
English As An International Language: The Nigerian English Perspective

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the global spread of English, many non-native varieties of English have emerged, prompting many scholars to discuss and recognize world Englishes (WEs, i.e., non-native varieties of English language) and world English (WE, i.e., English as an international language). This paper examines world Englishes paying particular attention to the Nigerian English variety. It seeks to determine if there is only one standard English language or whether there has emerged world Englishes. The aim of this paper is to find explanation for World Englishes and elucidate at what point a particular English Language could be referred to as a 'new English Language'. It would ultimately apply the concept to the English language as spoken in Nigeria and explain whether the term 'Nigerian English' could be added to the list of World Englishes (WEs). It also seeks to affirm that the English language spoken around the world is not just British English. In expounding World Englishes and Nigerian English, the historical research methodology was used.

Introduction

Most people around the world today are yet to come to terms with the word 'Englishes. The 'es' ending in the word raises a lot of attention in disbelief of the paradigm. The term Englishes was coined around ten to fifteen years ago to represent the reality of what occurs when the English language evolves into a global language and is adopted and adapted in various parts of the globe to fit and fulfil their needs (Crystal, 2007). Though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the concepts of global English and World Englishes are not the same. English as an international language refers to the English language as a lingua franca used in business, trade, diplomacy, and other spheres of global activity. World Englishes, on the other hand, explains the emergence of localized or indigenized varieties of English, particularly those that have developed in areas influenced by the United Kingdom. World Englishes (WEs) include the varieties of English spoken by nations such as Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Ghana, and others, and are sometimes referred to as "new Englishes".

The study of world Englishes entails identifying different varieties of English used in various sociolinguistic contexts and analyzing how sociolinguistic histories, multicultural backgrounds, and functional contexts influence the use of English in various parts of the world. The topic of world Englishes was originally brought up in 1978, with the goal of examining and explaining the principles of regional Englishes throughout the globe (Crystal, 2003). The adoption of English as an international and intranational language was supported by pragmatic reasons such as appropriateness, comprehensibility, and interpretability (Bolton, 2012).

Currently, English is spoken as a first language or as an unofficial or institutionalized second language (L2) in fields such as government, law, and education in approximately 75 territories (Crystal, 2007). Because new variants of English are continuously developing, determining the overall number of Englishes in the globe is challenging. The Americans do not employ the same English language as the British; Nigerians do not employ English language like Ghanaians or any other country for that matter. This explains the coinage Englishes. It must be noted that language exists primarily to enable people express themselves and talk about what they need to talk about. People basically talk in languages that reflect their local interest, history and culture. Once English language is adopted and adapted in any geographical domain, it begins to push itself into areas and angles that it never existed before, making it look natural to the environment of use. This is why English language is no longer the sole property of its native parents and so cannot be the only standard variety.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base of this paper is the theories of language variation and change. The theory of language variation examines the social, regional or contextual differences in the ways a particular language (in this case English language) is used within a speech community. It could be in pronunciation, word choice or even preference to particular grammatical patterns.

William Labov, an American sociolinguist, began his research into language variation by observing language use on Martha's Vineyard (a small island off the US east coast) and in New York City (Labov, 1972). The essential assumptions of Labov's work are that language variety is socially driven and that speakers are caught in a catch-22 situation. That is, on the one hand, they demonstrate identification with their community through the use of a regional dialect, and on the other hand, they aspire to social acceptance, so their speech conforms to local standards. 'It is usual for a language to have numerous distinct ways of stating the same thing,' Labov remarks (Labov, 1972:188) 'In the process of language change, internal structural forces and sociolinguistic pressures function in systematic alternation,' Labov explains. (Labov, 1972, p. 181)

William Labov's hypothesized three stages for language change, which may be stated as follows: a) A period during which numerous variations exist for the same phenomenon, b) A period during which one of the variants emerges, and c) A period during which the other variants are eliminated. Various external variables, most notably societal pressure from above or below, might hasten the process of language transition. Additional considerations include a community's literacy level, the limiting impact of a linguistic standard, and so forth. Labov validated his views on language variety and change by studying the English of diverse staff at New York department shops (in an anonymous way). He picked establishments with varying socioeconomic statuses for this. He was especially interested in the following language variables: the presence or absence of a syllable - final /r/; the ambi-dental fricatives' // pronunciations.

Gumperz conducted an early study of linguistic variety (1958). In an early essay of Gumperz, he described the technique he used to classify dialect differences (1958). Gumperz sought to demonstrate that slight variances in speech may be used to distinguish subgroups of the speech community based on their language use. He recognized

that the standard features contrasts between simple vowels /a/, /u/, /o/, and diphthongs /ai/, /ui/, and /oi/ preceding consonants, using the Khalapur residents as a case study.

Peter Trudgill (1977) believes that a speech community's social structure is mirrored in its linguistic activity. Linguistic diversity may occur as a result of social variance. The prestige that comes from using a nationally recognized language that is in governmental and educational situations is known as overt prestige. Because they use the 'proper' and 'best' form of the English language, speakers who use standard English are regarded as highly educated and clever. On the other side, covert prestige is earned by refusing to identify with the starboard language. It is the honor that comes with collective devotion and unity. By adhering to non-standards, working-class speakers demonstrate their solidarity with their class and locality. According to Kachru (1986), since women are more socially anxious than men, they are more cautious of using blatantly socially prized expressions. Another is that working-class slang is linked with toughness and roughness. People were asked to assess how effective recorded speakers would be in a street brawl in a poll. Those with a regional accent consistently came out on top (Mukherjee, 1971). Because these characteristics are associated with machismo and toughness, males are more likely to express themselves in this manner, whereas females are more likely to express themselves in this manner. It's worth noting that in more casual contexts, such as at home with friends and family, everyone employs their accent and dialect more. In an interview, though, they would talk completely differently.

Trudgill discovered that the prestigious variable in Norwich is the ending 'ng' on nouns like walking and chatting. In New York, it's the 'r'. It is mostly employed by the upper class in casual settings rather than official settings. Trudgill went a step further in his study, looking at the speaker's sex as well as his or her class. He discovered that ladies of each social class choose the prestigious variation over males of the same social class. It is not simply a working-class thing to use the non-standard variable; it is also a masculine thing to do. Trudgill's results echo those of Labov in New York City: the greater a speaker's socioeconomic position, the more often he uses the standard form.

Bailey and Bickerton (1971 & 1973), for example, believe that linguistic variety is caused by progress. Furthermore, they concluded that the environment in which the variant develops has a significant impact on the variation. According to Edward Sapir (1976), language changes based on the identity of the person being addressed to or the person being spoken about, Sapir (1976). 'When we examine carefully any language, we will learn time and time again that there are significant internal variances and that speakers make continual use of many various options provided to them,' (Ward, 1985).

The researcher adopted the theory of language variation because it gives an insight into why Nigerian English is a unique variant form of the Standard English language rather than a corrupt English language form. It also aids the understanding of the different levels of variations among speakers of Nigerian English.

The Nigerian English

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The English language came into Nigeria in the sixteenth century with the development of British commercial posts along the West African coast, and it was systematically studied from the mid-nineteenth century forward (Widdowson, 1994). By the 1880s, missionaries had been ordered to teach English to Africans who would support British colonial and commercial objectives at their schools. The significance of the English language in Nigerian education today cannot be overstated, since it plays vital roles in a variety of domains of influence. Although the English language is spoken in Nigeria with a variety of accents. Nigerian English is frequently classified into many sub-varieties, with a continuum of English language competency as a typical feature of a nation where English is spoken as a second language.

Nigerian English, often known as Nigerian standard English, is a dialect of English spoken in the country. It is based on British English, with some American English infiltration, as well as loan words and collocations. These loan words and collocations are borne out of the many cultures and multiple native languages used in Nigeria by Nigerians when describing notions that are unique to them example 'senior wife' and cousin sister or brother.

In Nigerian politics, formal education, the media, and other official interactions, standard English is utilized. It is full of terms created only by Nigerian English speakers or resurrected from long-forgotten old British English. Because of these characteristics of lexical innovation and archaism, certain terms are not present in any current English dictionary. Nigerian English, according to Adekunle (1998), is a dialect with the same status as other dialects of the English language spoken in other regions of the globe. According to Jubril (1982), Nigerian English is not a disputed word that denotes a substandard English, normal Nigerian English, or pidgin English. This implies that Nigerian English is not the same as poor English and cannot be referred to as Nigerian Pidgin English. There are logical grammatical patterns and phonetic traits in text items that distinguish a Nigerian English language user from that of America, Australia, and other countries.

Nigerian English, according to Adekunle (1998), is a "branch of English that is socially acceptable in Nigeria while yet being globally intelligible." Nigerian English, according to Broughton (1990), is one of several dialects that integrates local cultural content and numerous lexical feature demands. Nigerian English has grown to be regarded as a valid sub-style of English language, according to Jubril (1979). This is to state that the English language contains several variants, one of which being Nigerian English. Given this context, it's understandable if you are wondering what types of Nigerian English there are and which of them is qualified to be called Nigerian standard English (N.S.E).

The English language in Nigeria has several particular characteristics that cannot be overlooked. This scenario arises as a consequence of the social, ethnic, and linguistic limitations imposed by the language's use in a second language environment. Since 1958, when L.F. Brosnahan wrote his paper 'English in Southern Nigeria,' there has been a lot of academic interest in Nigerian English. The debate over what constitutes Nigerian English has divided researchers into two camps: the deviation school of thinking and the variation school of thought.

According to the variation school of thinking, Nigerian English does not exist, and what is referred to by that label is just a collection of faults that undergird the surface mastery of normal British English (S.B.E.) Vincent, Salami, Prator, Brann, and other Nigerian scholars belong to this school of thought. Nigerian English is anomalous to the members of this school, and the SBE flag is supported as the current form, despite the fact that their own speech and use offer abundant proof of its Nigerian English presence (Bamgbose, 1982). The variety school represents the modern

perspective, and it includes a large number of academics such as Banjo, Bamgbose, Awonusi, Odumu, Adetugbo, and Adegbija, among others. The school asserts that Nigerian English has its own unique variation or dialect, with subtypes along basilectal (non-standard), mesolectal (generic, virtually standard), and acrolectal (standard Nigerian English) lines (Awonusi, 1987, Babatunde, 2001).

The subject of either school is correct or incorrect is outside the scope of this project. The usage of English in Nigeria is undeniably defined by distinctive standards evocative of the Nigerian linguistic ecosystem.

The characteristics represent Soyinka's (1988) position on the usage of English by Nigerians and other non-native speakers: When we borrow alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must first co-opt all of the properties in our thought and expression matrix. We must stress such language, stretch it, impact and condense it, fragment and reassemble it without apology, as necessary to bear the load of experiencing and of experiences, whether such experiences are stated or not in the language's conceptual idioms.

Sociocultural Implication of Nigerian English

Nigerian English has been a fascinating phenomenon. This is because the concept of standard Nigerian English has been difficult to create in many parts of Nigeria, owing to a number of issues such as interference, lack of teaching aids and overcrowding classrooms. Because of the interaction between British Standard English and Nigerian English, which have two very different sets of grammatical, pronunciation, and spelling rules, a common occurrence of 'faulty analogy' (the assumption that because one grammatical feature resembles another in usage, the rules that apply to the former also apply to the latter) has emerged in what is referred to as "substandard" varieties of Nigerian English. However, there are a few commonalities across Nigerian English groups that help to bridge the gap between distinct types even inside Nigeria, many of which are related to cultural values conveyed in English language words. "Sorry" and "sir" are two common instances. The literal meaning of 'sorry' normally implies some form of blame on the side of the one expressing it; yet, it is used to communicate compassion in a unique manner, or to demonstrate empathy to whomever has suffered misfortune, in all variations of Nigerian English. "Sir," or the use of titles instead of names, denotes respect and a great regard for manners. The addition of 'sir' to a title (for example, "Professor Sir") denotes a higher degree of status than usual, or an example of being more courteous than usual.

Though the precise degrees of English use in Nigeria are debatable, there is widespread agreement that there are at least four levels of English usage in Nigeria.

The first level is pidgin English, which is spoken as a casual, informal language by both educated and uneducated segments of society.

Level two is a step up from level one, and it is spoken by those who have completed elementary school.

Level three has a larger lexicon and fluency and is primarily spoken by those with a secondary education, whereas Level four is proposed to be the Nigerian Standard English because its features are very similar (but still uniquely Nigerian) to 'Standard English' and is primarily spoken by those with a college education (Babatunde, 2001) The

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pragmatic realizations of Nigerian English are differentiated at these levels. Because of its prevalence in Nigeria, the English language has been a source of dispute among Nigerians who prefer a more nativistic way of life (i.e., returning to the predominant speech of indigenous languages of the country). However, others would argue that English is inextricably linked to Nigerian culture owing to the nature of its introduction and its role in imposing colonial norms on a post-colonial Nigeria.

Because they have evolved unique meanings, certain English words are totally Nigerian in origin and cannot be found in any other form of English in the globe.

Examples of Nigerianised English words include:

1. Disvirgin: this is a Nigerian English word that can never be found in any dictionary; it is entirely a Nigerian invention. Native speakers of English language use 'deflower' to mean 'deprive of virginity', but Nigerians use disvirgin to mean the same thing.

2. Opportuned: The English word for this word is 'opportune,' without the "d" at the end. For instance, 'Wait for an opportuned opportunity to tell him how you feel,' instead of 'wait for an appropriate moment to tell him how you feel.' 'Opportuned' implies 'privileged' in Nigerian English. "I am 'opportuned' to speak to this august assembly," for example.

3. Trafficate: This is another Nigerian English term that is often used on Nigerian streets. A Nigerian English backformation of 'trafficator,' which is most likely an antique British English term derived from a combination of the words 'traffic' and 'indicator.' Nigerians say "trafficate," whereas native speakers say "indicate" or "signal."

The presence of Citroen, Volkswagen, and Mercedes Benz automobiles has also resulted in the imaginative and amusing development of phrases such as "footroen," "footwagen," and "Legedise Benz." Do you classify this as Nigerian English lexis or street slang? 'They had to accomplish part of the trip on footroen,' for example, just implies they had to walk a portion of the distance.

Lexico-Semantic Innovations in Nigerian English

Loanwords, coinages, acronyms, and semantic shifts are the four main types of innovations that emerged as a consequence of the nativization of English in Nigeria. There are additional terms in Nigerian English that have taken on new meanings.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a loan word as "a term taken from a foreign language with little or no alteration." There are a wealth of loan terms in Nigerian English that have no direct English counterparts but have distinct meanings and have entrenched themselves into the variety. The examples below represent some of the most common Nigerian English loanwords.

1. Agbada: a kind of flowing garment worn by males, particularly by Yoruba: 'Chief Ogini attended the wedding ceremony in an agbada.
2. Babanriga: a long, loose clothing worn by males, particularly by the Hausas: I admire your babanriga.
3. Akara: a kind of dish often known as "bean cake."
4. Akamu: A kind of maize porridge known as akamu (pap): 'I had akara and akamu for breakfast this morning.'
5. Danfo and okada are forms of transportation; 'you can either take a danfo or an okada.'
6. Oba, Alakija: Chieftaincy titles, as in "The Alakija was the coronation of the Oba of Lagos."

Coinages: Coinages are comparable to loanwords in that they act as a kind of colloquialism that is pronounced in English but has a distinct cultural connotation. The majority of these inventions take the form of compound English terms. These are very common in Nigerian English. Coinages, unlike loanwords, often have a brief existence and are accepted for specific cultural objectives at the time of acquisition, and hence fade out soon. Long-leg, Free and fair, coming of age, Carpet crossing, No-go-area, Man of timber and caliber, Money bag, Political juggernaut / Heavyweight, Political bride, and more terms are examples. Bottom strength, a lengthy throat, a chewing stick, a tight buddy, a go-slow attitude, and so on. Coinages and acronyms are not the same thing; however Nigerian English has its own set of acronyms.

Semantic Shifts: Semantics is the study of how words are defined. The reappropriation of the meaning of English terms for Nigerian purposes and applications is a frequent example of semantic shift. The original English meanings may be 'shifted,' confined, or expanded as a result of this. This entails reframing a word's distinctive pattern inside the semantic field, thus marginalizing the word's primary context. For example, whereas the term 'trek' has a sense of a long distance or arduous travel in international use, it signifies 'to walk a small distance' in Nigerian English. The usage of a variety of greetings in Nigerian English is a typically a simple example of semantic shift. This stretching of meaning represents something from Nigerian culture as well as changing the meaning of the English term. The phrase 'good night mom', for example, may be spoken at any time of day and merely implies that the person in question will not be seen again until the following day.

Semantic Extension: In Nigerian English, the semantic bounds of existing English terms are often extended to include unexpected meanings, a phenomenon referred to by Akindele and Adegbite (1992) as "the adding of meanings to a conventional English word." The following are some instances in the use of the English language in Nigeria:

1. A. Before I was freed, I offered the cop a 'kola nut' (bribe).
B. Before I was freed, I offered the cob bribe.
2. A. This evening, he has a 'stranger' (a guest).
B. He has a guest this evening.
3. A. For two years, I 'stayed' (lived) in Katsina.

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B. I lived in katsina for two years.

4. A. Musa is quite good at 'hearing' (understanding) English.

B. Musa is quite good at understanding English.

The highlighted terms 'kola nut', 'stranger', 'stayed', and 'hearing' all retain their traditional English connotations while gaining new ones. 'Kola nut' refers to a chewable tree seed but is broadened to mean 'bribe'; stranger is expanded to mean 'visitor'; 'stayed' is widened to mean 'lived' and 'hearing' is widened to mean understanding.

Semantic narrowing: here the meanings of existing terms are semantically restricted to have a reduced scope example;

1 The cost of kerosine is higher than the cost of 'fuel' (petrol).

2 The light from my globe (electric bulb) is brighter than yours.

Many Nigerian English sentence structures include redundant semantic reduplications of the same meaning. This is known as tautology, or stating the same thing over and over again without clarifying one's meaning. Tautology may be seen in phrases like;

1.'Repeat again,'

2.'That's my own perspective, 'and

3.'Nigeria's previous history is worth studying.

The user here is mostly unaware of the repetition as his focus is to stress or emphasis his point.

Phonological features of Nigerian English

The phonological concord looks at diverse groups of Nigerian English speakers from various backgrounds (region of origin, present occupation, socioeconomic class, degree of education, and so on). Regions like Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba have received particular attention. In this regard, Nigerian English is comparable to American English; like American English, Nigerian English varies from area to region, and phonetic factors are realized in various ways in different locations. Each syllable of a given utterance is about the same length and given the same stress in Nigerian English phonology. Even though it is not a personal pronoun, the last syllable is often emphasised. No distinction is made between strong and mild strains (Alabi, 2003; Ufomata, 1996). Because of stress misplacement, the stress pattern of English words in Nigerian English is different. Jowitt (1991) illustrates this disparity in lexical, phrasal and clausal structures as follows:

SBE

NE

FIREwood

firewood

Madam

madam

PERfume	perfume
PLANtain	plantain
SAlad	salad
TRiBune	tribune
ConGRATulate	congratulate
inVESTigateinvestiGATE	
SITing-room	sittingROOM.
DeVElopment fund	Development FUND
It SHOULD be	it should BE

Prosody

Early research suggested that Nigerian English is syllable-timed rather than stressed, although the dialect has eluded categorization in either category. Milde and Jan-Torsten (1964) claim that Nigerian English is closer to tonal languages than other west African languages, but that tones are connected with grammatical functions rather than stress and unstressed syllables. 'Articles, prepositions, and conjunctions tend to have a low tone, while nouns, verbs, and adjectives are often created with a high tone,' they claim. "Nigerian English features a slew of conventional greeting phrases that would be perplexing at best and unintelligible at worst to most native speakers."

While some of these phrases are original creations or semantic extensions based on the socio-cultural uniqueness of Nigerian cultural expressions that the English language has yet to lexicalize, others are the result of a lack of familiarity with conventions and idioms, such as 'say me well' to him/her/your family, and so on. When Nigerians want to offer good wishes to someone via another person, they utilize this illiterate verbalism. Because it is structurally problematic, grammatically wrong, and unidiomatic, this peculiar Nigerian English term would be perplexing to native English speakers. Whatever it is, the term has now become idiomatic in Nigerian English, and it should most likely be copyrighted and marketed to other English-speaking countries as a Nigerian linguistic creation.

Distinctive Use of Preposition in Nigerian English

One of the important elements of our dialect of English language, according to several experts of Nigerian English, is the propensity to remove the preposition 'to' in the collocation 'enable someone/something.' In American and British English, the words 'enable' and 'to' are inextricably linked; one cannot exist without the other. 'I now ask for a loan to allow me to purchase an automobile,' Nigerians would say or write. While Nigerians happily forgo prepositions when using words like 'facilitate,' 'contest,' 'reply,' and so on, we cheerfully pluck some from the air and insert them where they are not generally used in local English dialects. The phrase 'request FOR' is an example. 'I sought a loan from my bank,' Nigerians might say, but native English speakers would write or say, 'I seek a loan from my bank.'

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this paper, it has been shown that indeed there is a Nigerian English that has its unique grammatical structures and is used solely by Nigerians to express their unique experiences. Therefore, it has become necessary to state categorically that Nigerian English should not be seen as an example of imperfect learning of British English language, it deserves to be considered as a plausible sign of healthy acculturation and of the creative capacity that we associate with mother tongue learning and use. Interestingly, as mentioned earlier, what is going on in Nigerian English is also going on in all the countries of outer circle of Braj Kachru's Model, especially in India. Mukherjee (1971) calls English language in India a twice born language. If this metaphor is to be adapted, we can equally state that Nigerian English is 'Born Again' English that has defied nature by undergoing a gynecological process that has brought it to a new place of rebirth.

Since variation is normal and natural in all languages, not only in English language, therefore it is normal to accept that this variation should not be termed substandard by any means. What is worthy of note here is that all variations must not be taught but students must be warned that whatever variation that they learn, they must also know that there exist other

variations. Native speakers of English language should be happy and content with the fact that English language is an international language. This fact makes it impossible for it to be considered an exclusive 'reserve' or 'possession' of any people for the singular reason that they were first owners' sorry users of English language.

To this end, it is recommended that instead of tagging most Nigerian English structures 'errors', it should be seen as what it is 'Nigerian English'. It should be represented as Nigerian English and encouraged to grow. This will help students and the new generation of English language speakers in Nigeria to think and speak English language in Nigerian culture with pride and develop adequate vocabulary that will lead to the development of its full potentials. This will go a long way in curbing most of the challenges facing teaching and learning in the education system in Nigeria since the language of education in Nigeria is English language.

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