectional properties. However, some

functional categories like pronouns and tenses have different forms in different positions in a construction. The two types of inflections that were identified in the literature were additive inflection (where an inflectional morpheme is added to an existing root to derive another form of the word as in 'files', 'looked', and 'children'), and the replacive inflection (where an item is used to replace an existing one to derive another form of the word like 'men', 'came', 'feet'). It was observed that the latter is what obtains in Yoruba. Apart from that, pronoun and future tense marker in Yoruba have more than one form in different environments. The paper argued that long and short pronouns inflect for number and person while the short pronoun also inflects for case and negation as well as the future tense marker, given examples such as: “Èmi nàà gbọ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ yín” (I also heard your word) and “Àwa nàà gbọ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ yín” (We also heard your word); to illustrate long pronouns having different forms of plural.

In addition, the study pointed out the fact that some scholars are of the opinion that long pronouns are nouns with the name “pronominal”, while others call them long pronouns which usually inflect for numbers. The work however pointed out that the forms of the third person singular short nominative pronouns are quite different from other forms of pronouns. The reason scholars like Awobuluyi in 2001 among others, opined that the pronoun does not exist in Yoruba even though Ajongolo in 2005 argued that it does, to which this paper followed. Again, while the study focuses on the “Ào” dialect of Yoruba, the current study focuses on the contrasts between the past tense inflectional morphemes/markers in English and Yoruba languages for pedagogical purposes.

Data Presentation and Analysis

It is important to reiterate that past tense conjugations of verbs in the English language are categorized majorly into two namely: Regular verbs (ending with - ‘ed’) and Irregular verbs (with other endings) using suppletive, replacive and zero morphemes as shown in the tables below:

Table 1. The English Regular Verbs

S/N	English Past Tense Marker – ‘ed’ (Regular)	Yoruba (Past Tense Markers: ‘se’...)
1	The chef cooked some delicious meals.	Alasẹ nàa se awọn ounje aladun.
2	We waited for the heavy rain.	A tẹsẹ duro fun ojo nla naa.
3	They passed through the bush path.	Wọn gba eba onà oko koja.
4	They hunted for three antelopes today.	Wọn d’ode agbòrin meta lonii.
5	I washed plenty of clothes today.	Mo fo awọn aṣo pupọ lonii.
6	You watched an interesting movie last night.	Ìwo wo ere aladun lalẹ ana.
7	Ade planted yam on his farm.	Adẹ gbin isu si oko rẹ.
8	Our teacher arrived at noon.	Olukọ wa de lagogo mejila osan.
9	She chopped some onions for cooking.	Ó ge awọn alubosa fun sise.
19	He finished all the food.	Ó pari gbogbo ounje naa.
11	The Queen passed out last night.	Olori gbemi mi ni ale ana.
12	We have repaired the shoes	A ti tun awọn bata naa se.
13	He tied the rope tightly.	Ó so okun naa le.
14	Mary pulled the door to herself.	Maria si ilekun naa sodo rẹ.
15	The company supplied a few bags of cement	Ile-ise naa ja cimenti ni wonba.

Table 2. The English Irregular Verbs

SN	English Past Tense Marker (Irregular)	Yoruba (Past Tense Markers: ‘se’...)
1	Mother beat Ojo’s dog.	Mama na aja Ojo.
2	Paul came around yesterday.	Poolu wa lanaa
3	I drank some water from the cup.	Mo mu omi inu ife naa.
4	We sold it.	A ta a.
5	You ate popcorn today.	O je guguru lonii.
6	Jack and I met recently at the cinema.	Emi pelu Jaaki padẹ laipe ni ile sinima O gba ile naa.
7	He swept the floor.	Ta lo da awon eso apulu naa silẹ?
8	Who threw those apples on the floor?	Ejo ge agbe je lona ilee rẹ.
9	The snake bit the farmer on his way home. They left it open completely.	Wọn si i silẹ gbayawu ni.
11	We saw our doctor yesterday.	A ri dokita wa loni.
12	The school bell rang at 2:00 p.m.	Agogo ile iwẹ naa dun ni ago meji.
13	Sarah hit the thief with a stick.	Seera gba ole naa pelu igi.

14	She cut the cloth into pieces.	Ó g é aṣọ náà sí wẹwẹ.
15	The two friends shook hands thereafter.	Àwọn ọ̀rẹ̀ méjì náà b o arawọ̀n l owọ̀.

Contrastive Analysis of the Past Tense Inflectional Morphemes of English and Yoruba

From Tables 1 and 2 above, it could be observed that both the past tense inflectional morphemes/markers of the English (-ed) and Yoruba (-se...) languages are all suffixes with free and bound morphemes. The two languages also have evidence of the tense and aspects in their conjugations to indicate past actions as well as the framework of the time of action. Also, there is evidence of zero morphemes in both languages. Thus, these past tense inflectional morphemes/markers all expectedly add to the grammatical information of the attached words in these languages to enhance their meanings rather than changing the meanings.

For the past tense formation in English specifically, the past tense marker 'ed' is used to indicate past actions for the regular verbs as seen in examples such as 'passed', 'talked', 'helped', 'tied', 'pursued', 'studied', 'rejected'. For Yoruba however, the verbs are not inflected for tense as the main verbs (such as 'se', 'rà', 'mu', 'je', 'gbó') are chiefly employed and are quite numerous, in achieving this purpose. Hence, a verb in its present form can also appear in past form in another context as in "Adé **se** iṣe" (Ade **does** work or Ade **works**), which may appear in another translation as "Ade **did** the work". Moreover, in some constructions, auxiliary verbs can be added or pronouns through the repetition of some words to account for this inflection as seen in examples like "Ade **se** é" (Ade **did** it); "Ọlá **mu** ú" (Ola **drank** it) and so on. In certain constructions, adverbs of time are employed to indicate the verb aspect or time of action as in "Jóónù **dé** lánáá" (John **arrived** yesterday), "Wón **gbé** láágo kan ọ̀rú" (He was **arrested** at 1:00 a.m.). All these indications, therefore, point to the fact that; there is no overt past tense marker in Yoruba but free morphemes and verbs lexicalized to indicate the past actions contextually.

Furthermore, English language has both regular and irregular verbs as indicated in the various examples given earlier (Tables 1 and 2), which are not in tandem with the Yoruba past tense formations.

Hence, there are indications of suppletion (go-went), replacive (shake-shook) and zero morphemes (put-put) in the English language, where some letters are substituted for another or do not change syntactically to indicate past actions.

The implication is that English learner has to contend with how, where and when to switch direction from each of these verb tenses such as 'drink-drank'; 'sweep-swept'; 'eat-ate', 'feel-felt', 'come-came', 'teach-taught', 'hang-hanged', 'think-thought', 'lose-lost', 'float-floated', 'beat-beat', 'cut-cut', and the like. Aside from that, English's past tense regular marker '-ed' is not only a suffix but also a bound morpheme just like the other inflectional morphemes in the language. This also implies that most of the English irregular past tense markers are generated "without inflectional suffix endings /d/ or /t/" (Quirk & Greenbaum cited by Ozoekwe 15). Whereas, those for Yoruba are free lexical morphemes. All these points of difference, exceptions and irregularities inherent in English's past tense inflectional morphemes may constitute sources of great challenge and hindrance to such a learner particularly a Yoruba bilingual, whose language does not have a clear-cut distinction between the regular and irregular verbs. This may also enable such a learner to fall into errors or go against certain rules of English grammar if not appropriately guided.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a contrastive study of past tense inflectional morphemes/markers of English and Yoruba with a view to envisaging and pinpointing the areas of hitches that may be faced by Yoruba learners of English as a second language. Consequent to the findings of this study, it is obvious that there are exceptional and fundamental differences between the English and Yoruba past tense inflectional morphemes. The study discovered that while past tense formations are realized in English with markers "-ed" (for regular verbs) and other endings (irregular verbs) through the process of suppletion and the utilization of replacive and zero morphemes, Yoruba engages mostly the main verbs of the language, such as "se" (did), "je" (ate),

“**mu**” (drank), “**sun**” (slept), “**gbo**” (heard) and other auxiliaries, pronouns and adverbs to indicate past actions and aspect. This is because most Yoruba words are not inflected through their verbs. Rather, they are usually lexicalized and attached to other free or independent morphemes as full-fledged lexical items unlike what obtains in English that has a specific regular past tense marker. Thus, while the past tense markers in English (of the inconsistencies or non-uniformities) are realized morphologically, they are however realized contextually in the Yoruba language.

Recommendations

Owing to the findings of this study, there are vital dissimilarities inherent in the past tense inflectional morphemes/markers of both English and Yoruba. While the similarities palpable in the morphological framework of these two languages (such as the existence of suffixes, free, zero and bound morphemes) are capable of facilitating the pedagogy of English by a Yoruba learner, the dissimilarities however, can mitigate against the process. Therefore, it is suggested that adequate employment of contrastive studies of this nature be utilized as tools for the upgrading of textbooks, curricula policies, teaching aids and other instructional materials, which could go a long way to improve the English language methodologies and enhance the proficiency of the learners concerned.

Also, students and instructors of English as a second or target language as well as Yoruba bilinguals as a matter of necessity, should be conscious of these contrasts and work assiduously to grasp the nitty-gritty about the past tense inflectional morphemes of both languages to deepen their expertise in English language. More so, additional contrastive studies of the past tense inflectional morphemes concerning other Nigerian languages should be reinvigorated for further progression of comprehension on the topic.

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