

The Sociolinguistic Survey of Nigerian English Spoken in Nigerian Public Sector; A case Study of Wukari Local Government Secretariat.

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Abstract: *The study is aimed at examining the sociolinguistic survey of Nigerian English spoken in Wukari Local Government Secretariat. The primary source of data collection was employed. That is, structured questionnaire employed to elicit information from the respondent. Based on analysis, the outcome of the research show some Nigerian expression like; let me land, I want to drop, I beg, the staff officer is suppose to sign, how far with my application for leave, you better leave the work undone were identified. Recommendations were made with a view of giving the Nigerian English a distinct position. The Nigerian English should have an agreed norms and conventions that can be used as model for education and public use. It should be codified and represented in dictionaries. The standard form of Nigerian English should not only be introduced into our academic system in Nigeria, but also be given a priority so as to show case the uniqueness of Nigerian English as it related to other English around the world.*

I. Introduction

The use of English as an official language in Nigeria has gone through a lot changes. The non-native speakers of English find it more appropriately to domesticate or indigenalized English in order to pass across his message to the Nigerian audience, so that he can be better understood, than when using the Standard English. And this without a proper guide, we will not have a base in terms of communication.

Many works have been written about Nigeria English for example Nigerian English usage by David Jiwitt, making a virtue of necessity: An overview of the English language in Nigerian by Ayo Banjo. In spite of all these great works, not much has been done in the use of Nigerian English in the local level. It is in view of this, that the researcher tries to look at the Sociolinguistic Survey of English spoken in Nigeria public sector: A case study of Wukari local government secretariat.

1.1 The global development of English Language. Language has evolved over the centuries to have different varieties to serving as model for particular sociolinguistic content leading to the question of standardization.

Nigerian English and other Englishes are establishing their sociolinguistic legitimacy, for this reason, “one can say that there is a growing acceptance of the idea of English of the non native speakers as well as their native speakers” (Oduman 1987).

For the English language to be put to use in Nigeria, it has to adopt itself to the Nigerian environment because, “Any language removed from its native environment is likely to undergo several changes in direct proportion to the degree of its psychological and sociological separation from its native speakers” (Bamiro 1991).

Nigerian English has been diverted from British American norms to the local Nigerian norms. Antera Dukes writing have come down to us, in his diary. That is, “his own personal records kept by the trading companies of course it must be admitted that there is no way now of judging how and what kind of English was spoken. But since English was, in fact, a foreign language needed for the specific purpose of commerce, the amount most have been small and if spelling is any guide, the phenomenon of mother tongue transfer was there from the very beginning, as the passage from Antera Dukes diary attests (making a virtue of necessity)

II. What is Nigerian English?

The English language in Nigeria is as a result of the contact between English and Nigerian language is the socio-cultural and political situation. The initial contact through trade and through the British Colonial activities is about nineteenth century led to a more formalized relationship during the Colonial period and subsequent development were to convert English into a second language with a distinction flavor.

The English language has undergone modification in the Nigerian environment. It has been pidginize, nativized, acculturated and twisted to express unaccustomed concepts and modes of interaction. As a result, it is as now Nigerian English as per with other world English. As Achebe (1965) has perceptively observed, it is now

“new English still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings”.

2.1. What is Nigerian Standard English?

According to Adekunle (1974) and Bamgbose (1983), Nigerian Standard English is a dialect of English. It is a dialect which enjoys the same status as other dialects of English in other parts of the world. Like other dialects, it has certain peculiarity that reflects its historical and socio-cultural background.

The description of Nigerian English is only partially acceptable. This is because some features of Nigerian English are seen purely as deviant. Not all situations of interference can clearly or totally be considered as Nigerian usage. Some belong definitely to the level of Pidgin English.

Some people are of the view that there exist Nigerian English (NE) but not in standard form. This is because standardization automatically means its acceptance, teaching and use of errors. (Adejare, 1989).

In spite of these schools of thought on the existence or otherwise of a variety of Nigerian English, infused linguistics still attest to the fact that Nigerian English is dialect of English language (Adejare 1989).

Jowitt (1991) “introduced the concept of popular Nigerian English and suggests that the usage of every Nigerian user is a mixture of standard form and popular Nigerian English form, which are in turn composed of errors and variants”. He also states that “for those who held a universalized view, the challenge was to prove that the English language could, indeed be appropriated for the country’s use. It is thus a matter of time before the term Nigerian English made its appearance in the work of research in the fields”. This is already happening.

Standard English in contrast to Pidgin, did not begin in some parts of the Nigerian society until in 19th century. This is no exact definition of standard Nigerian English (NE) but used by Nigerian writers and in conversation in the Nigerian society. It is complimented with Pidgin.

III. Standard British English

The Standard English did not begin to play its significant role in the Nigerian society until the 19th century. This was the period that white men began coming to the country in steadily increase numbers as missionaries, and traders in the later part of the century as soldiers and government officials.

Standard English has been described as a prestigious variety of the language, a variety with agreed norms and conventions that can be used as model for education and public use. The term may also refer to a variety that has been codified and represented in dictionaries and grammars.

Standard English is a dialect. It is simply a variety of English among many. It is for example, by far the most important dialect in the English speaking world from a sound, intellectual and cultural point of view; and it does not have an association accent.

Standard English is purely a social dialect, because of its unusual history and its extreme sociological importance. It is no longer a geographical dialect even if we can tell that its origin was in the Southeast of England.

Two linguists have professed to find this controversial. Stein and Quirk (1995) argue that standard Nigerian English is not a social class dialect because the Sun, a British newspaper with largely working-class readers, is written in Standard English. This argument will appear to be a total non-sequitur, since all newspapers are written in Standard English by middle-class journalists regardless of their readership.

Standard English is a general term for a form of written and spoken English that is considered model for educated people. Standard English refers to the words themselves not to their pronunciation.

IV. Methodology

The Sociolinguistic Survey of English spoken in Nigeria in this paper used data collected through questionnaire to elicit information on the area of indigenization of English language. In other to reveal the unique quality and peculiarity of Nigerian English. Ten question items were considered and 60 questionnaires were admitted to 60 respondents only 50 were retrieved and used.

The presentation is as follows:

Table 4.1 Sample population according age

Age	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Less than 30 years old	16	32%
Between 31 – 45 years old	26	52%
46 yeas and above	08	16%
Total	50	100%

The above analysis shows that 32% population of the members of staff are less than 30 years of age, 52% are between 31-45 years of age and 16% are from 46years and above. The analysis shows that the

secretariat is full of youth and this is a pointer to the fact that the use of “Nigerianess” in communication can be easily seen for the strength of an organization is highly dependent on her youth.

Table 4.2 Sample population according to sex

Sex	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Male	32	64%
Female	18	36%
Total	50	100%

In the analysis of this data, 64% of the populations are male while 36% are female. The sample population was discovered to be both married and single workers

Table 4.3 Sample population according to marital status

Marital Status	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Married	30	60%
Single	20	40%
Total	50	100%

The analysis above shows that 60% of the population are married while, 40% are still singles. In this analysis, communication will not only depends on the marital status but as the need arises.

Table 4.4 Sample population according to Educational qualification

Educational qualification	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Primary school certificate	15	30%
Secondary school certificate	30	60%
Tertiary school certificate	05	10%
Total	50	100%

Based on the analysis above, it was discovered that 30% of the members of staff hold primary school certificate and 10% go beyond secondary school. With this analysis, it will be very clear that the use of Standard English will be at a very low frequency if it will even be use.

Table 4.5 For how long have you been in service?

Years of service	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Less than 10 years	15	30%
11 – 20 years	25	50%
21 years and above	10	20%
Total	50	100%

The above table shows that 30% of the staff are less than 10 years in service, 50% are between 11 – 20 years in service and 20% are more than 20 years in service. Base on this analysis, it was discovered that 50% of them use expression like “most of my colleagues that we are mate”. That is, the insertion of personal plural “we” is used instead of “most of my colleagues that are my mates”

Table 4.6 Which level are you?

Position in service	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Junior staff	28	56%
Inter-mediary staff	10	20%
Senior staff	12	24%
Total	50	100%

From the analysis above, 56% of the staff members are junior staff, 26% are in-between the senior and junior staff and 24% are members of the senior staff. It is base on this analysis that we discovered that the highest percentage of the staff members use Hausa, mother tongue and Pidgin in communication than standard English in speech. This is one of reasons that brought about the indigenization of English. Omission of the article “a” is usually seen in conversation. For instance, Instead of the expression “I have a little problem”, “I have little problem” will be used.

Table 4.7 What is the nature of communication in the Secretariat?

Communication	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Oral	30	60%
Written	10	20%
Both	10	20%
Total	50	100%

The above analysis shows that 60% of the staff members are of the view that communication are done orally in the secretariat, 20% are of the opinion that it is done in written from through the minuting of files and 20% believe that it is both oral and written. The highest percentage of staff members (60%) which are junior staff believes that communication in the secretariat is oral. And with this “Nigerianism” in the use of English can easily be discovered. An expression was discovered in the cause of collecting the data. “you better leave the work undone” is use instead of “you had better left the work undone”.

Table 4.8 How often does this communication take place?

Views	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Always	25	50%
Not always	17	34%
Occasionally	08	16%
Total	50	100%

Base on the analysis above, 50% view that communication take place often, seeing that they are the senior members of staff, 34% are of the view that it is not often, being the intermediate members of staff and 10% believe that it is occasional seeing that they are the junior staff.

Expression like “how far with my application for leave grant?” was discovered and 50% of the staff members tend to use this term even more than 16% of the junior staff. How far? Which means a state of being is use instead of “how far about my application for leave grant”?

Table 4.9 The type of English commonly use in the office

Types of English	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Standard	08	16%
Pidgin	18	36%
Others	24	48%
Total	50	100%

The above analysis shows that 16% of the staff members use Standard English when it comes to official matters. And this is always done through files but when it comes to actual speech, there is a little mixture with pidgin. Expression like “I beg” is commonly seen instead of “please” in their conversation. 30% use pidgin and 50% use Hausa and at times mother tongue in communication. And this enhances “Nigerianism” in the use of English.

Table 4.10 How will you communicate to your boss in the office in the case of a missing files?

Communication	No. of Respondent	Percentage
It is lost	20	40%
It is loss	30	60%
Total	50	100%

According to this analysis, 40% of members of staff use the correct expression for a file that can not be found while 60% of the staff uses loss (a state of no longer having something) in place of not being able to find something.

Table 4.11 Is there any law governing the nature of communication in the office?

Response	No. of Respondent	Percentage
No	37	74%
Yes	13	26%
Total	50	100%

From the analysis above, it was discovered that 74% of the members of staff believe that there is no rule governing the nature of communication and 26% are of the opinion that there is a rule. They further stress that communication through files must be done officially.

Table 4.12 How will rate the promotion exercise in the local government secretariat?

View	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Good	08	16%
Fair	17	34%
Not fair	25	50%
Total	50	100%

In the analysis of the data, 50% of the staff members are of the view that the promotion exercise are not fair, 34% are of the opinion that it is fair and 16% believes that it is good. It was discovered in the analysis that

promotion exercise is good. Expression like OK (state of satisfaction) was used in the place of something being alright, "I have not seen my promotion yet" was used instead of "I have not seen my promotion letter yet" this is an omission of the noun "letter".

Table 4.13 How long does your promotion take?

Period	No. of Respondent	Percentage
2 – 3	30	60%
4 – 6	15	30%
6 – 8	05	10%
Total	50	100%

With respect to the above table, 60% of the workers are promotable through qualification and assessment between 2-5 years, 30% get promoted in a period of between 4-6 years. The last group of 10% gets promoted between 6-8 years. This however depends on effort to improve their academic qualification and good assessment over the years.

Table 4.14 Have you ever been trained?

Response	No. of Respondent	Percentage
No	12	24%
Yes	38	76%
Total	50	100%

From the analysis, 24% of the staff members have been sent, on various training. On the job training or otherwise on the other hand, 76% of the staff members who are the larger majority have been able to benefit from the training programmes of the organization. This also have the effect on the nature of communication in the secretariat. An expression was made, and it was discovered that about 76% of the staff members were the one that make such expression.

"The staff officer is supposed to sign". Suppose which means to think or believe that something is true is being used in place of expectation, the sentence should have been "the staff officer is expected to sign"

V. Conclusion

The Sociolinguistic survey of English spoken in Nigeria is geared towards the identification of indigenous terms in the use of English and the analysis in this paper provides reference to the English spoken in Nigeria. Base on the findings of this work, some recommendations were made with or view of giving the Nigerian English a distinct position.

There should be a standard form of the Nigerian English that can be use not only locally but internationally just like we have the American Standard English and the British Standard English. And this standard form of Nigerian English should not only be introduce into our academic system in Nigeria, but also be given a priority so as to show case the uniqueness of the Nigerian English as it relate to other English around the world. And this will help us to understand clearly the difference between the Nigerian English, the British English and the American English and not code-switching in terms of oral communication or written English.

The Nigerian English should have an agreed norms and conventions that can be used as a model for education and public use. It should be codified and represented in dictionaries and grammars.

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