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## **Culture and Identity: Implications in Nigerian English Usage**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Given the view that as language disappears, culture dies, language therefore is fundamental to construction of cultural identity. The argument on supremacy between culture and language which is led to rest in Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which asserts that language identifies cultural heritage such as food, dressing, technology, celebration, religion and the mode of life of the people is the aim of the paper. When Nigeria was a colony of the British Empire, and English was the medium of communication, the language began to wear a new look. The word "Englishes" came into linguistic currency to describe the varieties of English that depicts the cultural norms that gave other British colonies like India, Pakistan, Ghana, a variety of English that carries the indexical features of their indigenous languages and sociolinguistic realities. Today English has come to stay in Nigeria, though an "orphan", it has gained much respect in education, business, government, technology and social narratives. The domestication of English in Nigeria therefore is a result of British colonization. With nativization, the indigenous languages compete, intertwine and modify the*

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**features of the English to reflect the cultural norms of the Nigerian society. Consequently, the paper explores the historical aspects of Nigerian culture, its people and identity to investigate the degree of the influence of Nigerian norms and values in English in the Nigerian environment. With the question of linguistic status of these new ideas within and outside Nigeria, the paper seeks to identify the lexical items that are culture specific and mark Nigerian identity, examine the method of their creation and identify factors that can impede acceptance of these Nigerian English words globally.**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the historical aspects of Nigerian culture, its people and identity to investigate the degree of the influence of its culture on English in the Nigerian environment. When Nigeria was a colony of the British Empire, and English was the medium of communication, the language developed hybridized structures, creating new varieties of English known as Englishes. These new innovations of language came into linguistic currency to describe the new ways of expression that depict the Nigerian cultural norms which gave other British colonies like India, Pakistan, Ghana, Singapore, Sri Lanka, among others varieties of English. These new varieties, which developed through the communicative need of the people, carried the indexical features of the indigenous languages and their sociolinguistic realities. With this development in Nigeria, there is the existence of new codes of expressions which are culture-related, recognized and acknowledged as new and non-native variety of English. This variety of English is known as Nigerian English: this is the fulcrum of this paper.

However, the characteristics language codes of these new ways of expression, in which these varieties used in British colonized regions, are controversial in the sense that they are regarded as inferior by purists. In the light of this, Singh and Mufwene studies of 1998 and 2000 respectively,<sup>1</sup> posits

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1 Quoted in Melchers & Shaw, 2003

the argument on inferiority as meaningless, since no linguistic characteristic is common to all and that 'New Englishes' are varieties recreated by users from a mixed pool of features that make all 'new' in every generation.<sup>2</sup> This paper is of the view that these innovations are certainly true of language phenomenon, because the Englishes of India, Nigeria, Singapore, Pakistan and other British colonized countries do share a number of superficial linguistic characteristic which taken together, make it convenient to describe their new non-native varieties as a group separate from American, British, Australian and New Zealand varieties.

Given the view that language spoken and written carries indexical features of its environment, people, culture and identity of the users, Davis notes that culture, the way of life of the people dies once the language that interprets this culture and norms of the people dies.<sup>3</sup> Culture of the people therefore determines who is identified as a member of a society which is transmitted through language. Culture interprets the heritage of the people and its environment in forms of food, dressing, marriage, technology, education, and mode of life. It is the objective of this paper to ascertain how culture and identity of the people and environment in Nigeria have influenced their use of English.

Today, English is a global language. It is the dominant language in the world of politics, academics, governance and social discourse which is mentioned in Bamgbose, 2001<sup>4</sup> and Bottery, 2000<sup>5</sup>. With English in its dominant

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2 G. Melchers & P. Shaw, *World Englishes: An Introduction* (English language Series, Stockholm, Arnold Publication, 2003),229]

3 W. Davies, "Vanishing cultures", *National Geographic*, 196, no. 2(1999) ,62-89]

4 A. Bamgbose, "World Englishes and globalization", *World Englishes*, 20, no.3 (2001) 357-63]

5 M. Bottery, *Education, Policy and Ethics* (London, Continuum Books, 2000) 256]

position because of its growing popularity, Anwar, (2007:1)<sup>6</sup> notes that the users of English in non- native context develop a transplanted language. The view that transplanted language is culture –related and carries the identity of the people and its environment because the root of the language is completely removed is corroborated in Kachru's (1986) *The Alchemy of English*, "a language may be considered transplanted if it is used by a significant numbers of speakers in social, cultural and geographical contexts different from the context in which it was originally used."<sup>7</sup> The work explains that when a language is transplanted, it is cut off from its traditional roots and it begins to function in new environment, performing varied communicative roles. With these many roles it enters into the process of nativization, where Nigerians start to use English in a way that depicts their norms and tradition.

Accordingly, Kachru adds:

"The nativization must be seen as the result of those productive linguistic innovations which are determined by localized function of a second language variety, the culture of conversation and communicative strategies in new situation and transfer from local language."<sup>8</sup>

This work uses the theoretical framework of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as quoted in Eka (2000)<sup>9</sup> which asserts relationship between language and culture because it suits the ideas of the transplanted language which the research has noted. This paper notes that these linguistic innovations which are culture specific, are expressed in lexical items denoting religion, marriage, dressing, edibles/drinks, relations, technology, and education which are the ways the

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6 B. Anwar, "Urdu-English Code-Switching. The Use of Urdu Phrases and Clauses in Pakistan English (A Non –native Variety)" *ESP World*, Issue 17, (2007) 1-2]

7 B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,1986)30]

8 *Ibid*,21-22]

9 D. Eka, *Issues in Nigerian English Usage* (Uyo, Scholars Press(Nig)Ltd .2000)103]

people identities are enacted. Using some indigenous languages: Efik, Ibibio, Yoruba, Hausa and Annang as yardstick, this paper examines the traffic between English and indigenous languages to ascertain the creative status in this new non-native variety. The research, a corpus based and qualitative in outlook, identifies culture-related lexical items for analysis and discussion based on Bamiro (1991)<sup>10</sup> categories of lexico-semantic variations such as transfer, semantic shift, analogy, neologisms, acronyms and borrowing; and Adegbija, (1989)<sup>11</sup> aspects of pragmatic variation that manifest in the use of euphemism, idioms and proverbs, besides other linguistic methods through which these hybridized structures of new non-native variety is discussed.

### **English in Nigeria: A Historical Stretch**

In southern Nigeria where the British and Nigerian ethnic groups had their first contact at some period before the Atlantic slave trade, Portuguese was probably the earliest European language used not English. Portuguese was the language of commerce and diplomacy enjoyed by Portugal until 1553, when English sailors, Thomas Windham and Nicolas Lambert visited the old Calabar and ancient Benin coastal areas. With the duo in trading activities, Pidgin became the medium of communication. The focus of the trade-boom shifted from trading in gold, ivory and pepper to illegal trading of human beings called 'slave trade'. Some Nigerians had started learning English during the period of a heavy traffic in slave trading in African countries, especially as some Nigerians were trained as interpreters to serve as clerks in European companies in the country.

Ajayi (1965) research work (cited in Udom, (2015) reports that:

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10 E. Bamiro, "Lexicon-semantic Variation in Nigerian English" *World Englishes*. 13, no1, (1991)47-60]

11 E. Adegbija, "Lexicon-semantic Variation in Nigerian English" *World Englishes*. 8, no.2, (1989)165-77]

Calabar traders spoke English as their only European language in the 18th century. Notably, these early interactions between European and Nigerian languages resulted in a variety of English influenced by Portuguese Pidgin, English Pidgin and the Anglicization of some Nigerian names<sup>12</sup>.

However, the missionary activities in Nigeria took a lead in the development of English. Many Nigerians were trained as interpreters to aid in spreading the gospel in a language understood by local people. Nigerians were taught to read the Bible which was written in English and the language became a basic subject in the schools established by the missionaries to reach out to the people. In 1807 and with the abolition of the slave trade, Many Nigerians returned from their slave abode and began to speak English freely in their new settlements in Nigeria.

The research notes that the English language during the colonial period dominated the curriculum under various sub-heads such as reading, writing, dictation, composition and grammar as indicated by the colonial interest in standard education in Nigeria in the wake of the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate in 1914. At this time however, the educational policies thrived with the development and promotion of indigenous languages. Similarly, English was for the sciences education, mathematics and official usage, while indigenous languages were restricted to be used at the primary and lower secondary schools. Udom's work is of the view that the journey of English to Nigeria was tortuous because it faced both acceptance and rejection by many indigenous language users but that the role of English in Nigeria cannot be underestimated.

The use of English as the language of education, employment, legislation, media, commerce and social affairs made educated Nigerians familiar with the British western ideas, values and culture like democracy, fundamental human rights, self-determination and independence. With this awareness, educated Nigerians insisted on

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12 M, Udom, *Reader's Companion on Use of English*. (Uyo, Art-biz Global Effects ,2015)6]

the creation of political parties and demanded self-government. Therefore, with independence in October 1960, English contributed substantially in achieving national integration in Nigeria.<sup>13</sup>

Notably, Eka is of the opinion that English in Nigeria at that time were only spoken by missionaries, traders and colonizers what could be regarded as English, and not the way it is know today. Consequently, he added that English has since remained with us in Nigeria and has developed features which mark it out as an identifiable and legitimate subset of world Englishes<sup>14</sup>. This research notes that as English and Nigerian indigenous languages intertwined, a variety of English with Nigerian identity emerged, and entered a long blended process of domestication. Thus, Nigerian people started to express themselves in English that reflects their socio-cultural norms and identity.

### **Nigerian English Usage**

English in the Nigerian environment known as Nigerian English is used to describe the new variety of English as a result of British colonialism during the nineteen century, Crystal (1997)<sup>15</sup>, Trudgill et al, (2002)<sup>16</sup>, Jenkins (2003)<sup>17</sup> and Ajani (2007)<sup>18</sup> scholarly researches and publications are abounding. The question of the existence of a variety called Nigerian English has been supported by scholars, educated speakers/users of the language in the environment whose arguments and facts are backed up in their learned writings as well. Akere, (1982)<sup>19</sup> discussed the emergence of a

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13 *Ibid*, 8.

14 Eka, *Issues*, 74.

15 D. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press .1997).227].

16 P. Trudgill, et al, *International English: A Guide to Varieties of Standard English* (Arnold, New York: Oxford University Press) 153].

17 J. Jenkins, *World Englishes: A resource Book for Students* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003)233].

18 T. Ajani, "Is There Indeed A "Nigerian English" *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 1 (2007)7-12]

19 F. Akere, "Sociocultural Constraints and the Emergence of a Standard Nigerian English" In J.B. Pride (Ed.) *new Englishes* (1982) 85-89].



**standard** Nigerian English. Odumuh (1993)<sup>20</sup> recognized Nigerian English as one of the new Englishes. Similarly, Jowitt (1991)<sup>21</sup>, Goke-Pariola<sup>22</sup>, and Kujore (1985)<sup>23</sup> have made written comments referencing the existence of a variety common to the Nigerian environment.

**But**, Vincent (1974)<sup>24</sup> and Salami (1968)<sup>25</sup> contend that what have been identified as Nigerian English are in reality 'errors of usage'. They found this departure as derogatory and insulting to refer to such a variety as English. They saw the departure from British variety which was imported to Nigeria as either deviant or incorrect usage. This work however supports arguments of linguists who claim Nigerian English reflects the cultural norms of its people and its environment, and that although the English language has gained worldwide prominence it is not used exactly the same way everywhere. Accordingly, Ashcroft et al (1989) publication, (quoted in Ajani (2007) asserts that:

Although British imperialism resulted in the global spread of EL, the English of Jamaicans isn't [sic] the same as that of Canadians or Kenyans, and that a continuum exists between the various practices constituting EL usage throughout the world.<sup>26</sup>

He holds a strong belief that history has revealed that change as a result of two or more languages in contact is a phenomenon that has occurred in the past and is still going on today. He is also of the view that Latin, gave birth to the present day Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian,

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20 A. Odumuh, *Sociolinguistics and Nigerian English*. (Ibadan: Sam Bookman, 1993)

21 D. Jowitt, *Nigerian English Usage: An Introduction* (Ikeja, Learn Africa Plc, 1991) 277]

22 A. Goke-Pariola, "Language and Symbolic Power". In *Language and Communication* 3, no.3(1993)219-34]

23 O. Kujero, *English usage: some Notable Nigerian Variations* (Ibadan: Evans brothers Ltd. 1985)

24 T. Vincent, Register in Achebe". In *JNESA* ,6 no 6(1974)95-106]

25 "A. Salami, "Defining a Standard Nigerian English" In *JNESA* ,2, no 2(1968)99-106]

26 Ajani, "Is There Indeed A "N E" 8]

etc) during the Renaissance period. He adds that Arabic gave rise to the various regional dialects in North Africa and the Middle East which gave birth to Egyptian Arabic, Tunisian Arabic etc.<sup>27</sup> This paper is in line with these assertions that what is happening in English language in Nigerian environment today is not anomaly but rather a normal and natural linguistic process that takes place in an atmosphere of mobility of language and culture-contact.

Similarly, this work is of the view that nativization of English in Nigeria reflects the peculiarities of Nigerian culture and its people. However, Udom observes the purists' argument which asserts that in spite of the nativization of Nigerian English, there are still doubts in the minds of many Nigerians as to the validity of these innovations<sup>28</sup>. These divergent views with create uncertainties in the minds of users/speakers of these new varieties are parts of the problems this paper is set to address. On this premise however, Igboanusi asserts the development of Nigerian English to include the integration of loanwords from Nigerian languages and further claims that pragmatic nativization suggests the bending of rules of British English to create a modified variety to suit Nigerian socio-cultural environment. For example, he cites *sorry* as an expression of sympathy to one who has had a misfortune, disappointment or to one who sneezes and *well done* as a greeting to someone at work<sup>29</sup>.

In Nigeria, there are over 250 ethnic groups with three principals among them viz: Hausa, in the north, Igbo in the Southeast and Yoruba in the Southwest. Similarly, there are other larger minor groups: The Fulani, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra, Kanuri, Tiv and Nupe, all in the North; the Efik, Ekoi, Ibibio, Annang in the East and Urhobo, Ijaw, Edo and Itsekiri in the

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27 *Ibid*, 1].

28 M. Udom, *Lexical Innovations in Nigerian English Usage*, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation of the University of Uyo, (2007) 18-48].

29 H. Igboanusi, *The Dictionary of Nigerian English Usage*, (Ibadan: Enicrownfit Publishers, 2002)20-74]

**West.** Every ethnic group in Nigeria has its own values, beliefs and ways of living. A shared cultural heritage binds the members of each ethnic group and creates a sense of belonging and identity. Nevertheless, the cultural heritage of each ethnic group varies and is identified in arts, dance forms, music, crafts, food, clothing, celebrations, religion etc. These identities which are strong sense of ethnic allegiance are aspects of culture expressed and preserved in language.

Accordingly, Hale (quoted in Davis (1999) is of the notion that:

Language is fundamental to cultural identity. This is for people everywhere. For Bininj, their unique world is expressed in their language. For this reason, it is important that people keep their own language alive.... The loss of language means the loss of culture and identity. In many societies throughout history, the suppression of the languages of the minority groups has been a deliberate policy in order to suppress those minority cultures. As a result, a large number of the world's languages have been lost with the processes of colonization and migration. *Language therefore is an instrument that propels the people's cultural identity. Culture is dynamic, it develops and changes as the belief systems and ways of life of people in a given society changes, so thus the language systems, to interpret the new ways of life. Language in this case becomes a repertoire, an inventory of the group of people's customs. It carries the indexical features of the group and spells the direction for their ways of life.*<sup>30</sup>

The culture of Nigeria defines features of Nigerian people's identity. It contributes to how Nigerians see themselves and the groups with which they are identified. Nigeria is a multilingual society with about 400 indigenous languages spoken and a greater number written. These languages of the various ethnic and cultural groups preserved the cultural heritage and identity of its people.

The notion that identity is linguistically constructed and negotiated is unquestionable. The relationship between language and identity is mutually constructed because language with important symbolic values plays a crucial role

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30 W. Davies, "Vanishing cultures", *National Geographic*, 196, no. 2(1999) [65].

in identifying one's role in the society. For instance, one's social status is influenced by social variables such as educational background, class or ethnicity. An interaction between language and identity is obviously to construct identity. Meaning which is elicited from language gives users/ speakers a sense of their own identity, explaining who they are and where they belong. The culture of the people determines where they belong. Hall is of the notion that when two people belong to the same culture they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other<sup>31</sup>.

It is the view of this paper to look at language as a symbolic practice within a given culture in which meaning is expressed as belonging to the group. That is to say that cultural context gives meaning to things of the group rather than a thing having meaning in itself. Similarly, Zou summarizes thus:

Language constructs a certain identity for us and gives meaning of belonging to a culture or maintains identity within a group of people<sup>32</sup>. Without language the ways of life of a community cannot be expressed or preserved. Language cut barriers and makes integration of other's peoples ways of life possible; it fosters unity and love among people who share the same language codes. Language is like a mother of quintuplicate who gathers her offsprings in her care giving to one what he needs depending on one's request. Language interprets the cultural artifacts because it bears the meaning of the cultural artifacts using language. For instance, a child may request for toys and another for food. These items are in the storehouse of culture but the people's identity, and it is made manifest in language codes.

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31 S. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in Stuart Hall: *Critical Dialogues in cultural Studies*, D. Morley and K-H Chen, Ed. London; Routledge (1996)411-40]

32 H. Zou, "Language Identity and Cultural Difference" *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2, no. 6 (2012)465-67]

Similarly, identity is viewed as a continuous process of discursive construction involving voluntary acts of self-differentiation through language. Notably, Joseph, views language not only as the medium of identity negotiation but also as the source of identity interpretation of others and by others. Strongly embedded in Joseph's notion is the idea that language is the site of identity construction which is the main background for its negotiation<sup>33</sup>. For the facts that Nigerians have realized their identities through language choices and construction of utterances, and that the languages that they speak create a sense of belonging and reality for them because it reflects their belief systems, besides that the semantic and pragmatic elements which they used for their self expression navigate within different systems of social realities within their language community are therefore the objectives this paper will assert by generating lexical items whose meanings have connections with the Nigerian people and its environment in form of cultural codes which interpret their identities. Thus these emphasize the points that language is not passive but actually helps shape the society itself.

With the coming of English with colonization, English is today an official language in Nigeria. Given a well-known socio-linguistic fact that when two or more languages and cultures come in contact, different forms of varieties emerge or even birth of languages take place the question of whether there is Nigerian English should not arise since it is a known fact that in language contact situation, second language (L2) is bound to be influenced by its linguistic environment.

Another pertinent issue is that of intelligibility which has been dealt with by speakers/users of the NE. Accordingly, this paper has noted that NE is indigenous to Nigeria and its basic usage is intra-national. But on the question of

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33 J.E. Joseph, Linguistic identities: Double-edged Swords [Electronic Version]. *Language problems & Language planning*, 30, no.3, (2006), 261-267]

international intelligibility, (Ajani 2007) contribution is immense.

Standard NE is to a large extent intelligible and that whatever difficulties encountered along those lines are not peculiar to NE alone, but also to the users of all the other varieties of EL worldwide. The difficulties encountered by the NE speaker communicating with an American English speaker will be similar in many respects to that encountered by an Australian English speaker communicating with a New Zealander.<sup>34</sup>

This research, therefore, notes that there are linguistic scenarios which are bound to validate the many new ways of expressing the people's way of life given the many roles and important of culture as peoples' identity. These linguistic features are phonetics, phonology, syntax, lexis and semantics, discourse, speech acts and stylistics levels. However, this work limits its analysis on lexico-semantics features.

### **Culture-Related Lexical Items in Nigerian English**

Nigerian English is used in different cultural contexts and social situations. There are notable changes in their phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. These linguistic characteristics are the yardsticks to determine validity and acceptability of this language. This paper limits its scope to the lexical items that are culture-specific, an area which has not been dealt with extensively in the non-variety of English in Nigeria.

### **Selected Lexical Items in Nigerian English (NE) Usage**

1. White wedding (N+N) – Wedding rites performed in the church.
2. Traditional marriage (Adj+N) Marriage done according to ethnic customs.
3. Bride price(N+N)- Amount of money paid to the bride's family by the groom
4. Tarry night (N+N) Prayers done throughout the night plus other church activities

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34 Ajani, "Is There Indeed A "N.E", 3.

5. Native doctor (Adj+N) A traditional medicine practitioner.
6. Examination Malpractice (N+N) Various forms of cheating/misconduct during examination.
7. Palm wine (N+N) local wine collected from a special palm tree.
8. Tapping knife (Adj+N) A knife used in tapping palm wine.
9. Kitchen stool (N+N) A small seat meant for use by women in the kitchen.
10. Chieftaincy Title (N+N) A traditional honour of a chief.
11. Environmental Sanitation (Adj+N) Compulsory clean- up exercise introduced during Buhari Military regime.
12. Youth Corper (N+N) A university graduate/National Diploma holder who has undergone a paramilitary training for three weeks and his enlisted to serve her/his country for one year to qualify him/her to be employed in Nigeria.
13. Pepper Soup (N+N) A special delicacy with much pepper especially prepared with goat meat, water and other recipes like onions. It is usually used when one is drinking beer or used in when eating rice prepared without oil.
14. Edikang Ikong (Adj+N) A special kind of soup prepared with pumpkin leaves and water leaves plus other recipes. It is a special kind of soup originated from the customs of the Efik, Ibibio and Annang. It is expensive to prepare and it is usually best eaten fresh. It is not palatable to eat after refrigeration even when it has been preserved.
15. Bamboo bed (N+N) A special kind of bed made of a collection of dry branches of palm wine trees.
16. Illegal structures (Adj+N) Buildings (stores, houses etc) built by individual citizens that are not approved by government and are usually demolished once discovered.

17. Cut-off -point (V+Prep.+N) The bench mark for admission set by the University examination body on entrance examination into the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
18. Resource Control (N+N) Quest to control minerals by states in Nigeria.
19. Transport money (N+N) Fare for journey/transport fare.
20. Dubious character (adj+N) Bad Character/deceitful person
21. Tight friend (Adj+N) Close friend
22. Head tie (N+N) Hair dress usually worn by women as part of dress.
23. National Cake (N+N) Natural resources belonging to all Nigerians.
24. Fried eggs (Adj+N) Scrambled eggs
25. Careless driver (Adj+N) Reckless driver
26. Danfo driver (N+N) A driver of a particular kind of vehicle called *danfo*
27. Common Man (Adj+N) Peasant class
28. Raffia bag (N+N) A special kind of beg made of raffia.
29. Town man (N+N) kinsmen
30. Home people (N+N) Members of an extended family
31. Four-one – nine (Det.+Det. +N) A dupe or a fraudster, tagged after the Nigerian penal code #419
32. Mechanic village (N+N) A large expanse of area where car maintenance and repair works are done.
33. Area boys (N+N) A group of jobless youth who constitute themselves as nuisance in an area.
34. Cash madam (N+N) An influential and wealthy woman
35. Bottom power (N+N) A situation where a woman uses herself as sex mechanic to achieve her desires.
36. Sexual harassment (N+N) When sex is forcibly demanded to achieve ones aims it can be from male or from female, usually as a “quid pro quo”



37. African time (N+N) The tendency to be late for occasions.
38. Essential commodities (Adj. +N) Good that are scarce.
39. Ice block (N+N) Ice cubes
40. Okada riders (N+N) commercial motor cycle riders.
41. Motor park (N+N) commercial car garage
42. Pure water (Adj+N) A litre of water packaged in a cellophane bag and approved by NAFDAC – National Association for Food, Drugs Administration and control
43. Waterproof bag (N+N) cellophane bag
44. Husband Snatcher (N+N) A woman who forcibly lures another woman's husband to herself.
45. To take in (idiomatic)- pregnant
46. Intended- fiancée
47. Go-slow - traffic jam
48. JAMB (acronym) for Joint Admissions & Matriculation Board
49. Matrimonial home – marriage; the marital family.
50. Yellow fever – traffic warden
51. Cow meat –beef
52. Introduction- first visit about marriage enquiry/ pre-nuptial enquiry
53. Market women- common women traders
54. Chewing stick - A special stick chewed mostly in the morning for oral/dental gloss.
55. A second burial- Funeral rite traditionally conducted after the dead was buried. It is usually performed with merry-making rather than mourning.
56. Invitee- Guest
57. Duper- Dupe
58. Gossiper- Gossiper
59. Arrangee – a person who is assigned a role, using illegal deals.
60. Runs man- (idiomatic) a person used in shady deals
61. Machine – A person employed to write examination for another, illegal deals.

62. Lesson teacher – a teacher employed by parents to teach their children after official school hours.
63. To chase a girl – To woo a girl
64. Escort –see off
65. off-head – off hand
66. free barber- infection that cuts the hair

## Discussion of selected culture-related lexical items

### Transfer

The substrates (indigenous languages) usually are transferred as loans for want of better terminology to fill in the gaps in NE variety. Adegbija, (1989)<sup>35</sup> is of the opinion that transfer occurs when a meaning foreign to English is directly translated into English. This paper identifies the following types of transfer (i) Transfer of meaning (e.g. *bush meat, pure water, escort, tight friend, to chase a girl, free barber, off-head,*) (ii) transfer of culture (e.g. *matrimonial home, bride price, introduction, traditional marriage, Kitchen seat, home people, chieftaincy title, town's man, market women, native doctor, etc*).

### Neologisms

Neologisms constitute coinages of entirely new forms. These new words can be grouped in three categories, examples: **(a)** The ones that are hybridization of English and indigenous lexical items. Examples: *Okada riders and Danfo driver*. These terms are used to refer to persons who are riding the motorcycle or driving the lorry on commercial purposes respectively; *Raffia bag, Bamboo bed*, as technologies *Atama soup, egusi soup, ewedu soup, Afang soup* as traditional food; *etighe dance, makossa style* as dance steps; *wooden gong* as musical instruments. **(b)** The existing lexical stock in substrate forms, examples: *edikang ikong, amala, dodo, akara, eba* as traditional food; *agbada, adire*, as clothing **(c)**The existing stock in English, examples are

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35 E. Adegbija, "Lexicon-semantic Variation in Nigerian English" *World Englishes*. 8, no.2,(1989)165-77]

*area boys, go-slow, intended, essential commodities, cash madam, husband snatcher etc.*

### **Analogy**

Analogy arises when new ideas are formed on the basis of partial likeness or agreement with the existing words in either a source language or English (Adedimeji, 2007:9)<sup>36</sup>. This analogical usage in NE are (*invitee, arrangee, lesson teacher, gossipier, duper, runs man, hair-tie, house boy, gate man, machine, etc*).

### **Acronyms**

Acronyms which are formed from the combination of the initial letters of phrases are creation a phenomenon in language development. Examples are:

- WAI (War Against Indiscipline)
- JAMB (Joint Admission & Matriculation Board. By semantic extension it refers to both the examination body and the examination).
- NUC (National University Commission)
- NYSC (National Youth Service Corps, a compulsory paramilitary exercise meant for fresh university graduates. It is usually shortened *Corper*.)
- T P (transport money).

**Speaker A:** I am not attending church service today.

**Speaker B:** Why now?

**Speaker A:** I do not have TP talk less (let alone, BE) of collection, (offering, BE).

### **Loanshift**

Loanshift occurs when the meaning of a word or a phrase from target language (English) is shifted or extended to cover a new concept or idea. Examples are:

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36 M.A. Adedimeji, The Linguistic features of Nigerian English and their Implications for 21st century English pedagogy, Paper presented at the 24th Annual Conference of NESAS, University of Uyo, 2007.

- *expo* (leaked examination questions, the idea here is **that** the examination questions have been exposed before **the** actual time of writing. When a candidate is found **with** these exposed questions, he/she commits an offence under what is called *examination malpractice*, a coinage in NE.
- settle (bribe)

**Speaker A:** Oga, settle us before you pass.

**Speaker B:** How much?

**Speaker A:** Anything is Ok.

**Speaker B:** I have only 200 naira for you.

- Sorting (money given as inducement to influence award of examination scores)
- See you (bribe), a common parlance by students when soliciting for marks.

**Student:** Please sir, I want to see you.

**Teacher:** Yes, what for?

**Student:** Please sir, I did not do well in my examination. want to settle you.

**Teacher:** Ok

Note: At the end of the discussion, the money used in the transaction is called *sorting*.

- Drop something (money)
- Ten percent, kola (bribe) - commonly used by businessmen/elderly people during transactions involving money or when a younger person requests for assistant from the elderly.

**Boss:** Gateman (gatekeeper, BE) open the gate, I am leaving for work.

**Gatekeeper:** Yes sir, but Oga, there is no bread for breakfast this morning?

**Boss:** I have *dropped something (money BE)* with the house boy (House keeper, BE).

**Gatekeeper:** *All correct* Sir. (Thanks, BE).

- To form- to pose

### Lexico-semantic duplication

Lexico-semantic duplication refers to a situation where speakers/users of NE made use of superfluous elements which at time result in redundancy even though they create emphasis in the context of use. Examples include: *reverse back, repeat again, comprise of, discuss about, extreme comer, blue colour, vigil night*) some cited in Adedimeji, (2007).<sup>37</sup> We observe that the second elements are redundant though they also signal emphasis.

### Euphemisms

Euphemisms are expression which mask reality and give it a better face. They are expressions that present uncomfortable or lowly situations in elevated manner, (Odebunmi & Olagunju (2001)<sup>38</sup>. This paper notes euphemistic expressions that mask reality and are understood by NE speakers/users. Examples:

- To sleep with her- To have sex with her
- To ease oneself- to urinate
- Sleep in the lord- dead
- Travelled to the land of fore-fathers- dead
- Toast/ Brain a girl- seek her hand in love/ to cajole a girl
- Chase a girl- woo
- Shade tears - cry
- Do it –have sex/ fondle a female's breast.
- Not safe- in a menstruation

**Speaker A: (female):** Please madam, the laboratory attendant touched me.

**Speaker B :( Principal):** Lab. attendant, is that true?

**Speaker C :( Attendant):** What about the biology teacher who always touched you?

**Speaker A: (female):** So, did I ask you to *do it*?

**Male:** Hi Sweetie, you promise to *do it* today.

37 Adedimeji, "The Linguistic features," 2007.

38 A. Odebunmi & S. Olagunju, "Euphemism in English Usage." In Afolabi, D. (Ed) *Reading in the Humanities*. Ilesha: Jola Publishers, (2001) 48-51

**Female:** Dear, I am *not safe* today, let it be next week.

- Sleep around – prostituting
- She has not bathed- she is stinking, emitting body odour
- Shine the Congo- to have sex.

(It is often used with ellipsis, that is omitting the required word to make the meaning complete.)

**Example:**

**Speaker A:** Well, finally she visited after much postponement.

**Speaker B:** So you lastly *shine* her? (Have sex, with her?)

**Speaker A:** NO, she complained that she was *not safe*. (in a menstrual period)

The paper notes that word *Congo* is a loan from a popular dance style, makossa, where female from Congo Brazzaville danced nude. Thus the item, *Congo* is attributive. It is also used in a semantic extension sense to refer to female with attractive and large buttocks. It also connotes an unmarried lady

### Idiomatic Expressions

In NE, there is the tendency to coin idioms to express Nigerian cultural sensibilities which meanings are rigid and their word combinations cannot be altered. Udom, (2015)<sup>39</sup> notes that idioms are phrases whose meanings are different from the literal meanings of the individual words they contain. Examples:

- To take in (in relation to a woman)– to be pregnant
- To take light –power failure/ power cut
- Not on seat – not immediately available
- Bad people – criminals
- Overseas – abroad
- Put to bed –to be delivered of a baby
- Swallow – types of food taken in small rounded balls which are dipped in soup and then swallowed without chewing.

This act is commonly noticed when eating *pounded yam*, *amaala*, *tuwo*, *eba* and *fofoo*.

• Don't mind him – disregard what he says

**Speaker A:** Good morning Ma, what do you have for breakfast?

**Speaker B:** Rice *pepper soup* is ready.

**Speaker A:** No *swallow* yet?

**Speaker B:** *Edikang Ikong* with *fofoo* will be ready soon.

**Speaker A:** I need *eba*.

**Speaker B:** What! Have you not heard the *gari* is *essential commodity* now?

**Speaker A:** What about *amaala*.

**Speaker B:** It does not go well with *edikang Ikong*, I am not ready to prepared *draw soup*, may be later.

## Proverbs

Proverbs constitute greater usages in NE. They are statements of experiences in life and words wisdom usually handed down traditionally from generation to generation. They are the pride of Nigerian culture. They are used to convey messages during important conversations. It is believed that these sayings are from the wise. They are mostly used to advise a child or a youth.

## Examples:

- Make haste while the sun shines.
- The taste of the pudding is in the eating.
- Only a fool tests the depth of a river with both feet.
- If a child washes his hands he can eat with elders.
- Rain does not fall on one roof only.
- Mouth which eats does not talk.
- He that digs up a grave for his enemy may be digging it for himself.
- It takes a whole village to raise a child.
- The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who knee under them.

- Looking at a king's mouth one would not think he sucked his mother's breast.
- Ears that do not listen accompanied the head when it is chopped off.
- When two elephants fight it the grass suffers.
- A man who pays respect to a great man paves the way for his own greatness.

### **Conclusion**

The spread of a variety of English in Nigerian environment since the advent of English in the country is unprecedented. Given the view that English has been nativized, acculturated and twisted to express concepts and modes of interaction where English does not have the required expressions and nuances, and speakers/users of NE are compelled to communicate using peculiar expressions that are most apt for Nigerian context, NE will then foster the much needed unity and sustainable development with its multilingual and multi-ethnic diversities. Similarly, codification which has been referred to as language engineering process, which embraces orthographization and graphization is recommended as this will put NE as national language which would also allay fears of ethnic domination since all culture-related items will be adequately represented in the lexicon.

With a commitment towards the preservation of NE using appropriate cultural artifacts as investment will nullify geographical boundaries by introducing homogeneous language patterns that are desirable for improved communication. The implication in NE usage is that the people will continue to be interested in learning the language since most lexical items will reflect their cultural identity. The global spread of English and its association with economic modernization and industrial development may put Nigerians behind in development since their mastery of the English is shallow. With the set of English as global language, educational planners should inculcate varieties where NE belongs in school curriculum for learners and language instructors. This way the Nigerian varieties of English used in



Nigeria will be harmonized with the Standard English and international intelligibility of the domesticated language will be attained.

The paper has provided linguistic analysis of lexical features of NE indicating how Nigerian culture has enriched the language. It has observed that NE is not deviant but deviation which as a variety departs from BE usage and is tagged essentially productive and adoptable in Nigerian environment, in examples such as not on seat, walking in the sun, escort a friend, cut-off point as neologisms. In addition, NE usage is creative which signals a lot of sense by educated speakers because it is highly productive and opens to lots of interpretations in examples such as chase a girl, shade tears as euphemisms. This work notes that creativity is one of the ways culture of the NE people and its environment have enriched the new ways of expression that is culture-specific.