

## Use of Nigerian English in Literary Texts: A Study of Imasuen's *Fine Boys* and Agary's *Yellow Yellow*

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### Abstract

This study is carried out to examine the use of the nativised variety in two literary texts authored by Nigerians. Some language users are reluctant to accept nativised English. They believe that it is a debased form of English exclusive to illiterates and members of the lower class. Some writers are reluctant to use this variety in their literary works. These writers do not use the nativised variety in their literary works lest they be categorised as persons who lack a mastery of the English language. There is also the fear of not gaining wide readership. This group of writers believes that English being a global language will fetch wide readership for their literary works. The study derives its theoretical framework from Coupland and Giles' Communication accommodation theory. Data for the study comprised excerpts from the literary texts being studied. These excerpts were purposively selected, and textual analysis was employed to evaluate the data and answer the research questions. Findings indicate that the authors used nativised English to project their African experiences. It was also subtly employed to promote the indigenous languages, thereby curbing the hegemonic relationship between English and the indigenous languages. It helps them situate the literary texts in their correct socio-cultural/sociolinguistic setting, thereby giving the reader an insight into the African society. The authors also employed nativised English to critique society. The study concludes that the use of nativised English in literary works helps writers project their African experiences and culture while getting wide readership for their literary works. It is pertinent that a literary work should be situated in its right socio-cultural and sociolinguistic contexts and nativised English aids this process.

**Keywords:** Nativised English, language, pidginisation, indigenous language

### Background to the Study

Language is the main tool for constructing every literary work. The importance of language to human beings cannot be overemphasized. It is an important means of human communication that serves a wide variety of purposes. It is one of the factors that distinguish human beings from animals; the former communicate with language (verbal and non-verbal) and express thoughts, feelings and ideas in it. The primary purpose of language is communication and no human language is inferior to another. The concept of language universal asserts that there are characteristics/properties of language that exist in all languages.

In a multilingual nation like Nigeria, language contact is inevitable. In language contact situations, co-existing languages influence each other to produce. As a result of this, certain linguistic features are transferred from one language to another. In Nigeria where English co-exists with the indigenous languages, features of the English language rubs off on the indigenous languages and vice versa.

Nigerian authors are somewhat faced with the dilemma of the choice of language to employ in their literary works due to the multiplicity of languages in the country. Considering that one would want to gain wide readership, how does one begin to recount one's African/Nigerian experiences in a foreign language while projecting one's culture and still be able to project the inevitable relationship between language and culture? The global and prestigious nature of the English language makes the language an easy choice for many writers. But in contemporary times, many writers are beginning to adopt Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and even some minority languages into their writings. In certain cases, these writers tend to switch and mix codes (codeswitching and codemixing) in order to blend the English language with the indigenous languages professionally and aesthetically. Some contemporary writers appropriate English to suit various purposes. They nativise the language to make it culturally relevant to society, especially when the literary text is culture related; hence creatively using it in the process of decolonization by experimenting with the variant forms of English and incorporating forms of the indigenous languages into the English language.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Studies have been carried out, in various capacities, on the nativisation of English in Nigeria: Nkemleke (2006), Yeibo (2011), Medubi (2011), Ovu & Ononye (2013), Fadoro (2014). The researchers focused on the lexico-semantic features of Nativised English, nativisation of dissertation acknowledgements and letters, nativisation of Arabic names and the nativisation of English address terms. But little scholarly attention has been ascribed to the nativisation of English in literary works especially in the wake of the language bias certain people hold against the nativised variety. The present study looks at the negative attitude that certain language users hold against nativised English, especially Nigerian Pidgin, and analyses its use in literary texts to know if nativised English can lend creativity to the work whilst allowing the author situate the work in its correct socio-cultural context and project his/her Africanness/Nigerianness. It is on this premise that the present study stands to fill the existing gap in knowledge.

Some language users are reluctant to accept nativised English. Some persons believe that it is a debased form of English exclusive to illiterates and members of the lower class. In certain works of literature, nativised English is exclusively ascribed to the uneducated as their only linguistic choice. Some writers are reluctant to use this variety in their literary works. These writers do not use the nativised variety in their literary works lest they be categorised as persons who lack a mastery of the English language. There is also the fear of not gaining wide readership. They believe that English being a global language will fetch wide readership for their literary works. But can an African writer effectively convey the peculiar African experiences in English using the nativised English? It is, therefore, imperative to find out if the nativisation of English in literary works can be aesthetically and creatively done and be a long lasting solution to sociolinguistic problems like linguistic hegemony and linguistic death. These issues birth the need for the present study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Nativisation of English**

Language is dynamic. Co-existing languages may be in a process of rapid change, living in harmony or one might rapidly advance at the cost of the other, or sometimes, be in conflict. Such advancements/rapid changes can occur in the form of nativisation, that is, the process whereby a language gains native speakers like when a Pidgin language gets creolised.

Communicating in the English language is natural to native speakers. But they are likely to encounter persons speaking English that they do not fully comprehend. “English has been appropriated by its non-European users and changed to reflect their own experiences” (Mair, 2008: 235) and it has been undergoing processes of nativisation/acclimatisation in post-colonial contexts.

Due to the globalisation of the English language, English keeps spreading all over the world and gets nativised in the process. The spread of English has birthed various varieties; from British English to American English, Indian English, Singapore English, Japanese English, Nigerian English and others. These varieties differ in vocabulary, word usage, pronunciation and syntax. These varieties can be viewed as “acceptable departure from the rules in diction, pronunciation or from what is generally regarded as the standard, but possessing mutual intelligibility even at international level” (Owolabi, 2012:488).

Nativisation is the acculturation, indigenization, or domestication of a language in a non-native context. According to Adegbija (1998), “the domestication of English is referred to as acculturation, nativisation, indigenization, adaptation and application of English for home use to suit our various conveniences, experiences, nuances and sensibility” (20). When English is used in an international context, certain cross-cultural factors will influence strategies in discourse.

Adamo (2007), on the other hand, believes that “nativisation involves integrating a language into the culture of a community or integrating the culture of the community into a language for the expression of the experience and the worldview of the community.” (105) Adegbija (1998) concurs: “the domestication of English in Nigeria is informed by the necessity to meet the linguistic and socio-cultural needs; the need to project the local customs and traditions, which could not be easily expressed in

Standard English without being locally coloured to reflect its new social and linguistic environment” (23).

The production of a variety of English that is native and realistic as well as relevant to the needs of Nigerians such as the promotion of unity, deeper understanding and social interaction among the users of English is pertinent. Nativised/domesticated English may sound gibberish to non-Nigerian speakers of English, but it conveniently conveys the message of the writer to the target audience viz-a-viz meeting the linguistic and socio-cultural needs of the people. Upon nativising English, the new variety becomes distinct from the parent source/ variety and from other indigenized varieties in other regions of the world. A language pays a linguistic price for acculturation---for not remaining just a “guest or friend”, the linguistic price is nativisation. In Nigeria, the nativisation of English has birthed Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English.

Pidginisation involves a superstrate language and substrate languages. Mafeni (1971) opines that, “a Pidgin language is a special kind of ‘mixed’ language consisting of a ‘base’ language which supplies the bulk of the vocabulary of the ‘new’ language and one or more substrates which provide ‘the basic morphological and/or syntactical pattern of the language (102).

The superstrate is usually the language of power while the substrates are usually the local languages. A Pidgin language takes its lexifiers/vocabulary from the superstrate language and the grammar and phonology from the substrate languages. The emergent language is called a Pidgin; it is massively simplified and spelled as it is pronounced. Nigerian English, on the other hand, is home grown/domesticated English.

Kperogi (2015) says:

By Nigerian English --- I mean the variety of English that is broadly spoken and written by our literary, intellectual, political, and media elite across the regional and ethnic spectrum of Nigeria ---. But this is true of all ‘standard’ varieties of all ‘modern’ languages in the world. What is called British Standard English, for instance, is no more than the idiosyncratic usage of the language by the English royalty and by the political, intellectual, literary, and media elite of the country. (37)

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory on which this research work is based is Giles and Coupland’s (1991) Language Accommodation Theory. Language Accommodation Theory, formerly called Speech Accommodation Theory, was developed by Howard Giles and Nikolas Coupland (1991). It deals with language, context and identity and argues that people adjust their speech to accommodate other interlocutors. It is a process through which interlocutors adjust their diction, accent or other non-verbal behaviours according to the speech style of other interlocutors. “We tend to ‘accommodate’ our speech to the speech of the people we are talking to, in the hope that they will like us more for doing so” (Hudson:2000, 164).

People have specific/distinct ways of speaking to different groups of people. Human beings tend to adjust their speech/speech patterns, and this is dependent on the social situations the speakers find themselves in. “When people interact they adjust their speech, their vocal patterns and their gestures to accommodate to others” (Giles,1973:15). Wardhaugh (1998) concurs: “speakers often try to accommodate to the expectations that others have of them when they speak. *Accommodation* is one way of explaining how individuals and groups may be seen to relate to each other” (114). This theory explains why people change their communication styles. According to Giles and Coupland (1991), “accommodation is to be seen as a multiply-organised and contextually complex set of alternatives regularly available to communicators in face-to-face talk. It can function to index and achieve solidarity with or dissociation from a controversial partner, reciprocally and dynamically” (61).

Communication accommodation theory emphasizes the adjustments that persons make in conversations in order to minimise or maximise the social difference(s) between interlocutors. These adjustments can either be done verbally or non-verbally. They help to control the social differences between interlocutors. The two accommodation processes are convergence and divergence.

### **Convergence**

In communication, people manipulate their speech to sound like that of other speakers/listeners, and that is convergence. Convergence is hinged on people's need for social approval and/or mutual intelligibility. Wardhaugh (1998) says: "One individual can try to induce another to judge him or her more favorably by reducing differences between the two. An individual may need to sacrifice something to gain social approval of some kind, for example, shift in behaviour. This is convergence behavior." (114)

It can also be seen as "a strategy where individuals adapt to each other's communication behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-verbal features" (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991: 17). Convergence requires choosing a language variety that suits the other speaker; it is the process whereby individuals try to change their speech styles so they could be more similar to that of other interactants. It can be in terms of accent, vocabulary or tone. "We see convergence when a speaker tries to adopt the accent of a listener or that used within another social group or even in extreme cases gives up a particular accent, dialect, or language completely" (Wardhaugh, 1998:114). There is mutual convergence if the participants converge towards one another. Convergence comes into play when speakers wish to reduce the social differences or distance between they and other interlocutors.

People tend to accommodate to fellow interlocutors that are of higher standards/social status than theirs; for instance, a speaker might find himself/herself trying to match up with a fellow interlocutor in terms of vocabulary. If fellow interlocutors speak in high sounding words, the speaker converges with them by switching to high sounding words. In order to gain approval, a listener might hear someone pronounce /lip/ as /li:p/ and continues with the conversation instead of correcting the pronunciation.

### **Divergence**

A divergent communicator exhibits characteristics that emphasize/highlight the social differences between him/her and other interlocutors. "Divergence is behind exaggerating differences" (Wardhaugh, 1998: 114). He/she tries to be different from persons in a particular group. According to Giles and Coupland (1991), divergence is "the way in which speakers accentuate speech and nonverbal differences between themselves and others" (259). In divergence, social distance is maintained and there is no intention of accommodating to others.

"If one desires to be judged less favourably the shift in behaviour is away from the other's behaviour. This is divergence behaviour" (Wardhaugh, 1998: 114). Divergence can be a way of marking group identity. For instance, a teenager who decides to participate in a conversation with his/her parents or teachers by answering questions asked in English in Nigerian Pidgin knowing full well that using the language will infuriate them.

People assert their identities by speaking and acting differently from the other person/interactant. Generally, convergence and divergence deal with either speaking or eschewing identification with others. Communication Accommodation Theory analyses how relationships between individuals and social groups are negotiated through language and discourse.

### **Empirical Studies**

Ebi Yeibo (2011) studied *Nativisation of English in African literary texts: a Lexico-Semantic Study of Transliteration in Gabriel Okara's The Voice*. The aim of the research was to enhance understanding of the literary texts. The research paper highlighted how an African nativised the English language in order to interpret his sociolinguistic environment. A lot of socio-cultural and historical variables come into play while constructing an African literary text, that is, situating texts in their proper sociolinguistic environment. Bola Margaret Tunde-Awe also conducted a research on *Nativisation of English Language in a Multilingual Setting: the Example of Nigeria*. She discovered that the English language has adapted itself to the different exigencies especially the linguistic and cultural contexts of its use. She concluded that Nigerian English is a variety of world Englishes.

Nkemeke (2006) conducted a research on *Nativisation of Dissertation Acknowledgements and Private Letters in Cameroon*. Data for the study was composed of 200 dissertations and 222 private letters which were written between 1990 and 1999. The dissertations were written by students of the Department of English of Ecole Normale Supérieure, Yaounde. The researcher concluded that

dissertations and private letters in Cameroon are significantly culturally contextualised. Background knowledge of culture is essential for one to understand texts produced in that setting. He asserts that “some background knowledge of “culture” (of Cameroonians and/or Africans) is essential in order to properly understand texts produced in this setting” (183).

*Nativisation of Arabic Names: the Yoruba Language as a Case Study* was conducted by Fadoro (2014). The researcher noted that when words are borrowed into Yoruba from other languages, the words get nativised. Thirty Arabic names were selected for the research. The researchers pointed out that Yoruba speakers apply phonological rules to Arabic names in an attempt to make them conform to the syllable patterns of the Yoruba language. They suggested that nativisation of these Arabic names should affect their spelling too. A name like *Sadiq* should be spelt as *Sadiku*.

These researchers carried out studies on lexico-semantic features of Nativised English, nativisation of dissertation acknowledgements and letters, nativisation of Arabic names and the nativisation of English address terms. But the present work looks at the language attitudes certain writers and other language users hold against nativised English. It also critically studies the significance of adopting nativised English in literary texts.

### Methodology

Significant excerpts in the literary texts that portray the nativised variety of English formed the data for the study. Textual data was randomly collected from the instances of nativisation of English (Nigerian English and pidginisation) in the literary texts; *Yellow Yellow* and *Fine Boys*. These excerpts are written in the nativised variety. The method of data analysis for this study was textual analysis. Textual data was analysed in line with the research questions and theoretical framework.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### Excerpt 1

##### *Fine Boys*

##### Nigerian English

##### Lexical/clausal level

- a) Big men (3) (rich/influential men)
- b) *Umunna* meeting (293) (kinsmen meeting)
- c) Go-slows (6) (traffic jam)
- d. *Jambite* (21)

(JAMB is the acronym for Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board while *Jambite* is a freshman at a Nigerian University. It can also mean one that keeps writing jamb examination.)

- e. *Bukateria* (33) (a canteen)
- f. Pepper soup place (75)

(Pepper soup is a Nigerian delicacy made of meat/fish, pepper, local spices and water. Pepper soup place is where this Nigerian delicacy is sold.)

#### Excerpt 2

##### Sentential level

- a) NEPA had taken the light. (19) (interruption of power supply)
- b) NEPA had ‘brought light’. (31) (Power has been restored.)
- c) He was making mouth (100) (bragging)
- d) Escort me outside (111) (accompany me)
- e) Tuoyo and Wilhelm moved into a series of *face-me-I-face-yous* in Osasogie (155)

(two blocks of non-self service rooms with one block facing the other.)

##### Nigerian Pidgin

#### Excerpt 3

##### Lexical/clausal level

- a) *Yanga* (3) (showing off)
- b) Ruggedity (25) (durability)
- c) *Oyibo* (29) (Americana)
- d) *Aje-butter* (42) (a rich kid)
- e) *Pikin* (57) (child)
- f. The yabis (20) (ridicule)
- g. Liver (26) (courage)
- h. Shorty (24) (a short person)
- i. Haba (57) (exclamation)

#### Excerpt 4

##### Sentential level

- a) Ewaen, Willy. Make una no join confra o. (30)  
(Ewaen, Willy, you people should not join any confraternity.)
- b) I know one guy for Ekosodin wey fit help us get our stuff back. (38)  
(I know a guy at Ekosodin that can help us recover our stuff.)
- c) Because person quiet? because person quiet he feel say we be fools. Na by force to join confra? (52)  
(Because I am docile you take me for a fool. Is it by force to join a confraternity?)
- d) Follow me go my place na make we gist. Dude you dey fear? (122)  
(Follow me to my house let us tell stories. Dude are you scared?)

Eghosa's *Fine Boys* chronicles everyday Nigerian life of freshmen and sophomores at the University of Benin. The literary work is set in Warri and the University of Benin. It is imperative to situate literary works in their correct sociolinguistic context, so the writer of this literary work used Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English to capture the linguistic reality of the code choices made by these university undergraduates and residents of Warri. In examples *a* and *b* in the sentential level of Nigerian English, the acronym NEPA stands for National Electric Power Authority. Although it had been changed to PHCN before the work was published, the writer used NEPA to depict what was obtainable in the year the work was set in. NEPA is equally more popular than PHCN. Everybody knows it.

Nigerian Pidgin, a language of wider communication, is known for its widespread fame on Nigerian campuses and this writer used it creatively as a marker of solidarity and identity for Ewaen (protagonist) and his friends. It is their mark of friendship used to limit whatever social distance/differences there is between them. These undergraduates use Nigerian Pidgin to accommodate to themselves and converge towards one another in speech.

Nigerian English is not a debased form of English, as is exemplified in the excerpts under study. It is English that has been domesticated in Nigeria. Having left its borders, English came to Nigeria and adapted itself to society and culture of its speakers in Nigeria. Use of Nigerian English and other outcomes of language contact in the literary texts studied epitomise how English is used in Nigeria with particular reference to how the language is used in the settings of the novels in real life. English, having been indigenized in Nigeria, has adapted to the culture and nuances of its speakers unlike Standard English. In conversations involving the nativised variety of English, the nativised variety was used to shorten the social distance (class, education) between interactants, thereby causing the interlocutors to converge to themselves unlike Standard English that would normally broaden the social distance and cause divergence among the interlocutors. Communication Accommodation Theory is applicable here.

#### Excerpt 5

##### Linguistic peculiarities of major characters in *Fine Boys*

##### Ewaen

Ewaen is the first person narrator, the son of educated and rich upper middle class parents. He is a medical student at the University of Benin who speaks English and Nigerian Pidgin.

- a. "There's this joint at your junction. It looks like a pepper-soup place. Have you ever had any there?"(75)
- b. Na your papa na 'im them deflower. I hate that word. (76)  
(It was your father that was deflowered.)
- c. "Wetin even dey this cigar?" I was irritated. "It's not as if it makes you guys manlier". I reached for Tuoyo's lips and pulled the stick out of his mouth. "How them dey drag am?" I asked. (100)  
(What's the big deal in smoking a cigarette?)

##### Wilhelm (Ewaen's oyinbo friend)

Wilhelm is Ewaen's 'half-caste' (bi-racial) friend who is partly Nigerian and partly German. He adopted Nigerian Pidgin as his default language of communication, although he learnt the language later in Nigeria having been trained abroad. Although Wilhelm cannot speak a word of Ishan (native language), he speaks Nigerian Pidgin comfortably.

Wilhelm, who was always uncomfortable around girls, replied in the Queen's English, "I'm fine and you?"

Brenda caught on fast. See oyibo o. 'I'm fine and you', she mimicked

We all burst into laughter, including Wilhelm

"You no go change", he said, finally relapsing into the medium of language he was more comfortable with. (29)

### **Nene**

Nene is Ewaen's educated grandmother who was trained by the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). She was schooled at Ghana. She switches between Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin.

a. Food don done o! Osaze and Ewaen, come to the table and eat. Nene shouted from the door of the kitchen. (62) (Food is ready)

b. Aha! Osaze you still can't cut starch? Come, let me help you. (63)

c. You're still his mumu, shebi? Omasan. Omasan (64) (You are still his lap dog.)

d. What kind of a man did you marry. I mean, your father, he was no saint. But he never raised a hand to me. God rest his soul, not even in anger. (64)

Eghosa Imasuen does not use language to distinguish the educated from the uneducated. Nigerian Pidgin (the proverbial rejected stone) is used mostly by the educated and highly placed in society. The undergraduates fluently use it as a code choice available on campus. These undergraduates come from different social classes and Nigerian Pidgin is their language of convergence. It fosters their friendship and reduces the social differences between them.

### **Excerpt 6**

#### ***Yellow-Yellow***

#### **Zilayefa**

Zilayefa is the protagonist. She is a secondary school leaver that left her village for Port Harcourt in search of her essence in life and her father. She speaks both English and Nigerian Pidgin.

a. During my second to last year in secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled over several hectares of land, my Mother's farm was involved. (3)

b. Yellow Yellow. That is what most people in my village called me because of my complexion, the product of a Greek father and an *Ijaw* mother. (7)

c. Thank you. I sabi say I don disturb you plenty dis night. (139)

(I know I have disturbed you this night.)

d. Na lie! That's not possible. She looks so young. (54) (That's a lie.)

#### **Admiral**

Admiral belongs to the upper class in society, a retired Navy man. He speaks English and only uses Nigerian Pidgin when he has to communicate with uneducated characters like his domestic staff.

a. She says you have adopted a young girl who is turning out just like you. Well, that's a good thing because you are a very smart girl. (117)

b. So you are going to be helping Lolo with my party? I trust you young ladies will organize something spectacular and surprise me. (118)

c. Before he drove me home that day, he introduced me to his cook. "Ifiye, dis na my small friend Laye. Any time she come, even when I no dey house, keep her comfortable". At the gate, he said to the security man, "My friend, you see dis face, make sure you let her enter dis house any time she come. (151)

#### **Sisi**

Sisi is a learned business woman, one of Zilayefa's guardians in Port Harcourt. She exudes success and speaks English often but she switches between English and Nigerian Pidgin while conversing with Zilayefa in order to converge with her and reduce the obvious social difference between them.

Well, I knew my father, but I didn't know him as a father. He never lived in the same house with us, but he and my brother were close. (100)

My brother had his looks. I can understand why my mother went for him; he was a handsome man. (101)

In any case, only mama sabi who her pickin papa be and because dey say, ‘Married woman no dey born bastard’, not all people wey get papa sabi dem true papa”, she said and we both laughed. “My dear, papa story no begin wit you and e no go end wit you. Just look to your future. (102)

(It is only a woman that knows the biological father of her child. A married woman does not birth an illegitimate child. It is not everybody that knows his/her true father.)

Our hearts are all hardened. You want to help but na, do me good, do me trouble, you fit enter”, Sisi said. (114)

In *Yellow-Yellow*, language is clearly used to delineate characters. The highly placed like Admiral, Sisi and Lolo speak English while the lowly placed like Zilayefa, Binabei and Clara use Nigerian Pidgin at times. The writer uses language to show the social class of characters. Although Admiral speaks English always, he uses Nigerian Pidgin to converge with his domestic staff in order to reduce the social distance between them.

When English is in a diglossic situation with Nigerian English or Nigerian Pidgin, English becomes the high variety (H) while the nativised variety remains the low variety (L), the language of uneducated servants, waiters and others. In spite of this negative attitude, the author of *Fine Boys* did not assign English to the educated characters and the nativised variety to the uneducated characters. The uneducated use the nativised variety, the educated also use it alongside Standard English. In *Yellow-Yellow*, the lowly placed in society use Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin while the highly placed and educated use Standard English. But when they converse with the uneducated, they converge with them by using Nigerian Pidgin to accommodate to them in speech.

### Excerpt 7

#### *Yellow-Yellow*

Nigerian Pidgin has been creolised in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Yellow-Yellow* is set in Port Harcourt (Niger Delta), so Agary uses Nigerian Pidgin to project Zilayefa’s (protagonist) experiences in the city.

- a) A bend down boutique (17)
- b) Johnny just come (52)
- c) *Mami wata* (71)
- d) Go-slow-traffic(87)
- e) Born-troway (87)
- f) *Kilishi* (85)

A “bend down boutique” is where fairly used clothes are sold. They are also named after a town in Rivers State, Nigeria called Okrika. A JJC (Johnny Just Come) is a novice/ a new resident in a town. A “*mami-wata*” (mammy water) is a river goddess; this is prevalent in Nigeria especially in a riverine area like Port Harcourt. “Go-slow-traffic” exemplifies the traffic situation in Nigeria where vehicles move slowly. Expatriates are ubiquitous in Rivers state because of its oil and these expatriates often woo women which leads to unwanted pregnancies, so “born- troway” refers to the illegitimate children that are products of the love affair.

Language is used to portray the protagonist’s experiences in the city and what other language is suitable, if not the prevalent language in the city. The speech community in which the literary text is set is projected through language.

According to Ajiboye and Abioye,

The lexical choices in *Yellow-Yellow* have been stylistically made to create a synergy between the language used in the text and the environment in which it is used. In other words, the linguistic inspiration and style of *Yellow-Yellow* is largely Nigerian. The inspiration is seen in the use of loan-words, loan blends and loan expressions ---. These choices are aesthetic and socio-culturally relevant to the linguistic composition of the text, as the culturally rich expressions are able to provoke vivid images the reader can readily identify with. (127)



This writer has actually decolonized her writing from any western influence. English is used in such a way that it is rooted in the African culture and experience. In nativising English to show the cultural heritage and African experiences, the author strives to give adequate information with regards to culture, linguistic identity and society. Some Nigerian authors nativise English to say the truth (give certain ideas and objects their actual names) about the culture since that which is obtainable in Nigeria (in terms of culture) does not exist among the Britons and Americans. These authors do not give interpretations of the words in nativised English. They rather converge with readers that understand their local languages and diverge with those that do not understand the languages.

### Findings

The advent of English in Nigeria has produced sociolinguistic outcomes like pidginisation and Nigerian English. African writers who use English have manipulated and tampered with it to project their African experiences. The nativised variety helps situate literary texts in their correct socio-cultural/sociolinguistic setting thereby giving the reader an insight into the African society. According to Emenyonu,

Modern African writers see the need and admit a commitment for the restoration of African values, while at the same time accommodating those external influences and institutions which have become ineradicable (2).

Writers reclaim their identities through the use of the nativised variety and alterations of English, that is, building up their socio-cultural identities through language. Igboanusi (2001) asserts that “Nigerian writers who use English as their creative medium do so in the consciousness of the fact that they are presenting a Nigerian experience, and most of them reveal in their works a specific mode of imagination which derives from the Nigerian background” (55).

Nigerian writers that employ nativised English also use language to critique society. Altering the English language to add local flavour in literary texts is a way of promoting the indigenous languages, thereby curbing the hegemonic relationship between English and the indigenous languages.

### Conclusion

Languages are dynamic. Every language is nativised. English itself has grown from Old English - Middle English - Modern English and world Englishes and has borrowed extensively from languages like Latin, French, Greek and German. English is existing and interacting with local languages and cultures in Nigeria and has acquired a local social meaning having adapted to the local and regional sociolinguistic conditions it finds itself in. Nigerian English is justified in cases where it invents or creatively forms words to express unique Nigerian socio-cultural experiences that are not lexicalized in Standard English. Usage errors should not be classified as Nigerian English since they are unintelligible in international communication.

The use of nativised English in literary works helps writers project their African experiences and culture while getting wide readership for their literary works. It is pertinent that a literary work should be situated in its right socio-cultural and sociolinguistic context and the nativised variety aids this process.

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