

Assessment of Simple Past and Past Participle Inflections of Irregular Verbs in the Written English of First-year Students of the University of Agriculture, Makurdi

Adaje, Ambrose Ochigbo

Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi

and

Ikyase, Anastasia Vereshe

Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi

Abstract

*The study assesses simple past and past participle inflections of irregular verbs in the English usage of first-year students of English for academic purposes (EAP) at the University of Agriculture, Makurdi. The structural grammar model (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 2007; Pullum & Huddleston, 2002) is adopted to describe the simple past and past participle inflections of irregular verbs in English; it is, also, used to construct a proficiency assessment research instrument, tagged: *Inflections of Irregular Verbs in English*, which contains thirty-five Standard English sentences with contexts that require the use of the simple past and the past participle forms of verbs, sampled from the seven classes of irregular verbs. Fifty-eight study subjects were randomized from a first-year EAP lecture group. The results of data analysis, using frequency, percentage and mean scores, prove that the students have inadequate knowledge of the simple past and the past participle inflections of irregular verbs: they are incapable of using the simple past forms of *rend, saw, flee, stride, slay, shut, spit, grind, speed, heave, and spring* in English; they are also unable to utilize the past participles of *bend, strew, sew, swell, bereave, cleave, tread, lie, split, spread, cost, fling, swing, string, ring, shrink and swim* in English. The study recommends constant drills of EAP students on the simple past and the past participle forms of the two hundred and fifty English irregular verbs, through sentence construction and essay writing tasks.*

Key words: *Irregular verbs inflections, the simple past forms, the past participle forms, EAP students, inadequate knowledge*

Background to the Study

Verbs are obligatory elements in both spoken and written Standard English. So, verbs are among the basic grammatical items taught and learnt in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. Verbs

have forms which express appropriate meanings in diverse communicative contexts; changes in verb forms and the way the forms are used generate verb features such as tense, aspect, mood, modality, transitivity and complementation. Students are taught these verb features to use them acceptably in English. This fact may account for the inclusion of verb forms as an appendix to most English language dictionaries and textbooks for primary and secondary school students. To further improve students' competence in its use, the English verb is taught in the Use of English and Communicative Skills course for first-year university students. Also, researchers (Nwuba, 2010; Mansur, 2015; Adekemi, 2021) have established some of the difficulties which students encounter with the use of different verb features in English and have suggested remedies for effective teaching and learning. But previous studies have neglected students' difficulties with verb inflections. Yet students' problems with the English verb mostly emanate from using incorrect verb forms or utilizing correct verb forms in the wrong contexts. This research work, therefore, focuses on the likely difficulties that some selected first-year undergraduate students of English for Academic Purposes have with verb inflections in English. First-year students are chosen because, as beginners of university education in the medium of the English language, being the sole language of instruction at the level, it is relevant to establish their grammatical difficulties with verb inflections for pedagogical purposes of effective instruction and learning. This study aims to assess the simple past and the past participle inflections of irregular verbs in the written English of selected undergraduate students of English for Academic Purposes at the University of Agriculture, Makurdi. The specific objectives are to

- i. find out if the students can derive and employ the simple past forms of irregulars correctly in written English
- ii. find out if the students can generate and use past participle forms of irregular verbs acceptably in written English

Theoretical Framework

The study focuses on the grammatical competence of EAP students in inflections of the simple past and the past participles of irregular verbs; so, Error Analysis (EA) is a suitable theoretical framework and it is adopted for the study. EA associates problems of learners of English as a second language with two sources which are the first interference of learners' mother tongue with the learning of English and the second learners' difficulties originating from the nature of the English language. These sources are referred to as interlingua and intralingua errors (Ellis,

2008). The study hinges on the second aspect of the theory (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2008; McKay, 2008)

Conceptual Framework

The structural grammar model description of the English language, as elaborated by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (2007) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002), is adopted for this study because the linguistic model provides a simple and detailed self-study descriptive approach to the teaching and learning of the forms and usage contexts of the simple past and the past participle forms of the irregular verbs for teachers and learners of English as a second language. For this study, the linguistic model is used to discuss the inflections of the simple and past participle forms of irregular verbs and their usage contexts in Standard English

The Simple Past and the Past Participle Inflections of the English Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs are similar to regular verbs in their *-s* form (e.g.: *goes*) and *-ing* participle form (e.g.: *going*) but differ from regular verbs in the simple past and the past participle forms, which are symbolically referred to as (v-ed₁) and (v-ed₂) respectively. Both the simple past and past participle are irregular (Azar, 2003; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 2007). Since the *-s* form and the *-ing* participle are predictable for both regular and irregular verbs, the base form, the past form and the *-ed* participle constitute the principal parts of the verb (Greenbaum, 1996; Lester, Franklin & Yokota, 2010). The focus here is on the simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs because they constitute a common area of difficulty for second language learners.

The English language has about 250 irregular verbs (Lester, Franklin & Yokota, 2010); they are divided into seven classes based on three criteria, namely, *suffixation*, *v-ed identity* and *vowel identity* (Greenbaum, 1996; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2003; Quirk, *et al*, 2007). The table below indicates whether the three features apply (+) or not (-) to the seven classes. The symbol ± shows that some verbs in the class do not possess the three features.

Table 1: Classes of Irregular Verbs in English

Class	Use of suffix	V-ed identity	Vowel identity	Examples		
				v	v-ed ₁	v-ed ₂
1	+	+	bend	bent	bent	
2	+	±	show	showed	shown	
3	+	+	buy	bought	bought	
4	+	-	break	broke	broken	
5	-	+	hit	hit	hit	
6	-	+	find	found	found	
7	-	-	begin	began	begun	

The first class of irregular verbs uses suffixes; the *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂* are identical and vowel identity exists in all parts, as shown in: *burn ~ burnt ~ burnt*, *lend ~ lent ~ lent* and *make ~ made ~ made*. Other irregular verbs that belong here are *dwelt, earn, learn, smell, spill, spoil, bend build, rend, send, spend and have*.

In the second class, the verbs have two suffixes for the *v-ed₂* but there is no change of base vowel for *v-ed₂* as exemplified in: *mow ~ mowed ~ mown*. Other verbs that classify here are *hew, sew, shear, show, sow, strew, and swell*.

In the third class of irregular verbs, the suffix is used but with variable voicing. The *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂* are similar and change of base vowel obtains: *leave ~ left ~ left*; *think ~ thought ~ thought*, and *mean ~ meant ~ meant*. Other verbs in this category are listed below in order of vowel patterning with the use of semi-colon to indicate differences in pronunciation: *bereave, cleave, creep, deal, dream, feel, flee, keep, kneel, lean, leap, leave, mean, seek, teach, think, lose; sell, tell; hear; say*.

In the fourth category of irregular verbs *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂* differ; there is no base vowel identity. There is a range of base vowel changes: *break ~ broke ~ broken*; *choose ~ chose ~ chosen*; *freeze ~ froze ~ frozen*. Other verbs here are ordered below according to vowel patterning which is marked off by semi-colon: *steal, awake, weave; bear, swear, tear, wear; bite, chide, hide; forget, trade; lie; blow, grow, know, throw; forsake, shake, take; forbid, give; draw; fall; eat; see; slay; drive, ride, rise, sunrise, stride, strove, write, fly; do; beat; dive, strive and thrive*.

In the fifth class of irregular verbs, all principal parts (*v*, *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂*) are identical; there is no suffix or change of base vowel. Other members of the class are *bid*, *burst*, *lust*, *cost*, *cut*, *fit*, *hit*, *hurt*, *knit*, *let*, *put*, *guilt*, *rid*, *set*, *shed*, *shit*, *shut*, *slit*, *split*, *spread*, *sweat*, *thrust*, *net*, *wet*.

The sixth class of irregular verbs has no suffix; the *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂* are identical and there is a change of base vowel; for example: *win* ~ *won*. Other verbs here are *bleed*, *breed*, *feed*, *hold*, *lead*, *meet*, *read*, *speed*; *cling*, *dig*, *fling*, *hang*, *sling*, *slink*, *stick*, *sting*, *strike*, *string*, *swing*, *win*, *wring*; *bind*, *find*, *grind*, *wind*; *light*, *slide*; *sit*, *spit*; *get*, *shine*, *shoe*, *shoot*; *fight*; *stand*; *abide*; *leave*.

The seventh category of irregular verbs has no suffix; there are different *v-ed₁* and *v-ed₂* forms but there is a change of base vowel, as exemplified in *begin* ~ *began* ~ *begun*. Other verbs in this class are *drink*, *ring*, *shrink*, *sing*, *sink*, *spring*, *stink*, *swim*; *come*, *run*; *go*. The irregular verb forms above provide the basis for discriminating wrong verb inflections in the students' usage.

Usage Contexts of the Simple Past and Past Participle Forms of Irregular Verbs in English

Verb inflection produces different forms which facilitate communication in several speech contexts. The past forms of the irregular verb, namely, the simple past and the past participle, play vital roles in communicative English (Vince, 2003; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Foley & Hall, 2008). The past simple forms of irregular verbs (such as *ate*, *did*, *had*, etc.) are used to convey single completed actions in the past, e.g., *Nigeria became independent in 1960*; and also, to express actions which happened at the same time, as, for example, in *When we got to the library, John took to the left while the sister took to the right*; also, the simple past is used to talk about repeated actions, e.g., *I lived in makurdi in the nineties*; and in addition, it is used to describe sequences of actions and states as exemplified in *The sportsman ran to his bike, jumped on it and rode off into the night*. The past participle forms of the irregular (such as *eaten*, *done*, *had*, etc.) function in more ways than the simple past in English. The past participle forms are used to describe an action which is completed before a time in the past (for example: *By the time the police arrived, the robbers had fled*); for repeated actions (e.g.: *The new owner found out that the car had been painted several times*); to describe a state which existed before a past event (e.g.: *At the time of her trial last month, Monica had been in prison for ten months*); also, to make a sequence of events clear (e.g.: *When she returned, the baby sitter had gone home*); to describe the cause of a past event (e.g.: *Duke didn't join the club as he had signed up with a rival club*); for a past event which prevented a later action from happening (e.g.: *He sacked her before*

she had had a chance to explain her behaviour); to describe past intentions which were unfulfilled (e.g. *The family had hoped to travel to London for a vacation but the head of the family fell ill*).

The past participle forms of the irregular verbs are used with *has* or *have* to describe past actions and states which have links with the present. They are particularly used to introduce a new topic of conversation, as exemplified in: *I have heard from John that she has been in London for the last three months*; it also conveys future reference, as shown in: *They will make a move as soon as the cold season has stopped*; it expresses unfinished state and action as demonstrated in: *The man has governed the state since 2020*; the past participle is used to express unfinished time, e.g.: *We have not seen the gate man this morning yet*; to indicate present relevance of a past action, state or event, e.g: *The government has banned industrial strike by workers*; to show indefinite time, e.g. *She has been to London twice*.

Methodology

This quasi-experimental study was conducted among fresh students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi in the 2020/2021 academic session. All students who registered for the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course constituted the study population; a sample size of fifty-eight students was randomly drawn from one of the six groups into which the entire first-year students were divided for effective teaching and learning of the course. The research instrument tagged *Inflections of Irregular Verbs in English*, which is based on the structural grammar model description of the simple past and past participle inflections of irregular verbs and their usage contexts, consists of thirty-five Standard English sentences which are subdivided into the seven classes of irregular verbs. For each class, there are five standard sentences in which the communicative contexts require two simple past forms and three past participle forms of irregular verbs. The instrument was administered to the study subjects by the lead researcher who is also an EAP course lecturer. Frequency, percentage and mean scores were used for data analysis. Because past forms of irregular verbs are taught and frequently revised at lower school levels, a mean score from 0.0-0.4 in an item is considered an instance of incompetence; a mean score from 0.5 to 0.9 is regarded as evidence of minimal competence and finally, a mean score of 1 is construed as an indication of mastery. All wrong forms are discriminated against with an asterisk (*).

Results

The difficulties of the students with simple past and past participle inflections of selected verbs from the seven classes of irregular verbs are displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Difficulties of EAP Students with Irregular Verb Inflections

S/N	Class of Irregular Verbs	Tasks on Inflection of Irregular Verbs	Students' Performance	
			Simple Past x Mean	Past Participle x Mean
1.	1	The howling of wolves (rend) rent the night air.	7	0.12
2.	1	He (build) built the castle himself.	31	0.53
3.	1	She was (bend) bent over her desk writing a letter.	23	0.39
4.	1	The unrest has (spill) spilt/spilled over into areas outside the city.	33	0.56
5.	1	She (have) had the strong impression that someone was watching him.	30	0.51
6.	2	I (mow) mowed the grass before it rained.	32	0.55
7.	2	He (saw) sawed the plank half.	13	0.22
8.	2	The floor was (strew) strewn with clothes	2	0.03
9.	2	They think they have the election (sew) sewn up.	4	0.06
10.	2	Before the offer closed, the number of subscribers had (swell) swollen to over 2,000.	13	0.22
11.	3	That moment he (lose) lost his balance and fell.	32	0.52
12.	3	She bursts into tears and (flee) fled.	18	0.31
13.	3	She was (bereave) bereft / bereaved when her husband died in an accident.	27	0.46
14.	3	The students has (kneel) knelt down for over two hours now.	33	0.56
15.	3	She had (cleave) clove / cleft his skull in two with an axe before the rescues arrived.	2	0.05
16.	4	We (stride) strode across the snowy fields.	7	0.12
17.	4	The killer (slay) slew the victim in cold blood.	2	0.05
18.	4	The snow in town was (tread) trod into a dirty slush.	3	0.05
19.	4	These machine have (lie) lain idle since the factory was closed.	4	0.06

20.	4	All the newspapers reporters had (strive) striven / strived to be first with the story but only the Sun relayed it.	35	0.60
21.	5	Philip went to his room and (shut) shut the door behind him.	27	0.46
22.	5	He coughed and (spit) spit/spat into her handkerchief.	24	0.41
23.	5	The prize was (split) split among the winning contestants.	11	0.46
24.	5	The farm's mechanical applicator has (spread) spread the seedlings.	27	0.46
25.	5	The shop attendant had weighed and (cost) cost the yam tubers before they were sold to the customer.	17	0.29
26.	6	The argument (grind) <i>ground</i> on for two years	2	0.03
27.	6	The sailboat (speed) sped the wind.	11	0.18
28.	6	The Protestants were (fling) flung into pieces.	18	0.31
29.	6	He has (swing) swung himself out of the car.	16	0.27
30.	6	He had (string) strung the shells on a silver chains.	13	0.22
31.	7	We all (heave) hove on the rope.	3	0.05
32.	7	She (spring) sprang a surprise by winning the tournament.	12	0.20
33.	7	The church bell was (ring) rung every Sunday for years.	9	0.25
34.	7	The rumour has (shrink) shrunk to the size of a pea.	8	0.13
35.	7	The boys had (swim) swum across the lake before the crocodile crawled into the water from the shore.	3	0.05

Table 2 reveals both the weaknesses and strengths of the students in simple past and past participle inflections of verb words selected from the seven classes of English irregular verbs. Based on the decision criterion mean score of 0.5, the students failed two items in class 1 (questions 1 and 3), four items in class 2 (questions 7, 8, 9 and 10), three items in class 3 (questions 12, 13 and 15), 4 items in class 4 (questions 16, 17, 18, and 19) but failed all items in classes 5, 6 and 7 (questions 21 to 35). In summation, the students failed 28 items of the 35 irregular verb inflection tasks. This implies that the students could only provide the simple past and past participle forms of only 7 of the 35 irregular verbs, summatively representing a frequency score of 7, a percentage score of 20% and a mean score of 0.12. These EAP students are deficient in inflection of simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs.

Discussion of Findings

The main finding of the study is that the students lack knowledge of irregular verb inflections. Firstly, these EAP students are incompetent in the morphology of the class of irregular verbs which has identical simple past and past participle forms with the use of suffix and vowel identity in all three parts, for example, *build ~ built ~ built*. The test on this class of irregular verbs demands simple past forms of *rend* and *build*; and the past participle forms of *bend*, *spill* and *have*. The required inflections in the contexts of the test sentences are *rent*, *built*, *bent*, *spilt or spilled* and *had* as shown in Table 2. The students exhibit minimal competence in *rent*, *built*, *spilt or spilled* and *had*; they have only difficulty with *rend* and *bend*. Some of their wrong productions are italicized in the failed questions below;

Excerpt 1

Question 1: The howling of wolves (*rend*) *rend*, *render*, *rends*, *rented* the night air.

Question 3: She was (*bend*) *bends*, *bend*, *bended*, *bending*, over her desk writing a letter

A second finding of the study is that the students are poor in the inflection of the class of irregular verbs in which the past participle has two suffixes: one is identical with the simple past (with no change of base vowel) but the other is different, as in *saw~ sawed~ sawed* or *sawn*. The tasks here require the students to supply the simple past forms of *mow*, *saw* and the past participle forms of *strew*, *sew*, *swell* which are *mowed*, *sawed*, *strewn*, *sewn* and *swollen* respectively. But the students are unable to provide the required past forms for *saw*, *strew*, *sew* and *swell*. The wrong forms in the students' responses affirm their weaknesses as italicized in the failed questions given below:

Except 2

Question 7: I (*mow*) *mow*, *mown*, **mowded* the grass before it rained.

Question 8: He (*saw*) *saw*, *saws*, *sawn*, *see*, *sees* the plank half.

Question 9: The floor was (*strew*) *shrew*, **strewed*, *strews*, **strewd*, **stredded* with clothes.

Question 10: They think they have the election (*sew*) *sew*, *sewed* **sewes*, *sewing* up.

Another finding that has emerged from the study is the weakness of the students in the inflection of the class of irregular verbs which has identical simple past and past participle forms, with a change of base vowel, e.g.: *leave ~ left ~ left* and *think ~ thought ~ thought*. For this class of irregular verbs, the students are instructed to produce the simple past forms of *lose* and *flee*; and the past participles of *bereave*, *kneel* and *cleave*, which are *lost*, *fled*, *bereft* or *bereaved*, *knelt*

and *clave* or *cleft*, accordingly. The students have difficulty with *flee*, *bereave* and *cleave* as shown in their responses to the failed questions reproduced here:

Except 3

Question 12: She bursts into tears and (flee) flees, flew, flee

Question 13: She was (bereave) *berave, *breaved, *beraves, *behaving when her husband died in an accident.

Question 15 She had (cleave) cleave, cleaved, cleaves his skull in two with an axe before the rescuers arrived.

The fourth finding of the study is that the students are extremely deficient in producing past forms of irregular verbs which have different simple past and past participle forms, with no vowel identity, e.g.: *break* ~ *broke* ~ *broken*. For this particular class of verbs, the students are tasked to generate the simple past forms of *stride* and *slay*; and the past participles of *tread*, *lie* and *strive*. The required past forms are *strode*, *slew*, *trod*, *lain* and *striven* or *strived*. The students have problems with *stride*, *slay*, *tread*, *lie* except *strive*, possibly because *strive* has both irregular and regular variants, namely, *striven* and *strived*. The students' difficulties with *stride*, *slay*, *tread* and *lie* are revealed in the responses to the failed questions given below:

Excerpt 4

Question 16: We (stride) strike, *strided, strikes, strikes, *stroded, stride across the snowy fields

Question 17: The killer (slay) slay, slayed, *sluttered, slays the victim in cold blood.

Question 18: The snow in town was (tread) tread, treaded, treads, treading into a dirty slush.

Question 19: These machines have (lie) lie, lay, *layed, laid, lied, lies, lid, idle since the factory was closed.

The fifth finding is that the students are unable to produce the simple past and past participle forms of the class of irregular verbs which have all three parts identical (*the present, simple past and past participle forms: v, v-ed₁, v-ed₂*), with no suffix nor change of the base vowel, e.g.: *bet* ~ *bet* ~ *bet*. The test task here demands that students generate the simple past forms of *shut* and *spit*, and the past participles of *split*, *spread* and *cost* which are, respectively, *shut*, *spit* or *spat*, *split*, *spread* and *cost*. The students could not generate any correct past form for the verbs. They failed all the tasks; their wrong responses are indicated in italics in the failed questions captured below:

Except 5

Question 21: Philip went to his room and (shut) closed, *choses, shuts, *sholt. the door behind him.

Question 22: He coughed and (spit) spitting, spits, *shutted, spits, *spited, *spate into her handkerchief.

Question 23: The prize was (split) splitting, spitted, splits, spitting, splitter among the winning contestants

Question 24: The farm's mechanical applicator has (spread) *spreaded, *spilits, spreads, spray the seedlings.

Question 25: The shop attendant had weighed and (cost), *costed, cost, cost the yam tubers before they were sold to the customer.

Another finding from the study is that the students cannot produce the past forms of the class of irregular verbs which have identical simple past and past participle forms with a change of base vowel but no suffix, as in *win* ~ *won* ~ *won*. Here the competence test demands the simple past forms of *grind* and *speed*, and the past participles of *fling*, *swing* and *string* which are *ground*, *sped*, *flung*, *swung* and *strung*, respectively. The students are unable to give correct forms of the verbs. The responses to the tasks confirm the utter weakness, as demonstrated by the wrong forms which are italicized in the failed questions extracted below:

Except 6

Question 26: The argument (grind) *grand, *grinded, grounded, grinds on for two years.

Question 27: The sailboat (speed) *speeded, speeds, speed the wind.

Question 28: The protestants were (fling) flinging, fling, *flunged, *flinged, *flaung, into a police van.

Question 29: He has (swing) swing, *swinged, swings, *swang himself out of the car.

Question 30: He had (string) *strang, strings, string, *stringed the shells on a silver chains.

The last finding of the study is the student's inability to generate the past forms of irregular verbs which have different forms for the simple past and the past participle, with a change of base vowel but no suffix, e.g.: *begin* ~ *began* ~ *begun*. The competence test on this class of irregular verbs requires simple past forms of *heave* and *spring* and past participles of *ring*, *shrink* and *swim* which are *hove*, *sprang*, *shrunk* and *swum*, accordingly. The students are not able to provide the required forms of the verbs. The students' grammatical weakness is further proved by the italicized wrong responses to all the test questions in this class of irregular verbs as shown below:

Except 7

Question 31: We all (heave) heave, heaved, heaves, had on the rope.

Question 32: She (spring) springs, sprinted, *springed, *springed, springs, *sprauged, sprung a surprise by winning the tournament.

Question 33: The church bell was (ring) *ringer, rang, springing, *ranged, rings, ringing every Sunday for years.

Question 34: The rumour has (shrink) shrink, *shrinked, shrinks, shrank to the size of a pea.

Question 35: The boys had (swim) swim, swam, *swimmed, *swimed, swims, *swom, swimming across the lake before the crocodile crawled into the water from the shore.

This research has established that some EAP students of a Nigerian university are deficient in generating the simple past and the past participle forms of all classes of English irregular verbs. They are unable to provide the simple past forms of *rend, saw, flee, stride, slay, shut, spit, grind, speed, heave, and spring*, and the past participles of *bend, strew, sew, swell, bereave, cleave, tread, lie, split, spread, cost, fling, swing, string, ring, shrink* and *swim*. The findings of the study further confirm earlier finding that the English irregular verb constitutes a difficulty for EAP students in a second language (Nwuba, 2010; Mansur, 2015; Adekemi, 2021). There are probable causes for these deficiencies. The differences between the verb systems of the students' native languages and the English language could have interfered with their learning of past forms of irregular verbs. Also, poor exposure of the learners to the grammar of the English verb could have culminated in improper learning of the past forms of irregular verbs. The linguistic deficiency may be due to the complexity of the inflectional morphology of irregular verbs with numerous forms which have to be learned to be used proficiently in English. The learning environment with the likelihood of inadequate teaching personnel and materials could also be responsible for the students' misuse of past forms of irregular verbs. In addition, the English verb is known to be problematic to learners of English as a second language because of its numerous features which the learners have to learn and master for effective communication. In conclusion, the study has established that undergraduate students of English for Academic Purposes lack mastery of the simple past and the past participle inflections of the English irregular verbs.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The purpose of the study is to assess the inflections of simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs in the written English of some undergraduate students of English for Academic

Purposes. Using structural grammar description of the inflections of simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs and their usage contexts in English as the linguistic basis for assessing the students' productions, a proficiency assessment test was designed to elicit responses from some fifty-eight students who were randomized from an EAP lecture group. The data analysis, employing central tendency statistical tools with a decision criterion mean score of 0.05, proves that the students have inadequate knowledge of inflection of simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs, as out of thirty-five irregular verbs, the students are incapable of generating the required past forms of twenty-eight verbs; implying that the student has insufficient knowledge in inflections of irregular verbs. The conclusion here is that some EAP students are deficient in the inflection of simple past and past participle forms of irregular verbs. The study recommends thorough drills for EAP students on simple past forms and past participles of the two hundred and fifty irregular verbs of English through sentence construction and essay writing task.

References

- Adekemi, B. T. (2021). Appraisal of Common Errors in Spoken and Written English of 400 level students of Gombe State University. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* vol.22 No.4.
- Amadi, S. C. (2018) Learning the English Passive Voice Difficulties, Learning Strategies of Igbo ESL Learners and Pedagogical Implications *International Journal of English and Literature. Literature* vol. 9(5), pp.50-62, <http://www.academicjournals.org//JEL>.
- Azar, B. S. (2003). *Fundamentals of English Grammar*. New York: Pearson
- Biber, D., Conrad, S and Leech, G. (2003). *Student's grammar of spoken and written English*. England: Pearson Education Limited
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition*: Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. and Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analysing Learner Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Foley, M & Hall, D (2008). *Advanced Learners' Grammar*. England: Pearson Education Limited
- Greenbaum, S. (1996). *The Oxford English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Huddleston, R & Pullum, G.K (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lester, M., Franklin, D. & Yokota, T. (2010). *English Irregular Verbs: A Reference for Beginning to Advanced ESL Students*. New York: McGraw Hill
- McKay, S.L (2008). *Researching Second Language classrooms*. New Jersey. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Nwuba, C. N. (2010). *The English irregular verbs: implications for second language learners*. Unpublished M.A thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech and Svartvik, J. (2007). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Edinburgh Pearson Education Limited
- Mansur, U. (2015). *Factors contributing to lexical verbs errors in foundation students. Essay writing at a tertiary education institution in Nigeria*. An unpublished M.E.D (TESL) Thesis Universiti Putra, Malaysia.
- Vince, M. (2003). *English Grammar & Vocabulary*. New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited