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The standard Nigerian English in perspectives: A variety or an interlanguage?

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Abstract

It is established that different types of English which differ considerably from the standard British English exist among Nigerian English speakers. This paper examines the Standard Nigerian English also referred to as Educated Nigerian English vis-a-viz its acclaimed status as a variety of English. With lexical and grammatical data collected from adult Nigerian L2 English, this paper argues that it is extremely difficult to identify the particular form which qualifies to be called Standard Nigerian English since no particular form is exclusive to a particular group of speakers. It further argues that the various forms tagged Nigerian English emerged due to deviations which occur in the course of learning and using Standard English as L2. These deviations occur due to linguistic deficiencies of Nigerian English speakers which are traceable to both linguistic and cognitive issues peculiar to all L2 learners irrespective of the target language. The paper concludes that, since the acclaimed Standard Nigerian English is not systematically and structurally consistent and regular among every user, it appears more like an interlanguage than a variety.

Keywords Nigerian English, varieties, linguistic deficiency, interlanguage, cognition

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that English, the official language in Nigeria, remains a foreign language which most Nigerians still struggle to learn and use effectively. In Nigeria, English language has the status of a very important and prestigious language. Also, the recognized form of English which is used and accepted for all official purposes in Nigeria is the Standard English. However, scholars like Banjo (1975), Adekunle (1979), Akere (2004) and Bamiro (2006), identified different types of English spoken and used by Nigerians. These types were identified and grouped based on the speakers' educational qualification and level of competence in the Standard English. This claim was corroborated by Adegbija (2004) when he opined that the level of competence in Standard English is often tied to the level of educational attainment of the Nigerian speaker.

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However, there is a form regarded as Standard Nigerian English acclaimed to be exclusive to educated Nigerians. This form has been tagged a "variety" of Standard English. However, existing literature revealed that this particular type possesses some unusual linguistic features not peculiar to either a dialect or a variety which makes the claim that it (i.e. Standard Nigerian English) is a variety of English somehow contentious. From available evidences e.g. Lardiere (1998a; 1998b), Prévost and White (2000), White (2003), Hazenadar (2007) and Slabakova (2009), this particular form undoubtedly emanated from the combination of the full knowledge of an indigenous language (i.e. an L1 of any Nigerian acquired effortlessly) and the prospective knowledge of Standard English (an L2/official language which is being learned in formal L2 settings). The Standard Nigerian English has attracted so much attention that scholars like Banjo (1995) and Okoro (2004) discussed the prospects of its codification and challenges. Also, Adegbite (2015) suggested that an orthography and a dictionary be produced for the Standard Nigerian English in order to give it a linguistic status. This study takes a critical look at the features of the Standard Nigerian English with a view to determining whether it truly possesses the features and characteristics of a variety or it is just a product of features from the LI combined with the inadequate knowledge of the L2 which makes it more of an interlanguage than a variety.

1.1.   *Previous studies on Nigerian English*

The existence of Nigerian English has been contentious and controversial. Writers such as Salami (1968), Oshodi (2014a) and Okoro (2017) believe that the form tagged Nigerian English is a product of inadequate knowledge of Standard English which makes the form 'incorrect' English and by extension an interlanguage. However, a lot of scholars believe it is a form which has emerged with its own distinct features which are peculiar to Nigerian speakers of English. Such scholars include Walsh (1967), Adetugbo (1979), Kujore (1985), Akere (2004), Adegbija (1989; 2004), Kachru (1987), Bamiro (1991), Ajani (2007), Alo & Mesthrie (2008), Kirkpatrick (2011) Gut & Fuchs (2013) and Akinjobi (2015). According to Bemigho and Olateju (2006:150) "Nigerian English is that variety of English that has developed in the Nigerian non-native English situation and it has distinguishing features manifested at the phonological, lexico-semantic, grammatical and discourse levels". Kperogi (2007) observed that Nigerian English is the variety of English that is broadly spoken and written by Nigeria's literary, intellectual, political and media elite across the regional and ethnic spectra of Nigeria. The implication of Kperogi (2007) definition is that, Nigerian English is a variety of Standard English spoken by educated Nigerians. The submission of Kperogi (2007) on what constitutes the Nigerian English agrees with the assertion of Banjo (1975), Adekunle (1979), Akere (2004) and Bamiro (2006) that different varieties of English exist in Nigeria. These claims lead to two pertinent questions. One, do all educated Nigerians across the different regions speak the same form of English? Two, does every uneducated

Nigerian irrespective of region speak the same form of English as well? We shall return to these questions later. Let us first examine the various types of Nigerian English identified by scholars.

Jowitt (1991), Akere (2004) and Egbe (2004) all observed that in Nigeria, there is usually a correlation between the level of educational attainment and classification of the type of English spoken in Nigeria. This implies that the 'types' of English spoken in Nigeria are identified and grouped based on the speakers' educational level.

Jowitt (1991) identified four types of usage which are based on levels of education. Those in stage I are those with no formal education, those in stage II are those who completed only primary education, stage III comprises of those who completed only secondary education while those in stage 4 are those who completed university education. Banjo (1975) identified four types (varieties) of Nigerian English. Type one is spoken by semi-illiterate Nigerians and those with elementary education. He attributes type two to the type influenced by negative transfers from the Mother Tongue and observed that this type is locally acceptable but lacks international intelligibility. The third variety is the type spoken by secondary school leavers while the fourth type is a close model of the British accent. Adekunle (1979) identified three varieties. One, the near-native variety spoken by well-educated Nigerians. Two, the local colour variety a type which he considers to be Nigerian environmentally conditioned and the third type which relies on transliteration and is characterized by deviations from Standard English syntactic structures.

Akere (2004) identified three groups of Nigerian English speakers: highly educated, averagely educated and nominally educated types. Egbe (2004) identified types 1, 2, 3 and 4. These are the type spoken by university educated people; the type used by secondary school students and ''those whose formal education is not higher than their level of deficiency in English''. There is a type of English spoken by primary school leavers and many with post-primary school education who are exposed to types 1 and 2 and also the type used by primary and modern school leavers with no exposure to types 1 and 2 mentioned above.

Bamiro (2006) identified three varieties of English in Nigeria. He tagged the first one as higher variety, he referred to the second one as intermediate variety (mesolect) which is the internationally accepted variety and the third one lower variety (basilect), which is the "context" variety associated with the illiterate and semi-literate population. This last categorization by Bamiro (2006) made reference to literacy which is quite remarkable. This is interesting because literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. However, it is a fact that literacy is never a criterion for language competence and performance because one does not need to be literate before one can

understand and use a language effectively. However, if the language in question is a foreign or second language, the learner's target would be the native speakers' form where individual speaker has the tendency to exhibit different levels of competence and performance. This seems to be the case for the Nigerian English which is being mistaken for a variety. This issue shall be addressed later.

Based on the various submissions of scholars cited above, it is obvious that the various types of English in Nigeria are majorly categorized based on the speakers' educational attainment and level of competence in Standard English. An important question would be; is there a particular form which is considered the Standard variety of Nigerian English? We shall attempt to provide answers to this question in the next section

2. Standard Nigerian English: claims and controversies

There are controversies concerning the existence of a standard Nigerian English which have triggered a lot of studies. Most of these studies attempted to identify and justify the particular form that should be considered the Standard Nigerian variety among the types identified. Following the claim that there different types of English exist in Nigerian, how do we identify the particular form tagged Standard Nigerian English? Various scholars have expressed their opinions on the issue. Mbisike (2007) admonished that the nativization process of English in Nigeria should be curtailed because the process tends to reduce the rate of intelligibility with the native variety of the language. Scholars like O'Donnel and Todd (1999) and Okoro (2004) believed a variety of any language must be mutually intelligible to all the speakers of that language. By implication, a dialect (variety) of a language like English must conform to the rules governing the usage of the language at all levels: phonological, lexical, morphological, semantic, syntactic and even pragmatic level. This shows that for a Standard Nigerian English to be recognized it has to be mutually intelligible to other speakers of English, especially native speakers. Besides, if there is a standard form of the Nigerian English then there should be a non-standard form as well. However, these two terms are usually used as if they are mutually exclusive. Okoro (2004) suggested that instead of talking about 'Standard' and Non-standard' it is more practical to make reference to a single variety i.e. 'Nigerian English' which according to him captures standard and non-standard usages. These usages are based on the level of competence attained by Nigerian speakers of English which is often measured by their level of educational attainment. Can the form spoken by uneducated Nigerians also be referred to as Nigerian English? If not, why? And if yes, how do we classify it? Also, is the Standard Nigerian English, a dialect or a variety of Standard English? If yes, is it linguistically arguable for the varieties of a language to be determined by educational qualification and level of competence? Are educational qualification and level of competence distinguishing factors of dialects and varieties such as age, gender, region, accent and others? These are some of the issues that would be addressed in subsequent sections of this paper.

3. Language dialect and variety: a short appraisal

TThe term language is not so easy to define, however, there are certain characteristics that are peculiar to what is regarded as a language. On the basis of this, a language would be defined as "an arbitrary system of vocal and non-vocal symbols through which people in the same community and subculture communicate and interact in terms of their common cultural experiences, beliefs and expectations". A dialect is a speech form with the collection of grammatical (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics) attributes which make one group of speakers noticeably different from another group of speakers of the same language. A dialect is also defined as a regional or social variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, grammar and/or vocabulary. The term dialect is often used to characterize a way of speaking that differs from the standard variety of the language. Succinctly, a dialect is defined as a variant of a language which shares mutual intelligibility with other variants. By implication, a dialect is just one of the many linguistically related variants of a standard language. Linguistically speaking, a variety is a form of a language which varies based on a number of factors such as the social status, class, gender or region etc. of the speakers. It is always peculiar to a social group bound together by some factors and it is mostly identified through accent.

According to Crystal and Crystal, (2014), one basic feature of dialects is mutual intelligibility. Mutual intelligibility refers to a situation where people who speak different variants of a language understand one another perfectly when communicating. According to Awóbùlúyì (1992) with reference to standard Yorùbá and its dialects, each dialect contributes something no matter how little to the overall emergence of the standard form. Also, every dialect has a substantial number of native speakers who see it as their inheritance. Thus, speakers of different dialects would always speak the standard form which is the unifying language among them in addition to their respective dialects which they cherish and mostly use for informal purposes. A good example is the Standard Yorùbá which is spoken by speakers of the various dialects like Ọ̀yọ́, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ẹ̀gbá, Ìkàrẹ́, Èkìtì, Ondo, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ìlàjẹ, Ìgbómìnà and Ònkò. Awóbùlúyì went further to affirm that when a complex issue arises in the grammar of the standard form of a language, a look at the dialects is most likely to provide the solution to it.

A variety is also a variant of a language but it differs from a dialect in the sense that it is usually triggered by some peculiar factors which could be social or linguistic. A variety is usually spoken in a small context within a large context where the standard form is spoken natively by speakers of these varieties. In most cases, speakers of such a variety usually speak them as native languages within a context where a particular standard language is spoken. For example, Welsh, Midlands English, Scottish English, Cockney and Geordie all dialects of Standard English spoken in the United Kingdom are sometimes referred to as accents. This is because, the most prominent distinguishing factor of speakers of these varieties is their accent (Roach 2000). They are mostly used in informal settings and in conversations while the standard form is used for official purposes.

At this juncture, the pertinent question would be; what is or are the distinguishing features of the Standard Nigerian English? Does it possess salient features which qualify it either as a dialect or a variety? Does it have native speakers who are committed to its use and maintenance? Is it intuitively regular and systematic like every established dialect or variety? In the alternative, does it possess features related to L2 learning/acquisition which makes it an interlanguage? The answers to these very important questions shall be provided in the subsequent sections of this paper.

4. What is Interlanguage?

Selinker (1972) defined interlanguage as "the intermediate states or intermediate grammars of a learner's language as it moves towards the target language. It is a product of a creative process driven by inner forces and interaction, influenced by L1 and input from the target language". Interlanguage has some peculiar characteristics such as frequent changes governed by some innate rules as well as the L1. It also reduces complex grammaticality in form. Above all, it is used for a smaller range of communicative needs. The most distinguishing characteristic of interlanguage is the recognition of various levels among L2 speakers such as non-native level, near-native level and native-like level. Individual speaker are grouped based on their level of competence which in most cases are influenced by their level of exposure to the target L2 which ultimately influences and determines their level of competence and performance. The fact that interlanguage grammar exhibits frequent changes and also reduces complex grammaticality explains why Nigerian L2 English display different levels of competence and performance in Standard English. For example, they omit and sometimes misuse inflections in certain obligatory contexts where adult native speakers of Standard English would not. They pronounce some words wrongly which gives such words another meaning, they misuse some words which changes the semantic status of the word; they come up with some direct translations of individual words in their native language and use them in English expressions which produce non-native like English expressions. This inconsistent use of such inflections (omissions and misuse), incorrect pronunciation and usage of words, phrases and introduction of non-native like Standard English phrases and sentences have been taken to be features of Nigerian English.

5. The standard Nigerian English: matters arising

According to Salami (1978) and Oshodi (2014a), the form tagged Standard Nigerian English emerged based on issues which can be best analyzed from second language acquisition/learning perspectives. It emerged when Nigerians who were already fully equipped with the knowledge of their native language(s) attempted to acquire/learn English as an additional language. In the course of acquiring/learning a second language as we know, a lot of issues do arise. Among these issues are interference, errors, mistakes, competence, performance, transfer etc. which combine to form what is referred to in L2 literature as interlanguage. However, interlanguage is exhibited at various levels based on the kind and level of exposure which a particular individual has to the target language. Thus, educated Nigerians

who have more exposure to Standard English tend to exhibit some features which are not likely to be found among uneducated Nigerians in the course of using English language and the result of their efforts is a modified level of interlanguage (near-native) which is tagged Standard Nigerian English. This form popularly known by scholars as Standard Nigerian English is always referred to as a variety of Standard English. As we know, the most distinguishing feature of a variety is usually the accent. However, Nigerian speakers of English language exhibit different accents based on their tribe and level of exposure to Standard English. For example, the Yorùbá accent differs considerably from the Ìgbò, Efik and Hausa accents. Also, even among Yorùbá native speakers of English, different accents are exhibited depending on the speaker's region. For example, speakers of Lagos, Ìjèbú, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ẹ̀gbá, Ìgbómìnà and Èkìtì dialects of Yorùbá language all have different and distinct accents. The question that would arise is: which accent would the Standard Nigerian English be based on considering the fact that different accents are exhibited by Nigerian speakers of English? Furthermore, a variety is always spoken intuitively by its speakers based on native speakers' competence which is innate. Can the same be said about the Standard Nigerian English in which case what the speakers produce is not intuitively or innately motivated but are deviations cognitively influenced by the combined knowledge of their L1 and inadequate knowledge of Standard English which arose in their bid to attain a near-native or native-like level in Standard English? Let us examine some of these 'distinguishing' features.

5.1.   Some features of Nigerian English
According to Bemigho and Olateju (2006), the Nigerian English possesses some distinguishing features manifested at the phonological, lexico-semantic, grammatical and discourse levels. The belief that these features are peculiar to only Nigerian speakers of English is the reason why this speech form is tagged Nigerian English. Some of these features shall be examined in this section

5.2.   Phonetic and phonological features
Studies have established that a lot of sounds attested in Standard English are not attested in Nigerian languages. This usually results in Nigerian speakers and users of English coming up with deviant forms when pronouncing some English words. Consider the examples below:

Form Produced	Target Form	Target Word	Sound Pronounced		Target Sound
1. /taŋk/ -tank	/θaŋk/	thank	/t/	instead of	/θ/
2. /kɔ:t/ - caught	/kʌt/	cut	/ɔ:/	instead of	/ʌ/
3. /faif/ - fife	/faiv/	five	/f/	instead of	/v/
4. /dziə/- jeer	/giə/	gear (of a car)	/dz/	instead of	/g/
5. /ba:θ/ - bath	/beið/	bathe (verb)	/θ/	instead of	/ð/

In examples (1-5), the target words were wrongly pronounced as shown under the form produced. The most interesting thing about these examples is that in the process of pronouncing the target words, the subjects ended up pronouncing different words with different meanings from the target and intended words in Standard English. This was due to the wrong pronunciation of a single sound as shown under sound produced and the target sound.

5.3.   Lexico-semantic features

There are certain words and phrases in Standard English with distinct meanings which are being used in Nigerian English to express other meanings some of which produce the exact opposite of the original meaning in Standard English. Consider the examples below:

6. *Gallant*; this means brave. "The soccer team lost gallantly by 10 goals to nothing". Gallantly has been used here instead of 'woefully'. A 10-0 loss in a soccer match cannot be a gallant loss?
7. *Garage*: a building for housing a motor vehicle or vehicles. "I usually enter Ikarẹ bus at Offa garage in Ilorin". Enter and garage have been used here instead of 'board and motor-park'.
8. Borrow: take and use (something belonging to someone else) with the intention of returning it." I did not get angry even when he refused to borrow me the money". Borrow was used here instead of 'lend'. One can borrow from someone and not the other way round.
9. *Rusticate*: suspend (a student) from a university as a punishment. "The boy was rusticated from the University when he was in 200 level and since then he could not gain admission into another University". Rusticate was used here instead of 'expel'.
10. *Take and Drop*: "I took a bus from Ikarẹ garage and I dropped at Akungba garage". Take and drop have been used instead of 'board and alight'.
11. *Big man*: "We all know that El-Rufai the Kaduna state governor is a big man". The phrase big man here refers to a rich and powerful man but in the real English context the sentence would mean the opposite since Mallam Nasir El-Rufai is physically a very small man.
12. *Long legs*: "The teacher has very long legs that is why she behaves as she likes". Long legs in this context means the right connections whereas in English context, it would refer to the physical length of the woman's legs.
13. *Senior/junior*: "My junior brother is a student in your school. My senior sister is a nurse". Junior and senior were used here instead of 'younger and elder'.
14. *Frank*: open, sincere, or undisguised: "I franked my face when I saw the student who stole the money". Frank has been used here instead of 'frown'.
15. *Globe*: "I need a globe in my room". Globe was used in this context instead of electric 'bulb'.

The most interesting thing about the examples in (6-15) is that the wrong use of the italicized words gave the sentences completely different meaning in Standard English. By implication, speakers of English language outside Nigeria would interpret the sentences differently.

5.4.   Morphological features (Inflections)

This is one area in which the 'features' are most prominent. It involves the "omission" and "misuse" of those inflections found in the area of 'inflectional morphology' which are used for tense marking, such as –s on third person singular verb, –ed which expresses past, –ing which shows continuous and –en which is used for past participle. It also includes the misuse of pronouns which distinguish between genders. These inflectional morphemes are sometimes omitted and misused by Nigerian L2 English in obligatory contexts (i.e. contexts in which adult native speakers of Standard English would use them). Kirkpatrick (2011) observed that these are marked features which distinguish the Nigerian English from other Englishes. Consider the examples below:

16. The girl came here with **his* father: The girl came here with **her** father.
17. It happened when I **travel* to Lagos: It happened when I **travelled** to Lagos.
18. Why did you **stole* your friend's biro? Why did you **steal** your friend's biro?
19. When I began to **saw* what was happening… When I began to **see** what was happening..
20. My students **knows* me well: My students **know** me well.
21. I mean my friend who **love* to drink: I mean my friend who **loves** to drink.
22. The principal **have* seen her lost phone: The principal **has** seen her lost phone
23. What is the sole **agenda* of our meeting? What is the sole **agendum** of our meeting?

Examples (16-23) involve the wrong use of morphological inflections. As shown in the examples, there were cases of omission and misuse of inflections in obligatory contexts. Notice that the inconsistent use of these inflections by the subjects is neither deliberate nor innate. It was due to their inadequate knowledge of Standard English specifically the rule of subject-verb agreement which they flouted. The fact that they were able to use the inflections (though wrongly) in obligatory contexts is an indication that they were aware of the rule of agreement in Standard English. However, the inconsistency of their use was due to the subjects' level of competence in Standard English which was far from native-like.

5.5.   Syntactic features

Sentence formation is another area in which inconsistencies are very profound. Consider the following examples:

Nigerian English	Standard English
24. *I have said my own my neck is clean	I have done the right thing and I am vindicated.
25. *Say me well to your family	Give my regards to your family.
26. *Leave the road for me	Get out of my way.
27. *Horn at the car	Honk at the car.
28. *Are you hearing me?	Can you hear me?

The Nigerian English examples in (24-28) were triggered by the features of Yorùbá the subjects' L1 and a combination of their limited knowledge of Standard English which are clear examples of interlanguage. All the above examples (i.e.1-28) were taken from Oshodi (2014b). They were spontaneous oral data collected from adult native Yorùbá L2 English who were senior secondary school teachers with over ten years of teaching experience when the data were collected. They are all University graduates which implies that they are educated Nigerians.

6. Linguistic Error versus Native Speakers' Intuition

In line with Chomsky's notion of Universal Grammar (UG) which focuses on native speakers' competence based on the intuitive knowledge of adult native speakers of a language, a linguistic error would be defined as any utterance which deviates from the conventional norm as affirmed by adult native speakers of that particular language. The claim is that it is only an adult native speaker of a language who possesses intuitive knowledge about his/her language that can authoritatively confirm an utterance as being correct or incorrect.

From the foregoing, some facts are clear about the status of the Standard Nigerian English. It is obvious that native speakers of Standard English would not understand most of the lexical items, phrases and constructions produced by the subjects in Oshodi (2014b) cited as examples (1-28) above. It is interesting that most of the lexical items and phrases used incorrectly in the examples above have unique and distinct meaning(s) in Standard English as against the meaning(s) given to them by educated Nigerians. For example, the word garage is "a building for housing a motor vehicle or vehicles" but it is usually used by educated Nigerian speakers of English in reference to 'motor-parks' which is a designated place where one can board a vehicle from one destination to another. Also, the misuse of gender pronoun 'his' instead of 'her' cannot be considered a feature but an error since it presents something different from the intended meaning. Based on examples (1-28) above, would it not be correct to affirm that these examples are linguistic errors rather than features? However, since such errors are expected from L2 users based on established linguistic and non-linguistic (cognitive) peculiarities of such errors among L2 learners and users

generally, it is more practical to group whatever such speakers produce as interlanguage.

7. Discussion

It is evident that educated Nigerians speak a form of English that is close to the Standard British English though with some lexical, tonal, structural and semantic differences. It is also evident that these differences manifest differently among educated Nigerians. In this study, it was shown that all the forms referred to as Nigerian English actually emanated from a combination of features from an indigenous language of individual Nigerian and the inadequate knowledge of Standard English usage. Beside tone which marks out the region and tribe of Nigerian English speakers, structural variations abound among speakers of every type of English spoken in Nigeria. These are dictated by features of the L1 of the Nigerian speaker combined with inadequate knowledge of the L2 (English) which previous scholars adduced to differences in academic qualifications and competence in English. It is interesting to know that these scholars used the Standard English as the yardstick for their categorizations. This confirms that the different forms of English produced by Nigerian speakers emanated from their quest to speak the Standard English. Thus, the form they produce is influenced by their L1 and whatever knowledge they possess of the Standard English which is a L2 to them. This explains why there are obvious differences between the forms of English spoken by educated Nigerians even those from the same tribe as well as uneducated Nigerians from the same tribe and region. It also accounts for the differences between the forms of English spoken by Yorùbá native speakers and Hausa native speakers, same for Ìgbò and Hausa and Yorùbá and Hausa native speakers of English aside their regional accents. What an individual speaker comes up with is usually cognitively created, a process which is peculiar to individual L2 speakers usually triggered by a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic factors which is a clear case of interlanguage.

As observed by Oshodi (2014a), the variable use of morphological inflections which is considered a feature of Nigerian English is not totally regular, consistent and systematic among Nigerian speakers of English. Apart from that fact that what is likely to constitute an inflectional error can be predicted, the rate, level and particular context of occurrence of such variable use of inflections cannot be emphatically predicted. This is because a speaker may fail to use the correct inflection in context A but the same speaker will use it correctly in context B and also overuse it in context C (Oshodi 2014b). This according to Selinker (1972) is a feature of interlanguage which is a cognitive creation of most L2 learners triggered by a combination of L1 and L2 features as their grammar moves closer to the target L2 form. For example, Oshodi (2014a) based on oral and comprehension data collected from undergraduate Nigerian and undergraduate Malaysian L2 English students from the department of Linguistics and languages with focus on the variable use of inflectional morphology discovered that the variable use of inflections in terms of omission and misuse among the subjects were similar and followed almost

the same pattern. This confirmed that what is considered features of Nigerian English at least in the area of variable use of inflections is not peculiar to Nigerian L2 English alone but cut across L2 English speakers generally especially those whose first language lacks inflections. The Malaysian subjects were native speakers of Malay and Mandarin two languages which do not inflect for tense.

Lardiere (1998a, & 1998b) and Hazenadar (2007) examined Chinese and Turkish native speakers who were L2 learners of English. They discovered that both the Chinese and Turkish subjects displayed similar features adduced to speakers of Nigerian English particularly in the area of inconsistent use of inflectional morphology. Also, Prévost & White (2000) and McCarthy (2007) found out that similar inflectional morphemes which mark tenses in inflectional languages like French and Spanish were also identified in the interlanguage grammars of L2 learners of these languages. It involves the misuse, overuse as well as omission of such morphemes by L2 learners in their attempt to acquire and use the L2 morphological inflections in a native-like manner.

Also, based on the definitions and features of a dialect and a variety, the English spoken by educated Nigerians does not fulfill the condition of either a dialect or a variety of English. It is not native to the speakers (i.e. Nigerians) who have their own native languages. Also, it is not consistent among all educated Nigerians in terms of usage. Furthermore, it cannot be a variety of English language because English is not spoken as a native language in Nigeria. From available literature, varieties of a language are not usually distinguished by educational qualification, the same features cut across speakers irrespective of their level of education. For example, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ọ̀wọ̀, Èkìtì and Ọ̀yọ́ are all established dialects of Yorùbá language. Speakers of each of these dialects irrespective of their academic qualifications use the same tonal, lexical and structural features in their discourse. Furthermore, it has been shown that these features are not consistent among all Nigerian English speakers and the differences according to scholars are triggered by academic attainment. This clearly confirms that it is a cognitive creation which is a peculiar feature of individual speaker depending on a number of linguistic cum cognitive features. Thus, a codified form would never solve the problem since the issue with Nigerian speakers of English goes beyond academic attainment. It is a socio-cognitive issue triggered by the combination of sociolinguistic and cognitive features from both L1 and L2.

Furthermore, considering the fact that there is no distinct form of English which reflects a particular type spoken by all Nigerians i.e. educated and uneducated, literate and illiterate. How then do we have a codified form bearing in mind that Nigerians do not speak English as a native language? At this juncture, there are pertinent questions that need to be asked. How do you teach uneducated Nigerians to use the codified form which is an exclusive property of the educated ones? Do Nigerians really need a codified form of Nigerian English? What significant purpose would a codified Nigerian English serve when Nigerians are usually encouraged to speak the Standard English? Definitely, it would be difficult to teach an uneducated person to use materials meant purely for educated people. With facts on ground, Nigerians surely do not need another form of speech especially one which

would not serve any real linguistic purpose outside the academic arena. The Nigerian English is not used in any formal setting, it is not acceptable in official examinations in Nigeria and it would not be understood by speakers of English language outside the country. The answers to the above questions have shown that the truth regarding the proposal is purely an academic one which does not reflect the true linguistic situation in Nigeria.

According to Okoro (2004) and Nbisike (2007), Nigerians are skeptical about Nigerian English. The major argument against it is that apart from the tendency to spell doom for Standard English which is the official language in Nigeria, the Nigerian English would definitely not serve any functional purpose in the country. Aside the fact that there is no single particular variety which cuts across every Nigerian speaker, it has no native speakers who see it as their inheritance and are ready to fight and protect it. Apart from scholars in the academic circle who promote it more for academic than linguistic purpose, few Nigerians are interested in any form called Nigerian English either standard or non-standard. Educated Nigerians are the biggest antagonists of this form. They prefer to speak the Standard English which has international acceptance. To buttress this claim, Elugbe (1995) observed that the Nigerian pidgin has the widest coverage in terms of usage in the country since it cuts across educated and uneducated, literate and illiterate Nigerians. Based on this, one would expect Pidgin to receive a better attention in terms of codification than the Standard Nigerian English.

8. Conclusion

In sociolinguistics, a prominent feature of any speech form be it language, dialect or variety is the regularity and consistency in the use of forms across the speech of adult native speakers. These features are naturally acquired by the speakers and are innately part of their language repertoire. For example, speakers of a particular dialect or variety use the same form irrespective of their level of education especially their accent which usually gives them away as speakers of a particular variety. This is not so for the Nigerian English where the form among the educated is not consistently similar, same for the uneducated, the literate and the illiterate as well as different tribes which make use of different accents. In fact, educated people from the same tribe most times speak different forms. The different forms produced and used by different groups of Nigerians which scholars grouped into types are in reality interlanguage. Such forms are triggered by cognitive issues which are usually a combination of features from the speakers' L1 and features from the target L2 which they are still struggling to master. White (2000) rightly observed that a L2 speaker tends to exhibit different levels of performance in different tasks. For example, a Yorùbá L2 speaker of English may perform better in a comprehension task where he/she may have time to access the L2 features from his/her memory than in an oral production task where his/her reaction would be spontaneous. This was corroborated by Oshodi (2014b) with data from three groups of Nigerian L2 English users: primary school pupils, secondary school students and secondary school teachers who were native speakers of Yorùbá. Findings revealed that all the subjects across the three groups performed better in comprehension tasks than in

oral production tasks where they exhibited many of those features identified as features of Nigerian English. Another unclear issue is the status of the other forms of Nigerian English. Would these forms be considered varieties of the Standard form? If yes, how do you explain the existence of varieties of a form which does not have the status of either a language or a dialect? In sociolinguistics, a variety is usually identified and recognized only in contexts where a standard form exists be it a language or a dialect and such a variety neither competes for recognition nor competes with the standard form. In Nigeria, the proponents of Nigerian English are fighting for its recognition, they also want it to compete with the Standard English in terms of usage. This explains why Adegbite (20015) advocated for a codified form and a dictionary so that a particular form can be recognized and given a linguistic status. As we know, a speech form (language, dialect or variety) is a natural concept which binds the speakers together based on mutual intelligibility when they communicate in terms of their belief and expectations. Without prejudice, there is none among the identified 'types' of Nigerian English that fulfills this criterion.

In conclusion, it is evident that the various forms of English in Nigeria were grouped by scholars sorely on educational qualification and level of competence in Standard English but not on the basis of age, gender, accent or even tribe. The different forms identified among Nigerian speakers are not even consistent. The forms have the tendency to change and improve as the speakers gain more exposure to the Standard English. This is a feature of interlanguage exhibited at different levels. It further confirms that the forms tagged Nigerian English appear more like interlanguge which can be grouped into different levels. There is non-native level, near-native level and native-like level depending on the cognitive ability of speakers coupled with their language aptitude and exposure to Standard English on the basis of competence and performance. The question of such interlanguage being considered a linguistic system (i.e. a form of language on its own merits) according to Oshodi (2016) depends on a number of factors. Such factors include consistency, regularity and systematicity of the identified features. Also, the form has to be totally consistent among the particular group of users and be peculiar to all members of the group. Since the English spoken by Nigerians are grouped into types based on academic attainment, it becomes imperative to ask this question: can education be the sole determiner of competence and performance in a language? Using the Standard English as a reference in Nigeria, the answer to this question is NO! There are university graduates who speak 'bad' English whereas, there are uneducated Nigerians who speak flawless English. Finally, are the so called features of Standard Nigerian English regular among all speakers? For example, is the (mis)use of inflections (morphological variability) regular and consistent among all speakers of the Standard Nigerian English? Do all speakers of Standard Nigerian English substitute original English words for the same lexical items or phrases in all contexts of occurrence? For example, do we classify the use of 'frank' for 'frown' by an educated Nigerian as an error but classify the use of 'garage' for 'motor park' by another educated Nigerian as a feature of Standard Nigerian English when the usage in both contexts are incorrect in Standard English? The answer to these questions is

No! It is obvious that the different types of English identified in Nigeria were triggered by psycho-sociolinguistic factors. However, it is not a phenomenon since the source and cause can easily be traced.

The fact that some scholars categorized varieties of Nigerian English based on academic attainment and speakers' competence in Standard English clearly confirms that the identified forms are different levels of interlanguage which tend to change as the speakers gain more exposure to Standard English. The forms emanated due to inability of Nigerian speakers of Standard English to acquire and use some target forms correctly forcing them to resort to the features available to them (i.e. features from their L1 and the little ones they have acquired in Standard English) which they now combine to produce the different forms which scholars tagged types of Nigerian English. The forms differ based on individual linguistic ability and exposure to Standard English and not on the basis of age, gender, class or social status which varieties are known for. In reality, the forms are cognitive cum linguistic creation of individual speaker categorized on level basis which make them more of interlanguge with different levels among the different Nigerian L2 English speakers.

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