


Inherent Grammatical Inconsistencies: A Challenge for Learners of the English as a Second Language

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
<p>Keywords: <i>Grammatical inconsistencies, Challenge, L2 Learners and Second Language.</i></p> <p>©2025 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International</p> 	<p><i>Like any other natural language, English is rich and complex by virtue of its arbitrary and conventional symbols. Such symbols characterize the language with inherent grammatical irregularities in linguistic areas of morphology, syntax, phonology and spelling. In morphology, for instance, L₂ learners of the language unconsciously learn how to form new words in so many different ways. They form nouns, as an example, by adding -ment to some verbs to get statement and attachment. L₂ learners of the language are also taught that words ending in -er mean something or somebody that does something, like teacher, tapper, or drummer. A singer is somebody that sings. But does such part of the body like finger *fing? Do shoulders *should? Does liver *live? In inflectional morphology, adding -ed suffix to a verb, depending on context, indicates simple past or past perfect tense, like entered, killed, or kicked. But such -ed past tense morpheme is not applicable to the formation of past tenses for verbs like write (wrote), eat (ate), or come (came). From these few examples, it is assumed that grammatical rules of the English cannot be trusted, so to say. It will result to incongruities should the rules be applied mechanically. This is because the grammatical rules for word formation are not all together consistent. The inherent irregularities pose a challenge to the L₂ learner in acquiring communicative competence in the language. This paper is an attempt to investigate the inconsistencies prevalent in the grammatical rules of the English language, which have salient exceptions that L₂ learners are not always conversant with. The objective of the study is to highlight these grammatical flashpoints which confuse L₂ learners when they encounter the grammatical rule exceptions in normal communication events. Such investigation covers other linguistic areas of syntax, phonology and spelling. In pursuit of these objectives the paper will attempt to shed light on the following: why the pronunciations of many English words are not related to their spellings; why many words are not pronounced as spelt; why English spelling is so irregular, and; why the irregularities in the spelling and pronunciation of English words.</i></p>

*Linguistic sign of unacceptable

Introduction

Of all living human languages of the world today, English stands out as a world language, being the most widely spoken language and mutual means of communication between people of nations and races. It is being claimed that one person out every four in the world can be interacted with in English, and that there are now about 250 million people for which English is the mother tongue or first language. Adding this figure to people for whom the language serves as a second or foreign language (Africans, Asians, Russians, the French, and so on), the figure rises to about 350 million (Quirk, 1962; Verghese, 1989). Back home in Nigeria English serves as a second language for inter-ethnic and inter-personal relations. Beyond the country's shores, it is the language of international, political, diplomatic and industrial relations with other countries of the world. It is only in English that Nigeria can participate in world affairs. All commercial and international businesses are conducted through English. It is no gain saying therefore, that without the knowledge of English, Nigeria would be secluded from the rest of the world. It is for this reason that its study occupies

paramount position in the nation's curriculum. But the study and mastery of the language is hampered by inconsistencies in grammatical rules which often get L₂ learners confused in real language events.

To L₂ learners (like Nigerians) learning English is not as natural to them as it is to the native speaker, who has internalized the components of the language in their natural process of growing up. This is unlike the L₂ learner, for whom learning the language is intrinsically a deliberate effort at developing competence in the different components of the language – phonology (its sound system), syntax (its patterns for sentences and phrases), and morphology (word patterns and formations). To the L₂ learner of English, mastering these components with idiomatic precision is challenging due to inherent distractions involved in learning and applying the rules of the language.

Several research attempts have been made to contextualize the sources of the problems that pose challenge to the mastery of English as a second language. Some studies (Bryne, n.d.; Baugh and Cable, 2002; Singh 2005 and Hoad, 2006) have investigated into the irregular structure of the grammar of the English language. These scholars claim the irregularities emanate from Germanic, French, Greek and Latin influences. Historically, English acquired its vocabulary from diverse sources dating back to early invasions by the Vikings and Normans. The borrowing trend embraced the classical languages in the renaissance period and the adoption of foreign lexicons through commercial and colonial operations (Obasi, 2018). In their contribution, Pink and Thomas (1974) claim that the invention of the printing press in the 15th century is another historical reason for the inconsistencies in the grammar of the English. This enhanced the printing of books in quantum, each adopting the spelling of words prevalent in its area of operation.

The chequered historical development of English, Mastin (2011) observes, added to the un-uniform and confusing spelling pattern in the language. This largely has to do with open door borrowing from other languages, vowel/pronunciation shifts and reforms in orthography. Masten (2011) recounts that a great number of spelling rules, alongside their exceptions, are a source of confusion to both native and non-native speakers. This is more so to foreign and L₂ learners of the language. Buttressing this observation, Obasi avers that the spelling reforms which took place at different historical periods in Britain and United States further confounded situation such that there are variations in British and American spellings, as exemplified in *realize/realise*, *centre/center*, *dialog/dialogue*, *traveler/traveller*, *fulfillment/fulfilment*, *aging/ageing*, *spelled/spelt*, *favour/favor*, *humour/humor*, *programme/program*, etc.

Umera-Okeke (2008) states that three reasons are responsible for the lack of regular pattern in English spelling. One of the reasons, according to her, was the advent of the printing press in the 15th century, when the modern English spelling was fixed. Before this time there was no order in the matter of spelling. However, despite the harmonization of spelling system in this period (15th century), and despite far reaching changes in pronunciation, till date there is no correspondence between the written words and the spoken words. The second reason for the unsystematic spelling pattern in English is traceable to the influence of the French language from which certain symbols were adopted to represent English sounds. This informs the use of /s/ sound for letter[c] as *city*, *mice*, etc. The third reason for the disorder in English spelling and pronunciation is the attempt to the spelling of a word to reflect its origin. For instance, the Norman-French words, *doute* and *dette*, did not change in spelling when they gained currency in use. They later came to be written as *doubt* and *debt*. This is in reflection to their Latin origin of *dubitum* and *debitum*, respectively.

In addition to historical root of irregularities in the grammatical rules of English, empirical studies have also been carried out on the challenges they (the irregularities) constitute in learning the language in a second/foreign language environment. Oz (2014) highlights the essence of morphological awareness in making meanings of words in contexts. Oz submits that morphological awareness facilitates FL or L₂ learning. Abubakar (2015) examines the inconsistencies in the meaning of *-er* suffix morphemes. She discovers the prevailing inconsistencies to be a source of challenge to L₂ learning of English. Ida (2006), states that in discussing the orthography of the English, spelling

should be given special consideration. Solati (2013) provides two reasons for this. Spelling is essential in written communication because a writer cannot make their meaning clear if they cannot spell words correctly. Secondly, misspelling is considered a serious and unpardonable error in communication, as it marks the writer as either illiterate or outright ignorant fellow.

The above brief empirical survey buttresses the claim in this paper that actually, English is characterized by grammatical inconsistencies, which constitute impediment in learning the language in a second language environment like Nigeria. The apparent irregularities occur at various levels of applied linguistic analysis. In subsequent sections, the paper will attempt a survey of such irregularities with a view to providing a resource material for the L₂ teacher and learning aid to the L₂ learner of the language.

Morphological Inconsistencies in the English Language

Morphology is a branch of applied linguistics which deals with word formations and patterns. But as has been established above, due to its complex history and borrowing from other languages, English has many morphological inconsistencies which make its learning and mastery challenging to an L₂ learner. Such inconsistencies in word formation are mostly experienced in the formation plural forms of nouns, verb conjugations indicating tenses and words with similar spellings but different pronunciations. These are exemplified below.

- i. **Regular Nouns:** These are nouns which form their plural forms by adding *-s* or *-es* suffixes. Examples are: *boy-boys*, *girl-girls*, *bus-buses*, *bunch-bunches*. Even among these, there is variation in the realization of their plural morphemes. While some are realized as /s/, others are realized as /z/ or /ɪz/. Examples: cats *-/kæts/*, books *-/bʊks/*, maps *-/mæps/*; dogs *-/dɒgz/*, cows *-/kaʊz/*, leaves *-/li:vz/*; bench *-/bentʃɪz/*, house *-/haʊzɪz/*, dishes *-/dɪʃɪz/*.
- ii. **Irregular Nouns:** Irregular nouns disobey the traditional morphological rule of adding *-s* or *-es* suffixes as plural markers. These set of nouns are so irregular in their plural inflections that even incompetent native speakers of English can encounter challenges in applying the rules in communication. Examples are given below.
 - a. Irregular nouns that undergo internal vowel mutations as in *man –men*, *woman –women*, *goose –geese*, *mouse –mice*, *louse –lice*, etc.
 - b. Irregular nouns that form their plural markers through zero morpheme as in *deer*, *sheep* and *fish*.
 - c. Irregular nouns which form plurals through radical morphological applications that have no bearing with the singular forms as in *ox –oxen*, *child –children*, etc.
 - d. Borrowed nouns that have French, Greek or Latin origin as in *criterion –criteria*, *agendum –agenda*, *memorandum –memoranda*, *stadium –stadia*, etc.
 - e. Compound nouns present more complex problems in their formation of plural forms as in *president-general –presidents-general*, *commander-in-chief –commanders-in-chief*, *son-in-law –sons-in-law*, etc.
- iii. **Regular Verbs:** Regular verbs are those verbs that form their past and past perfect tenses by suffixing *-d* or *-ed* morphemes. Examples: *record –recorded*, *bag –bagged*, *map –mapped*, *plaster –plastered*, *date –dated*, etc. Regular verbs may not pose challenges to a non-native learner forming their past and past perfect tenses, but they may find them problematic in their phonetic realizations which vary. Below are few examples with similar morphological endings, but with different phonetic realizations. Examples: *Stoned*, */stəʊnd/*, *washed* */wɒʃt/*, *started* */sta:tɪd/*, *played* */pleɪd/*, *faced*, */feɪst/* *handed* */hændɪd/*, etc.
- iv. **Irregular Verbs:** As we have in nouns, we also have irregular verbs in English language. Like their irregular noun counterparts, irregular verbs defy the conventional order of suffixing *-d* or *-ed* morphemes as past and past perfect tense markers. Examples: *eat –ate*

–*eaten, take – took –taken, make –made –made, sit –sat –sat, mean –meant –meant, catch –caught –caught, think –thought – thought*, etc. Furthermore, there are some irregular verbs which do not undergo any morphological mutations to form past and past perfect tenses. These are known as invariant verbs. Examples: *put, read, set, cut, let, and hit*. Note that there are variations in realizing the present and past tense/past perfect tenses of *read* - /ri:d/ for simple present tense; /red/ for past and past perfect tenses.

Inconsistencies in Spelling and Pronunciation

The challenges in spelling and pronunciation (sound) are various and discrete. For convenience they can be classified under the following categories.

- Same letters that are pronounced differently.
- Same sound represented by different letters.
- Letters that are spelt, but not pronounced.
- Words whose pronunciations are diametrically different from the letters that compose them.

I. Same Letters Pronounced Differently

In English, a letter can assume different sounds depending on its context of occurrence. Below are illustrative samples.

- a. The letter **c** is never realized as **c** sound. It is always realized either as consonant /k/ - *camp, court, come*, etc; or fricative /s/ - *cell, excel, except, ceiling*, etc.
- b. Letter **g** is realized in two ways in pronunciation: as plosive /g/ like in *goat, gate, good, gun*, etc. In some places it is realized as affricate /dʒ/ as in *large, huge, sage, age*, etc.
- c. The letter **s** has about four different phonetic (sound) realizations as fricatives:
 - (i) /s/: *see, sit, seven, set*, etc.
 - (ii) /z/: *season, boys, easy, nose, base*, etc.
 - (iii) /ʃ/: *sure, sugar, fusion, fission*, etc
 - (iv) /ʒ/: *treasure, measure, visual, vision*, etc.
- d. The vowel letter **u** has six different phonetic realizations either as monothong or diphthong:
 - i. /ʊ/ as *put, pull, bull*, etc.
 - ii. /aɪ/ as in *guy, buy*.
 - iii. /ə/ as in *purchase, success, button, succumb*, etc.
 - iv. /ʌ/ as in *strut, bus, study, such, much*, etc.
 - v. /ɜ:/ as in *nurse, purse*, etc
 - vi. /ʊə/ as in *cure, pure, jury*, etc.
- d. The letter **a** has about six different realizations either as a monothong or diphthong. Examples include the following.
 - i. /ɪ/ as in *manage, village, salvage, private*, etc.
 - ii. /e/ as in *many, any, famous*, etc.
 - iii. /ɔ:/ as in *salt, malt, walk, talk, tall*, etc.
 - iv. /ɒ/ as in *wash, was, want*, etc.
 - v. /ɑ:/ as in *palm, start, father, park, mark, ask*, etc.
 - vi. /æ/ as in *clap, trap, bad, mad, sat, match*, etc.

II. Same Sound Represented by Different Letters

Another area of inconsistency in English is the area of dichotomy between spelling and pronunciation; where a sound is not always represented by the same letters. Here we have six categories.

- a. **The long vowel sound /u:/ assumes different spellings in different morphological environments.** Like in *goose, food, two, blue, group, route, shoe, canoe, blue, tune*, etc.

- b. The short vowel sound /e/ assumes different spellings in varying environments as found in dress, bed, head, spread, many, any, said, again, leopard, Geoffrey, Leonard, friend, guest, guess, etc.**

Among the consonants sounds, dichotomy of sounds and spelling also exists. Examples:

- a. The labio-dental fricative /f/ sound is spelt as:**

- i. *f* in *fat, soft, face, fan, etc.*
- ii. *ff* in *coffee, coffin, off, affair, etc.*
- iii. *gh* as in *rough, laugh, cough, etc.*
- iv. *ph* as in *photo, trophy, paragraph, phenomenon, Philomena, etc.*

- b. The alveolar nasal /n/ sound is realized in spelling as follows:**

- i. *n* as in *nice, nut, sun, net, etc.*
- ii. *nn* as in *nanny, sunny, funny, running, etc.*
- iii. *kn* as in *knowledge, knife, know, etc.*
- iv. *pn* as *pneumatic, pneumonia, pnemonics, pneumatology, etc*

- c. The palate-alveolar fricative sound /dʒ/ realizes its spellings in the following letters:**

- i. *dj* as *judge, bridge, budget, etc.*
- ii. *dj* as *adjourn, adjoin, adjust, adjacent, etc.*
- iii. *d* as *soldier, etc.*
- iv. *j* as *judge, joy, Jos, jump, etc.*
- v. *g* as in *germ, gorge, engine, cage, gage, etc.*

- d. The velar plosive consonant /g/ sound is differently spelt as:**

- i. *gh* as in *ghost, ghastly, ghoulish, aghast, etc.*
- ii. *g* as *give, get, go, gutter, etc.*
- iii. *gg* as *boggle, begging, jogging, juggle, giggle, etc*

- e. The velar plosive consonant /k/ sound has different spelling forms as shown below:**

- i. *k* as in *kit, key, beak, etc. school*
- ii. *c* as in *coat, corn, cup, camp, etc.*
- iii. *cc* as in *accommodation, accord, occult, occasion, etc.*
- iv. *ch* as *school, scheme, chemistry, stomach, etc.*
- v. *ck* as in *clock, back, smack, snack, etc.*

Letters that Are Spelt, but not Pronounced

Many English words contain letters which are not sounded out in pronunciation. Such letters are said to be silent. Writing such words as pronounced would amount to error in spelling. They are part of the challenges encountered in learning English as a second language. Below are some examples.

- i. Unpronounced *w* as in *wrong /rɒŋ/, write /raɪt/, sword /sɔ:d/, whole /həʊl , whore-house /hɔ:h aʊs/, who /hu:/, etc.*
- ii. Unpronounced *u* as in *guide /gaɪd/, guard /ga:d/, quest, /kwest/, etc*
- iii. Unpronounced *t* as *castle /kɑ:s əl/, whistle /wɪsəl/, listen /lɪsən/, Christmas /krɪsməs/, Christendom /krɪsəndəm/, depot, /depəʊ/, etc.*
- iv. Unpronounced *p* as in *phone /fəʊn/, psalm /sɑ:m/, psaltery /sɔ:ltəri/, receipt /rɪsi:t/, psych /saɪk/, phobia /fəʊbiə/, etc.*
- v. Unpronounced *m* as in *mnemonic /nɪmɒnɪk/ etc.*
- vi. Unpronounced *n* as in *column /kɒləm/, condemn /kəndem/, etc.*
- vii. Unpronounced *d* as in *Wednesday /wenzdi/, handkerchief /hæŋkətʃɪf/, width /wɪθ/, etc.*
- viii. Unpronounced *l* as in *half /hɑ:f/, calm /kɑ:m/, palm /pɑ:m/, talk /tɔ:k/, walk /wɔ:k/, etc.*
- ix. Unpronounced *k* as in *knot /nɑ:t/, knock /nɑ:k/, knuckle /nʌkəl/, knife /naɪf/, know /nəʊ/, knight /naɪt/, etc.*

- x. Unpronounced **h** as in *hour* /aʊə/, *honour* /ɒnə/, *honest* / ɒnəst/, *heir* /eə/, etc
- xi. Unpronounced **g** as in *sign* /sam /, *design* /dɪzain/, *gnash* /næʃ/, *gnome* /nəʊm/, etc.
- xii. Unpronounced **c** as in *science* /saɪəns/, *scene* /si:n/, *sent* /sent/, etc.
- xiii. Unpronounced **b** as in *lamb* /l æm/, *tomb* /tu:m/, *thumb* /θʌm/, *bomb* /bɒm/, *plumb* plʌm/, etc.

Words Whose Pronunciations Diametrically Differ From Their Morphological Makeups

Adding to the challenges faced by the L₂ learners of English is the fact that there are some words whose pronunciations are diametrically different from the letters that compose them. Examples include: *queue* /kju:/, *chour* /kwaɪə/, *yacht* /jɒt/, etc.

Handling the Inconsistency Challenges in L₂ Learning of English

It is true, as can be seen from the preceding analysis, that English is notoriously inconsistent especially at its morphological, spelling and phonological levels. This notwithstanding, there are certain observable patterns which can serve as a guide to the mastery of the language. Those patterns are pinpointed below for the assistance of the L₂ learner of the language.

i. Changing the Final y to i

English words that end in y often change to i before a vowel except in a suffix that starts with i. Few examples include: *magnify* –*magnifies/magnified*; *marry* –*marries/married*; *verify* –*verified/verifies/verifiable*; *happy*- *happily/happiness*; *busy* – *busier/business*, etc.

ii. Adding -es instead of -s Suffix in Nouns and Verbs

- a. For the inflections of nouns and verbs that end in consonant sibilant sounds - /z/, /s/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /x/ - add -es rather than -s suffix. Examples: *buzz* – *buzzes*, *glaze* – *glazes*; *bus* –*buses*, *glass* – *glasses*; *trench* – *trenches*, *bleach* – *bleaches*; *slash* – *slashes*, *finish* – *finishes*, etc.
- b. When the final y letter in a noun or verb is preceded by a consonant, the y changes to i to form an inflection. Examples: *marry* – *marries/married*; *cry* – *cries/cried*; *lorry* – *lorries*; *nanny* – *nannies*; *baby* – *babies*, etc.

iii. Consonant Doubling and Non-doubling

- a. When the final consonant in a word is preceded by a vowel, the consonant is often doubled before -ing, -ed, -er, -est and -ish suffixes. Examples: *clan* – *clannish*; *fat* – *fatten*, *fatter*, *fattest*; *run* – *runner*, *running*; *big* – *bigger*, *biggest*; *begin* – *beginner*, *beginning*; *beg* – *beggar*, *begging*, *begged*; *drag* – *dragged*, *dragging*; *rub* – *rubbed*, *rubbing*; *refer* – *referring*, *referred*; *permit* – *permitted*, *permitting*; *admit* – *admitted*, *admitting*, *submit* – *submitted*, *submitting*, *stop* – *stopped*, *stopping*, etc.
- b. For words ending in double consonants, or have two vowels before a final consonant, the final consonant is not doubled. Examples: *start* – *starts*, *starting*, *starting*; *long* – *longing*, *longed*; *return* – *returned*, *returning*; *hand* – *handed*, *handing*; *coil* – *coiled*, *coiling*; *curl* – *curled*, *curling*, etc.

iv. -ei- and -ie- words

Rules of spelling occur for -ei- and -ie- words. Examples: (-ei- words) – *conceive*, *receive*, *receipt*, *deceive*, *deceit*, *ceiling*, etc. (-ie- words): *believe*, *belief*; *relieve*, *relief*; *grieve*, *grief*, *chief*, etc.

v. Dropping or Retaining Silent e Before Adding Syllables

- a. The silent e that ends a verb is dropped before the addition of the following suffixes: -ing, -able, -ary, -ition, -ous, -ation. Examples: *advertise* – *advertising*, *cope* – *coping*, *phone* – *phoning*, *pounce* – *pouncing*, *issue* – *issuing*, *pursue* – *pursuing*, *manage* – *managing*, *rogue* – *roguish*, etc.

Note: The above have exceptions, like: *dye* – *dyeing*, *see* – *seeing*, *be* – *being*, *mile* – *mileage*, etc.

b. For all the regular verbs that end in letter *e*, they add **-d** suffix to form past and past perfect tenses. Examples: admire – admired; dance – danced; love – loved; refine – refined; refuse – refused; enslave – enslaved, etc.

c. Before adding *-y* and *-th* suffixes, for words ending in silent *e*, the *e* is dropped. Examples: nose – nosy; edge – edgy, noise – noisy; wide – width, etc.

Note: There are two exceptions to rule *c* above.

1. When the adjective-forming suffixes – *a*, *o*, *u* – are added to words ending in **-ce** or **-ge**, the silent *e* is retained. Examples: cage – cagey; marriage – marriageable; knowledge – knowledgeable; dice – dicey; change – changeable, etc.

2. When the suffix begins with a consonant the silent *e* is retained in forming a new word. Examples: care – careless/careful, edge – edgewise, entire – entirely/entirety, base – basement, engage – engagement, advertise – advertisement, etc.

Note: For 2 above, there are exceptions where the *e* is dropped, like in wise – wisdom, argue – argument, true – truly, judge – judgment, etc.

d. To form the comparative and superlative forms, an adjective that ends in *e* takes **-r** and **-st** suffixes. Examples: wide – wider – widest; large – larger – largest; late – later – latest, pale – paler – palest, etc.

e. When an adjective ends in *e*, to form **-ly** adverb, the *e* is retained, like in late – lately; nice – nicely; wide – widely, etc.

f. When an adjective ends in **le**, the *e* is dropped before adding *y* in **-ly** adverbs, as in terrible – terribly, reasonable – reasonably, simple, simply, etc.

g. Realization of -ed Past and Past Perfect Tense Morphemes

The **-ed** past and past perfect tense morphemes is realized differently in different morphological environments as summarized below

i. When a verb ends in /t/ or /d/ consonant the **-ed** is realized as /ɪd/. Examples: start - /stɑ:tɪd/, desided - /desaɪdɪd/, landed - /lændɪd/, provide - /prəvaɪdɪd/, waited - /weɪtɪd/, bolted - /bɔ:ltɪd/, etc.

ii. The voiceless consonant sounds of /p, k, f, s, ʃ, and tʃ/ realize their **-ed** inflection as /t/, like roped- /rəʊpt/, missed - /mɪst/, locked - /lɒkt/, smashed - /smætʃt/, slapped - /slæpt/, fixed /fɪkst/, etc

iii. All voiced, minus /d/, realize their **-ed** as /d/, like in stoned- /stəʊnd/, sued - /sju:d/, solved - /sɔ:lvd/, pegged - /pegd/, hurried - /hʌrɪ:d/, bribed - /braɪbd/, bowed - /bəʊd/, etc.

h. The Formation of Plurals after Voiceless Sound

In forming the plurals /s/ occurs in a voiceless sound except the hissing consonant sounds – /s, ʃ, tʃ/. The following serve as examples: rats /ræts/, pits /pɪts/, cooks /kuks/, boats /bəʊts/, plots /plɒts/, packs /pæks/, etc.

i. When y Changes to i

a. When *y* that ends a noun or a verb is preceded by a consonant, the *y* changes to *i*, as in baby – babies, marry – marries, fry – fries, tarry – tarries, etc.

b. When *y* or *w* that ends a noun or verb is preceded by a vowel, both the *y* and *w* are retained, like in play – plays, delay – delays, pew – pews, plow – plows, day – days, guy – guys, monkey – monkeys, etc.

j. Inflection of Words in Ending in O

a. Some nouns ending in *o* take **-es** inflection as in *commandoes*, *tornadoes*, *tomatoes*, etc.

Note: In some other nouns the vowel letter *o* has other ways of forming their plurals.

1. Some simply add **-s**, as in *crescendos*, *albinos*, *casinos*, *buffalos*, *provisos* etc.

2. Some nouns ending in *o* have two plural forms: *innuendoes/innuendos*, *cargoes/cargos*, etc.

Homophones and Homonyms

Other two areas of concern in L₂ learning of English are homophones and homonyms. The former refer to words with the same sounds as other words, but with different meanings and spellings.

Examples: complementary/complimentary, stationary/stationery, flower/flour, bare/bear/beer, knight/night, etc.

Homonyms are words spelt the same, but with different meanings. Examples: see (to perceive with the eyes)/sea (large body of water), saw (past tense of see)/saw (carpentry tool for cutting), spring (season of the year)/spring (coiled metal object), cloud (pertaining to weather)/cloud (online collection of data or applications), bank (financial institution)/ bank (riverbank), bat (animal)/bat (sports equipment), etc. Though highly tricky in practical language event, homophones and homonyms add to the complexity and interest in learning English as a second language.

Conclusion/Recommendation

In this paper attempt has been made to highlight certain grammatical inconsistencies which characterize the English language. The aim is not to prescribe how to use grammatically correct English in the mould of Traditional English Grammar, but to spotlight the pitfalls which would pose challenge to the L₂ learner of the language. By so doing the paper hopes to serve as a resource material to the teacher, and learning material to the L₂ learner of the English language. On this note the paper concludes with the following suggestions to help the L₂ learner improve on his effort in mastering the foremost international language of today.

- i. The L₂ teacher should engage in constant improvement of their competence in the language so as to be able to help students be aware of their spelling and pronunciation problems that may result in their being misunderstood by others.
- ii. Students should be provided with practical opportunities for them to constantly put into practice those aspects of English sound and spelling systems that they find problematic.
- iii. Students should be encouraged to always make use of the dictionary and the thesaurus in studying or just reading any material in the English language. This would enhance their vocabulary development in the language.

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