



Status of Nigerian English

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Abstrak

Bahasa Inggris muncul dalam konteks Nigeria sebagai akibat dari kebutuhan untuk berkomunikasi dengan banyak orang dari berbagai latar belakang etnis yang berbicara bahasa yang berbeda. Namun, keunikan bahasa Inggris Nigeria yang berbeda dari bahasa Inggris standar memunculkan keunikan tersendiri dan perlu untuk dikaji lebih dalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis status Bahasa Inggris Nigeria dengan menjelaskan fitur morfologis dan sintaksis serta perbedaannya dengan Bahasa Inggris Standar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data akan dikumpulkan dengan hati-hati untuk mewakili berbagai aspek morfologis dan sintaksis. Data akan dikumpulkan dengan melakukan analisis teks dan wawancara, baik teks tertulis maupun lisan dalam Bahasa Inggris Nigeria. Data yang dikumpulkan akan dianalisis secara sistematis. Hasil penelitian ini menyajikan fitur morfologis dan sintaksis Bahasa Inggris Nigeria dan perbedaannya dengan Bahasa Inggris Standar. Dengan komentar singkat tentang identitasnya yang berbeda, makalah ini menyimpulkan pembenaran gagasan bahwa bahasa Inggris Nigeria harus dianggap sebagai salah satu bahasa Inggris di dunia.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris Nigeria, Fitur Morfologis dan Sintaktis, Identitas Berbeda

Abstract

English emerged in the Nigerian context as a result of the need to communicate with many people from different ethnic backgrounds who speak different languages. However, the uniqueness of Nigerian English appears, which is different from standard English. This study aims to analyze the status of Nigerian English by explaining the morphological and syntactic features and how they differ from Standard English. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The data will be carefully collected to represent various morphological and syntactical aspects. Data will be collected by conducting text analysis and interview, both written and spoken text in Nigerian English. The data collected will be analysed systematically. The result of this study presents the morphological and syntactical features of Nigerian English and how they differ from Standard English. With a brief commentary on its distinct identity, the paper concludes the justification of the notion that Nigerian English must be regarded as one of the world's Englishes.

Keywords: Nigerian English, Morphological and Syntactical Features, Distinct Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a global language and it is associated with many languages and cultures. Given its worldwide usage, English can be divided into three concentric circles: a) the inner circle, where English is the native language; b) the outer circle, where the language is spoken as a second language; and c) an expanding circle, where English is spoken as a foreign language (Hashim & Yunus, 2018; Menggo, 2022; Nishanthi, 2018). Along with India, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, Malaysia, and Bangladesh, Nigeria, where English is used as second language, is placed under the Outer Circle (Hasanah et al., 2019; Idowu et al., 2014; Moyi & Galadima, 2020). Today, the use of English in Nigeria is widely covered many different domains such as education, administration, mass communication, and judiciary (Okal, 2014; Smiley et al., 2020).

Nigerian English acts as a branch of English that is socially acceptable in Nigeria while yet being globally intelligible. Among Nigerians, as among natives of other colonies of the British Empire, English spread through freed slaves, who had been formally educated in English to serve as interpreters between the colonists and the natives (Adewumi et al., 2020;

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Unuabonah & Oladipupo, 2021). In the absence of a common language for the whole population of Nigeria, there was the urgent need for the Nigerian English speakers both for the British traders as well as the Christian missionaries, and they exploited Nigerian slaves to use English as *lingua franca* (Gunantar, 2016; Ibna Seraj & Habil, 2019; Pransiska, 2017).

Since English in Nigeria is considered as a ladder for social advancement, parents encourage their children to learn and use the language of the more advanced people who used it for trade and civilizing natives through Christianity missionaries (Awofala & Blessing, 2014; Okenyi, 2022; Onumajuru, 2013). During the colonial era, English traders built ports and factories in areas where missionaries were active in order to promote the use of English. Previous study argues that proselytising work by Christian missionaries and colonial trade grew hand in hand in Nigeria (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

Many studies have shown that Nigeria is linguistically diverse. In this linguistically diverse country, English is viewed as a language that can help uplift social and economic status (Camović, 2019; Sharma & Puri, 2020). In this context, Nigeria's culture and socio-linguistic history have played a significant role in the development of Nigerian English. notes that the version of English used by Nigerians for communication across socio-cultural boundaries differs from native speakers' English. Previous study also observes that Nigerian English instructors have left some rules of English grammar unchanged, in order to maintain Nigerians' ability to communicate both internationally and cross-culturally, without imitating native speakers' sound (Unuabonah & Oladipupo, 2021).

English emerged in the Nigerian context as a result of the necessity to communicate with many people from different ethnic backgrounds who otherwise use different languages. They also found that Nigerian parents view English as a prestige language for their children, and hence they prefer to hear their children speaking English rather than an indigenous language (Florence Aduke, 2015; Ntamu & Oyo-Ita, 2022; Owoeye, J. S. & Yara, 2021). This wholehearted acceptance of English in Nigeria reveals a stable influence on indigenous languages. Finally, Nigerian writers have found it convenient to be able to express their spoken culture and traditions in English. This study aims to analyze the status of Nigerian English by explaining the morphological and syntactic features and how they differ from Standard English. It also discusses the distinct identity of Nigerian English.

2. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive approach (Huberman & Miles, 2012; Nassaji, 2015). This research will collect data on Nigerian English from various sources, such as written texts, interviews, and recorded conversations. Data will be carefully collected to represent various morphological and syntactical aspects.

Data will be collected by conducting text analysis, both written and spoken text, in Nigerian English. Interviews with native speakers and competent speakers of Nigerian English will also be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the features and identity of this language.

The data collected will be analysed systematically. Morphological features, such as word formation, affixation, reduplication, and shape shifting, will be identified and analyzed. In addition, syntactic features, such as word order, use of prepositions, and sentence construction, will also be analyzed in detail.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Nigerian English Morphology

The points illustrate some of the morphological features used in Nigerian English are 1.) Pro-breaking agreement in Nigerian English means not taking into consideration the terms of the agreement. However, the prefix pro, in Standard English means in support/favour of. 2.) Being multiple-tongued in Nigerian English means insincere while in Standard English it means possessing the ability to speak two languages. 3.) Tongue-lashed someone in Nigerian English means to have reprimanded someone while in Standard English, it means severe scolding. 4.) The adjective big has a different meaning in Nigerian English. It is used when a Nigerian English speaker says: ‘Ferdinand could have talked to the big people in the police, and I could not get justice’. The meaning intended in this example is influential people or top brass in Standard English.

Another morphological feature of Nigerian English is affixation. Although some of prefix items might surprise English native speakers, most of them share their cores in both form and meaning with Nigerian first languages. Conversely, suffixation is quite striking in Nigerian English. The following examples may not be common for native speakers. The pattern used in these instances is simply verb + able = adjectives. The example is show in

Table 1. Uncommon Suffixation Pattern in Nigerian

Suffixation	Meaning
Danceable	in Nigerian English means able to dance
Hearable	in Nigerian English means able to be heard
Walkable	in Nigerian English means ability to walk to the target point
Poundable	in Nigerian English means something can be banded
Writeable	in Nigerian English means something that can be noted
Pushable	in Nigerian English means something that can be pushed
Digable	in Nigerian English means something that can be dug
Sublatable	in Nigerian English means able to be sublet.
Unbendable	in Nigerian English means something that cannot be bent

Base on Table 1 show how Nigerians have added the suffix *-able* to verbs in order to provide ability in specific actions. The last two examples, H and I, reveal how the suffix *-able* can be added to a compounding verb or prefix + verb.

Another morphological feature found in Nigerian English, as indicated by, is that the application of the suffix *-in* to set noun-forming differs from Standard English. The following examples demonstrate how the suffixes *-ist*, *-ness*, and *-ship* change the meaning of the words as show in Table 2.

Base on Table 2 show that the suffixes *-ist* and *-ness* are linked to adjectives to create new nouns. In C and D, the suffixes *-ness* and *-ship* were sometimes added to the wrong words although they have almost the same meaning. Some suffixes, too, are overgeneralised.

Table 2. Suffixes change the meaning of the words

Suffixes	Meaning
Superstitionist	A person who believes in supernatural
Unreadiness	Indicate unpreparedness.
Charitableness	A person who is tolerant in judging others
Twinship	Two things are related to each other or cannot be separated

Syntactic Features Of Nigerian English

The adaptation of Nigerians to English language and the acceptance of English as a second language have created new syntactic features that distinguish Nigerian English from Standard English. The syntactic features of Nigerian English can be divided into two types:

Deviance is a term used in linguistic analysis to refer to a sentence (or its units) which does not conform to the rules of grammar, i.e., it is ill”. The reason for deviance in Nigerian English is that Nigerian learners often do not continue studying the language beyond age 16. If a person has no use for the language, a speaker will naturally revert to using his or her first language. Table 3 shows the differences between Nigerian English and Standard English.

Base on Table 3, show that the differences appear in the choice of verbs and their subjects. Obviously, such verb choices are unacceptable to native English speakers, but those changes are the result of the transfer from the Nigerian English speakers’ first language. explains that language transfer from Nigerians’ first language, inadequate visualisation and the change of the verb forms always leads to a number of deviant syntax features in Nigerian English.

Meanwhile deviation is an institutionalized error, which is widely accepted, and it enjoys universal acceptance. It is an acceptable departure from the norm. Some syntactic features of Nigerian English that are considered deviations in NE syntax is show in Table 4.

Base on Table 4 show that Nigerian English has different syntactic features from Standard English. Example shows that the verbs ‘hear’ and ‘see’ can be misused in Nigerian English. It is also possible, in Nigerian English, to add the marker -s to non-count nouns to make them plural. In Nigerian English, determiners are not required, though they are mandatory in the same context in Standard English. Finally, reduplication can be seen in many cases of Nigerian English; however it is incorrect in most Standard English contexts.

Table 3. Differences between Nigerian English and Standard English

Nigeian English	Standard English
I hear English	I understand English
I can hear a smell	I can sense a smell
The food is too sweet	The food is delicious
Don’t move with bad boys	Don’t associate with bad boys
They are calling you	He is calling you

Table 4. Syntactic Features of Nigerian English

Syntactic Features	Meaning
Be + ing: <i>I am hearing you</i>	The continuous marker -ing is added to the be verb + <i>hear</i>
Pluralisation of non-count nouns: <i>Listen to these informations</i>	The plural marker -s is added to a non-count noun

Syntactic Features	Meaning
determiner is required in some contexts: <i>I have bright feature</i>	This distinguishes from Standard English, as <i>a</i> is required for the phrase in Standard English.
Reduplication in some adjectives and adverbs: <i>Could you repeat the answer again?</i>	The repetition appears in this question when the speaker used <i>repeat</i> and <i>again</i> in the same question

Discussion

When Nigerians accepted the use of English as a second language (ESL), they tend to develop several morphological rules that differ from Standard English. Examination of the morphology and syntax of Nigerian English illustrates the differences between popular Nigerian English and Standard British English. The area of Nigerian English phrasal and prepositional verbs that clearly differ from Standard British English (Adewumi et al., 2020; Ekundayo, 2021; Ogunjobi & Akindutire, 2020). These morphological differences were considered by some linguists to be errors. Nigerian English carries some ‘glaring’ errors, the syntactic gap between Nigerian English and Standard British English is ‘narrow’. found that compounding items in Nigerian English are the most common forms to deviate from Standard English.

This section explores some morpho-syntactic features similar to Nigerian English that appear in different varieties of world English. Some syntactic features are not unique to West African English, but have also been observed in Englishes elsewhere found that South Asian English (SAE) has morpho-syntactic features that are similar to Nigerian English (Bae & Min, 2020; Mayasari & Ardhana, 2018; Taşçı & Turan, 2021). The rule about be+ing, in the SAE context, is used as it is in the Nigerian English context. For example, SAE speakers say, ‘I am understanding English better now’, while Nigerian English users would say, ‘I am hearing you’. This rule also appears in Sri Lankan English (SLE), where speakers apply it when a verb comes after ‘to be’. They add the morpheme *-ing* to the verb, as in, ‘I am having a fever’. Reduplication is also used in SAE and Nigerian English. ‘Hot hot tea’ and ‘could you repeat the answer again?’ are similar examples of these varieties, respectively. The morphological and syntactic features discussed above are not exclusive to Nigerian English. We can see that the rule on be+ing is used in all NE, SAE and SLE varieties, whereas reduplication can be seen in NE and SLE varieties.

Every version of spoken and written English has emerged from different historic, geographic, political and socio-cultural situations, thus creating a language distinguished by its variety of characteristics, linguistic and cultural identities (Madyukova, 2021; Magomedkhan & Sadovoy, 2021; Saputra et al., 2019). Nigerian English is one of these. Nigerian English as “one of the new varieties of English language developing all over the world, which proceeds to provide a theoretical basis to justify its existence – the development of variation studies”. Nigerian English has been considered one of ‘new Englishes’. In fact, Nigerian English has enough features in common that render it accepted by its speakers and to qualify it for acceptance as a variety of English.

The varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English (Idowu et al., 2014; Usman & Hussaini, 2017). The assertion that Nigerian English is a variety of Standard English is not convincing to many stakeholders. Descriptions to Nigerian English, noting its similarities with other variants of English, we must generalise these variances to all versions of English that differ from Standard English.

The implications of this study will provide a deeper understanding of Nigerian English, including its distinctive morphological and syntactic features. This will enhance our understanding of language variation and help describe the status and characteristics of Nigerian English more accurately. This research will also contribute to the field of sociolinguistics by providing insight into the role of language in cultural and social identity. This research can help us understand how Nigerian English is related to social, political, and cultural aspects in Nigerian society.

However, this study has limitations, because this study focuses on Nigerian English, the findings may not be immediately generalizable to other varieties of English. Differences between language varieties can be significant, and these findings may not be representative of other varieties of English. In addition, this study may be limited by the availability of relevant data. Nigerian English data can be hard to find or limited to certain types of text or communication situations. This can limit the completeness of the analysis and the generalizability of the findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the status of Nigerian English as world Englishes, with an illustration of the historical perspective of Nigerian English, especially how English arrived in Nigeria, how Nigerian people received this language and how English has become the country's second language. The research has revealed that the cultural and socio-linguistic aspects of Nigerian English, especially how morphological and syntactical features differ from Standard English. The finding points to the fact that the creation and development of new syntactic features such as deviance and deviation distinguish Nigerian English from Standard English while it has, at the same time, developed various morphological rules like phrasal and prepositional verbs that differ from Standard English. One major aspect of Nigerian English is its distinct identity since many linguists view it as a new variety of English.

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