

**PERCEPTION OF AND ATTITUDES TO  
EMERGING FEATURES OF NIGERIAN ENGLISH:  
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF STUDENTS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**

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## Abstract

In this paper, we present the result of a survey of the perceptions of, and attitudes to, some marked features of Nigerian English syntax and lexis by a sampled cross-section of students at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Our Objectives in the survey were *first*, to test out the students' ability to recognize the range of variation between features of Nigeria English (NigE) on the one hand and those of native-speaker varieties such as British or American English (BrF/AmE) on the other. *Secondly*, we explore the attitudes of the respondents to the identified features of NigE and the value judgements that they pass on these features. *Also*, to facilitate a comparison, the sample of respondents was drawn from students of English (who had supposedly acquired) *formal* knowledge of the tuition of variation in language through their studies) and others outside the discipline (who apparently lacked such *formal* knowledge, although presumably they *were* aware of the existence of Nigerian English or "English as spoken and written by Nigerian") The data collection procedure consisted of the administration of a questionnaire to 40 randomly polled students – 20 English majors and 20 from other disciplines. The survey gives useful insights into the perception of and attitudes to NigE as a global variety of the English Language by the generality of educated Nigerian speaker, rather than by the minority linguists formally studying and characterizing this variety.

## 1.0 Introduction

It is easy for the linguist to assume that the general language user has the same insights about the language as he/she does and the same understanding of where the language is coming from and in what direction it is heading, as well as the same language attitudes. But this may hardly be the case, especially in second language situations.

With respect to the English Language in Nigeria, a potential lack of insight and understanding among the generality of users may result predictably from the fact that right from primary school, pupils and students alike are usually poorly motivated in the teaching and learning of the language. This lack of motivation often arises from lack of teaching and learning facilities, large and unmanageable class sizes, over-crowded classrooms, poorly motivated and in many cases incompetent teachers themselves, who show little interest in the job. Many teachers at secondary school also easily cause their students to resent, dislike or even hate them! And at this stage in the students' academic career the teacher and his subject are seen as synonymous, since the students are not yet mature enough intellectually to separate teacher and subject. So, once the teacher is resented or hated his subject inevitably suffers the same fate! Then all too soon, secondary school is over, and many are relieved to be rid of teacher and subject to go on to tertiary institution to pursue careers of their choice without the encumbrance of continued language study. The consequence is inevitable fossilization, a situation in which the process of language learning, which is expected to be on-going, grinds to a halt. The subjects involved continue to use the language of course, but they remain largely ignorant of the way it works, the new trends, the direction of change and the current thinking about the language.

## 2.0 Objectives

Our objectives in this survey are:

- (a) to establish the extent of awareness among students of the specific features of Nigeria English by testing out their ability to recognize these features in sentences where they occur;
- (b) also to find out whether this awareness or perception is accompanied by a corresponding awareness of standard and non-standard usages in this variety of English.
- (c) to establish to what extent, if any, there is a subsequent discrimination between the two sets of usages - standard and non-standard.
- (d) and to compare the perceptions and attitudes of students of English (who have acquired *formal* knowledge of the notion of variation in language through their studies) and other students outside the discipline (who apparently lack such *formal* knowledge, although presumably they *are aware* of the existence of the label “Nigeria English”).

## 3.0 Methodology

A total of forty students were used in the study. These were made up of twenty 300-level English majors and twenty 300-level students from other disciplines – four each from the Faculties of Business Administration, Engineering, Law, Science and Social Science. The 300 level was chosen because we felt that after three academic sessions of study, any differences in perception and language attitudes between English major students and students in other discipline should begin to show clearly.

A total of thirty items constituting peculiar usages in Nigeria English were tested using 55 sentences. That is, the 30 sentences exhibiting these peculiar usages were mixed up with 25 more error free, non-variety-specific sentences, all listed in a random order (see **Appendix**). The inclusion of the latter sentences were intended to counter a lop-sided presentation to the respondents of only sentences exhibiting features of Nigeria English. It was hoped that this way, more authentic responses would be elicited.

The respondents were required to read each sentence and then do three things:

- (a) first, state whether or not the sentence contained a feature they adjudge as peculiar to Nigeria English.
- (b) if yes, underline the portion of the sentence that contained this feature, and

- (c) indicate their attitude to this feature, that is, whether they considered it acceptable, as standard usage or not.

The test covered six carefully selected features of Nigerian English, namely

Category Shift

Conversion of Non-prepositional Verbs to Prepositional Verbs

The Use of Stative Verbs in the Progressive

Meaning Broadening, Narrowing or Total Shift

Lexical Coinages IPeculiar to Nigerian English

Peculiar Nigeria English Variants of Native-speaker Idioms.

Each of these features was tested with five different sentences (see below). The responses to these 30 sentences were then collated and analyzed and the results were presented statistically. The responses to the 25 neutral sentences were not reckoned with as they were not relevant to our objectives.

#### **4.0 The Data**

We present below the test items under the respective features. (The tested portions are highlighted here for the reader's benefit)

##### *4.1 Category Shift*

1. For a long time the country was ruled by *mediocres*
2. He horned to attract her attention as she walked past his car.
3. I don't like her, because she is a *talkative*.
4. The mechanics *piecesed* the engine of his car to find out what was wrong with it.
5. My uncle *chairmanned* the wedding reception.

##### *4.2 Conversion of Non-prepositional Verbs to Prepositional Verbs.*

1. We *demandded* for an explanation of his action

2. He *ordered for* more drinks when more guests arrived.
3. She *requested for* more information before filling in the form.
4. Olu sat there and *contemplated* on what to do next.
5. They complained that for a long time their community has been *denied of* its own share of essential amenities.

#### 4.3 *The Use of Stative Verbs in the Progressive.*

1. You *are still owing* me two hundred naira.
2. She didn't know who *was having* her book
3. The problem has *been existing* for the past two years.
4. We're not *hearing you* clearly at the back, Sir.
5. A. Have you met John before? B. No. *I'm knowing* him for the first time.

#### 4.4 *Meaning Broadening, Narrowing or Total Shift*

1. The first thing children learn at school are the 26 *alphabets* of the English Language.
2. *Our academicians* should put their heads together to find a solution to the falling level of educational attainment among the youth.
3. Beware of that man – he's a ruthless *dupe!*
4. Amina and Bisi have not been talking to *themselves* since they quarreled.
5. He doesn't cheat you like the other sellers – so I've made him my regular *customer*.

#### 4.5 *Lexical Coinages Peculiar to Nigerian English*

1. A good education guarantees personal *upliftment*
2. He made an *insultive* remark about the new foreman
3. He tried to remember the telephone number *off-head* but couldn't.
4. The new church has a large *followership*
5. She is an *indigene* of Ondo State.

#### 4.6 Peculiar Nigerian English Variants of Native speaker Idioms:

1. *A tree cannot make a forest*

(BrE: One swallow does not a summer make).

2. Cut your coat according to your *size*

(BrE: Cut your coat according to your cloth)

3. *What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander*

(BrE: Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander)

4. *More grease to your elbow*

(BrE: More elbow grease)

5. Our politicians are always *dancing* to the gallery.

(Br.E: Our politicians are always playing to the gallery).

## 5.0 Data Analysis

Here, we first present a brief description of each of our six tested features before an analysis of the students' responses to the feature.

### 5.1 Category Shift

We have said elsewhere (Okoro, 2006:10) that “category shift in word classes is a process in which a word that originally belonged to a particular word class gradually begins to be used as another word class. “For example, in the 1950’s the word “broker” and “source” occurred only as nouns. Today, they have become verbs as well, and we can “*broker* peace” and “*source* information”. Even “rubbish”, originally a noun, can now be used as a verb – so that someone’s plans or argument can be “*rubbished*,” by another. And even sentences such as the following can be heard at a football commentary. “He has been *red carded* by the referee” – where the italicized nominal has been verbalized. However, while this process occurs naturally enough in native English usage, on 1.2 contexts it often violates some usage constraints and yields unacceptable results.

Category shift in Nigerian English was tested among the respondents with the following words (see 4.0 The Data above).

Mediocre	→	<i>mediocre</i>	(category shifted from adjective to noun)
Horn	→	<i>horned</i>	(category shifted from noun to verb)
Talkative	→	<i>a talkative</i>	(category shifted from adjective to noun)
Pieces	→	<i>piecesed</i>	(category shifted from noun to verb)
Chairman	→	<i>chairmaned</i>	(category shifted from noun to verb)

Below is the statistical presentation of the students' responses:

**Table 1 : Category Shift**

S/N	PERCEIVED STATES OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	-Std	+Std	-Std
1	14/18	6/2	32	8	80%	20%
2	12/17	8/3	29	11	72.5%	27.5%
3	9/11	11/9	20	20	50%	50%
4	19/20	1/0	40	0	100%	0%
5	8/10	121/0	18	22	45%	55%

### Interpretation

**S/N** → This refers to the tested sentences in serial order

**PSS** → The paired entries here are the numbers of English major students/students of other disciplines, respectively, who adjudged each sentence as not containing a feature of Nigerian English (**-NigE**) or as containing such a feature (**+NigE**). For example, 14 English major students and 18 non majors adjudged sentence 1 as **-NigE**, while 6 majors and 2 non-majors adjudged it as **+NigE**

**JAS** → This shows the cumulative number of students who considered each sentence acceptable as standard (**+Std**), and who considered it non-standard (**-Std**). For example, all the 32 students (ie. 14 + 18) who adjudged sentence 1 as free of any feature of Nigerian English also

considered it acceptable as standard usage (+**Std**), while the 8 (6 + 2) who adjudged it as Nigerian English also classified it as non-standard and unacceptable (-**Std**).

% → This is the percentage quantification of the responses: 32 = 80% of 40 (the total number of respondents), and 8 = 20% of 40.

(This interpretation also applies to all the other features tested in the study.)

## 5.2 Conversion of Non-prepositioned Verbs to Prepositional Verbs

A prepositional verb is always followed by a preposition in the sentence. We give the following examples, some of which are taken from Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:350)

Deal <i>with</i>	long <i>for</i>	object <i>to</i>	part <i>with</i>
Refer <i>to</i>	depend <i>on</i>	agree <i>with</i>	abstain <i>from</i>
Dabble <i>in</i>	react <i>to</i>	result <i>in</i>	belong <i>to</i>
Refrain <i>from</i>	conform <i>to</i>	relate <i>to</i>	desist <i>from</i>

Although prepositional verbs may look like phrasal verbs, the two can be distinguished in a number of ways.

The preposition following a prepositional verb does not contribute to the meaning of the verb, whereas the preposition (or adverb) that forms the phrasal verb particle contributes to the unique meaning of the phrasal verb. Thus the meaning ‘succumb’ is borne out by the combination ‘give + in’, and not by ‘give’ alone.

(2) The particle of a phrasal verb can be shifted to the end of the sentence. This we can have :

The soldiers blew up the bridge (correct)

The soldiers blew the bridge up (correct)

But the preposition following a prepositional verb cannot be shifted in the same way:

She dealt *with* the matter. (correct)

She dealt the matter *with*. (wrong)



- (3) A prepositional verb can accept an adverb inserted directly after it but the lexical verb element in a phrasal verb cannot:

She dealt quickly with the matter (correct)

\*The soldiers blew quickly up the bridge (wrong)

One notable feature of Nigerian English is the conversion of many transitive verbs to prepositional verbs by the redundant insertion of prepositions after them. A well known grammatical constraint on transitive verbs is that they must have grammatical objects. Another – but less known constraint is that they must be followed directly by these objects a preposition should never be inserted between a transitive verb and its grammatical object. But as we have pointed out, this is quite common in Nigerian English. This phenomenon was tested among the respondents with the verb forms “demand *for*, \*order *for*, \*request *for*, \*contemplate *on*, and \*deny *of* – in which the italicized prepositions are all redundant. We present the students responses below.

**Table 2: Conversion of Non-Prepositional Verbs to Prepositional Verbs**

S/N	PERCEIVED STATES OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	+Std	+Std	-Std
1	18/20	2/0	38	2	95%	5%
2	18/20	2/0	38	2	95%	5%
3	18/20	2/0	38	2	95%	5%
4	18/20	2/0	38	1	97.5%	2.5%
5	18/20	2/0	38	3	92.5%	7.5%

As with the earlier feature, most of the respondents (38 on average) considered the sentences here free of any features of Nigerian English or errors and therefore standard usage. It is obvious that some over-generalization and faulty analogy are at work here. Used as nouns, ‘demand’, ‘order’ and ‘request’ can correctly be followed by prepositions (e.g. ‘His demand for an explanation was ignored; ‘The barman took his order *for* more beer’; Her request for more time was granted). This attribute is then over-generalized and extend to the words when they are used as verbs as well. Faulty analogy is treating b the same way as a on the logical basis of a perceived similarity between the two. But the logic frequently does not apply – and the analogy yields a faulty usage. For example, if we can *think about* something, can we not also contemplate on something, since ‘think’ and ‘contemplate’ are synonyms’. But we cannot do this, because while think is a prepositional verb, ‘contemplate’ is not. (Faulty analogy is given more detailed treatment in 5.5 below).

### 5.3 *The Use of Stative Verbs in the Progressive*

Stative verb – those that indicate states rather than actions – do not grammatically take on the progressive affix, -ing. This is because this affix is used to indicate ‘action in progress’ (e.g. ‘She is combing her hair (physical action), He’s thinking about the suggestion’ (mental action). Since state verbs do not involve any action, they do not take on –ing, as we cannot indicate action in progress, where there is none’.

However, the usual incomplete and lop-sided definition given by most teachers to pupils at the early and impressionable stage in their language learning is that the verb is an action word or a doing word’. With such a blanket definition, the teacher, predictably, does not subsequently make for necessary distinction between dynamic (i.e. action) and stative (ie. State of being) verbs.

The inevitable consequence is that learners tend to inflect all verbs uniformly: they consider that just as all verbs can take on the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present tense affix (-s), the simple past tense affix (ed) and the perfect tense affix (-ed) so can they take on the progression affix (-ing) without exception. Thus verbs like owe, have (to be in possession of), exist, hear, know and many more are freely used in the progressive form. This unrestricted use of state of being verbs in the progressive is one of the frequently cited features of Nigerian English.

We present below the students’ responses to the test items in our survey:

Table 3: The Use of Stative Verbs in the Progressive

S/N	PERCEIVED STATES OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	+Std	+Std	-Std
1	17/17	3/3	34	6	85%	15%
2	10/11	10/9	21	19	52.5%	47.5%
3	18/19	2/1	37	3	92.5%	7.5%
4	2/8	18/12	10	30	25%	75%
5	12/11	8/9	23	17	57.5%	42.5%

These responses show a somewhat greater awareness of the misuse of state of being verbs in the manner discussed here as a (sub-standard)) feature of Nigerian English. Sentences 2, 4, and 5 in particular were adjudged by 19, 30 and 17 respectively out of 40 respondents to contain a sub-standard feature of Nigeria English.

#### 5.4 *Meaning Broadening, Narrowing or Total Shift*

Language is dynamic, not static. It therefore continues to change over time on all the levels of usage phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic. This change is usually gradual, often noticeable only through the diachronic study of a particular language, although advances in technology have somewhat accelerated some aspects of this process.

On the semantic level, language change can occur through meaning broadening, meaning narrowing or total shift in meaning. For example, in Old English, 'dogge' used to refer to a special breed of dogs. But in Modern English, occurring as 'dog', the term has broadened in meaning to refer to all dog species. Up until the 1960s 'gay' was an adjective only and meant 'bright or attractive cheerful and excited'. Up until the 1980s 'gay' was an adjective only and meant 'bright or attractive, cheerful and excited'. Today, it too has broadened in meaning to refer in addition to the aberration of being sexually attracted to people of the same sex as oneself. And as a corollary, the word is now also used as a noun to refer to those who feel this way, that is homosexuals. (Dictionaries now mark the earlier meaning of 'gay' as old fashioned, and people are using it less and less in these senses, because of the negative, connotation that the newer meaning has given to it, it a time comes when the word becomes completely divested of these earlier meanings, this will be an example of total meaning shift.) Again, 'ox', 'pig', 'calf', 'sheep' were references to both the animals and the food got from them. But through borrowing from other languages, 'beef', 'pork', 'veal' and 'mutton' became respective references for the food, and the meaning of the first set of references were thus narrowed down to the animals alone. Finally, total meaning shift can be seen in the word 'knight,' which in medieval times (in the age of chivalry) referred to a high-ranking man who was trained to fight on horseback, but which today refers to a man who has received a knighthood and has the title 'Sir'.

However, while meaning change is a gradual and uniform process in native speaker English, it is quite arbitrary, erratic, often unexplainable and disturbingly widespread in Nigerian English. With the majority of instances there is often no plausible explanation other than massive ignorance of the correct dictionary meaning of these words, resulting perhaps from early fossilization in the language learning process.

Let us analyze the examples used in our survey.

- |             |   |  |
|-------------|---|--|
| Alphabet    | → | shift from 'a set of symbols arranged in a particular order used for writing a language' to the individual letters of the alphabet'. |
| Academician | → | shift from 'a member of an academy' to 'a teacher in an institution of Higher learning.  |
| Dupe        | → | shift from 'someone who is tricked or cheated because of their   |

gullibility, stupidity or greed' (i.e. the victim that has been duped) to "the con-man who had duped someone'.

- Themselves → meaning broadening from 'reflexive pronoun' to now included 'reciprocal pronoun'.
- Customer → meaning broadening from 'regular buyer' to 'both regular buyer and the seller from whom one buys regularly'.

Two interesting examples of meaning narrowing in Nigerian English are 'Ms' and 'chairperson', both coming among many other similar coinages in the wake of the protest against sexism in language use.

Day (1992:95-6) observes that:

Men in our society have always been 'Mr.' a title which gives no indication of marital status. Women, considered the chattel of men, were called 'Miss' if unmarried and "Mrs' if married. Such labeling made it easy for men to determine which women were 'available'.

To avoid this semantic labeling of women, the term 'Ms' was invented (Pronounced 'Miz,' this title was coined by Kansas journalist Roy F. Bailey in 1950). This title provides a term of address that can be used for both married and unmarried women.

But today in Nigerian English the meaning of 'Ms' has been narrowed down to 'sprinter', as neither the average married woman nor young girl is willing to use it. In a country that has more than its own fair share of both womanizing and unmarried females, married women frequently have a need to proclaim their marital status in order to ward off unwholesome advances, and single young girls dare not give a misleading impression about their age and youthfulness by replacing 'Miss' with 'Ms', which (come to think of it) does give the impression of a graduation from a certain age bracket to the next higher one'.

Again, 'chairperson' is intended as a gender neutral term of reference for a male or female alike who chairs an occasion. But in Nigerian English it has been narrowed down to the female alone as the men have stuck to their masculine – sounding 'chairman'.

Our students' responses to the items testing meaning change in Nigerian English were as follows.

**Table 4 : Meaning Broadening, Narrowing, or Total Shift**

S/N	PERCEIVED STATES OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	+Std	+Std	-Std
1	17/18	3/2	35	5	87.5%	12.5%
2	15/17	5/3	32	8	80%	20%
3	20/20	0/0	40	0	100%	0%
4	4/8	16/12	12	28	30%	70%
5	12/17	8/3	29	11	72.5%	27.5%

Here, we see that a preponderance of the responses considered the sentences as free of features of Nigerian English, and thus pass them as standard usage. While sentence 3 ('dupe' referring to the con-man) has full marks, only sentence 4 (themselves' used for 'each other') is recognized by the majority (28 out of 40), ie., 70% as faulty and sub-standard.

### 5.5 *Lexical Coinages Peculiar to Nigerian English*

Coinage is a natural word-formation process in any language. But here, we are concerned with only a peculiar kind of coinage resulting from faulty analogy. This is the logical but faulty reasoning that if b is similar to a in a certain respect, then what goes for a in that respect can also be applied to b. on the basis of this similarity. But because the English language is not as logical as our rational mind constantly considers it this kind of reasoning frequently yields erroneous expressions – which we may call faulty analogy errors. For example, if someone who sings, teaches or drives is a singer, teacher or driver respectively, then someone who gossips, cheats or flirts is by faulty analogy referred to by many Nigerians as a “gossiper, “Cheater or \*flirter (instead of a gossip, cheater or flirt).

It can easily be seen that the items tested in our survey resulted from the following processes of faulty analogy.

In our survey, responses to the items testing peculiar coinages in Nigerian English stood as follows:

**Table 5 : Lexical Coinage Peculiar to Nigeria English**

S/N	PERCEIVED STATES OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	+Std	+Std	-Std
1	20/20	0/0	40	0	100%	0%
2	14/17	6/3	31	9	77.5%	22.5%
3	4/10	16/10	14	26	35%	65%
4	16/18	4/2	34	6	85%	15%
5	20/20	0/0	40	0	100%	0%

Here again, the usages received a very high rating as standard and devoid of features of Nigeria English. Sentences 1 and 5 were adjudged by all 40 respondents as standard and without any feature of Nigeria English. Only sentence 3 has the majority (26 out of 40), or 65%) declaring it as non-standard.

#### 5.6 Peculiar Nigeria English Variants of Native-speaker Idioms:

An idiom has been defined in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as ‘a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word. Native-speaker varieties of English are highly, idiomatic and examples are legion:

To beat about the bush	to pay someone back in their own coin
To pull someone’s leg	to buy clothes off the peg
To play it by ear	to get butterflies in one’s stomach
To make ends meet	to make a beeline for somebody something
To take a shot in the dark	to take someone for a ride
To kick the bucket	to be under the weather
To be light fingered	to buckle down to work
To call a park a spade	to pull a few strings
To play to the gallery	to split hairs over something

Several language varieties of English also have their own fair share of idioms. But geographical diversity, differences in sociolinguistic and socio-cultural experience, seasons of the year, flora and fauna, etc. Understandably account for differences in the idiomatic content of different varieties of the same language. Thus, Nigerian English has a lot of idioms that are unique in content as well as those that involve slight or extensive modifications of existing native English idioms. Below are our students' responses to the five tested items (presented in 4.6 above).

Table 6 : Peculiar Nigerian English Variants of Native-speaker idioms

S/N	PERCEIVED STATUS OF SENTENCE (PSS)		JUDGEMENT OF ACCEPTABILITY OF SENTENCE (JAS)		PERCENTAGE (%)	
	-NigE	+NigE	+Std	-Std	+Std	-Std
1	6.17	14.3	40	0	100%	0%
2	6.17	14.3	39	1	97.5%	2.5%
3	6.17	14.3	40	0	100%	0%
4	6.17	14.3	40	0	100%	0%
5	14.18	6.2	40	0	100%	0%

Here, the Nigerian English variants of well known native English idioms received the highest rating as standard usage – by both those who classified them as features of Nigerian English and those who did not. The only exception was sentence 2 (Cut your coat according to your size) which a lone respondent out of forty considered non-standard.

1. *\*upliftment*

- enjoy → enjoyment
- argue → argument
- confer → conferment
- punish → punishment
- commit → commitment
- uplift → *\*upliftment* (instead of 'uplift')

2. *\*Insultive*

persuade	→	persuasive
decide	→	decisive
educate	→	educative
impress	→	impressive
insult	→	<i>*insultive</i> (instead of ‘insulting’).

3. *\*off-head*

To remember something *offhand* is to be able to remember it immediately without having to think about it or consult a source. By default, many Nigerians have substituted for this word the similar sounding coinage ‘offhead’, the appropriateness or correctness of which is hardly doubted or questioned. After all the remembering is done with the head, not the *hand!*

4. *\*followership*

apprentice	→	apprenticeship
steward	→	stewardship
head	→	headship
leader	→	leadership
follower	→	<i>*followership</i> (instead of ‘following’)

5. Indigene

In a country where one’s state of origin and ethnicity are so politically and socially significant, the term ‘indigene of ...’ is widely used to refer to someone’s state of origin or hometown

A few other examples

privatize	→	privatization
regularize	→	regularization
vandalize	→	<i>*vandalization</i> (instead of ‘vandalism’)



evangelize → \*evangelization (‘evangelism’)

tight → tighten

loose → loosen

soft → soften

smooth → \*smoothen (instead of ‘smooth’)

## 6.0 Findings and Conclusion:

We present below a summary of our findings

The average perception in percentages of the status of each of the six features of Nigerian English tested in our survey standards as follows (in descending order from the features perceived as most standard to that polled as least standard).

FEATURE OF NIGERIAN ENGLISH TESTED	PERCEIVED AVERAGE STATUS IN PERCENTAGES (5)	
	+Std	+Std
Peculiar Nigeria English Variant English Idioms	99.5%	0.5%
Conversion of Non-prepositional verbs to Prepositional verbs	95%	5%
Levical Coinages Peculiar to Nigeria English	79.5%	20.5%
Meaning Broadcasting, Narrowing and Total Shift	74%	26%
Category Shift	69.5%	30.5%
The Use of Stative Verbs on the Progressive	62.5%	37.5%

As we can see from this table, the use of state verbs like action verbs (i.e. with -ing) was perceived the most as a non-standard feature of Nigerian English, while peculiar Nigerian English variants of native English idioms were the least perceived as non-standard. The table also shows the relative positions of the other features.

2. The percentage figures are a clear evidence of a disturbingly low level of *grammatical* competence among the category of language users surveyed, and thus a general inability to detect deviant forms, especially the not-too-obvious ones.

3. There is also an inability among most of the students to recognize the variation involved as peculiar Nigerian English usage exhibiting a lexical, syntactic or semantic departure from

native speaker usage. The obvious consequence here will be a potential inability to recognize variations that are intra nationally intelligible that which threaten international intelligibility, so that the speaker will be unable to adjust appropriately when communicating with native speakers of English.

4. There appears a strong correlation between the perceived status of a usage and the students' judgment of its acceptability as standard or otherwise. That is, most of the usages adjudged as Nigerian English were also classified as non-standard by the students passing the judgement. (The idioms were an exception.) However, although the evidence tends to strongly suggest this, it cannot be concluded categorically from these responses that the students equated the label 'Nigerian English' with 'non-standard English', since the sentences indeed contain different forms of deviance.

5. Only a marginal difference in competence manifested among the two groups of students, *English majors* and *others*, showing perhaps that the teaching of the characteristics of Nigerian English to English major students has remained largely theoretical and little effort has been made by these students themselves to comprehensively identify the features in practical terms.

We conclude our presentation by posing a question which this paper does not attempt to answer, but which we present here as food for thought and this is, how can the language expert actually succeed in carrying along the general language user, who is generally guided in his language use more by his instinct than by any formal awareness of the linguistic developments and the current thinking concerning the language”.

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