
The Nigerian English language Brand and the Evolutionary Trend: A Quest for global recognition

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Abstract

Nigeria, like any other English speaking countries of the world, uses the English language in her everyday communication. In fact, English is the official language of Nigeria. It is the colouration of this brand of English which is constantly evolving that gives it the name “Nigerian English”. This paper investigates these colourations and makes strong argument that those varieties give the language its peculiarities and should not be seen as defects but rather as a brand that needs global recognition. The stand of this paper is that those ‘perceived flaws’ should not be strong enough to deny Nigerian English its pride of place in the common wealth of nations since the important aspect of communication which is meaning is not lost. Since language reflects the culture of the people, it will be out of place for the learning of the British English which came after the first language acquisition to be the grand norm for speakers and writers of English. These various nuances make up what is known as the Nigerian English brand, which in turn, enhances the evolutionary trend of the language. The study recommends documentation of this brand to enhance its global recognition.

Keywords: Nigerian English brand, language policy, mother-tongue interference, Global recognition, evolutionary trend

1) Introduction

What is today described as Nigeria, existed as separate nations before the advent of the British colonisation. This presupposes that there were nations such as ‘the Igbo nation, the Hausa/Fulani nation, the Yoruba nation, the Ijaw nation, the Idoma nation etc. These multilingual nations were collapsed into one indivisible entity called Nigeria.

Prior to the advent of the colonialism, the country called Nigeria had hundreds of languages that multilingualism was a second characteristic of the country with its attendant peculiarities (cf. Ndiribe & Aboh 2020). The coming of the British brought these self-existing nations together and annexed them as one entity. In January, 1914, the Southern and the Northern protectorates were amalgamated into one indivisible entity called Nigeria. That announced the birth of a new country under the British colonial rule. By the amalgamation and annexation of the different nations, the British used language as a unifying factor which would make it easier for their administration. The unifying factor was seen in making the English language the lingua franca of the various ethnic identities and everybody had to learn the British English language in order to be relevant in the new government.

With the annexation of Nigeria by the British in the nineteenth century, the English language became so powerful a communication tool that all official functions of government were conducted in the British English language. In fact, it is an aberration to speak any ‘local language’ to any judicial presiding officer from the magistrate Court to the Supreme Court. For one to address these judicial officers in any ‘local language’, an intermediary must interface to interpret the language to English. The development of Nigeria in areas of technology, commerce, religion, communication,

military, education and other social activities hinges on the ability to speak good English.

English is seen as a sine qua non for attending institutions of higher learning and securing of a nice employment in Nigeria. Based on the status of English in attaining self-actualisation in Nigeria, many have engaged in different studies to gain mastery of the language but the fact remains that many factors inhibit these efforts. These inhibiting factors form the bedrock of this study. The paper advances the tenet of Nigerian English and is of the opinion that Nigerian English is currently undergoing evolution which is positive for the total mechanisation of the language.

There are World varieties of English and Nigerian English. Although nations like United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), India, Ghana, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia, South Africa, Australia and Nigeria speak the English language, there are a lot of dissimilarities and cultural colourations inherent in the speech repertoires of these countries. Alerton, Skandra, Paul, Tschichold & Cornelia (2002) suggest that the expansion of English language has resulted in the diversification of its forms and functions. Their assertion suggests that the function of various Englishes by various countries differ considerably based on their different nuances. Melefa & Odoemenam are of the opinion that for any English to qualify as one of the world's Englishes, such a variety must be codified and legitimized to serve as the country's official English as America and Canada have done. Mgbemena (2012) affirms that the term 'New Englishes' – Indian English, American English, Ghanaian English, New Zealander's English, Nigerian English (NE) etc do no longer constitute ambiguity. She further maintains that no two Englishes explain the same concept exactly the same way. The interference of the mother tongue is a big issue in English language construction. From the outlook of the

varieties of English of these nationals, one can pinpoint, without error, the countries of the speakers based on some particular nuances. These nuances could be noticed in the pronunciation of various lexemes. Oluikpe (2021) categorises the varieties of the English language in use in the world today into two groups – the inner circle and the outer circle. According to her, the inner circle comprises of the variety of the English language spoken by countries like the Great Britain, United States of America, Canada, Australia and the New Zealand. On the outer circle, which according to her, comprises of those countries that use English as a second language. She buttresses her point on outer circle thus:

They speak indigenous languages as the mother tongue (L₁). Countries in this category have been colonized by English speaking powers. In this circle, English serves as the official language and used as the medium of administration, commerce, education, politics, etc. the countries in this circle are: India, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia, Liberia etc (p.29).

The outer circle, according to Oluikpe (2021) is characterized by the evolution of new varieties of English distinct from those of the inner circle where English is the native language.

These new varieties are designated in line with the country that practices each. This is why such terms as Ghanaian English, Kenyan English, Malaysian English, and Nigerian English etc do not pose any comprehension surprise.

When the colonial masters, the British was at the helm of affairs in Nigeria, between 1914 and September 30 1960, they taught Nigerians their own type of English which was aimed at making the Nigerians British in their country. But soon after their departure

Nigerian started evolving other nuances of the English language both orally and orthographically.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the brand of the NE and point out some of its peculiarities. Based on the introductory information, the thrust of this paper is to situate the NE in its proper perspective and also advance that the trajectory of NE emanate from so many variables among which are the Old King James version of the Holy Bible (KJV), innovation, mother tongue (first language interference), culture and rules of overgeneralization, evolution among others.

The study is designed to provide an overview of the English language variety in political set-up called Nigeria. The study employs qualitative method in its data gathering. In doing this, secondary sources of data from textbooks, journals, theses, magazines, Inaugural lectures, newspapers and observer's method are adopted. The methodology is to analyse sentence structures either in its spoken forms or written forms. The study is only interested in analysing sentence structures to see how they align or differ with the British English which is adjudged as the proto-type. The study is not interested in oral performance of Nigerian English usage.

2) Related Studies

A number of studies about NEB have been conducted by many researchers. Many Nigerian scholars have said one thing or the other about the linguistic implication of NEB as it relates to development of social, economic, linguistic and political well-being of the entity called Nigeria. For instance, Scholars like Olagoke (1981), Bokamba (1982), Adegbite (1989), Jowit (1991), Bamiro (1994), Bamgbose (1998), Igboanusi (1998), Mgbemena (2012), Obiegbu (2015), Okeke & Ndiribe (2015), Nwoko (2016), Okechukwu

(2017), Dalamul (2018), Apakama and Amadi (2018), Melafa and Odoemenam (2019), Al-Khresheh and Orak (2021) and Oluikpe (2021) have commented on the prospects or otherwise of NEB in the advancement of the nation.

Olagoke (1981) and Bokamba (1982) see NE as deviation which they term 'non-standard usages'. They posit that the inaccurate usage of the language has robbed off the prestige the nation would have recorded in the committee of Nations. They maintain that the non-adherence to standard is a dent to the image of intellectuals in the country. According to them, the non-standard usage of the language distorts the supposed semantic import the correct usage could have afforded.

On the other hand, Adegbite (1989) and Igboanusi (1998) see Nigerian English as innovations, a green-light and a springboard of acculturation of English in the socio-cultural linguistic context of the nation. They maintain that the English language is still a work in progress and that Nigerian should not expect to be at par with the original owners of the language.

Mgbemena (2012) opines that NE gains supremacy in the local markets because of the educational attainment of the traders. She maintains that one could 'toil' the market from morning to evening without succeeding in getting what one wanted not because the items are absent in the market but because of the terminology the inquirer uses in soliciting for the items. According to her, if the inquirers use the British name for what they are looking for, they are sure not to obtain them but the moment they use the Nigerian name for the items, they will be surprised at how people will besiege them to patronize them on the items. She concludes by saying that people have to learn the NE in order to save them from the embarrassment that would emanate from trying to use British English or terminologies to the local people.

Dalamul (2018) investigates the manipulation of English words in forms of arbitrary phonemic units, blending and compounding to form callers tunes network communication providers in Nigeria. He suggests lexicographic examination of the new inventive to develop and integrate new lexemes in dictionaries of Nigerian perspectives. He affirms that the new trends of linguistic manipulations are part of language development which could lead to language stability. He sees the manipulations as a positive sign of language advancement and encourages its sustainability.

Nwoko (2016) analyses domestication of Nigerian English through the use of syntactic attributes like acronyms, conversions and neologisms. He equally makes a case for the use of compounding, redundancy or repetition of lexical coinages which have become fundamental characteristics of some aspects of Nigerian English. He asserts that domestication of the English language in the environments where it is used as second language L₂ or foreign language FL is no longer a bizarre phenomenon, but a welcome development. According to him, Nigerian English has emerged as a global one and should not be subjected to the English assumptions of correctness and this, according to him, accounts for the emergence of such expressions as ‘new Englishes’ or ‘world Englishes’. He concludes that there are proofs that there are some levels of variations between the Standard English and the Nigerian English in respect of morphology and syntax. He observes that linguistic situations in Nigeria makes the use of Nigerian English indispensable as in fashion, food, music and other aspects of life where mutual intelligibility between interlocutors requires its use.

Oluikpe (2021) investigates Nigerian colonial mentality in the use and teaching of English in a globalised world. She is of the opinion that the Nigerian English has come of age to be independent of any outer interferences and abuses. She emphasizes the need for

a paradigm shift in the use and teaching of Nigerian English. She maps out five strategies that could serve as blue-print in effecting changes in the mind-set of educated Nigerians regarding Nigerian English and the teaching of spoken English in Nigerian educational system. She maintains that the use of Nigerian English have been so neurologically wired into our systems like our indigenous languages that it is difficult for us to shelve it aside. She concludes by calling all Nigerians to use Nigerian English consciously or unconsciously since it was our creation.

Apakama and Amadi (2018) discuss the emergent variety of Nigerian youths' English language. They discover a different variety of language spoken by the youths. This variety they term "the fusion of English and those of the native tongues". They notice that this new variant of the youths has often resulted in reducing the relevance of standard variety as a code of communication amongst them thus affecting acceptability and compliance to the policy of language use in Nigeria. They maintain that the brand adopted by these youths have come to be identified as social identity. In conclusion, they opine that the youths have developed slangs in their class work. These slangs, according to them, are contraptions which have seeped unconsciously into their written works to the detriment of all. They solicit the help of education planners to monitor the deviant forms and decide if those contraptions or deviant could form an effective means of encoding meaning in a given culture, since creation of new words, is a product of context and circumstance.

Obiegbu (2015) research focuses on the factors that are responsible for the poor quality of teaching of English as a second language in public schools in Nigeria. She points out three variables that are responsible for the deficiencies. These variables, according to her are: frequency of the use of instructional media; the proficiency of the instructor and the school learning environment.

These variables, according to her, constitute the most visible flaws in learning and teaching of the subject matter. She goes on to assert that the majority of the students admitted into university in Nigeria have no ample opportunity to study the English language further apart from ones admitted to study English and related courses like linguistics and literature in English. She maintains that even though students offer few courses in the use of English, the content of these English courses are grossly inadequate for the students to acquire requisite skills in effective use of the language for communications and for the 'give and take' of social experience. She suggests that for English to be studied effectively as a second language, the students must be helped by the teachers to acquire skills in the four language art-skills of speaking, reading, listening and writing. She concludes by urging teachers in public schools to adopt technologies such as audio and video recordings, language laboratories and computers to enhance effective teaching of the English language. She equally canvasses the place of conducive learning environment as a panacea for effective learning.

Melefa and Odoemenam (2019) examine Nigerian English variation differentiation. Their research is based on Brosnahan (1958) model tagged 'Differentiations of Nigeria English varieties examined'. In their analyses of this model, they place the attainment of the English language of the peoples of the southern Nigeria based on their educational qualifications. They highlighted four levels of attainment, viz: the variety spoken by people with no formal education (pidgin); the variety spoken by people with only primary school education; the variety spoken by secondary school leavers which is marked by greater fluency and excessive vocabulary and the variety spoken by people with university or higher education. They reject this characterization. According to them, if each variety correlates with the speaker's level of education, it implies that one's

level of education automatically determines one's level of competence in English. In their opinion, differentiating a variety of Nigerian English based on the above criteria is questionable. They say that Nigerians do not need formal exposure to education since the non-educated ones can still use pidgin to communicate. Based on this, they reject education as a parameter for naming the variety of Nigerian English. In their closing remarks they recognize the need to codify and legitimise Nigerian English. They cite world Englishes like American English, Canadian English etc as countries that have codified and legitimized their English versions. They aver that since English has become a major asset to Nigeria due to the problems associated with multilingual composition of the country, there is a need for Nigerian English to take its pride of place among the corpus of world Englishes.

Okechukwu and Salami (2017) discuss the place of Pidgin English (NP) in the socioeconomic activities of Nigerian peoples. They extolled the expertise of the staff of WAZOBIA FM/TV station in updating millions of Nigerians in fluent Pidgin English. According to them, given the linguistic diversity of most Nigerians, many have grown up speaking more than one indigenous language. But English, in their words, has remained the dominant official language of business, education and politics. They maintain that Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have national language status over the others regarded as the minority languages. So the language that cuts across and survives in a heterogeneous nation like Nigeria must be easily understood by both the educated populace and the illiterate members of the society, hence the pidgin. They assert that WAZOBIA was the first radio station in Nigeria that allocates more airtime for NP in news casting, drama, advert, discussions, musicals etc in a 24-hour broadcasting. They conclude that despite the marginalization by the elites and the educated Nigerians in the past,

NP continues to occupy an incongruous space in the nation's varied communication platform. They call for attitudinal change on the part of the government, researchers and scholars towards NP, since, according to them, NP has come to stay as a living human language in Nigeria.

On the assessment of the English language use in Nigeria, Okeke and Ndiribe (2015) admonish that student who use some Nigerian versions of English in their quest to gain entry into institutions of higher learning should not be penalized by the examination bodies like the West African Examination Certificate (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and the National Board for Technical Examination (NABTEB) based on the perceived flaws of the Nigerian version. According to them, since English language is compulsory in the entrance examinations to higher studies in the universities and colleges of education, they opine that not all candidates for higher studies intend to do courses that are language related.

Considering the place of English grammar in the 21st century, Al-Khresheh and Orak (2021) investigate the place of grammar in the world using 22 countries as case study. Their research findings show among other things that there is a unanimous agreement that good grammatical skills enable the faster acquisition of proficiency in the target language for EFL/ESL students. They are of the opinion that since English has ascended the global language and the world's lingua franca, the ability to speak English can help immensely in this era of globalization. They maintain that English has enabled people from all over the world to communicate seamlessly with one another and is the rich source of knowledge in the current age of science and technology. In their conclusion, they believe that ELT (English language teacher) teachers have high positive perceptions regarding the importance of grammar teaching.

They caution that incessant and immediate correction of grammatical mistakes should be avoided in order not to dampen the morale and self-esteem of the learners in the process of language learning.

Evidences from the review show that many things have been said and written about NE and English language in general by various Nigerian and non-Nigerian scholars. In as much as the researches mentioned above have somehow similar things to this one under discussion, they have inherent differences in many respects. In as much as many researchers in the language have discovered one advantage or disadvantage in the use of Nigerian English, the present study is of the opinion that the English language type in Nigeria is a special brand which belongs to Nigerians only. In as much as other scholars weigh NE according to benefits and losses inherent in their uses, this study sees it as a child of necessity based on the peculiarities of situations that gave birth to the brand. Other scholars suggest the subjugation of the nuances of NE according to the rules of the original language, but this study makes a case for the adoption of the brand as a Nigerian brand considering the fact that its communicative competence consideration outweighs its linguistic competence. On the account of this view, the contribution of the present study lies in its endeavour to investigate how the NE has metamorphosed/ evolve from common specie of the English language to a powerful brand. In fact, this study attempts to highlight those peculiarities that coloured NE into a special brand through its evolution trend and the need for its recognition globally. Here lies the significance of the present study.

3) The Language Policy and Education in Nigeria

Ezema (2015: 70) states thus:

There is no separate national language policy in Nigeria. It is within the national policy on education that some provisions are made for languages. From the level of basic/pre-primary education to the senior secondary education level some language provisions are stipulated.

From the above quote, the provisions are made in the area of what method should be adopted in teaching various calibres of pupils/students and at what age/level should each methodology be adopted. Okeke and Ndiribe (2015:58) specify the content of the language policy:

The policy stipulates the use of Nigerian languages in the lower level of primary education, viz: pre-primary and first three years of primary education and English language later. Alajuruonye (1998) asserts that in 1977, the government came up with what is known as the language policy when the National Policy on Education was formulated. In the policy, the federal government made the pronouncements on language thus:

Each child should be encouraged to one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. For the pre-primary education: the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. For the primary education, the medium instruction is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage English (NPE pp 3-7)

For the secondary school the policy does not specify the medium of instruction. By keeping silence, Alajuruonye (1998) avers that the policy adopts the English language. The revised edition of the

Language Policy 1981 stipulates that students in junior secondary school should offer English and other Nigerian languages. At the senior secondary school level, students are to take English and one Nigerian language.

Ezeafulukwe (2016) examines the language policies as it concerns the learning of English and French in Nigeria. She is of the opinion that language policy is a governmental way of realizing the parts of national goals which can be achieved using language as a tool. Tracing the place of language in national development in Nigeria, she reiterated that the retention and development of the English language as a result of its contribution to national development led to its inclusion in the National Policy on Education. She states that section 97 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives exclusive privilege to the use of the English language in the conduct of the businesses of the nation's legislative chambers – the House of the Representatives and the House of Senate. She clamours for a clear definition of the French language status in Nigeria in order to have a seamless implementation of its policy. Finally, she recommends the revision of the various levels of language and education policies simultaneously and together by various stakeholders in education so as to prevent the homogeneity of content as is the case with French in the middle and upper basic.

Njoku (2004) sees English as both a second and official language in Nigeria. With colonisation and education, the English language becomes the language of politics, administration, and commerce. She affirms that the oral and written forms of the English language become the standard for linguistic expression in education, scholarship, politics and administration and are not only acknowledged but entrenched.

Alamu (2004) asserts that English in Nigeria enjoys the official status in the fields of administration, education, commerce

and industry and international communication. Consequent upon the use of English for these purposes in Nigeria, he maintains that English language has established itself as the language of upward mobility. He remarks that the role of English in various domains of language use in Nigeria has seemingly made it a sine qua non to the survival of individual in the nation, as well as to the development objectives of Nigeria.

Speaking on national language issue and the place of translation, Anyabudike (2018) avers that the issue of national language always carries controversy whenever it is mentioned. He opines that the non-adoption of any indigenous language as a national language impedes the operational efficiency and capability of Nigerian translator. He blames the successive government in the country for lacking the will-power for establishing national language upon which translation practice would emanate from. In his opinion, there has not been clear policy on the language policy of the country. He concludes by saying that the country needs or should select six national languages from the six geopolitical zones that make up the country in order to enhance the services of translators who in turn deal with the languages of the immediate environments.

From the above contributions, one can see that the English language has a heavy load to carry as far as the advancement of Nigeria is concerned. Therefore for English to shoulder its responsibility effectively in Nigeria, as is the case elsewhere, its shoulders must be mechanised to carry the enormous loads. This suggests that the language should be structure to accommodate different nuances.

4) The Speech Acts and Functionalism

When ‘the speech act theory’ was developed in 1962, what the author had in his mind was the appropriateness and inappropriateness in the use of speech in any language including the Nigerian English usage. The concept of ‘speech act’ rests solely on the assumption that the meaning of an utterance is its intended social function. This implies that the act of learning to communicate in a language involves more than acquiring the pronunciation and grammar of the particular language. Ndiribe (2016, p.236) suggests that the initiator of the framework believes that people perform some kind of actions whenever they use language. Saeed (2003, p.219) asserts that one must, as a necessity, learn how to ask questions, make suggestions, greet and thank other speakers. This presupposes that language as an act needs to be dispatched passionately in the new language community and also controls how the uses are controlled if one wants to use the language in a realistic way.

In speech act, the disciplines of both semantics and pragmatics are explored to bring out both literal and intended meanings. This is because languages often have specific morphemes, intonations and sentence patterns to ask questions, make wishes, and give orders etc in communication. Communicative functions also rely on both general knowledge of social conventions and specific knowledge of the local context of the utterance. This is what Saeed (2003, p.220) calls interactions and context-dependence aspects of speech acts. According to him, ‘these are two important characteristics of speech act’. The use of the term ‘speech act’ covers actions such as ‘requesting’, ‘commanding’, ‘questioning’ and ‘informing’ in language structures.

Yule (1996, p.132) asserts that when a form such as Did he...?, Are they...? or Can you...? is used to ask a question, it is known as a direct speech act. He maintains that when a speaker does

not know something and asks the hearer for the information, he/she will typically provide a direct speech of the following type: ‘can you ride a bicycle?’

Yule (1996, p.133) goes on to say that some utterances which look like questions are usually treated as requests to perform some actions. He describes this type of questions or constructions as indirect speech acts,

Functionalism asserts that nothing will be found in society unless its existence is functional for other features of the structure or working of the society (McCuire 2006). Finch (1998) asserts that communicating linguistically involves an interactive event between two or more people in which one takes on certain roles; the most fundamental being speaker/writer v. Listener/reader or put more simply addresser v. addressee and attempt to influence or understand others. Language is used to perform a function and nothing should be further from this. Declaratives are used to give information, and perform the function of statements; interrogatives are used to request something, and perform the function of question; imperatives are used to give instructions and perform the function of commands. He concludes that the exact correlation between form and functions occurs in idealized sentences. According to him (Finch), ‘we frequently use declaratives to ask questions and on occasion, to issue instruction’.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) see function as the purpose for which an utterance or unit of language is used. They say that in language teaching, language functions are often described as categories of behaviour, e.g. requests, apologies, complaints, offers, compliments etc. The functional uses of language cannot be determined simply by studying the grammatical structure of sentences. In linguistics, the functional uses of language are studied in speech act theory, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. In the

communicative approach to language teaching, a syllabus is often organized in terms of the different language functions and the needs to express or understand.

From the above, it is obvious that language serves the purpose of communication. Therefore, if communication is in the realms of functionalism, it behoves any language to fulfil its duties, responsibilities and obligations to its adherents. This is what the Nigerian English brand is evolving to achieve for its users.

5) The Evolutionary Trend

By evolution, it means the inconsistency in the adoption of either British English (BE) or American English (AE) brands in both speech and written Nigerian English (NE). The inconsistency stems from spelling discrepancy in BE and AE brands. This inconsistency leads to evolution of a special brand. For instance, the words like: centre – center, comparison – comparism, meter – metre, specialise – specialize, travelling –traveling, are some of the things that bring inconsistency in the use of Nigeria English Brand (henceforth, NEB). Based on the fact that the spellings above resemble in some ways, NEB adopts eclectic method which is evolutionary. That is, using both as convenience might require. So the brand uses any/both whenever there is uncertainty as to which is to be used. When the BE spelling is handy, the NEB adopts it but when the BE is not handy, the NEB adopts the AE brand. For instance, NEB uses more of the AE brand whenever there are spellings involving –z instead of –s (localize instead of localise). The –z version is handier than its –s counterpart coupled with the fact that the computer system recognizes the AE version.

Based on the fact that NEB adopts eclectic/ evolutionary method, the Nigerian speakers learn English language without any thought on the brand they are learning. What matters to the language

user/learner is to make use of English no matter the brand the English language belongs to. For instance, in the diction of car automobile, a Nigerian speaker of English will identify its body components using different brands (evolutionary) as they appeal to him/her easily.

	British English (BE)	American English (AE)
1	Bonnet	Hood
2	Indicator	Turn signal
3	Aerial	Antenna
4	estate car	station wagon
5	Saloon	Sedan
6	Wing	Fender
7	Boot	Trunk

The NEB user will select ‘bonnet’ instead of ‘hood’. They are comfortable with ‘indicator’ instead of ‘turn signal’. They select ‘antenna’ over ‘aerial’. They are more comfortable with ‘station wagon’ than with ‘estate car’. The word ‘fender’ is an everyday diction as against ‘wing’ which is synonymous with birds. NE user will select ‘saloon’ as against ‘sedan’ and ‘boot’ instead of ‘trunk’. From the analysis above, one will notice that the choices do not follow any particular pattern but more of familiarity than vocabulary. The users that make these selections do not base their selections on choice because they do not even know that there are other nomenclatures to theirs. In fact, a story had it of a man who had just return from the United States of America to the country, who went to the market to buy an item. He roamed round the whole market asking of the product and getting negative responses even from traders who happened to have the material he was looking for.

He had a reprieve when he met another person who knew the local name for which the item he was looking for is known in NE. The moment he mentioned its Nigerian English name, people started replying in the positive way and calling him to come and buy from them.

In NE, if one fails to mention the names of things the way it is used, one will not only embarrass oneself, but will also confuse one's listeners. This is not only in the grammar of the language but also in the pronunciation of the NE. If any person tries to speak in unfamiliar accent, people will see him as an unserious person and will laugh off whatever information s/he seems to be conveying if the person is known to be a Nigerian. But an expatriate is excused. In the area of adjective comparison, NEB adopts the British brand holistically. A NE user will have the comparison of 'bad' as 'worse and worst' instead of the American brand that would have 'badder and baddest'. Also, the NE user will go for 'more stupid and most stupid' instead of the American that would opt for 'stupider and stupidest'. In the use of which brand to show probability, NEB will use the British brand. Example, a NE user would rather say "If I were you" rather than the American brand "If I was you". The NE user does not know the reason for using 'were' when 'was' ought to be the normal norm. They can go on to say "If I was there yesterday... They are not interested in knowing why the rule change for 'If I were you' which is more unconventional than the straightforward 'If I was you'. The Nigerian English teachers are rather not interested in telling the students and the language learners why the rule for 'if I were you' had to change from the normal norm. Again, a NE speaker would say 'If men were God... Like the former, the normal rule is contravened. Why not 'If men are God'? The possibility and the otherwise of the wishes make the choices of 'were' appropriate for the two occasions. That is to say, 'I cannot be

you and men cannot be God'. The negativity of the two wishes make the choice of 'were' the most appropriate. But do the above suggest why the American versions are faulty? For instance, can 'If I was you' connote that 'I can be you'? Or can 'If men are God' suggest that men can ever be God? The answers to the questions are all negative. Therefore, both the British and American brands of the English language are matters of conventions and the NE users choose the ones that are most convenient for them at any point of language considerations.

There is also the evolution of "Demonstrative – Possessive co-occurrence. In English language, demonstratives do not co-occur with the possessives in a sentence structure but the NEB makes use of the co-occurrence. For instance, a NE user is likely to say *'that your friend* looked for you in the morning' instead of *'that friend of yours* looked for you in the morning'. It follows that when the right structure is used, the possessives change appropriately according to the usage. For instance, 'my becomes mine' your—yours, our – ours, their – theirs, his -- his, her – hers. Following this new structure, a sentence like: That my knife is lost will now change to 'that knife of mine is lost'. Also a prayer like: 'I believe that God will hear *this our prayer*' will now read 'I believe that God will hear *this prayer of ours*'. It will be interesting to note that this confusion emanates from the use of "Old King James Version of the Holy Bible which makes extensive use of demonstrative –possessive co-occurrence.

6) Mother-tongue Interference

Like I pointed out in the introduction, Nigerian people were separate entities before the amalgamation of the different ethnic nationalities into an entity called Nigeria. So every group learns the English language against the background of their mother-tongue. Based on

the afore-mentioned, the mother-tongue colouration crept into the use of the English language. For instance in Onitsha, Southeast of Nigeria, with the Igbo language as the mother-tongue, is the concept of 'Head Bridge'. The concept of 'Head Bridge' was coined because people assembled at the base of the bridge for business transactions. The people referred the place as '*isi* (head) *biriji*' (bridge). Even the elites use the concept of 'Head Bridge' instead of 'the bridge head'. The Igbo language was incorporated in the use of the concept.

It is also normal in NEB to have something like 'he ate/eat my money'. The Igbo language '*O riri ego m* ((O (S/he)) *riri* (eat/ate) *ego* (money) *m* (me/mine my)) is transferred to English language and it becomes a brand. The word 'eat' in the Igbo language and that of the English language do not mean the same thing. In the English language, 'eat' subcategorises edible things. But in the Igbo language, 'eat' subcategorises something one cannot recover after giving it out. A sentence like 'she does not want to see me since s/he ate my money' is a brand that is not disputable. The sentence above is no longer peculiar the Igbo language speakers but has cut across the Nigerian people's diction.

The NEB licenses the user to make a sentence like 'as I was returning back from my journey' ... The sentence is a direct transfer of the Igbo sentence "*ka m na-aloghachi azu na njem*" Here *aloghachi* (returning) *azu* (back) translates to 'returning back' in the English language which knows that 'return' is to come back and does not need the suffix 'back' after return. The NEB allows the user to make a phrase like '*repeat again*' which is not so with either the British or American brands. 'Repeat' implies doing a particular thing again and again.

These collocation extensions are part of NEB. Bodha (1994) describes such combinations as contracting new relations. Other instances of collocation extensions which emanate from the

interference of the mother tongue are seen in the following examples. *Nnukwu ego*—‘big money’ for ‘a lot of money’, *rie ego*—‘eat money’ for ‘to extort money, spend money recklessly’ or ‘to embezzle money’, *inu isi*—‘hear smell’ for ‘perceive an odour’, ‘fragrance or aroma’, *nata ozi*—‘get message’ for ‘receive message’.

Mother-tongue interference has a big role in NEB’s evolution. According to (Anasiudu 2003:141), “interference of the L1 with the English language L2 is even more pronounced in syntax which is complicated from the already mastered structures of the primary language”. There is also the transfer of phonological features from L1 to L2. According to Uzodimma (1973), thoughts and ideas are also expressed phonologically as in the statements below:

*You carry mouth come to work and yet you are calling snuff. [(*I* (you) *buru* (carry) *onu* (mouth) *bia* (come) *oru* (*work*) *ma* (but/and) *i* (you) *na-akpo* (is calling) *utaba* (snuff)] This is a typical example of direct translation of idiomatic expressions into English which makes the construction a Nigerian brand. Whether the speaker achieves the true meaning by the translation is immaterial. The statement means: “You have come to work without eating any food and, yet you are taking snuff”(cf Anasiudu 2003, p.142). Oluikpe, (1974) on his own cites instances of interference of mother-tongue in the NEB with the examples such as “watch night” for “night watchman”, “hide secret” for “keep secret”, and “win an opponent” for “beat an opponent”.

In the area of ‘double comparison, NEB will look for more convenient one at any particular time. For instance, there is nothing in having a sentence like “He does the work ‘more better’ than his brother instead of “He does the work better than his brother. What the ‘double comparison suggests is that even though the former does a nice job, the latter does a nicer job. The latter excelled above the

former. In the same fashion, a sentence like “I gave you this formula to make things ‘more easier’ for you would not be a misnomer as far as NEB is concerned.

English language uses ‘more or most’ as comparisons for some lengthy words like ‘intelligent’, ‘beautiful’, ‘stupid’, ‘wicked’ etc. In fact, words of two or more syllabi use ‘more or most for their comparisons. It will not be a surprise to hear something like “most tallest”, “more cleaner”.

What we have enumerated above are just some of the exceptions from the norm and not the entirety. It will also be understood that some brand of NE is regarded as aberrations by some perfectists. Some use the comparison the way it should. For instance, it is most uncommon to see something like ‘*most intelligentest’, or ‘*more beautifuler’. Again no Nigerian English speaker would say ‘*intelligenter or *stupider’.

7) Rules Applications and Overgeneralisations

Any science must have a constant rule by which it operates. The rule will be in form of some known formula as in ($2x + 2y = 2(x + y)$) and it has to be constant in all situations for it to qualify as a rule. But the English language is an exception to this rule of consistency. In the English language, there are some rules like ‘nominalisation rule, verbalisation rule and past tense formation rule e.t.c.

In nominalisation, some affixes are attached to the verb stem to create nouns out of those verbs. A single example of nominalisation is the attachment of the suffix ‘ment’ to the existing verb stems to form nouns. Example, advance – advancement, enrich – enrichment, enhance —enhancement, uplift --*upliftment. Here the rule that generate grammatical nouns in others turn out to generate ungrammatical noun in *upliftment. Despite the ungrammatical outcome of the derivation, upliftment has come to

be the NEB as nobody sees anything wrong in generating or nominalising the verb ‘uplift’ to *upliftment. The sentence like ‘attend the gathering for the *upliftment of your career is apt amongst the elites.

Rules also apply in the formation of past tense in English. These rules are not water-tight. They have some exceptions. In the formation of past tense in English one considers two rules – the regular verb formation and the irregular verb formation. The regular verbs form their past tenses by simply adding the –ed suffix to the verb stems. The verbs like kill, stay, believe, start all have their past tenses the moment the –ed suffixes are attached to their host verbs. But the trend changes when verbs such as ‘cut, paste, cast, etc are involved. So the addition of the –ed suffixes to these verbs will generate ungrammatical past tenses as *cutted,*pasted, and *casted.

Overgeneralization rule is a process common in both first and second language learning, in which a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule of linguistic item beyond its accepted uses, generally by making words or structures follow a more regular pattern. For example, an English child may use ‘ball’ to refer to all normal objects, or use ‘mans’ instead of men for the plural of man.

In NEB, a lot of affixes are employed in the formation of new words or terms. These affixes have been employed mostly to generate nouns from verbs. These affixes are –or, -er, -ive -ish, -ment etc. In English, a possessor is generated from the verb ‘possess’ meaning the one who possesses. In like manner, a NEB generates ‘fabricator’ from the verb ‘fabricate’ and thereby overgeneralises the concept. In the English language it is appropriate to generate ‘container’ from the verb ‘contain, meaning that which contains the content but to generate ‘gossiper’ from ‘gossip’ is overgeneralization. Since gossip is the act of telling idle tales, the person that engages in telling idle tale should not be called a gossip

but a ‘gossiper’. A NEB has no difficulty in generating ‘trickish’ from the verb ‘trick’ instead of the noun trickster. The overgeneralization is not unconnected by the generation of the word ‘foolish’ from ‘fool’. NEB follows the rules strictly. The words “vulcaniser” and “tiler” are NEB since they are non-existent in either British or American brands of the English language vocabulary. These two words are purely NEB coinages because the work of inflating car tubes is not done manually either in British or American environments. Also, tiles are placed by special machines and not by a person trained in the act of placing the tiles as is the case in Nigeria.

In NEB, since a teacher teaches, a worker works, it is not abnormal to follow the trend to conclude that a ‘barber’ barbs. Unfortunately, in both British and American brands of the English language, a barber does not barb but cut. That is to say that such expression like “I went to the barber to *barb* my hair” is NEB.

Other area of rule application and overgeneralization is the perspectives of NEB in the area of verbalisation. That is, the ability to form a verb out of a noun. It is purely NEB to see sentences like: *’I credited English in my WAEC’ instead of ‘I got or made credit in English in my WAEC.

*’The man texted me seven times yesterday’ instead of ‘the man sent me text messages seven times yesterday’.

*’The players pocketed two million naira each for winning the championship’ instead of ‘the players were given or received two million naira each for winning the championship’.

One of the reasons for verbalisation is to avoid lengthy sentences. Verbalisation reduces the length of a sentence which would have been lengthy following the normal rules. But the sentences generated by this rule are purely NEB and neither British nor American English brands. Nigerian English brand has

developed in leaps and bounds through these evolutionary innovations!

A cursory look at the processes above reveals that the rules followed by the NEB are rules that operate in the language with some exceptions in certain conditions. In fact, there is no explanation as to why ‘enhance’ and ‘enhancement’ should be acceptable whereas ‘uplift’ and upliftment are unacceptable. It is purely the rule of the thumb (cf. Okeke and Ndiribe 2015).

8) A Quest for Global Recognition

Since language evolves from one form to another level, it is only imperative to recognize the nuances of the language for easy identification and recognition. In one of the articles submitted for publication in one journal, the paper was accepted but the editor advised that ‘the author looked for indigenous Englishman to edit the paper or that the author should consult a professional in English language. I do not think that an American, Canadian or an Australian would receive the same type of advice. In fact, some journals advise seriously that they want their authors to write exclusively in American English. This is what is known as ‘brand recognition’. This study is of the opinion that Nigerian English brand should be accorded the same status of recognition especially among the English for second language writers. A typical Nigerian has two languages – the mother-tongue and the learned English language. Those nuances that make the language a brand should be recognised and accorded its status in the English speakers of the world.

For instance, a NEB would be recognized world over as a language that allows ‘adverb-interference’. An adverb-interference is a situation where an adverb follows the subject before the verb. Whereas an English man would say ‘I love this bicycle dearly’ a Nigerian would rather say ‘I dearly love this bicycle’. For the

English man, a sentence should be in the order of Subject-Verb-Object-Adjunct (SVOA), where the adjunct is the adverbials but a Nigerian would have the structure reflect ‘Subject-Adjunct-Verb-Object (SAVO). Nigerian English speaker would make a sentence like ‘he nearly falled me down’ whereas an English man would say ‘I was nearly pushed down by him. The English man recognises that push is a transitive verb that requires both the subject and the object, unlike fall which is an intransitive verb that requires no object. One critical thing about the Nigerian English brand is that it enhances speech flow and rapidity and does not in any manner distort comprehension. The position of this paper is that the Nigerian English brand is evolving and should be accorded its due status across globe.

9) Summary and Conclusion

Nigerian English is a brand. The brand is known by its peculiarities. What gives rise to the NEB is amalgamation of several factors some of which are outside the scope of this study. Cook (1990) maintains that language message is a conglomeration of many factors from the language itself which sometimes includes the paralinguistic features of the spoken message. In this connection, so many factors including the mother-tongue and the culture of the speakers influence the second language in such a manner that it will colour the outcome and the output of the learned language, i.e. the second language. The NEB is a direct reflection of the culture of the speakers. It is a hybrid of both social and cultural contexts and as such, reflects the existing realities of the speakers. In Nigeria, for instance, a speaker is identified whether he is an Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa from his/her particular articulation of various English words. It cuts across all the ethno-linguistic groups of the country (Ndiribe and Aboh 2020).

On the communicative function of the NEB against the background of social relationship, the Nigerian English language user would likely say “close the door” instead of “shut the door” in the same manner he would say “close your mouth” instead of “shut your mouth”. When the users make statements as above, they do not envisage rudeness either to their elders or to a total stranger (cf. Littlewood, 1981 p. 4). The speakers do not anticipate any offense from their interlocutors. The interlocutor understands the concept perfectly and this understanding between/among discussants constitutes the evolutionary trend of the language.

Oluikpe (2021) asserts that when a Nigerian English speaker asks the question “how was your night?” s/he expects a favourable answer as to whether the respondent ‘slept well’ yester night or not. To the questioner, s/he is only showing concern to his/her fellow without any ill-thought or prejudice. But the same question will turn out to be abusive or insulting if it is put to a British man who will see it that the questioner is intruding into his personal/sexual life and could retort by telling the questioner that “how his night was is not his business”

Our stand on this paper is that Nigeria has a brand of the English language which is distinct from either British or American brands. It is equally our opinion that this brand should be nurtured and allowed to blossom and develop since it is on its evolutionary stage. A closer look at American brand shows that even though it is the former colony of the Britain, it has developed her brand of the English language through evolution to the extent that today, American English is recognised worldwide. In fact, the Microsoft computer recognises only the American brand as a correct form. Again, the American brand is not as complicated as the British brand. That is what language mechanism is all about. The American brand has reduced some spelling discrepancies to the barest

minimum. They also go ahead to devise their own terminologies in certain vocabularies.

Since NEB is a combination of both the British and the American brands with other local colourations, efforts should be made to document those things that give the NEB a special place of study. It will be a nice policy to legalise the use of NEB in an official capacity. Since we have not been able to master the British English brand after more than one century after the amalgamation by the British, it becomes imperative for us to harness our own put it into good use. Therefore, some coinages like “vulcaniser and tiler” should be indoctrinated into our NEB lexicon because we have them in Nigeria unlike in Britain and America where machines do the jobs of inflating tires and fixing of tiles. Also the sentence like “ let me go and barb my head” should be acceptable as NEB because Nigerians will not use ‘cut’ as the appropriate word for the head since the action is carried on the head and not on the hair.

As linguists, we believe that no borrowed language is used without modifications. The modification is to allow the new concepts which are not in the original to creep in, in order to suit the culture and the social life of the recipients of the borrowed language. This is where innovations are needed to enhance the growth and the development of the language under consideration, Nigerian English language inclusive.

Finally, since change is inevitable, Aitchson (1991) asserts that “time changes all things”. There is no reason why language should be exception to this universal law. Language should be seen as an instrument of communication without which human race is disorganised and disoriented. The function of communication should be the utmost in the analysis of any language. The NEB forms, in the writings and speeches English of Nigerians, should be seen as part and parcel of the modification of the English language

to suit its environment and culture. These are likely to save the Nigerian peoples from the present social, political, economic and religious problems facing the country as a result of multilingual nature of the country (see Ndiribe & Aboh 2020). The reason is that NEB would be developed to enable Nigerians have good grasps of the brand in order to enhance productivity in all aspects of human development and endeavour. Taking up NEB with its peculiar nuances and colourations that are peculiar to our culture and social life will be a good alternative. The study recommends complete documentation of NEB for posterity implementation. Nigerian English brand, as a moving train evolves from one form to another and that is the greatest strength of the language. Let this brand be recognized globally!

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