ENGLISH GENITIVE ON SIGNBOARDS IN ABA

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ABSTRACT
The genitive case in grammar, is the case that is used to mark possession. The English language marks the genitive case by the use of the apostrophe *'s*. The objectives of this paper are: to illustrate the fact that there is a default in the use of the genitive case marking on some of the writings done in the English language on some signboards in Aba and; that the omission of the apostrophe *'s* in the use of the English genitive case in the writings on the signboards in Aba, is a reflection of the poor use of the language in communication in the city. The data for this paper is gotten by the observation of some of the English writings on signboards in Aba. The theoretical framework on which this paper is carried out is the theory of *Error analysis.* The choice of this theory is because it helps in the descriptive account of the various types of errors that can be found in the human language. The study finds that: the omission of the English genitive marker on signboards in Aba is erroneous in the standard use of the language, and that the error in the non-use of the English genitive marker, is misleading in the acquisition and use of the English language.

Keywords: Aba, English language, Error Analysis, Genitive Case, Signboard

1.0 INTRODUCTION:
The grammar of every language requires that the rules that are operational in that language be strictly observed in order to avoid the production of ungrammatical expressions in such a language. cf. Lyons (1968, p. 133), Robins, (1989, p.20), Ndimele (1999, p.80), O'Grady et al (2001, p. 716), Carnie (2007, p. 8), and Akmajian et al (2008, 151).The grammatical marking of the genitive case on the appropriate noun in the English language by use of the apostrophe*'s,* is a principle that must be observed in order for acceptable constructions to be produced. This paper is concerned with the use of the genitive case on signboards in Aba. In the subsections that will follow, some key terms that are relevant to this paper will be presented.

The framework and methodology employed in this paper will equally be briefly discussed.

1.1 Conceptual Review
In language study, case is a grammatical paradigm of declension that is used to specify various nominal functions in the grammar of a language, such as: nominative, accusative, oblique, dative, adnominal (genitive), instrumental and so on. Lyons (1968, p. 390), notes that, "… the most typical function of what is called *possessive* or *genitive,* is to modify a noun or noun-phrase, in endocentric construction and this is also the most typical function of the adjective". This implies that the

main role of the genitive marker is, to add extra information to the noun on which it is inflected. An endocentric construction, it must be explained here, is a type of construction that is made up of a compound word, or a phrase where one of the words links the other words syntactically. Thus, genitive construction in the English language is an endocentric construction because the nouns in associative constructions are grammaticaly linked in that the noun on which the apostrophe *'s* in inflected on, specifies the possession of the other. Also in anendocentric construction, the linking word is identified as the head. If the head in an endocentric construction is omitted in speech or writing, then this will lead to a distortion in the meaning of the construction. This is because it is the head word that confers the meaning to the other words in the construction. Lyons explains further that in traditional grammar, the term *adnominal* is given to the *genitive case* just as the term adverbial is given to the function of modifying the verb. Lyons (1968, p. 390), gives the following examples in the English language to illustrate the function of grammatical modification in the genitive and adjective constructions.

1a. Harry's pencil.
  b. The red pencil.
  c. The pencil is Harry's.

In (1a and c) above, the modifying morpheme, is the English genitive apostrophe *'s,* which is inflected on the noun *Harry*, while in (1b), the modifier in the construction, is the adjective *red,* which modifies the object, *pencil.* Lyons (1968, p. 390), explains that the type of genitive marking in (1a), is called *subjective genitive,* while that of (1c), is called objective genitive. Lyons (1968, p. 390), however notes that in the English language, *the subjective genitive* and *objective genitive* are in complementary distribution.

According to O'grady, Archibald, Aronolf and Rees- Miller (2001, pp. 160-162), "…

inflectional contrast associated with nouns in many languages involves case -a category that encodes information about an element's grammatical role (subject, direct object, and so on)". This means that inflectional contrasts that are marked on nouns as case distinctions are used to indicate the nominal role of the inflected item, which could be: nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, oblique, ablative and so on. O'Grady et al (2001, p. 160), go on to mention that some languages are more rich in case declension than others. For instance as noted by O'Grady et al (2001, p. 160), the Turkish language has six case categories, while Romanian has two. O'Grady et al used the examples from the Turkish language to illustrate the six genitive case language marking type. This is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Six genitive case language

CASE	FORM	TYPE OF ELEMENT THAT IT MARKS
2a. Nominative	ev-‖	The subject
b. Accusative	ev-i	The direct object
c. Dative	ev-e	The recipient
d. Genitive	ev-in	The possessor
e. Locative	ev-de	A place or location
f. Ablative	ev-den	Direction away from

The use of the case morphemes are illustrated in the Turkish sentences below:

3a. Adam-‖ ev-i Ahmed- e g ster-di.

Man   nom house-Acc Ahmed- Dat   show
past
'The man showed the house to Ahmed'.

b. Ev – in rengi-‖ ma: vidir.
  house-Gen colour-Nom   blue
  'The house's colour is blue'.

c. Adam-‖ ev-de kalel½.
  Man-nom   house- Loc stayed
'The man stayed in the house'.

d. Adam-‖ev-den t◁½kt½.
  Man-Nom house -Abl went
'The man went from the house'.

From the examples above, one can see that the case markings are inflected on nouns to show the grammatical function of the nominal entity. The genitive case, which is the focus of this paper is marked with the *–in* suffix in the Turkish language. O'Grady et al, (2001, p. 160), went further to mention that in some languages, case is realised through changes in the form of the determiner. This type of case marking is illustrated with examples in the German language below:

4. Der   Mann sient   den   Hund.
 The (Nom)   man   sees the (Acc)   dog'.

In (4) above, the article used to mark the nominative case in the German language is *der*, while that for the accusative case is *den.*

Case marking in some languages like Japan results in free word order. This is illustrated below with examples from the Japanese language.

Subject –Direct object –   Verb order

4a. Yumiko-ga- sono–kodomo-o sikat-ta.
   Yumiko- Nom that child-Acc scold-Pst.
'Yumiko scolded the child'.

 Direct object- Subject – Verb order

b. Sonokodomo-o Yumiko-gasikat-ta.
That child-Acc Yumiko-Nom   scold-Pst.
'Yumiko scolded the child'.

cf. O'Grady et al (2001, p. 161).

From the examples in (4a) and (4b), in spite of the difference in word order in the two constructions, the meaning of the sentences are the same, since each nominal in the construction is grammatically marked according to its case function.

In case marking, it must be mentioned that the term *Ergative* (Erg) is used to refer to the subject of a transitive verb, while the subject of an intransitive verb is called *Absolutive* (Abs). Ergative case marking is not as common as the Nominative-Accusative case marking. However, Ergative case marking is found in languages like: Basque, (in Spain), Tagalog (in the Philipines), Tabssaram (in the Caucasus), Inukitat (in northern Canada and Greenland), and Halkomelem (on the west coast of Canada).

The Nominative-Accusative case marking is found in Turkish, German, Russsian, Japanese, Korean, and many other languages. In Old English, nouns and determiners were marked for case. It was as a result of the numerous case markings in old English that led to the acceptance of the Norse dialect which had a simplified case marking system during the Danish rule of 787AD-850AD. cf. Baugh and Cable (2013, p. 98). The simplified nominal forms were carried over to the Middle and Modern English forms. However, in Modern English, the only remnant of the case system is the genitive suffix-*'s,* that is used to mark the possessors of an item or some items.

For example:
5. The man's book.

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In (5) above, the apostrophe *'s,* that is affixed on the subject *man,* marks the possessor of the object, *bag*. In Modern English, neither nouns nor determiners are inflected to mark grammatical relations such as subject and direct object. However, according to O'Grady et al, (2001, p.162), "English pronouns exhibit case contrasts, distinguishing a nominative (I, they, he), an accusative (me, them, him), and a genitive (my, their, his/hers)". This implies that the English pronouns are the only left trace of the Old English case markings. These are illustrated below.

Nominative:
6a. I wrote the letter.
b. You spoke to the man.
c. He left.
d. She read the book.
e. They bought a new house.

The underlined pronouns above in (6a-e), are used to mark the *Nominative* (Subjective) case.
Accusative:

7a. The man kissed me.
b. He helped you.
c. The doctor treated him.
d. The students are fond of her.
e. She saw them.

The underlined pronouns above, in (7a-e), are in the accusative case.

Genitive:
8a. This is my book.
b. That is your book.
c. That is his shirt.
d. This is her bag.
e. These are their pencils.

9a. John*'s* room.
b. Lucy*'s* and Mary*'s* brother
c. Grace*'s* cup.
d. Jones*'s* car.
e. Marx*'s* book.
f. In Jesus*'s* name, we pray. Amen!

g. In three days*'s* time.
h. The nurses's office.

It must be mentioned here, that whether a noun ends phonetically or graphically with a voiceless or voiced alveolar fricative, the genitive must be phonetically pronounced, but graphically some authors use only the apostrophe ['], when the word ends with a voiceless or voiced alveolar fricative, while others overtly write out the apostrophe*'s,* as in examples (9c-h).

In a further explanation, the apostrophe*'s* is phonetically pronounced, /ɪz/ when it is preceded by a voiceless or voiced alveolar fricative,/s, z/, or the voiceless and voiced palato-alveolar affricate,/ʧ, ʤ/. In other cases, the state of the glottis of the segment that precedes it, determines its realisation as either a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ or a voiced alveolar fricative /z/. For example:

10 a. Philip*'s* shoes.
b. Lucy*'s* scarf.
The apostrophe's in (10a), is phonetically realized as a voiceless alveolar fricative, /s/, because it is preceded by a voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. While in (10b), the apostrophe*'s,* is phonetically realized as /z/, because it is phonetically preceded by voiced palatal plosive /j/.

Matthews (2007, p. 49), refers to case as an: "Inflectional category basically of nouns, which typically mark their role in relation to other parts of the sentence". This means that case as a grammatical category is inflected on nouns only. Carnie (2007, p. 27), with reference to the English language notes that case is, "The form a noun takes depending upon its position in the sentence". This implies that case marking in the English can be predicted by the position of the nominal in a construction since in the English language or Subject Verb Object languages (SVO), the nominative case naturally occurs at sentence initial position, while the accusative case occurs at sentence final position. Carnie

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gives examples of the singular and plural forms of the *Nominative, Accusative and Anaphoric* cases in the English language as shown in Table 2:

From Table 2, one can see that anaphors agree in person, number and gender with its antecedent.

Table 2: Singular and plural forms of the *Nominative, Accusative and Anaphoric* cases in the English language

Nominative		Accusative		Anaphoric	
singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
11a. I	We	12a. Me	Us	13a. Myself	Ourselves
b. You	You	b. You	You	b. Yourself	Yourselves
c. He	They	c. Him	Them	c. Himself	Themselves
d. She	They	d. Her	Them	d. Herself	Themselves
e. It	They	e. It	Them	e. Itself	Themselves

(cf. Carnie 2007, p. 49).

1.2 Aba

Aba is the trade centre of the Ngwa people and the entire Abia State. The Ngwa people are a group of the Igbo tribe, who speak Ngwa as their dialect of the Igbo language. Aba was founded by one of the grandsons of Oha Ngwa called, *Aba Amaku.* Oha Ngwa is the father of the Ngwa nation. cf. Nwankwo (2009). During the colonial period, many white men settled in Ngwa land especially in Aba because the Ngwa people were hospitable to them. This hospitality in the terrain, and the quality of good water found underground in Aba, encouraged the colonial masters and other investors to establish industries like: the Lever Brothers, the Nigerian Breweries, Paterson Zochonis (PZ), International Equitable Industry, Seven-Up Bottling Company, and so on. The Aba Blue

River, gives these industries the sewage for their liquid waste product. With the industrialized nature of Aba, it became populated by people from all parts of the world, who have come to work as either expatriates or labourers. With the commercial and industrial nature of Aba, the need for transportation became imperative. At the present time, the most common means of public transport is the tricycle, though there are buses, taxis (which are very few), and motorcycles. As a major business centre in the south eastern part of Nigeria, the use of the signboard for advertisement by different organisations is imperative. This paper examines the use of the English genitive on some of the signboards in this city.

1.3 English language

English is a language borne out of the fusion of many related Germanic dialects. Baugh and Cable (2013, p. 41), report that: "the first people in England about whose language we have definite knowledge are the Celts". This implies that the original owners of the land known as England are the Celts. The two divisions of the Celtic language are: the Gaelic or Goidelic branch and the Brythonic branch. Before the arrival of the Germans on the British Isles, Latin was spoken in Britain for a period of about 400 years. Latin was introduced into Britain when it became a province of the Roman empire. This was under the reign of Julius Caesar in 55BC. During the Roman Empire, most of the Germanic tribes of northern Europe were not under the rule of the Romans, except the south western parts. Irrespective of this situation, some German soldiers served in the Roman military and troops from Germanic tribes such as Tungri, Batavi and Frisii served in Britain under the Roman Command. With this situation at hand, Germanic settlement and domination of the British Isles, took a toll during the Migration Period which occurred in the 5th to 7th century AD as a result of the collapse of the Roman Empire. About 449AD, Vortigern, king of the Britons (Celtic king), invited the popular *Angle Kin,* led by the Germanic brothers: Hengist and Horsa to help fight the Picts who were attacking the British Isles. Vortigern in turn promised to give the *Angle Kins* lands on the Isle of Thanet, Southeastern part of Britain for settlement.

When the German soldiers saw that the land was comfortable, they expanded their territory by bringing into the British Isle, more of their people. This wave of settlement led to the establishment of seven kingdoms called the *heptarchy.* The Saxons were settled in Essex, Wessex and Sussex; the Angles in East Anglia,

Mercia and Northumbria; and the Jutes in Kent. The Presence of the German tribes brought about an abrupt end to the existing functional Roman civilization of the Celtic people who are the original owners of the British Island. The history of the English language is divided into three periods. These divisions are based on the features which mark out each phase in the development of the language. The period from 450AD to 1150AD is called the Old English era. It is sometimes referred to as the phase or era of grammatical inflections.

This is because the endings of nouns, adjectives and verbs were inflected for different grammatical notions. From 1150AD to 1500AD, is referred to as the Middle English. In this period much grammatical inflections were reduced. From 1500AD to 1600AD is known as the Modern English era. From 1500AD, the language had great vowel shifts and consonant changes. In Modern English, the large part of the grammatical inflections ceased to be functional. cf. Baugh and Cable (2013, p. 48). Since this paper is not on the history of the English language, the essence of this sub-section is just to give a background information of the language of discuss in this paper. For this reason, one will have to stop the discussion on the formation and development of the English language here.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Corder (1974, p. 123), "Error is a term used in psycholinguistics, referring to mistakes in speech or writing based on the user's inability to conform to a set of standards of expression in his target language". This means that an error in speech or writing,is a shift or a default from the intended expression. Error analysis is usually carried out in a second

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learners's speech. Akidi (2016, p. 167), notes that, "Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics that concerns itself with the study, compilation and analysis of errors made by the second language learners". In other words, error analysis is undertaken to help a second language learner to improve his performance in a target language. Error analysis is usually carried out at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels of any human language. Following Ugorji (2018, pp. 45-46), some of the errors that have been identified in linguistics are discussed below.

2.1 Expressive error

This is the type of error that is found in the speech and writing of a second language learner. Expressive errors are always in the form of incorrect modes of expression in the target language by the learner. Expressive errors at the phonological level involve the wrong pronunciation of words and at the morphological, and syntactic level they involve wrong grammatical constructions. At the semantic level, this will involve wrong interpretation of words.

2.2 Receptive error

This type of error is as a result of incomprehension or lack of understanding of the rules of the target language.

2.3 Analogical error

This type of error is due to the fact that the learner of a second language has not properly mastered the rules of the target language. For this reason, the learner overgeneralizes the rules to include the exceptional cases of the rules. For instance, the learner in the plural form of English nouns may overgeneralize *man* as *mans* instead of *men*, *mouse* as *mouses*, instead of mice. Analogical errors are due to imperfect understanding of the rules of the target language.

2.4 Transfer error

This type of error occurs when the learner equates the features that are close to his mother tongue to that of his target language. At the phonological level, the speaker may pronounce the words of the target language using the phonological features of his first language, and at the syntactic level-, he imposes the word order of his mother tongue to be the same thing in the target language.

2.5 Causes of error

Having discussed some of the errors that are encountered in language learning, one will also take a look at the factors that could lead to the causes of errors in language learning.

2.5.1 Homophony and wrong phonographonology

These two phenomena cause error in sentences where two or more words are pronounced the same, but spelt differently. For instance, *week* could be placed for *weak/wick, too* for *two,* and *waist* for *waste.*

2.5.2 Inaccurate listening and pronunciation habit

When a learner has failed to listen well in order to distinguish the distinctive sounds of a word, the learner often times ends up producing ill-pronounced words. For instance, the learner may pronounce *impact* for *impart*; *guide* for *guard; weak* for *wick; event* for *invent*, and so on.

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2.5.3 Pronunciation spelling and spelling pronunciation

This is another factor that causes error. This type normally shows up when the learner has not been able to differentiate between the pronunciation form of a language from its written form. This is mostly found in English language where there is inconsistency between the spelt form of a word and its pronounced form. For instance in English, there is a difference between the way the following words are pronounced and the way they are spelt: talk /tɔ:k/, calm /kɑ:m/ annihilate /əˈnaɪəˌleɪt/, and so on.

2.5.4 Teacher induced error

This type of error is as a result of the teaching technique and the teaching materials used by the teacher in the context of teaching and learning of a language. This could also be because the teacher has not used the right materials and the necessary teaching strategies in the classroom situation, or that the teacher is not adequately informed on the topic in context. Having considered some causes of error in language learning, the next sub-section of this paper will give an explanation of the term *signboards.*

2.6 Signboard

A signboard is a billboard which displays the name or logo of a business or product, or the name of a shop with its name written with paint materials on it. cf. Oxford languages (2022, p. 1). Another definition has it that; "A signboard is a piece of wood which has been painted with picture or words and which gives some information about a particular place, product, or event". This means that on a signboard, one can have pictures drawn, or words written on it. Cf.

Merriam-webster (2022, p. 1). Another term that is often considered when signboards are being discussed is the term *signage*. According to Merriam-webster (2022, p. 1), "Signage, is a term that is used to refer to all the visual graphics (public advertisements, billboards, groups of graphics, and so on) that communicate information to the public". This means that any signboard advertising any good or service on a roadway, is called a signage. Some of the synonyms of signage are: lighting, a-boards, paving, fascias and shop fronts.

Some of the importance of signages are: to assist in the communication of relevant instructions, to reinforce safety messages and to provide instruction for emergency situations. In the preparation of a signboard, one is advised to choose a strong smooth surface that could be a hard wood or a metal. The colours to be used for a signboard are expected to be distinctive (for effective contrasts), sharp (for visual attraction), and durable (to stand the test of time and weather). A signboard is expected to include the very required information either in pictures or words. The area and size of a signboard is determined by the boldness of the picture or the letters to be inscribed on it. The area of a signboard thus, refers to the total area occupied by the by the painted picture or inscribed letters on the board. cf. Lawinsider (2022, p. 1). A signboard is different from a signpost and a billboard. A signpost, is a post bearing a sign that gives information on directions, while a billboard is a very large advertisement board along the side of a highway. cf. Merriam-webster (2022, p.1) and wikidoff (2022, p.1). Some of the types of signboards are:

14a. Graphic signs board

    b.   Graphic signboards with a digital insert

c. Signboard with mini inserts.

Some signboards are double-sided which allow for users to see a message from both sides of the signboard, while others have a single side which limits users to read from only one side of the signboard. Some of the purposes of signboard are:

15a. To communicate and to convey information about a thing or service.

b. To help a reader in decision-making based on the information provided.
c. To indicate the type of products or services available in an organization.
d. To persuade receivers of the merits of a given product or service.
e. To show the name of a business, school, hospital, church, bank, and so on.
f. To inform readers of the place to get a product or service.

Having briefly discussed what a signboard is, and how it differs from a signpost and a billboard, one will in the next subsection present instances of the use of the English genitive on signposts in Aba.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper was collected by observing and writing down, names of institutions, churches, hotels, shops, organisations and so on, written on signboards from various parts of the city of Aba. This exercise was conducted for three weeks.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 English Genitive on Signboards in Aba

Recall, that the genitive case in the English language, is marked by the use of the preposition *of*, or by the use of the suffix *–s,* that is used to modify a noun or noun-phrase, in an endocentric construction, to mark the possessor of an item.

Table 3 shows some instances of the use of the English genitive on signboards in Aba.

Table 3: Use of English Genitive on Signboards in Aba

COLLECTED DATA	CORRECT FORM
16a. *Joyce urgent nail care.	b. Joyce's urgent nail care.
17a. *The Chosen Catholic Revival Movement.	b. The Chosen's Catholic Revival Movement.
*18a *St. Francis Allied Medical Services.	b. St. Francis'/Francis's Allied Medical Services.
19a. *The Ministers Conference, 2022.	b. The Ministers's Conference, 2022.
20a. * Eunice Beauty Empire.	b. Eunice's Beauty Empire.

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21a. * Ada Restaurant.	b. Ada's Restaurant.
22a. * Jesus Glorious Ministry.	b. Jesus's Glorious Ministry.
23a. * Bonimas Oil.	b. Bonimas's Oil
24a. God's Glory Store.	b. God's Glory store
25a. Tobinu's Monie Point.	b. Tobinu's Monie Point
26a. * St. Catherine Catholic Church, Aba.	b. St. Catherine's Catholic Church, Aba.
27a. *Shadoraz Plaza.	b. Shadoraz's Plaza
28a. *Emmanuel Electrical	b. Emmanuel's Electricals
29a.Meku's Blocks	b. Meku's Blocks
30a. Divine G's Creations	b. Divine G's Creations
31a. *Ngele Stores	b. Ngele's Stores
32a. * Chris Mary Hotels and Suites, Aba Port Harcourt Road, Aba,	b. Chris Mary's Hotelsand Suites, Aba Port Harcourt Road, Aba.
33a. *Acha Stores, Ariaria, Aba.	b. Acha's Stores, Ariaria, Aba.
34a. * Jaykay Carpet, Faulks Road, Aba.	b. Jaykay's Carpets, Faulks Road, Aba.
35a. *Lezone Gas, Seven Up Bottling Company Road, Aba.	b. Lezone's Gas, Seven Up Bottling Company Road, Aba.

From the data in Table 3, in (16a, 18a, 19a, 20a, 22a, 23a, and - 35a), one can see that there is a poor use of the English language genitive in the writings in the English language on signboards in Aba, as seen in:

(16a), here recast as (36a) *Joyce urgent nail care.

(18a) renumbered (37a) * St. Francis Allied Medical Services.

(19a) renumbered (38a)*The Ministers Conference, 2022.

(20a) renumbered (39a) *Eunice Beauty Empire.

(22a) renumbered (40a) * Jesus Glorious Ministry.

(23a) renumbered (41a) ,* Bonimas Oil.

and (27a) renumbered (42a) *Shadoraz Plaza.

where the sound in word final position is an alveolar fricative /s/, or /z/. The writings on the signboard do not reflect the appropriate

inflection of the English genitive apostrophe *'s*, where it should be used. Though, the sound in word final position of the noun to be marked, ends with an alveolar fricative, this should not prevent the orthographic marking of the genitive case on the appropriate noun to indicate possession as shown on the correct English language forms in:

(16b) renumbered as (43b) Joyce's urgent nail care,

(18b) renumbered as (44b) St. Francis's /Francis' Allied Medical Services,

(19b) renumbered as (45b) The Ministers's/Ministers' Conference, 2022,

(20b) renumbered as (46b) Eunice's Beauty Empire,

(22b) renumbered here as (47b) Jesus's Glorious Ministry,

(23b) renumbered (48b) Bonimas's/Bonimas' Oil,

and (27b) renumbered as (49b) Shadoraz's Plaza.

In (21a, 26a, 28a, 31a, 32a, 33a, 34a, and 35a), there is also a wrong use of the English apostrophe *'s*, this time with words that do not end with a voiced or voiceless alveolar fricative; /s, z/, as seen in:

(21a) renumbered (50a) *Ada Restaurant,

(26a) renumbered (51a) *Catherine Catholic Church, Aba,

(28a) renumbered (52a) * Emmanuel Electrical,

(31a) renumbered (53a) * Ngele Stores,

(32a) renumbered (54a)* Chris Mary Hotels and Suites, Aba Port Harcourt, Aba,

(33a) renumbered (55a) *Acha Stores Ariaria, Aba,

(34a) renumbered (56a) *Jaykay Carpets, Faulks Road, Aba,

and, (35a) renumbered (57a) *Lezone Gas, Seven Up Bottling Company Road, Aba.

From the data above, the noun to be inflected for the genitive case in (50a-57a) ends with the letter: (a, e, l, e, i, a, y, and e) respectively. Yet, they were not properly marked for the grammatical function they were to express. In (50b-57b), are their correct forms, as shown below:

(21b) renumbered (50b) Ada's Restaurant,

(26b) renumbered (51b) Catherine's Catholic Church, Aba,

(28b) renumbered (52b) Emmanuel's Electrical,

(31b) renumbered (53b) Ngele's Stores,

(32b) renumbered (54b) Chris Mary's Hotels and Suites, Aba Port Harcourt, Aba,

(33b) renumbered (55b) Acha's Stores Ariaria, Aba,

(34b) renumbered (56b) Jaykay's Carpets, Faulks Road, Aba,

and, (35a) renumbered (57b) Lezone's Gas, Seven Up Bottling Company Road, Aba.

The correct forms, in (51b-57b), show that the genitive case must be marked on the noun preceding the possessed item in order for the construction to be acceptable.

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In (24a, 24b, 25a, 25b, 29a, 29b, 30a, and 30b), the accepted English genitive case markings were used, as shown below in (58a, 61a):

(58a) God's Glory Store,

(59a) Tobinu's Monie Point,

(60a) Meku's Blocks, and

(61a) Divine G's Creations.

The few examples in (58a-61a), show that there are few correct users of the English language apostrophe *'s* in Aba, that grammatically inflect the first noun in associative constructions for the genitive case marking.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper has been on the use of the English genitive case (apostrophe *'s*) on signboards in Aba. A signboard is expected to include the very required information either in pictures or words. Recall, that the genitive case, which denotes the possessor of an item, is marked by the use of the apostrophe*'s* on the first noun in an associative construction. From the information in this paper, it was discovered that the genitive case is one of the inflectional cases that is carried over from the Old English in 400AD to the Contemporary English which began in 1600AD.

The English language is a second language in Aba. Thus, some errors are bound to occur in its use. This paper also showed that, a signboard is a billboard which displays the name or logo of a business or product, or the name of a shop with its name written with paint materials on it. It discovered that, some of the functions of the signboard are: to help a reader in decision-making based on the information provided and

to indicate the type of products or services available in an organization and so on. The paper, also showed that there are different types of signboards, such as: graphic signs board, graphic signboards with a digital insert, and signboards with mini inserts.

The paper, showed that the apostrophe *'s* should be inflected (marked), whenever it is appropriate for it to be marked, irrespective of the letter or phonetic segment that precedes it. The data also showed that the English genitive is an indispensable integral feature of the English language. From the data too, it was discovered that an omission in the use of the genitive marker, results in ungrammatical constructions.

The paper equally, showed that the proper use of the genitive in the English language, is part of one's competency in the language. Finally, the data in this paper also showed that the omission in the use of the English genitive case on signboards in Aba is a grammatical error, which reflects the level of the competency of the users of the English language in Aba. This paper, encourages the proper use of the apostrophe *'s* in the English language in order to avoid ungrammaticality in the language by the residents in Aba and generally elsewhere.

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