Lexical Representation as Innovations in Nigerian English Usage.

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Abstract: *Over the decades, linguists have conducted scholarly researches in various areas to favour a variety of English used in the Nigerian situation, but they have scarcely attempted on innovation. These research gaps have raised questions on the validity of these lexically innovated words which this paper seeks to examine with the aim of identifying the pragmatic nature of words which reflect the Nigerian people and culture. Data which were obtained via questionnaires from 100 respondents; the internet, books and journals were discussed through denominalization, argument/qualia structures and polysemy based on the rule-governed/rule-bending principles which are the foundations for creativity. The finding indicates that the generated words are intelligible and acceptable Nigerian English usage. The paper concludes that the validity of these innovations in the Nigerian English consortium is standard for educated speakers of Nigerian English. It recommends that English language planners in Nigeria should codify these new words to serve as a practical guide for gaining and building a viable educational language system.*
Key Words *acceptability, deviant, innovation, intelligibility, variant*

I. Introduction

Educated Nigerians are of the view that lexical innovation in Nigerian English is the variant of metropolitan forms of the English language obtained through long interaction of English with other Nigerian languages; (cf, Bamgbose1995, Jowitt 1991; Igboanusi 2002) .This phenomenon has led to the nativization of English in Nigeria. As a result, new words are coined to reflect and interpret Nigerian culture, its people and way of life. These newfound words, which are qualified as acceptable language usage in education, and in social spheres, are therefore, innovations, (cf Udom, 2007:1).

This paper, consequently, attempts analysis of lexical innovations in Nigerian English with a focus on developing a variety that is generally intelligible to Nigerians as is true for British English in Britain and American English in the United States of America. Linguistic scholars observe that educated Nigerians prefer the variant forms of words (Nigerian English (NE) because it depicts Nigerian cultural norms.

Jowitt (1991) speaks in favour of these variants thus:

> Clear examples of variants are the Nigerian use of 'sorry', 'brother ' '(not) on seat' and 'motor park'. These are all called variants…The peculiarly Nigerian use of 'sorry' or 'brother' however, breaks on general rules, and is justified on semantic grounds, since it shows an adaptation of the vocabulary of English to fill a semantic gap that exists because of differences between English and Nigerian culture,(p62-63).

Variant forms of words are the result of creativity. Creativity is the means through with any language passes on its way to be full,(Bamgbose,1995).The paper identifies the usage that is innovation, as well as the methods of creation of the new words to ascertain how pragmatic and dynamic they are in Nigeria English. However, Quirk(1990) and Tollefson (1991,) quoted in Bamgbose (1995) say that the newfound usage is a barrier to educational progress of Nigerians, who are English second language users because this usage is not internationally intelligible and acceptable.

Thomas (1991: 12) language planning asserts that language devoid of innovation maintains proficiency and standard of usage. He says that innovations encourage deviant forms and corrupt English language rather than propagate growth. However, Udom (2007:28) rejects the notion of the linguistic purism on creativity. He asserts that creativity in language provides the means of expressing many of the definite thoughts used to react appropriately where there is an indefinite range of new situations. He notes that creativity has helped educated speakers of Nigerian English to develop fresh expressions to reflect their cultural
background, examples: clothing,(adire);festivals,(traditional marriage) and food,(Edikang Ikon).

Lexical innovations are labels that have been used to describe many of the English words that have been nativized in new environments (Banjo 1971). The paper analyses variant forms through denominalization, argument/qualia structures, polysemy and type coercion, which are the standards of generating ideas in language. The paper examines factors that impede acceptance of the lexical innovations and define the boundary

between variant and deviant forms of words in Nigerian situation to extract new words that are intelligible. What then are the common core features of these innovations? Does this concept of pragmatic innovations describe all creations in the continuum of Nigerian English? This paper answers these pertinent questions

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory of the Generative Lexicon (Pustejovsky (1995:19) is a descriptive model used for the systematic description of innovations in Nigerian English. This model is well suited for analyzing innovations in language because its goal accounts for the representations of lexical semantics and polysemy, which are creative and conventional. We rely on this framework to find out how these new words are created and the factors responsible for the formation.

However, this system argues that the lexicon of a given natural language cannot simply be characterized as a list of items with only syntactic and minimal semantic information but that words assume new senses in novel contexts, besides, generating a huge set of word senses that can be used creatively. This theory provides adequate analysis of our data under selected linguistic functional items. The reason for this approach is because this theory gives a comprehensive understanding of how words are accessed and retrieved and their representation within the mental framework. It is the goal of this paper to examine lexical, which are semantically unpredictable, and to identify well formed words from the potential ones based on this theory because it accounts for rule-governed and rule –bending principles, which are of course how creativity manifests itself.

1.2 Research Procedure

The subjects were one hundred educated speakers of Nigerian English of varied linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds selected by a stratified random sampling technique from five ethnic groups in Nigeria. We chose University of Uyo and Calabar with educational background ranging from undergraduates, Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D degrees with a spread of the subjects thus, Hausa 19, Igbo 20, Yoruba 22, Ibibio 23 and Annang 16 to ensure that the subjects were educated speakers of English as a second language. Sources of data were the questionnaire, the internet, books, and a set of spontaneous speeches which were recorded on tape. Each of the respondents was given adequate time to answer the questions from the research instrument. Thus, while the scope was limited, data collected were sufficient for the study.

II.   Discussion of Functional Items

This paper examines lexical representation through denominalization, polysemy, type coercion and argument/qualia structures as methods of innovations in Nigerian English to ascertain intelligibility of the new words.

2.1 Denominalization: An overview

Lexical representation in Nigerian English addresses denominalization as a process of innovation, where a particular class of verb is derived from a noun.
Aronoff (1976), and Kelly 1998) had this to say:

> The literature on denominal verbs is relatively sparse compared to that of other
> linguistic phenomena, but great gains have been made in using the phenomenon of
> denominal verbs to understand the creative use of language. (p.6)

However, denominal verbs in the past were primarily looked at from the perspective of lexical semantics, (Buck1993, Volpe 2002) in Kelly (1998), and pragmatics, (Clerk &Clerk 1979). Later, Aronoff (1976) and Kelly (1998) examined them from an experimental perspective. Denominal verbs are yet to be examined from the angle of speech production and processing. However, despite the high productivity of denominal verb creation, not all nouns have assumed the role even though they are quite frequently encountered in Nigerian English usage. Such gaps in the lexicon of denominal verbs imply that restrictions exist on their creation and use, (cf Kelly 1998).

Nevertheless, Clark and Clark (1979) proposed one such restriction on denominal verb use derived from pragmatic considerations. This restriction, which Clark and Clark call the Denominal Verb Convention (DVC), states that a noun can be used to convey meaning X if the speaker has good reason to believe that the listener can readily infer meaning X given their mutual knowledge. This principle, however, can account for the avoidance of many grammatical category extensions, in an example say, *car* cannot be denominalized because it falls under the semantic principle known as pre-emption by synonymy. This is a phenomenon which blocks the formation process of a verb from a noun because there exits a synonym in that word class. '**He carred across the borders with drugs'* will be unproductive because there is the verb class of the vehicle category '*drive*'

This paper focuses on pragmatic accounts of denominal verbs with close reference to Nigerian English

because innovative denominal verbs in Nigerian environments have a seemingly infinite number of possible meanings, usages and interpretations. For instance, *danfo*,(Yoruba origin), a noun denoting a name of a kind of a vehicle, which could be used to carry something. Besides, denominal verbs are types of contextual expressions, whose senses shift, depending on the time, space and the context of utterance,(Udom 2007). Nevertheless, the sense of a contextual expression depends on the speaker, the addressee and the context of the utterance. For instance, a Nigerian speaker may change the context of *danfo*, a noun class to a verb class while retaining the sense, as in the following:

- 1 A danfo */dɪnfə/* was recently impounded for carrying contraband drugs across Nigerian border.
- 2. Recently, contraband drugs were danfoed */dɪnfəʊd/* across the Nigerian border.

The noun *danfo* in (1) is denominalized in (2). We observed that the meaning of *danfoed*, a denominalized verb is highly dependent on context, but the knowledge of the noun in use is crucial in the understanding of the use in the verb class, (Udom 2007).

- 3. *Danfo* carried the contraband drugs.
- 4. The drugs were *danfoed* across Nigerian border.

In an example (3), the knowledge of the noun, *danfo* aids in the understanding of the subject of the sentence to mean a container. And with the verb, carried, the meaning of the noun is extended to mean a container that can move. Consequently, with the knowledge of the noun, *danfo* in (3), the meaning of the denominalized verb in (4) *danfoed* can be inferred to mean that the subject of the sentence, drugs, in (4) contained in a somewhat movable object capable of travelling to a distance destination. Udom (2007) is of the opinion that when a sentence uses an innovative denominal verb, at least some aspect of the meaning can be predicated through knowledge of the meaning of the noun. We noted that *danfoed*, a denominalized verb is from *danfo,* a lexical item common in Nigerian environment, which belongs to a semantic category of a vehicle.

This paper isolates two classes of denominal verbs: rule-derived and idiosyncratically derived for discussion.

2.1.1 Rule -derived Denominal verbs

These are verbs from classes of nouns that belong to the same semantic category such that when they are used as verbs, they all have a predictable meaning. These verbs exist for several semantic fields that include: flavouring, vehicle, dance, musical instrument, colour, and dwelling. The table illustrates their definitions.

We observed that these nouns used verbally as verbs have a specific interpretation.

- 5) The cargo is being *danfoed* across the town.
  (To travel by something)
- 6) The soldier *cassava-starched* his khaki uniform for easy ironing.
  (To add substance to a cloth)
- 7) The cook *blackpeppered* the cocoyam porridge
  (To add a type of flavour to food)
- 8) Akon *makossaed* the night away.
  (To dance a type of dance)
- 9) He *gonged* at the new yam festival
  (To play a type of instrument)

2.1.2 Idiosyncratically Derived Denominal Verbs

Idiosyncratically derived denominal verbs do not seem to have any salient interpretation based on the semantic category to which they belong; they rely heavily on context for interpretation. Kelly's (1998) experiments on the production and comprehension of rule and idiosyncratically derived denominal verbs show that there is a psychological reality to this distinction. We observe that most of the idiosyncratic denominal verbs are full or partial idioms as in the following examples:

- 10) The governor *has buttered* my bread.
- 11) Arit was asked to *bell* the cat.

2.1.2.1 Sub-categorization of Denominal Verbs

Many denominal verbs are categorized based on their uses. One of these classes is the locatum verb. Locatum verbs involve the description of one location in reference to another. Examples are:

- Butter (his fate)
- Grease (the pan)
- Date (the agreement)

- Mould (a character)

We observed that another common class of denominal verbs is the location verb. This differs from the locatum verb in that the parent noun refers to the end location. Examples:

- Kitchen (the pots)
- Gourd (the palm wine)
- Bamboo (the bed)
- Clay (the pot)
- Hoe (the weed)
- Bottle (the oil)
- Raffia bag (the maize).
- Bottle (the oil)

Adapted from Udom (2007:47)

However, other common denominal verb classes are based on core semantic relations like goal, source, agent and instrument, examples of the instrument class are:

- Rattle (the basket)
- Net (the fish)

Finally, while the vast majority of the use of denominal verbs may be categorized, not all denominal verbs fit well into any category, and some categories were much more common than others. Also the classification of denominal verbs was useful because it provided a tool for looking at the semantic representations of these verbs.

TABLE 1. Rule- derived Denominal Categories and Definitions.

Category	Definition
Vehicles	To travel/convey by X
Musical Instruments	To play the X
Dances	To dance the X
Flavourings	To add X to food
Colours	To make something have the colour of X
Dwellings	To occupy or live in X

III. Other Methods of Lexical Representation

There are other methods describing a lexical entry in Nigerian English. These are argument, event and qualia structures. These structures represent the three kinds of information conveyed by a verb or verb base, each in a spate tier. For instance, an argument structure identifies the participants in the situation. The event structure articulates the internal structure of the situation denoted by the verb-base, while, qualia structure gives the particulars of that situation. These methods of representation give information about words that are necessary to account for their grammatical use, but, which are not entirely predictable from real world knowledge of the entities denoted by the words.

We noted that though the line between lexical semantics and world knowledge has been difficult to draw, we relied on Copestake (1995) observation:

It is methodologically important to distinguish between linguistic and non-linguistic representation, even though the two have to be interrelated so that linguistic utterances can be interrelated as having some connection with the real world.

This observation advocates lexical representation as a generative model that can account for the word world knowledge through polysemy. We noted that with a formal account of lexical representation, co-existing with derivational processes, the relationships between them, which result in polysemy, is crucial in the documentation of Nigeria English.

3.1 Argument Structure

This is the logical starting point for an investigation into the semantics of Nigerian English lexical innovations. Bresnan's (1982) *Functional completeness and coherence condition* requires argument structure to be expressed as syntactic constituents. Chomsky's (1981) *Projection Principle* further requires that such conditions are satisfied at all levels of linguistic representation. Recently, Pustejovsky (1995) Generative Lexicon theory is of the view that argument structure itself is highly structured independent of the syntax and Jankendoff (1990) proposes a hierarchically structured representation to provide the basic syntax for one aspect of a word's meanings.

Therefore, NE lexical items are argument structure with a minimal specification of its lexical semantics. Although NE words are certainly inadequate for capturing the semantic characterization of lexical items, they are the necessary components. This paper analyses true, default, shadow and true adjunct as NE argument structures.

3.1.1 True argument

True arguments are usually syntactically realized parameters of the lexical item. They are obligatory in a sentence construction.

12.) Effiong devoured *fried eggs* (BE Scramble eggs)

In the NP argument in (12), '*fried eggs*' is an expression of the verb's true argument. The verb '*devoured*' requires a direct object, thus making (13) ungrammatical without an argument.

13) *Asuquo devoured.

Further examples are:

14) Inyang destroyed the *bamboo bed.*

15) Kuje built a *mud house.*

16) Joe played *the ogene.*

17) Tinubu wore *adire.*

18) Etieno cooked *edikang Ikon.*

3.1.2 Default Arguments

These arguments are optional but necessary for the logical well- formedness of the sentence. They are parameters, which participate in logical expression in the qualia but which are not necessarily expressed syntactically.

19) James danced.

20) Emman danced *makossa.*

21) Etieyen ate.

22) Etieyen ate *afang soup.*

The arguments expressed by *Makossa* in (20) and A*fang Soup* in (22) are optional.

3.1.3 Shadow Arguments

Shadow arguments are usually not expressed in the syntax but appear within the semantic context of the verbs.

23) The lorry driver *horned* the car.

24) Mura *barbed* her hair.

25) Joseph is *choked up* with class tests.

The information italicized in sentence 23, 24, 25 is semantically encoded within the verbs. In (25) for instance, clearly the driver pressed something (horn) that gave a signal. There is a similar situation in 23, where denominalized word 'horned' has a rich shadow argument.

3.1.4 True Adjuncts

These are parameters that modify the logical expression, but they are part of the situational interpretation and are not tied to any particular lexical item's semantic representation as in (26)

26) The *careless* (BE reckless) driver failed to observe the *go-slow* (BE traffic jam) on the highway.

3.2 Event Structure

An event structure characterizes the situation of the internal properties of dynamism, telicity, and duration. The classification of events and states is an aspectual one (cf Smith 1981; Pustejovsky 1995). Three two-valued semantic features distinguish types of a situation: static vs. dynamic, telic vs. atelic, and duration vs. instantaneous. The distinction between events and states is due to the property of dynamism. Events are dynamic with successive stages, which take time, while states are static and homogeneous.

3.2.1 Process Event (atelic)

A process event consists simply of successive stages with no result or outcome. It can end at any time. The following examples illustrate this point.

27) She *roamed*

28) She was *choked up*

29) I *begged*

3.2.2 Transition Event (telic)

A transition event is more complex. It consists of a process and a new final state, the result of the process. Examples are as follows:

- *reach* before nightfall (*arrive*, BE equivalent)
- *clean* the word(*erase* BE equivalent)
- *scales* through all the hurdles(*succeeds*, BE equivalent)
- *use* three nights(*spend*, BE equivalent)
- *roam* the streets (*wander about,* BE equivalent)
- *choke up with* assignments (*choke with*, BE equivalent)

In Nigerian English, the situation types are realized at the level of the clause by a verb together with its arguments. Consequently, verbs in Nigerian English may denote either a process or a transition depending on the arguments with which they appear. A denominalized verb, 'clapped' can be used for illustration.

30) Mama Titi *clapped* for the dancers (NE) (transition)
31) Mama Titi gave the dancers a *clap* (BE)
32) Mama Titi *clapped.* (process)

IV.   Qualia Structure: Overview

Qualia structure represents the event particulars that identify a given situation (Talmy 1985, Jackendoff 1990). It is perhaps the most important mechanism for lexical representation because it is critically involved in many of the generative devices in language. The qualia provides the structural template over which semantic transformations may be applied to alter the denotation of a lexical item or phrase,(Pustejovsky 1995) Qualia structure in Nigerian English contains many of the features that formalize the meaning of a word, especially nominal. They are useful in describing polysemy in nouns.

Qualia structure consists of four sub roles: constitutive, telic, formal and agentive. Consequently, every lexical category has a representation for qualia, but not every lexical item will have a representation for each of the four sub roles of qualia. Notably, these roles are not merely a list of relevant features associated with an object; rather they are defining semantic constraints that contribute to the specification of the meaning of a word within a given semantic context.

4.1 Constitutive Role

This refers to the relationship between an object and its constitutive parts, which might include, for instance, the information that the object is a part of a larger whole. In addition, it might include distinguishing characteristics such as weight, material parts and component elements.

33The *bamboo* chair is condemned.
34) *Wooden* spoon is on sale.
35) Her *traditional* marriage is suspended
36) An *idol* worshipper shall not go to heaven.

The innovative lexical item '*bamboo'* in (33) modifies the head noun '*chair'* and also specifies *'chair'as* a material part of the nominal. It as well distinguishes the nominal from the verb *condemned*, which means '*should be thrown away'* in NE usage.

4.2 Telic Role

Telicity defines the purpose or function of the object/concept. There are two types of telic roles: purpose and direct modes.

4.2.1 Purpose Mode

This mode is used for concepts that are used to facilitate an activity.

37) Akon served *bush-pig* at her birthday party.
38) He made the *cut-off-point* for medicine.
39) Mallam Shehu destroys *illegal structures* to build a hospital.
40) Ikwo works in the *government house* as a security.

The purpose mode of the objects of telicity, *bush-pig* and *cut-off-point* are facilitated by the additional constraints at *her birthday party* in (37) and *for medicine* in (38).

4.2.2 Direct Mode

Direct mode is used when the object/concept is acted on directly.

41) Jacob ate *pepper soup.*

42) Akon served *bush-pig.*
43) Cultists encourage *examination malpractice.*

4.3 The Formal role
The formal role can be used to distinguish an object from a larger set of objects. It often includes objects with a large domain such as orientation, magnitude, shape, dimensionality, colour and position.
44) A *concubine* fought with the *wives* of chief Idung.
45) A *motorcycle* has a more affordable fuel economy than *cars*.

The lexical items *concubine* and *wives* in (44) share the default argument + human, while *motorcycle* and *cars* in (45) share + vehicle.

4.4 Agentive Role
The agentive role refers to the factors that are responsible for the origin of a particular object. Pustejovsky (1995) says that the way something is created is a mode of explanation that will distinguish natural kinds from artefacts. Consequently, an object is encoded in the Agentive Qualia of the lexical item associated with it.
46) She fries *akara* from beans.
47) She paid her debts from *Osusu*.
48) States are paid allocated funds based on *resource control* purse.

V. Polysemy in Nigerian English:
Polysemy refers to the existence of several meanings for a single word or phrase. This paper identifies type coercion as one of the generative mechanisms for analysis of polysemy.

5.1 Type Coercion
Type coercion involves the derivation of multiple syntactic representations from a lexical item. It allows for the semantic type of the verb to remain the same but the syntactic type of the complement to change to reflect variations in the possible argument of the verb. It reduces the amount of redundant information that would need to be stored in the lexicon if each syntactic argument were given its own lexical entry.
49) Emem wants palm oil to *fry akara*
50) Emem wants *to fry*
51) Emem want*s akara*

Type coercion permits 'want' with NP argument or VP argument types to surface without each syntactic argument being used as a separate lexical entry.

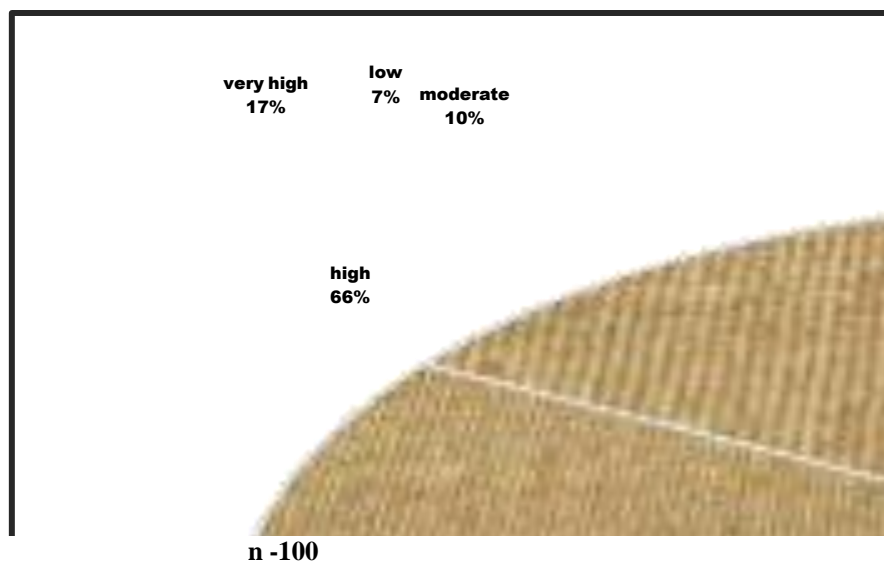**Figure 1: Attitude of Nigerians to New Ideas**

very high 17%
low 7%
moderate 10%
high 66%

n -100

Figure 2: Denominalization 1

80			
70			
60	70		
50			
40			
30			
20			
10	12	10	8
0			
balance	return	give	handover

n-100

Figure 3:   Denominalization 11

acceptable   occasional acceptable   not acceptable   not heard of

n-100

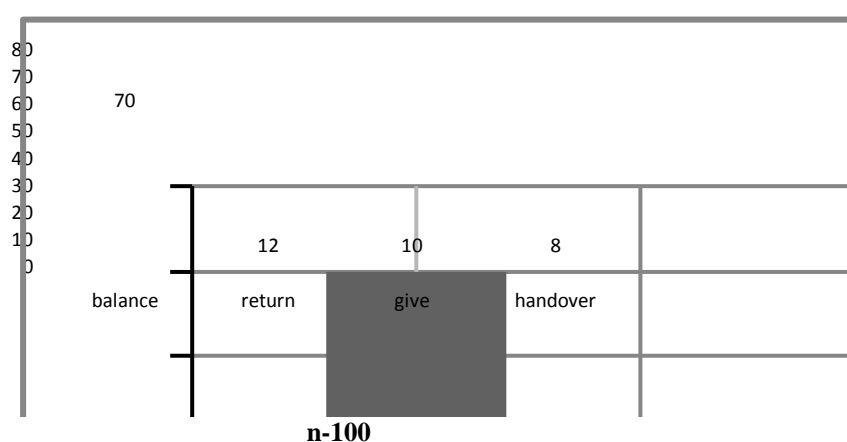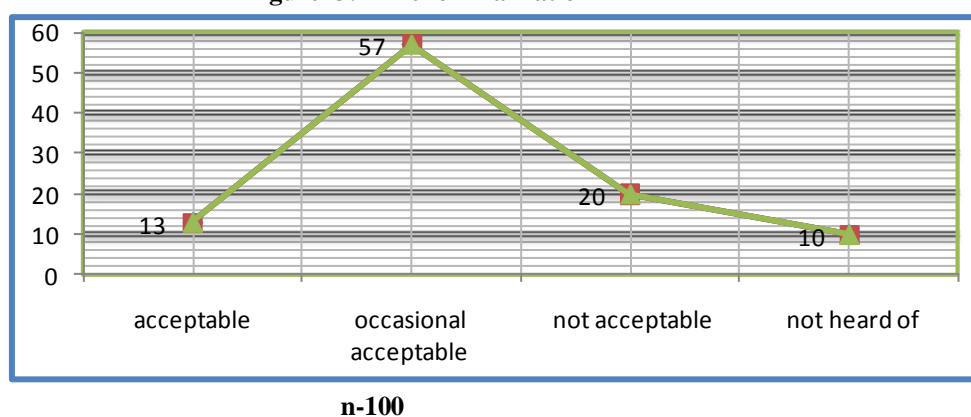## VI.   Date Analysis& Results

100 respondents were examined on the items indicating denominalization and other methods of innovational processes. In figure 2, the item, *balance* scored 70% average, making the item standard for Nigerians. The lexical item, balance, a noun in BE, which refers to the total amount of money gained and money spent in an account but in NE, it is commonly used as a verb to mean 'complete payment of money for a deal'. Only 30% disagreed with this phenomenon.

In figure 3,the item, butter (a noun) as an example of the formation of an idiosyncratically derived denominal verb, scored 13% indicating acceptability of the item *buttered* in the Nigerian situation. 57% of the respondents indicate *not acceptable* option. In figure 1, 66% rated Nigerian attitude to new ideas as high and 17% rated very high, totaling 83% in all. We noted the age range between 18-40 years contributed to the total percentage of 83%, indicating that innovation thrive within an age range.

VII.   Discussion

We observed that innovative usages in NE cut across various linguistic levels. 70% of the informants respond in favour of the rule-derived denominal verb is an example. We observed the inability of the respondents to form idiosyncratically derived denominalized verb in the 13% option indicating acceptance of the item. It is an indication that informants could not readily derive verbs from nouns through the idiosyncratic rule because its interpretations rely on the context that is often idiomatic. Consequently, nouns that belong to semantic categories that have an associated denominalization rule tend to be quickly understood. However, there is an exception to this rule-based category. Some nouns cannot be denominalized simply because of their implied meaning. For example, nouns that denote vehicles lend themselves to the interpretation of travel (by something) when used as verbs, but the existence of well-established verbs likely *drive* and *fly* pre-empt the denominalization of nouns like *car* and *airplane*.

Thus A& B with (*) asterisk on the item are impossible.
- A)We *carred/ drove around the village
- B)We *airplaned/ flew across the Atlantic.

This paper has observed the following as innovations in NE usage:

Horned (v)   Barbed (v)
Choke up (phrase verb)   Adire(cloth) (n)
Bush-pig(n) undomesticated animal   Cut-off-point (compound)
Balanced(v)   Buttered(v)
Fried eggs(phrase)   Osusu(n)
Akara(n)   Resource control(N+N compound)
Pepper soup(N+N compound)   Examination malpractice(N+N compound)
Illegal structures(adj+N compound)   Idol(n)
Bamboo(n)   Clapped(v)
Careless(adj)   Go-slow(n)
Makossaed(v)   Afang soup(N+N compound)
Ogene(n)   Edikang Ikon(adj+N) compound
Fried eggs(adj +N) compound   Danfoed(v)
Cassava-starched(v)   Blackpeppered(v)
National cake (adj+N)   Raffia bag (adj+N)
Tapping knife(adj+N)   Husband snatcher(N+N)
Ghost worker(N+N)   Mammy water (adj+N)
Tight friend (adj+N)

VIII.   Conclusion

This Study has revealed lexical innovations as a variety of English used in Nigerian situation which is capable of being adopted by speakers of English language. We noted that the spread of innovations depend on communicability of linguistic innovations which can only be achieved if the valid lexical items with Nigerian flavour have been standardized. One of the resources for standardization is the printing of dictionaries by language planners to inform the public. We observed that complexity of lexical innovations impede acceptance by speakers of Nigerian English especially where lexical cohesion has not scientifically determined. We therefore recommend more research into this area besides seminars, workshops and symposia to create awareness on the need to use these lexical items. Finally, curriculum planners should not be left out of this campaign to indigenize English language. They should structure English courses outline to include lexical items which reflect Nigerian norms .This will help the students to begin at an early stage to learn this variety.

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