



## Features of Nigerian English in the Spoken and Written English of Undergraduates at Nigerian Universities

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**Abstract.** This study examined the features of Nigerian English in the spoken and written English of undergraduates in Nigeria Universities. The objectives of this study are to identify the features of Nigerian English that characterize the spoken and written language of students in the university and to investigate the sociolinguistic factors that influence the use of Nigerian English features among the students. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Labov's Sociolinguistic theory which focuses on the idea that the way a language is spoken and written differs across individuals as well as across situations encountered by the same individual. Using the descriptive research design and the questionnaire as research instrument, data was collected from a sample of 400 students using the purposive sampling method to determine the sample size. Findings revealed that English as a dynamic and evolving variety is shaped by sociolinguistic factors which manifest in the language of university students. Also, the Nigerian English features are more prevalent in the spoken English than the written form. The researcher recommended that Nigerian universities should consider implementing language awareness program as to help students recognize and understand the linguistic features of Nigerian English as part of the linguistic heritage of the country.

### 1. Background Overview

The English Language in Nigeria has evolved over the years due to its coexistence with indigenous languages and its role in expressing Nigerian experiences. This has led to the development of unique linguistic patterns that distinguish it as a variety of world English. With over 400 languages spoken in Nigeria, English serves as a second language for many Nigerians and is influenced by the cultural nuances of

the Nigerian social landscape. As Eka (2000:70) aptly puts it, when a language moves to a new region, it inevitably takes on the characteristics of its new environment.

Due to the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the country, various forms of English have emerged. This study aims to pinpoint the specific varieties that are significant in defining Nigerian English. Linguists have extensively researched the spoken Nigerian English variety, with scholars such as Eka (1985, 1993, 2000), Bamgbose (1982, 1995) and Udofot (1997, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007) delving into its characteristics. These researchers often categorized the language based on formal education, with Banjo's classification (as cited in Udofot, 2007: 15) being particularly noteworthy. Banjo identified four distinct varieties of spoken Nigerian English.

The first variety is used by individuals who have completed elementary school or have basic literacy skills. It is characterized by a significant amount of negative influence from the phonological system of their native language, making it unacceptable even among Nigerians. On the other hand, the second variety is spoken by those who have completed secondary school. While there is minimal interference from their mother tongue, these speakers do not make important distinctions in phonemes. However, this variety is widely understood and accepted throughout the country. University education is linked to variety three. Important phonemic differences are made by the speakers, and the diversity is recognized and understood both domestically and globally. Although variety four is mocked in Nigeria for being fake, it is said to be similar to ordinary British English. Udofot (1997, 2002, 2003, and 2004) classified spoken Nigerian English variations into three groups, focusing on distinguishing between segmental and non-

segmental traits. Nigerian English is spoken in diverse ways and is utilized for different things depending on the social setting and surroundings.

Nigeria, a country with over 500 ethnic groups, each with its languages and dialects, has played a significant role in shaping Nigerian English.

### 1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The General aim and Objective of this research is to comprehensively investigate the linguistic features of Nigerian English as they manifest in undergraduates' spoken and written language at Nigerian Universities. The study intends to contribute to the understanding of Nigerian English within the context of higher education in Nigeria.

Specific Objectives are to:

- identify the features of Nigerian English that characterize spoken and written language of undergraduates in Nigeria Universities
- examine the prevalence of Nigerian English features in the spoken and written language of undergraduates within the university context
- investigate the sociolinguistic factors that influence Nigerian English features among undergraduates in the university
- compare and contrast the Nigerian English features found in the spoken and written language of different students

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Nigerian English as a distinctive linguistic variety. It allows for the documentation and analysis of specific linguistic features, enriching the body of knowledge on this variety of English. By examining the sociolinguistic factors that influence the use of Nigerian English features among students, the study sheds light on the complex interplay between language, ethnicity, and social background in a higher education context.

Understanding how Nigerian English features manifest in students' language at Rivers State University has practical implications for language education. It can inform curriculum development, teaching strategies, and language policy decisions within the university and potentially across Nigerian higher education institutions. The findings of this study may inform language policy decisions within Nigerian universities. As the use of Nigerian English

features is increasingly recognized, institutions may consider adjusting language policies to accommodate this linguistic diversity. Therefore, the study will be significant to students, teachers, language educators, policy makers, curriculum developers and researchers.

## 2. Nigerian English

Nigerian Standard English (NSE), sometimes known as Nigerian English, is a unique variety of the English language spoken and written in Nigeria. It has evolved over time, influenced by Nigeria's rich linguistic and cultural diversity, historical context, and sociopolitical factors. It can be defined as a variety of English whose standard has been affected by our native languages that are commonly used by Nigerians. Thus, at all sociolinguistic levels, the English used in Nigeria has undergone various changes to fit its user's new environment, concept and perception. Nigerian English has a distinct pronunciation, grammar and semantics which do not conform to the Received Pronunciation (RP). It is acceptable and intelligible to Nigerian people and is based on peculiarities which have developed in Nigeria.

English is currently used as the official language of education, government and other areas, has so permeated all spheres of life in the country that in spite of several attempts to replace it with an indigenous language, it seems to have come to stay. English, by its very nature as a second language in the Nigerian context, qualifies as a situational or contextual language, adopted to suit the communication needs of the people from diverse educational, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Ken-Maduako, 2003).

Ekpe (2010), cited in Enwere (2021) defined Nigerian English is the form of English employed by Nigerians to facilitate communication across diverse sociocultural contexts. Nigerian English fits into these criteria because of the wide range of functions it performs in Nigeria. The English language as it is now, has been domesticated to reflect the general social context within which it is used.

### 2.1 Features of Nigerian English

#### 2.1.1 The Phonological Features

In Nigeria English, phonological features mark it out distinctly from other global English varieties. The variation in Nigerian English's phonological structure affects the sounds and suprasegments. The way these sounds are used by Nigerians and the suprasegments vary from the way they are used by the original English speakers. Such variations are caused by

linguistic and social factors. Linguistic variations are components in a language with various realizations this could be expressed in terms of both suprasegmental characteristics and sound segment at the phonological level.

Sound Segments in Nigerian English

The vowels and consonants consist of sound segments in English. The English segments differ from the Nigerian native languages' segments. According to Adetugbo, Nigerians who speak English as a second language have several challenges when it comes to pronouncing English words correctly. The primary cause of issues is the interference that their native language sound patterns cause with the English sound system. Such issues result in Nigerian English differences depending on the geo-linguistic region from which the speaker comes.

The Dental Fricatives /θ, ð/.

Speakers of Nigerian English mostly substitute /t/ for /θ/ and /d/ for /ð/. There seems to be difficulty in the articulation of these sounds as a result of the lack of dental fricatives in Nigerian native languages.

British English (BE)	Nigerian English (NE)
1. Thank /θæŋk/	/tanK/
2. That /ðæt/	/dat/
The Glottal Fricative /h/	

In some Nigerian English, the glottal fricative /h/ is missing, particularly among western English speakers for Nigeria, who speak Yoruba languages. Some of these Yoruba speakers tend to drop or insert /h/ where it does not occur. Awonusi identifies five types of "aitches" in Nigerian English Variety as;

- H-Weakening: This refers to the loss or non-articulation of /h/ in words, such as "his" /hiz/ /Is/ in related speech, and the ensuing weakening of the sound. /aĩ/ and /ʒn̩ / /hawa / and /h̩n̩/; H-restoration is the usage of /h/ in words that are /h/ less in BEV, such as hour, honor.
- H-dropping in categories: the non-articulation of /h/ in "h-full" terms such as "house," "hauz," and "aus."
- Variable H dropping: in terms like "hotel," the /h̩d̩ot̩el/ -[ot̩el] is dropped or retained.
- H-insertion: when /h/ is used in words that ordinarily have no h sound, such as egg /eg/ \*heg (2004: 214).

2.2 Variances in Nigerian English vowels

There are fewer vowels in the Nigerian English sound system unlike the British English sound system which has a larger number of vowels. Nigerian native

languages only have vowels of monophthongs and diphthongs but Triphthongs are lacking.

The British English vowels are categorized into three parts. Which include:

1. The Monophthongs
2. The Diphthongs
3. The Triphthongs

2.3 The Monophthongs

It is not common for Nigerian English speakers to distinguish between [i:] and [ɪ], [u:] and [ʊ], and [ɔ:] and [ɒ]. Since the tense vowel is longer than the lax vowel, the length requirement is used. Nigerian English variety speakers will not use the differences between [ɪ] and [i:], [ʊ] and [u:], and [ɒ] and [ɔ:].

The examples below show the differences between British English pronunciation and Nigerian English pronunciation

British English Pronunciation	Nigerian English Pronunciation
1. pin /pɪ n/	/pi:n/
2. Door /dɔ:/	/dɒ/
3. Book /bʊk/	/bu:k/

2.4 The Central Vowels

For English speaking Nigerians, the central vowels of British English feature pose a major problem due to the realization of distinct variables. This has an impact on sounds like / ə:, ^, ə/. (Adetugbo1993:145). According to his findings, English speakers from West Africa substitutes [ó] for [ɔ], [a] for [ə], and [a] or [e] for [ɪ].

The central vowel / ə: / which is regarded as the schwa sound does not occur in Nigeria English phonology. Examples are shown below:

British English Pronunciation.	Nigerian English Pronunciation
1. go: /gəʊ/	/go/
2. Upon: /ə'pʊn/	/ɒpʊn/
3. Come /kʌm/	/kɒm/

2.5 The Diphthongs

The majority of Nigerian languages lack these English gliding sounds. Nigerian speakers often tend to monophthongize the English diphthongs, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word monophthongize" implies to become a monophthong or to simplify a diphthong, triphthong, or other phoneme into a single vowel sound, as exemplified below:

**British English Pronunciation Nigerian English pronunciation**

- |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Know:  | /nəʊ/     | /no/      |
| 2. Police | /pə'li:s/ | /pə'li:s/ |

**2.6 The Triphthongs**

There is a lack of triphthongs in Nigerian native languages, so an average English-speaking Nigerian reduces a diphthong or triphthong to a simple vowel sound, this process is called Monophthongization. Examples are shown below:

British English	Pronunciation
Nigerian English Pronunciation	
1. Lower:	/ləʊə/
	/lowə/

**2.7 Grammatical Features of Nigerian English**

Grammar can be defined as the relationship of words, phrases and clauses in a sentence. The grammatical component includes the syntactic features in this system. Some of the characteristics that differentiate In Nigeria, English spoken by native speakers or in nearby environments is faultily structured and deviant of word order, misuse of prepositions, absence of articles, wrong use of pronouns etc. Absence of articles is one of the most common problems of Nigerian speakers of English.

Articles like the “ (definite article) and a/or an (indefinite articles).

Examples;

Sandra is going to School by tomorrow (N.E)

Sandra is going to „the“ School by tomorrow (B.E)

**WORD ORDER**

Word order has to do with the way words are used in a sentence.

Examples:

*Me and Goodness went to the market* (N.E)

*Goodness and I went to the market* (B.E)

*He loves colour green* (N.E)

*He loves green colour* (B.E)

**WRONG USE OF REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS**

Wrong use of reflexive pronouns is rampant among Nigerian English speakers. (themselves, each other, and ourselves)

Examples:

*They hate themselves* (N.E)

*They hate each other* (B.E)

*God said we should love ourselves* (N.E)

*God said we should love each other* (B.E)

**DYNAMIC VERBS**

A dynamic verb can be defined as a verb displaying constant or incremental action on the subject. Put simply, these are verbs that convey physical actions

and are used in the progressive aspect. They are also referred to as non-finite verbs. Below are a few instances of unconventional usage by Nigerian students.

- |                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1. NEPA has brought light | the light |
| has been restored         |           |
| 2. Cold is catching me    | I am      |
| having a cold             |           |
| 3. off/on the light       | Switch    |
| on/off the light          |           |

**2.8 Lexico – Semantic features in Nigerian English**

Lexico“ is from the term lexis, which is the collection of all words in a language or its word list. Semantics can be defined as the linguistic analysis of a language's word meanings. The lexical features of NE are formed in quite a lot of ways which includes loan words, semantic shift or extension, coinages and semantic transfer.

**SEMANTIC SHIFT OR EXTENSION**

In Nigerian English, several lexical elements have been modified, reduced or expanded their meanings. Examples are shown below:

1. Paul“s father is a „big man“ „, Big man“ is used to signify how wealthy or influential a person is.
2. If your dad has „long legs“ then you will get that admission.

Long legs“ is used to represent personal connection with an influential individual.

3. I want it “sharp sharp” “Sharp sharp” is used to ask for something to be done quickly.

**COINAGES**

Coinages are words or lexical elements that are unique to Nigerian English speakers are translated into the local language to accommodate the Nigerian setting.

Examples are shown below:

1. Bryan is a 419  
Bryan is a fraudster
2. There was hold-up on my way home  
There was traffic on my way home
3. Angel had a carryover in GNS  
Angel failed GNS

**LOAN WORDS**

The general transition of Nigerian English words to Standard English variety are referred to as loan words. Examples include: akara, agbada, dodo, Buka , etc.

1. I ate akara and bread this morning
2. Amaka hates dodo

**SEMANTIC TRANSFER**

While certain Nigerian English elements are also seen in British English, British English does not include the idea which they convey in Nigerian English. Examples are below:

1. I went to a night vigil in my church  
I went to a vigil in my church
2. Can you escort me to the school gate?  
Can you accompany me to the school gate?

## 2.9 Pragmatic Features of Nigerian English

The code changing process is an important aspect of Nigerian English discourse. Many Nigerian ingenious Writers frequently employ this technique in their literary works to convey the diverse linguistic settings of characters. They skillfully navigate between various forms of Nigerian Pidgin, L1 or English depending on factors like change in location, social status, or the age of the individuals being addressed. Code-switching is a common occurrence in the everyday conversations of Nigerian English speakers. A typical example is the expression, “*Wetin dey do u sef*” (i.e what is wrong with you?)

This is a noticeable occurrence among speakers of Nigeria English due to speakers’ linguistic background. For example, the same English-speaking Nigerian may perhaps move from Nigerian Standard English to Nigerian English less Standard.

Depending on changes in the sociolinguistic environment, he could move from Nigerian English to Igbo and Ikwerre, then to Pidgin or even Ikwerre. Such progresses frequently follow suitable changes in communication methods, depending on the age or position of the participating conversers.

The frequent use of titles by some speakers of Nigerian English speakers in discussions with their colleagues, such as “*Prof, Dr, Oga, Madam, Sir, Pastor, Presido*” etc., is another characteristic that we find in conversing Nigerian. Such discourse items are transferred from Nigerian indigenous languages where the regular use of words and titles is sometimes a symbol of reverence. While loan words in English have been received in Nigerian languages by the Nigerian speakers, Sir and Ma have gained a much wider range of usages and connotations.

### 3. Sociolinguistic Variation of Nigerian English

The sociolinguistic variation of Nigerian English is a fascinating and complex phenomenon that reflects the diverse sociocultural, historical, and geographical factors at play in Nigeria. This variation encompasses various linguistic features, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics, and is influenced by social factors such as social class, ethnicity, education, and urbanization. Here's an

exhaustive exploration of the sociolinguistic variation of Nigerian English:

**Regional and Ethnic Variation:** Nigeria is home to over 500 ethnic groups, each with its languages, cultures, and dialects. As a result, regional and ethnic variations in Nigerian English are pronounced. The linguistic features of Nigerian English can differ significantly between the northern and southern regions, as well as among ethnic groups.

**Phonological Variation:** Pronunciation is a significant aspect of sociolinguistic variation in Nigerian English. Different regions may exhibit distinct phonological features, such as vowel and consonant sounds. For example, the pronunciation of English sounds may differ in the North compared to the South (Earnest, 2015).

**Lexical Variation:** Nigerian English incorporates vocabulary from indigenous languages and cultures. These loanwords and expressions, known as “Nigerianisms,” enrich the lexicon of Nigerian English. Examples include words like “buka” (local restaurant) and “okada” (motorcycle taxi).

**Grammatical Variation:** Variations in grammar may manifest as differences in sentence structure, word order, and the use of prepositions. For instance, Nigerian English speakers might say, “I am coming” to indicate a future action.

**Pragmatic Variation:** The pragmatic features of Nigerian English encompass speech patterns, politeness strategies, and communication styles. The use of honorifics and greetings may differ from standard British or American English.

**Code-Switching and Multilingualism:** Nigerians are often multilingual, speaking multiple languages alongside English. Code-switching, or alternating between languages in conversation, is common. This can lead to the incorporation of elements from local languages into Nigerian English discourse.

**Education and Social Class:** Education and social class play a significant role in sociolinguistic variation. Nigerian English spoken by individuals with higher levels of education and those from urban, middle-class backgrounds may exhibit features closer to standard English.

**Urban-Rural Divide:** Urbanization has led to distinct urban-rural linguistic variations in Nigerian English. Urban centers, where educational opportunities and exposure to global media are more abundant, often

exhibit linguistic features closer to standard English than rural areas.

**Influence of Media and Pop Culture:** The media, including Nigerian movies, music, and literature, has a substantial impact on linguistic variation. Popular culture often incorporates Nigerian English expressions, contributing to their widespread usage.

**Gender-Based Variation:** Gender can also influence linguistic variation. While not exclusive to Nigerian English, some gender-based differences in speech patterns and language use may be observed, particularly in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.

**Evolution and Standardization:** Nigerian English is continuously evolving and adapting to the changing sociocultural landscape. Efforts have been made to standardize Nigerian English for use in education and formal communication, but linguistic variation remains a vibrant aspect of the language.

#### 4. Influence of Indigenous Languages

The influence of indigenous languages in Nigeria, such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, has had a profound impact on Nigerian English, resulting in unique features in vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax. This linguistic amalgamation reflects the rich cultural and historical tapestry of Nigeria. Here's an exhaustive examination of these influences:

##### 1. Vocabulary:

- **Loanwords:** Indigenous languages have contributed a significant number of loanwords to Nigerian English. For example, "okada" (motorcycle) from Yoruba, "buka" (local eatery) from Hausa, and "obi" (heart) from Igbo. These loanwords not only enrich Nigerian English but also reflect the importance of local cultures in daily life.

- **Naming Conventions:** Nigerian English often follows indigenous naming conventions, with people adopting traditional names from their respective ethnic groups. This practice can lead to unique given names and surnames in Nigerian English, setting it apart from other forms of English.

##### 2. Pronunciation:

- **Tone Influence:** Nigerian languages are tonal, meaning the pitch or tone in which a word is spoken can change its meaning. This tonal aspect influences Nigerian English pronunciation, sometimes leading to distinctive speech patterns. For instance, the use of tone in words like "police" or "chance" can differ from standard British or American English.

- **Consonant Modifications:** Certain consonant sounds in indigenous languages can be challenging for

Nigerians when speaking English. The "th" sound is often replaced with "t" or "d," resulting in pronunciations like "dis" for "this" or "dat" for "that."

##### 3. Syntax:

- **Word Order:** Nigerian English may exhibit different word orders influenced by indigenous languages. In some cases, the subject-verb-object (SVO) order typical in English may be altered. For instance, "I am going to the market" might become "I go market" to align more closely with Igbo or Yoruba sentence structures.

- **Reduplication:** Reduplication, a feature found in many Nigerian languages, can also be observed in Nigerian English. For emphasis or plurality, words may be repeated, such as "big big" for "very big" or "small small" for "tiny."

##### 4. Idioms and Expressions:

- **Cultural Signifiers:** Indigenous languages provide unique idiomatic expressions and proverbs that find their way into Nigerian English. These idioms often carry cultural significance and are used to convey specific meanings. For example, the Yoruba saying "Ọlórún kò sọ fún ọlórín tí ó ní jù bàjẹ̀" (God does not tell a singer that he or she will die of starvation) might be used to encourage someone pursuing a career in music.

- **Greetings:** Greetings in Nigerian English frequently incorporate elements from indigenous languages. For instance, "How you dey?" (How are you?) is a common greeting influenced by Pidgin English, which itself draws from various Nigerian languages.

#### 5. Spoken Nigerian English

**Vocabulary Enrichment:** Pidgin has contributed an extensive vocabulary to spoken Nigerian English. Many Pidgin words and phrases have become commonplace in everyday conversation. For instance, "wahala" (trouble), "boku" (plenty), and "jare" (used to indicate agreement) are frequently used in spoken Nigerian English.

**Code-Switching:** Nigerians often code-switch between Pidgin and English in casual conversations. This means they switch between languages seamlessly, incorporating Pidgin elements when it suits the context. This fluidity showcases the integration of Pidgin into spoken Nigerian English.

**Phonetic Influence:** Pidgin has influenced the pronunciation of English words among Nigerians. Certain English words are pronounced with a Nigerian

Pidgin accent or phonetic pattern, especially when spoken informally.

**Informal Settings:** In informal settings such as social gatherings and everyday conversations, Pidgin phrases and expressions are frequently used. This reflects the ease with which Pidgin has blended into spoken communication.

## 6. Written Nigerian English

**Informal Writing:** Informal written communication, such as social media posts or text messages and personal emails, elements of Pidgin often find their way into written Nigerian English. This is particularly evident in the use of Pidgin abbreviations like "na" for "is" or "I dey" for "I am."

**Creative Expression:** Nigerian writers, especially in contemporary literature, sometimes incorporate Pidgin elements into their works to capture the authenticity of Nigerian life and culture. This creative use of Pidgin can be seen in novels, poetry, and plays.

**Blogs and Online Platforms:** Online platforms and blogs, where a conversational style is often encouraged, frequently incorporate Pidgin expressions and slang. This caters to a broad and diverse Nigerian audience and adds an informal, relatable tone to written content.

## 7. Incorporating Pidgin into Formal Communication

While Pidgin is primarily an informal language, elements of it can be strategically incorporated into formal communication in Nigeria:

**Cultural Sensitivity:** In situations where a formal message needs to resonate with a diverse Nigerian audience, a well-chosen Pidgin phrase or expression can add cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

**Emphasis and Clarity:** In formal speeches or presentations, using Pidgin to emphasize key points can make the message more memorable and relatable. **Engaging the Audience:** In marketing and advertising, incorporating Pidgin elements can help engage a wider audience by making the content more approachable and appealing.

**Quotations and Proverbs:** Nigerian Pidgin often contains rich proverbs and idioms. Quoting or referencing these in formal writing or speeches can add depth and authenticity to the message.

## 8. The Role of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions, including universities like Rivers State University, play a crucial role in shaping the English spoken and written by students. They serve as centers for language development and change in several ways:

1. **Academic Environment:**

- **Formal Instruction:** Universities provide formal education and instruction in the English language. This includes courses in English grammar, composition, and literature, which help students develop a strong foundation in written and spoken English.

- **Standardization:** Universities often uphold Standard English usage as a benchmark for academic excellence. They emphasize correct grammar, vocabulary, and style in academic writing and presentations, contributing to the maintenance of a formal standard of the language.

2. **Language Diversity:**

- **Multilingual Environment:** Many universities, including Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, have a diverse student body. Students from various linguistic backgrounds converge in these institutions. This linguistic diversity can lead to language contact and influence as students interact and exchange language features.

- **Pidgin and Vernacular:** In such diverse environments, students may bring elements of Pidgin English or vernacular languages into their daily communication. This linguistic interplay can lead to language change and the incorporation of regional and informal elements into spoken language.

3. **Language Development:**

- **Research and Linguistics Departments:** Universities often have linguistics departments that conduct research on language variation, change, and development. This research contributes to our understanding of how languages evolve, including the evolution of English in specific regions.

- **Language Evolution:** Through research and academic discourse, universities may document and analyze linguistic shifts and changes within their student populations, shedding light on how the English language adapts to the needs and culture of its speakers.

4. **Cultural Context:**

- **Literature and Humanities:** Educational institutions, including Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, study and analyze literature that reflects the cultural and historical context of the region. This cultural context can influence the language used in literature and academic discussions.

- Local Perspectives: Universities often encourage students to explore local perspectives and issues in their academic work. This can lead to the incorporation of regional terminology and idiomatic expressions into written assignments and research.

5. Language Policies:

- Language Policies: Some universities have language policies that dictate the medium of instruction and the languages used in various contexts. These policies can influence the linguistic landscape of the institution and the language choices made by students.

6. Language Diversity and Inclusivity:

- Inclusivity Efforts: Universities may make efforts to be more inclusive by recognizing and valuing linguistic diversity. This recognition can lead to greater acceptance of different language varieties, including non-standard forms of English, among students and faculty.

**9. The features that characterize Nigerian English in the spoken and written language of undergraduates in Nigerian Universities**

This question aimed to identify and describe the distinctive linguistic elements that are prevalent in the English used by students in the university. To answer this question, the researcher carefully observed the conversations of students after lectures, and at other strategic positions in the school. Also, chats from social media platforms were used to analyse this research question. The linguistic features are analysed at the phonological, morphological, semantic, pragmatic and lexical features.  
Phonological Features

The phonological features were gathered by eavesdropping on student’s conversations after lectures, cafeteria and hostels. Data is presented in table 4.1 below:

**Table 4.1** Phonological Features

S/N	STANDARD ENGLISH	NIGERIAN ENGLISH
	Thank /θæŋk/	/tʌŋk/
	That /ðæt/	/dat/
	Book /bʊk/	/bu:k/
	Door /dɔ:/	/dɒ/
	Pick /pɪk/	/prɪk/
	Come /kʌm/	/kɒm/
	Bag /bæg/	/bag/
	Above /əbʌv/	/abəuv/
	Father /fæðə/	/fada/
	Comb /kəʊm/	/kəumb/

The table above shows that Nigerian English used by students are characterized by deviations from the standard variety. Because of this, /t and d/, respectively, are realized for the dental fricatives /θ and ð/. in the words ‘thank’ and ‘that’. The phonemic distinctions between /I:, I/, /ɔ: ɒ/ and /u: ʊ/ are not realized in students’ pronunciation of words. Also, the vowel no. 12, (also known as schwa) is replaced with vowel no. 6 /a/. This is as a result of the lack of these sounds in Nigerian indigenous languages.

**9.1 Morphological Features**

At the morphological level, Nigerian English features are seen in the areas of reduplication, blending, borrowing/ loan words, clipping and coinages. These features are presented in the table below;

**Table 4.2** Morphological features

S/N	Morphological process	Words/Expressions	English Equivalent
	Reduplication	quick quick sharp sharp Fast fast Well well Fine fine Big big Las las One one	Quickly Immediately Fast Well Fine Large Finally Equal
	Blending	Legedez-benz Kolomental	Trekking Crazy
	Borrowing/loan words	kpako Fashi	Low class Forget it

		Wayo No wam Otilo Kpeme/kpai Buka/mama put Okada Jakpa Hafar/how far yab	Ticklish No problem Its gone Die Local restaurant Motor bike To relocate How are you? Talk freely and insulting
	Clipping	Legit Info	meaningful/tangible information
	Coinages	Beddie Roomie Scarra Pitakwa Wify Lemme Gime	Bedmate Roommate Scatter Port Harcourt Wife Let me Give me

### 9.2 Lexical / Syntactic Features

At the sentence level, distinctive features of Nigerian English are popularly used among students, giving expressions such that it is understood within themselves, without observing the grammatical rules of English. Some of the examples include the following:

**Table 4.3:** Lexical/Syntactic features

S/N	Popular Nigerian English	Standard British English
	give me my change	give me my balance
	I'm broke	I've ran out of cash
	On/off the light	Turn on/off the light
	What's the 411?	What's the way forward?
	Day break	Night out
	Next tomorrow	A day after tomorrow
	Hold-up	Traffic
	Wash	Fake, not true
	I swear	honestly
	To chase woman	Woo a woman
	runs girl	a whore
	Hot drink	Alcohol
	Henry is on colos	Henry is influenced by an alcohol (popularly known as colos)
	Take time	not to hurry
	Favour abeg chill	Please calm down
	Tight friend	Blossom friend
	To parah	Anger
	To burn book	To study hard
	To bracket someone	To beat up someone

### 9.3 Semantic Features

One of Nigerian English's main characteristics is its semantic derivations and expansion. This is a result of certain words' meanings being prioritized and semantically changed. Consequently, in order to describe specific Nigerian practical objects and concepts that are not found in native speaker societies, the normal worldwide meanings of a few lexical items and phrases have been adjusted. The following are just a few instances that students have given, however they are not exclusive to:

**Table 4.4:** Semantic features

S/N	Expressions	Meaning
	I am coming	When a person is going, to come back shortly
	Jonesing	To behave foolishly
	Beef	quarrel
	To have long legs	Some sort of connection
	Dabbing	Used to express one's outfit
	The food is sweet	The food is tasty

	return back (redundancy)	To return or come back
	Hammer	To become rich

### 9.4 Pragmatic features

The pragmatic features of Nigerian English used by students are usually dependent on the context in which it is used, the knowledge, belief, and purposes shared by the participants (ken-Maduako, 2003). Some examples include but not limited to the following:

**Table 4.5:** Pragmatic features

S/N	Expressions	Meaning
1	Moi moi matter	easy/irrelevant matter
2	My padi	My friend
3	Pack well	respect yourself
4	Linus mbaka	A liar
5	Clement	One who claims to be what he/she is not
6	Full of swags	Full of unique styles

### 10. Findings of the study

The results of the analysis on the characteristics of English in Nigeria spoken and written English of undergraduates in Nigerian Universities reveals the following:

- The characteristics of English in Nigeria language use undergraduates in the university are present at various linguistic levels such as the phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic levels.
- These features are highly influenced by sociolinguistic linguistic factors such as ethnicity, social background, language background of the students, and their perception of the English language.
- Nigerian English's characteristics include more prevalent in the spoken language of students than in the written forms in formal writings such as assignments and essays.
- Students communicate more effectively using Nigerian English in order to share their ideas and thoughts in the environment they find themselves.
- The way Nigerian English is used differs from Standard English in the written English of students as they ensure the use of the grammatical rules of English, as opposed to the spoken form.
- There are variations in the language use of students in the university in the areas of regional variations, gender variations, and variation according to age, sex, educational level, rural / urban divide, marital status and social class.

### 11. Recommendations

Based on the findings and their implications, the following recommendations are made:

- The University should consider implementing language awareness programs to help students recognize and understand the linguistic features of Nigerian English. This can contribute to improved language competency and effective communication.
- The University's curriculum should be periodically reviewed to incorporate Nigerian English as an acceptable English variety. This recognition can foster a more inclusive and culturally relevant language education.
- Faculty members should receive training on teaching Nigerian English effectively. This includes understanding its features, variations, and how to address them in language instruction.
- Encourage linguistic research and documentation of Nigerian English features in both spoken and written forms. This will contribute to a better understanding of language evolution in Nigeria.
- The University should consider formulating a language policy that recognizes Nigerian English as part of the linguistic heritage of the country. This policy can guide language instruction and assessment.

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