

TRULY NIGERIAN? REASSESSING THE QUESTION OF ENGLISH NATIVIZATION IN NIGERIA

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The set of historical events that brought English to Nigeria was an unflattering one. As a language, English for decades evolved as the nexus of the British colonial investment in West Africa. Colonialism ended in this region of Africa close to half a century ago; yet the social role of English has since remained unchanged. If anything, in Nigeria, this role has been bolstered through political legislations ingrained in the nation's educational policy (1977) and the constitutions (1979, 1999) that accorded this language along with selected national languages an official status in all public sectors. The rise of English in the country through legislative intervention has prompted serious academic debates with comprehensive conceptual dimensions to them; but the concern of this work is a debate of a different kind. This debate was triggered by the simple theory that assigned a distinctive identity and native credentials to the variety of English spoken in Nigeria. It has, over the years, created two conflicting paradigms: *nativist* (Odumuh, 1984, 1993, Adekunle 1985, Emenanjo 1988, Kachru 1997) and *maladaptivist* (Tomori 1967, Banjo 1969, Vincent 1974, Mufwene 2000). As this debate diverged into these two paradigms, more questions than answers evolved vis-à-vis the actual socio-cultural status of the Nigerian English. Working with simple *attitude-based* empirical data, government language policy and student educational performance records, exposed is the serious conceptual anomaly in the theory that lends national credence to the popular English usage in Nigeria. This usage is only a part of a more complex language equation in a country still burdened by its colonial past and the language management choices this past continues to dictate.

La série d'événements qui a introduit l'anglais au Nigeria n'a guère été flatteuse. En tant que langue, durant des décennies l'anglais a évolué comme noyau de l'investissement colonial britannique en Afrique Occidentale. Il y a près d'un demi-siècle que le colonialisme a pris fin dans cette partie de l'Afrique, et cependant le rôle social de l'anglais reste inchangé depuis. On peut même dire qu'au Nigéria ce rôle a été renforcé par des mesures de législation politique qui imprègnent la politique nationale de l'enseignement (1977) et les constitutions (1979, 1999), lesquelles accordent à cette langue ainsi qu'à certaines langues nationales un statut officiel dans tout secteur public.

L'essor de l'anglais dans le pays à la suite de ces interventions législatives, a donné lieu à des débats académiques sérieux ayant des dimensions conceptuelles importantes, mais la présente étude s'intéresse à un autre ordre de débat. Ce débat fut amorcé par la simple théorie qui dota la variante d'anglais parlée au Nigéria d'une identité distinctive, et d'un caractère national. Au fil des années il se sont créés deux paradigmes en conflit: *nativiste* (Odumuh 1984, 1993, Adekunle 1985, Emenanjo 1988, Kachru 1997), d'une part, et *maladaptiviste* (Tomori 1967, Banjo 1969, Vincent 1974 et Mufwene 2000), d'autre part.

À mesure que ce débat fit naître ces deux paradigmes divergents, il suscita plus de questions que de réponses vis-à-vis le vrai statut socio-culturel de l'anglais nigérian. Un examen des simples données empiriques *subjectives*, de la politique linguistique du gouvernement, et des archives de la performance de l'enseignement, révèle l'anomalie conceptuelle sérieuse au sein de la théorie qui sert à justifier au plan national l'opinion populaire de l'usage de l'anglais au Nigéria. Usage qui n'est qu'une composante d'une équation linguistique plus complexe dans un pays qui continue à sentir le fardeau de son passé colonial et des choix que ce passé continue à dicter quant au management des langues.

0. INTRODUCTION

With the use of language as a tool of political conquest, often created is a cultural legacy that fuses the linguistic identities of the conquered into those of the conquerors. Colonialism produced the Nigerian nation forcing its peoples to coalesce politically and

play host to a "culturally-unmarked" super-code, English. The application of this language as the main management apparatus of colonial investment defined the political strategy that elevated mere mercantile outposts into a geo-political concept, Nigeria. As colonialism howbeit folded and replaced by political indigenization, the nation's social policy management remained guided by its history and congenital character. Traditional ethnic antagonism tempered by cultural factionalism persisted where the campaign for national language identity is pursued with a degree of ideological conviction. What the nation's policy makers advocate is a finite policy guideline for one-nation, one-language initiative to evolve the country from political integration to national unity predicated on a collective sense of nationhood. However, as this idea gained credence among the political elite, the popular response among the Nigerian masses is a strong distaste for any policy that adopts an indigenous language in an official role for promoting such unity.

Given the division of the elite and the masses on the official language choice for the country, English is by default retained in its traditional official role and even infused with greater functional power that stretches its social value beyond its original colonial objective. It has become an integral part of Nigeria's political identity, a "national artifact" (Adekunle 1985) bolstered by its unique roles in social communication, education, technology, public services and international alignments (Odumuh 1984). Now, English competes only minimally with major indigenous languages, as it assumes functional advantage and privilege uncharacteristic of an ordinary alien code. The language, along with other national languages including Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were, in fact, accorded official legislative certification through the national policy on education (1977) and the national constitution (1979) respectively. With that, Emenanjo (1988) advocated the naturalization of English as a condition for national unity and development. But the rise of this language in the post-independence Nigeria has, by no means, been devoid of controversy. Apart from being a language alienated by the nationalists in their vision of linguistic autonomy for the country (Simpson 1978, Ikara 1987), English faced strong debates guided by the questions surrounding its credentials as a bona fide Nigerian system (Odumuh 1987), or, what Jowitt (1991) described as a "legitimate variant" of the standard English. From the initial definitional tussle between Walsh's (1967) characterization of English in Nigeria as a new second language (L2) emerging inevitably into a standard form feasible as a Nigerian English (NE) to Salami's (1968) reduction of such form to a "sub-standard model" lacking international intelligibility, unleashed was an intense scholarship on the identity of this language with foci that diverge with epochs and consistent shift in theoretical paradigms.

In early studies, theories driven by inconsistency established the linguistic stature of NE as a "bad English" (Vincent 1974) fraught with "errors of usage" (Tomori 1967, Prator 1968, Banjo 1969). The focus then was primarily structural and only a foundation for other theoretical models that centralize the environmental conditions in the determination of the character of English and its unique usage in Nigeria. What the models affirmed primarily is the NE identity, which in character, is defined as a variant of West African Vernacular English (WAVE), a language that is fast emerging into a standard form while reflecting its contemporary geo-cultural environment (Adekunle 1974, 1985, Adetugbo 1979, Bokamba 1982, Jibril 1979). But to Gorlach (1984:39) the involvement of WAVE depends on the sociological role English assumes in Nigeria. He

observed that “the future of English in West Africa will more or less be decided by what forms and functions it will take in [Nigeria] whose population and economic power surpasses [sic] those of all neighbouring coastal states put together”. Kachru (1997:iv) agreed with Gorlach in his statement that “the West Africans have over a period of time given English a Nigerian identity”. Still, Wolf (2001:42) was more conclusive in his observation; where to him, “Nigeria’s overwhelming dominance in terms of population makes her variety the prototype of WAE [West African English]”. The paradigm shift from error-based analysis to status evaluation of NE occurred with a theoretical buffer marked by conceptual confusion.

In this confusion, three major questions persist: (i) Is there a unique Nigerian English with a national base strong enough to support its role as the West African prototype? (ii) Should the social status of NE be validated outside the theoretical models that dismiss it as a system of errors in varying reproductive stages? (iii) Have the persistence of errors in consistent patterns in NE usage forced a theoretical assignment of functional legitimacy to NE as a matter of course? Where these specific questions provide the motivation for the present endeavor; of great concern is whether or not NE status should be considered outside its fundamental character as a culturally-unmarked code, a *volksprache* whose social stature has only been elevated as a result of the persistent gap in the national language policy. Indeed, should NE be accorded national legitimacy as a unique linguistic variety where in light of Mufwene’s (2000) argument, its characteristics derive from a mixed pool of features acquired from the diverse indigenous cultures and inserted inconsistently in its usage? Now, to the extent that *nativization* of English is hardly tantamount to *nationalization* whereby the *regionalization* or *ethnicization* of this language is muted, should the claim of a bona fide NE continue to hold? English in the present day Nigeria is an agglomeration of varieties that diverge by the dictates of ethno-cultural composition of the country.

In fact, there are several new Englishes in Nigeria. Although Platt *et al.* (1984: 2-3) observed that New Englishes have certain features in common; still, a new English, that NE exemplifies, must, according to them, fulfill four major criteria: (i) It has developed through the education system. This means that it has been taught as a subject and, in many cases, also used as a medium of instruction in the regions where languages other than English, were the main languages. (ii) It has developed in an area where a native variety of English was *not* the language spoken by most of the population. (iii) It is used for a range of functions among those who speak or write it in the region, where it is used. (iv) It has become ‘localized’ or ‘nativised’ by adopting some language features of its own, such as sounds intonation patterns, sentence structures, words, and expressions. In reality, does NE, per nativist claims, fulfill all these criteria? Is the fulfillment of one or two of these criteria, sufficient to identify, NE as a tongue native to Nigeria? The merits of these questions are addressed much later. But, more importantly at this point, the intriguing question is whether or not the identity of this language should be determined via the influence it can exert in the West African sub-continent; or, should such determination be made in concert with Jenkins (2003) idea of ‘local conditions’ which, in Nigeria, are driven by cleavage politics? If indeed NE, per Adekunle’s (1985) assertion, maintains a “common core Nigerianness” that makes it, in Odumuh’s (1993:1) view, “part and parcel of Nigerian culture”, and “mark it out from other Englishes” (Odumuh 1987:19), then this language ought to maintain features that

provide logical answers to the above and other complementary questions. Overall, the question that lingers large is whether the nativists have arrived at conclusions that are inadequately supported by the conceptual premise on which those conclusions are constructed.

1. GOAL IN PERSPECTIVE

To the extent that NE has, in many quarters, been validated as an authentic national code, what this study seeks by way of simple empirical investigation is to ascertain whether or not answers to questions surrounding such validation can be rendered without reducing this code to linguistic anomaly. The intention is to utilize the traditional debates to investigate as well as seek answers to the questions pertaining to NE identity. As a perspective precursor to this investigation, two conditions associated with NE distinctiveness: *authenticity* and *indigenization* are examined with respect to the two existing nuclear claims: (i) that a language variety known as Nigerian English exists (Jowitt 1991, Odumuh 1993), and (ii) that this variety is nativized and made national through perennial acculturation that, in turn, defines its distinctiveness (Jibril 1982, Adekunle 1985). Whereas the nativization of English as a Nigerian code has customarily been conceived in terms of the naturalization and acculturation theories; analyses aimed at reinforcing the attendant nuclear claims have established NE as a national system driven by unique rules with origin in Standard British English (SBE). These claims are by all account based on historical factors more so than anything else.

The basic argument is that the popular Nigerian English-PNE (Jowitt, *ibid*) or the educated Nigerian English-ENE (Odumuh 1993, Mohammed 1997, Adejare 1997) evolved through a systemic hybridization of SBE and Local Languages to acquire structural and national identity. Essential to the nativist thesis is the notion that the Nigerian speech communities, regardless of geo-cultural alignments, have succeeded in creating a New English codified in a unique pattern with which Nigerians socially relate and express themselves. The customization of English infused with native concepts and structural features is perceived under this thesis as an evolutionary necessity motivated by the need for the language to conform to local conditions that drive its usage. The conceptual essence therefore, is that although, NE is an endonormative variety with clear relationship with SBE, but nonetheless constitutes a linguistic entity, a unique linguistic code in its own right. For that reason, the assertion is that its *naturalization* or *standardization* does not originate from a singular center, which in the Nigerian case is associated with SBE, but instead its overall character is perceived as a pluricentric affair marked by its evolutionary relationship with multiple linguistic centers.

While there is an element of validity to this position, the question remains, what constitutes the quintessential linguistic centers out of which NE has indeed emerged with a degree of consistency in the character of factors that govern such emergence? Still, the nativists maintain that the character and status of NE in the Nigerian social structure are continually shifting. Here, the question is, shifting from what to what? To Adekunle (1974, 1985), the language is indeed shifting from a 'bastardized variety' to a 'bona fide Nigerian code'. If indeed Adekunle's assessment is valid, how then do Nigerians acquire English? Is it acquired as a foreign language, i.e. Other Tongue (OT) or as a Mother Tongue (MT)? If the learning of English in Nigeria is treated as a Native Acquisition (NA), it begs the question to ascertain whose Mother Tongue is it?

Which group among Nigeria's 300 or more ethno-cultural groups should, by all conceptual requirements lay primordial claim to this language as a tongue native to it? Given these questions, there is a need to examine not only the functional status NE acquires through national usage but also the functional parity it maintains with other national variants in its class, e.g. the New Zealand English (NZE), Canadian English (CE) and American English (AE).

On the NE hybridized identity, what appears conspicuously trivialized is the linguistic complexity of Nigeria, a nation of more than 300 local languages where none boasts of national territorial spread. Where Nigerianization of English has been perceived as a nationally-guided process of naturalization or nationalization that transcends Nigeria's ethno-cultural divide, lacking clarity is the extent to which the nation's individual cultures have contributed to such a process. The idea of measuring the linguistic input to NE by indigenous cultures, of course, appears far-fetched, but not so is the need for this study to ascertain the level of collective social allowance the indigenous cultures have made to accommodate this language as a nationally-salient code. A conceptual signpost to the goal here is the contention that the extent to which English is "native" to a nation-state such as Nigeria ought to be perceived as a correlate of the degree to which inter-cultural fusion or harmony has been actively promoted among the nation's various ethnic constituencies. To the extent that ethno-cultural groups in Nigeria remain territorialized, separate and unequal, the claim of existence of a unique NE, a national language is indeed difficult to assert with a degree of logic. The issue is whether or not NE provides culturo-linguistic centrality, a socially homogenizing language system for Nigeria as a nation. The answer to this inquiry may be acquired from the basic testing of the conditions under which NE has been defined as a national code.

2. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

From the basic idea of affirming the existence of "New English", (Platt et al. 1984) emerging out of the process of nativization (Bamgbose 1997); four simple conditions associated with such process can be assumed: (a) *code-nesting*, (b) *standardization*, (c) *equalization* and (d) *social attitude*. In this study, these conditions are individually employed in dual roles, (i) as independent variables in the examination of NE authenticity and (ii) as parameters for determining the membership of NE in the Nigerian language family. With condition (a), assumed is that NE is only an approximation of SBE. This indeed is based on the historical symbiosis between the two varieties of English. The question is whether or not the former should be treated as evidence of imperfect language where its users essentially need to strive for the latter in accord with specific rules. Where the functional relation between NE and SBE, as two socially distinct systems, is conceived in hierarchical terms both by rule convention and functional privilege with which they are associated in Nigeria, assumed is that one system is subordinated, perceived as a Low (L) variety socially *nested* in the superior other, usually the High (H) variant (Gumperz 1964). A predicate to this observation is the questionable institutional commitment to the *standardization* of NE, a requirement for its structural and functional authenticity (Fasold 1990).

Granted that the term "Standard Language" according to Jenkins (2003:29) "excite an immense amount of controversy and contention both inside and outside the linguistic

profession”; there is nonetheless equally enormous political pressure supported by institutions and public attitudes that demand standard language usage at national level. As an important aggregate of language vitalization, often standardization stems from functional status augmentation process complemented by linguistic re-engineering of a language variety. What standardization engenders is the establishment of a *mainstream* language enhanced and supported by institutions of state. Still, if standard is indeed the term used for ‘that variety of language’ that constitutes *the norm*, what is that variety in the Nigerian case? Is it, what Jowitt (ibid.) recognized as the Popular Nigerian English (PNE)? But then, that a particular variety is the popular code does that necessarily make that variety standard? The standard language in Jenkins, (ibid.) view, is “the variety held up as the optimum for educational purpose and used as a yardstick against which other varieties of the language are measured”. It is the prestige language used by professional elite. Now, which of the NE variety in its perception as error-driven sub-system rises up to the conceptual imperative or demand of this simple definition and test?

Moreover, since when do errors in language, as in the case of NE, become prestigious? It is hereby assumed that the language that meets the conceptual criteria of “Standard Language” in Nigeria is simply yet to be determined outside the existing character of SBE. Also assumed is that its NE counterpart in its various forms is marginally accommodated in the country's educational system that is rigidly prescriptive and biased in favor of the SBE variety. The role assumed by the Nigerian institutional elite: professionals and politicians alike is to preserve ‘language standards’ as the ‘prescriptive language rules’ whereto they expect society to conform as a matter of course, if not ideology. The nativists, in their persistent enterprise of promoting English naturalization tend to sideline the role of SBE in the possible evolution of Standard Nigerian English (SNE). Hence, the nativist claim echoed in the idea that standardization derives from a linguistic process that is pluricentric is of primary concern. To Jenkins (2003:33), that “the new Englishes should have as their target the Standard English of the inner circle [such as SBE] is of dubious validity”. But then, the contention here is that, to accept Jenkins aforementioned position is to deny the history that produced the new Englishes in the first place.

Thus, the assumption is that New English such as NE is not in a separate evolutionary trajectory as the variety that ensured its nascence, i.e., SBE. If anything, SBE and NE are both located in the same evolutionary continuum within which, NE continues to manifest identity deviation in its social adjustment and modification of its colonial past. And it is that deviation that defines the basic character of NE, as it assumes identity in conformity with the local conditions. Because of Nigeria's persistent and unadulterated institutional support for SBE, the supposition is that tolerance for NE marked by divergent native linguistic input remains tentative. The basic idea, therefore, is that such low tolerance continues to drive the perception of NE as a variety fraught with errors and character inconsistency. And if indeed standardization is what determines language autonomy to which linguistic distinctiveness is inherent, (Fasold 1990, Romaine 1994), perhaps it is fair to assume that a code such as NE, still lacking clear rule-driven parameters at one end; and

Social deviation from NE as a preference is mainly contingent on education given the absolute role it plays in the acquisition and mastery of English. But, education as a rare commodity for many Nigerians has motivated *elitization* of English driven by class narcissism. The overvaluation of English, particularly the SBE variety, in national policies that determine the level of social access granted to Nigerian citizens continues to drive national consciousness on the perception of English as the language of advantage and social mobility. The heavy policy investment in English is what drives the Nigerian language imperative. With education, what is embedded in the above observation is the assumption that English users in Nigeria are inclined to regard NE as a sub-standard social system given the persistent denial of political and pedagogical bestowal of standard value on it. Even where standardization is pursued with strategic commitment, still required is sufficient provision for the mechanisms that permit efficient linguistic imports, both lexical and structural, from the nation's complex culturo-linguistic base that is likely to inform the process. Two conceptual measures are involved: pragmatic co-permeation and homogeneous accommodation both, in terms of procedure, acquire anchorage in the *equalization* condition. Essentially, the sense identified with these measures is that NE may, as a linguistic hybrid, assume national character only where, by some in-built mechanism, it exhibits capacity to neutralize the cross-cultural constraints, as well as accommodate the diverse socio-linguistic values required to construct such distinctive character.

Where political investment in NE standardization is nonexistent, the capacity of this language to evolve such mechanism, in essence, defies basic sociolinguistic logic. Also, without such investment, the hypothesis is that NE can only be validated not as a national code but rather as ethnic-centered heterogeneous linguistic sub-systems. Melchers and Shaw (2003:130) observed, "Outer-circle varieties [exemplified by NE varieties] are frequently not as well-developed in some registers as others". They noted that, "because (...) of multilingualism, the outer circle (...) is characterized by internal variation of proficiency". The outer circle speakers, they went on, "will not only vary in the degree to which their English (...) has local features, but also in their proficiency in English". The expectation therefore is that the consideration of NE usage will mostly be identified with communal-linguistic differences rather than with the features that appear nationally synonymous with it. Given these assumptions and others, four hypotheses are tested in this study:

- (i) NE is a national language variant with core features that define its Nigerianness and distinctiveness; (Jibril 1982, Adekunle 1985, Jowitt 1991, Odumuh 1993, Adejare 1997)
- (ii) NE is a language in transition undergoing environmental sensitization precursory to its standardization; (Achebe 1968, Bokamba 1982, Jibril 1982, Jenkins 2003)
- (iii) NE constitutes an imperfect acquisition, a reduction of the standard form; (Tomori 1967, Salami 1968, Prator 1968, Banjo 1969, Adetugbo 1979, Orisawayi 1990)
- (iv) NE is constrained by the status of a High (H) variety SBE with which it is in competition; (Arasanyin 2003)

3. METHOD

On the contention that the hypotheses hitherto identified constitute the guidelines for the affirmation of NE character, the approach adopted was pursued under three primary sociolinguistic concerns: *status* (identity), *convergence* (acceptability) and *maintenance* (standardization). Data collected through proficiency surveys on English language usage among government workers in 2003, between the months of May and August, in Abuja, Nigeria's capital were, in concert with these concerns, utilized to test the four hypotheses. Chosen for its geo-demographic character, the site as the seat of government provides point of contact for a population drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds in addition to being the setting for professional *mélange* and social interaction between the educated elite and the illiterate poor. Survey participation was guided by two strategies: random and controlled, both utilized in sequential order. The former was used in a pilot selection exercise involving distribution of 550 questionnaires employed as participatory screening tools. They were strategic filters in the selection of participants by education (levels), professional experience (length/duration), ethnicity (linguistic peculiarities) and demography (population class). Participation conditions require that only those with minimum of secondary education (Class IV or ¹SS2 or higher) may be selected with consideration for two equal group distributions: tertiary and non-tertiary per Jowitt's paradigm. Work experience is applied only complementarily to education.

The strategy was deliberate, indeed reflecting the previous findings on usage deviation from standard based on educational and professional attainment, (Adesanoye 1973, 1980). But the goal is to use the existing and current findings in tandem where the output is expected to provide novel perspectives on the conceptualization of NE identity. With this goal, ethnicity is used as a group signature that affords diversity filter, which, in turn, guarantees the required participatory equity. For monitoring purposes, population classes: majority and minority were used as selection criteria. Out of 301 respondents that met all the screening criteria, only 144 were targeted as the controlled group to participate fully in the second phase of the survey. For each of the educational categories, (secondary and above secondary education respectively), a group of 72 workers were identified. Ethnic aggregates afforded even distribution of participants, into four categories, ($N=36$ in each case); three in the class of "big three", Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (Brann 1977) and one, the monitoring group, in the minority class. The minority participants fall into two categories: bilinguals and trilinguals with equal distribution number ($N=18$). Those in the former are users of English besides their MT'S. And, in the latter are those who are proficient in one majority language, and English, in addition to their respective mother tongues (MT'S).

The employment of minority participation as a monitoring component derives from Giles' (1977) study that treated *accommodation* as a conditioned variable in relation to either convergence or divergence factors. Data on minority patterns of acceptance of NE influenced by conspicuous linguistic imports from the nation's majority cultures were sought. The identification, selection and distribution of the crop of participants deemed appropriate for the study were followed by one-on-one interviews

¹ A newly adopted educational system referring to Senior Secondary education as a level above its lower counterpart the Junior Secondary (JS)

complemented by questionnaire-based responses. Essentially, simplicity was the basic denominator of the approach adopted. The aim was to deviate from the traditional investigative over-load given the contention that it only takes candid data and analysis to determine NE identity with sufficient clarity. Hence the method preferred is one that seeks data on three levels of participant profile: autobiography, language competence and attitude. The first two levels were realized through interviewer-interviewee, question-and-answer sessions while the third required direct responses from the participants based on language comprehension exercise. The strategy for generating competence data was text-based, (Schmied 1997), relying on two error-affirmation tests: (i) sentential (componential) and (ii) textual (narrative) in addition to the one that focused on inter-textual delivery (stylistic). While phonological consideration remained peripheral to the data sought, syntactic data were recorded as the primary units of analysis.

In (i) and (ii), the deviation frequency derived from the absolute number of errors participants identified as a measure of their proficiency in English was investigated. The basis for error-determination by the investigators was comparative where NE structures were matched with their SBE counterparts as the unmarked standard forms. Since NE has yet to attain institutionally recognized standard, i.e. SNE, relating NE to SBE becomes an immediate and logical option. Specific error aggregates that include: lexical misappropriation (modifiers–mass/count nouns, infinitive, tense, etc); lexical variations (borrowing, substitutions, etc); structural peculiarism (ellipsis, hedging, contractions, duplications, serialization etc); omission (determiners, prepositions, nouns-object, conjunctions, etc); and infusion (ideophones, sweeteners, tags, etc) were identified in the test instrument by the investigators prior to the subjects' participation in the survey. In the textual and stylistic realms, items of cross-cultural translations (figurative speech, interference, coinage, borrowing, etc) were considered.

The goal here was to observe usage preference among the participants. The emphasis therefore was on communicative effectiveness and situational appropriateness (Achebe 1985) rather than on structural accuracy and grammatical correctness. Of interest is the participants' language choice and preference; NE or SBE, regardless of the capacity for error detection. Participants' responses on the three levels were compiled into data that provided the context where NE authenticity or lack thereof was deliberated and debated. All instances of error-affirmation were tallied and organized in concert with the established hypothesis-oriented matrix wherein *education*, *professional experience*, *social attitude* along with *communicative value* were used as primary variables of NE character assessment. What all these afforded, were candid indices that permit the affirmation or rejection of the four guiding hypotheses of this study.

4. FINDINGS AND EVALUATIONS

Examined in this section is the outcome of the data derived from the two test categories: error-affirmation and preferential assessment. Where one focuses on structural errors consistent with everyday NE usage the other examines the functional attributes of such usage in terms of its communicative effectiveness. On the one hand, the tests require recognition of errors generated in syntactic structures that embody propositions, clauses and phrases that manifest direct interference from native cultures particularly those of the majority: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. On the other hand, they

demand the participants' evaluation of excerpts in SBE and NE with features from the major linguistic groups where the goal is the assessment of functional preference based on their unique stylistic values. The analyses adopted allow the examination of NE properties in terms of proficiency and mastery correlated with inter-level consideration of education and the inter-group language dynamics in Nigeria. The basic analytical aggregate is *deviation*, a denominator with which an attempt is made to re-explore the conclusion that NE usage is only a stage in the user's graduation to higher English proficiency. The contention is that such conclusion could be affirmed if the characteristic features of NE are appreciatively appropriated through the attributes of education and group-driven attitude.

4.1 EDUCATION

Here, the basic idea is that the authenticity and identity of NE as a national code cannot be guaranteed through incidental interferences or arbitrary intervention of indigenous languages with the Higher SBE variant. In this regard, the observation is that the higher the educational accomplishment by Nigerians the more pronounced their capacity to deviate from interferences that support NE usage. To engage this observation in empirical terms, the validity of the previous investigations (Adesanoye 1990, Orisawayi 1990) that suggest that the allowance for Nigerians to recognize rule transgression in English usage increases with improvement in education was tested using Jowitt's *deviation* model. What this addresses is the simple idea that the higher the user's education, the greater the potential for error recognition in NE usage. Granted that this idea presents nothing new and its outcome is more than predictable; but more important is whether or not this variety of English should be considered as a linguistically-stabilized variant native to Nigeria; or be treated as a system fraught with errors largely validated by inadequate mastery of the higher standard variant. Again, given that a standardized Nigerian English (SNE) supported by national policy and institutions is yet to be identified the variety to emulate by default, is SBE.

With that, any application of English outside, the target variety SBE constitutes linguistic deficit. Where such deficit may be correlated with education, the English nativization argument, still in effect, attracts serious theoretical anomaly. What this argument has customarily neglected is the answer to the question of whether or not the authenticity of NE as a national system should be determined in terms of deficiency in educational achievement or in terms of something else for that matter. Table 2 consists of data distribution instructed by this question. With these data, the answer is explored through the application of Jowitt's educational paradigm (Table 1) as the basic conceptual threshold. The first two data categories were compiled from responses provided by participants with Class IV and ²WASC/GCE education levels here classified as the non-tertiary category and require average of 12 school years. The other two are generated from those with ³NCE/P-Cert. and college graduates who fall in the tertiary education level attained in more than 12 years. Each of the two major

² Old secondary school educational structure now replaced by the JS/SS format

³ National Certificate of Education primarily for advanced teachers' training where P-Cert. represents professional certificates by individual graduating from technical schools such as Polytechnics

educational levels was used for selecting mainly government employees as participants and, each accounts for 72 workers distributed on the account of the acquired work experience. A written text containing over two dozen, $N=26$, categories of ⁴errors identified with NE (Kujore 1997:372-3) were presented to the participants with the instruction to identify forms they consider to represent errors of usage.

Responses produced outside the target forms and the syntactic indices for error types are not treated as part of the data under consideration. Given the number of participants ($N=144$) in relation to the number of predetermined errors ($N=26$) contained in the written text, the sum-total frequency of errors projected is 3744. The four-way employment of time duration, 1-15 or more years of work experience, is an analytical choice that derives partially from the pool of participants and justified by its parity with number of years required to learn English up to the tertiary level. All participants regardless of educational, professional and group profile were provided equal opportunity to respond to the same test instrument.

Table 2. Performance Distribution in Error Affirmation Test

Education	Duration (years)	Professional Experience (in years)												
		> 5			6 - 10			11 - 15			< 15			
Level	Duration (years)	N(p)	N(e)	%	N(p)	N(e)	%	N(p)	N(e)	%	N(p)	N(e)	%	N
Class IV	1 - 12	4	9	8.7	8	25	12.0	11	45	15.9	5	22	16.9	28
WASC / GCE	1 - 12	7	23	12.6	9	77	32.9	17	220	49.8	11	178	62.2	44
NCE / P- Cert.	< 12	10	172	66.2	18	314	67.1	12	212	67.9	4	75	72.1	44
C - Graduate	< 12	5	92	70.8	7	127	69.7	11	232	81.1	5	112	86.2	28
Total	<> 12	26	296	43.8	42	643	58.9	51	709	53.5	25	387	59.5	144

On the bases of the participants' overall response, it was interesting to find that the basic assumption of the study was accommodated somewhat readily. The participants' capacity to identify errors improves with both levels of educational attainment and duration of work-experience. With 5 or less years of work experience, participants in the lowest educational cadre, Class IV, identify, on the average, 8.7 percent of the expected number of errors, while other individuals in the groups with similar duration of work experience but separated by higher educational attainment with: professional certificates (P-Cert), National Certificate of Education (NCE), or college degrees (C-Graduate), each identifies more than 65.0 percent of the errors. Yet there is a strong need to acknowledge from the outcome in the data configuration that the significant differentials in error-identification performances between the two major educational classes: tertiary and non-tertiary diminishes somewhat with work experience. What this suggests is that the workplace operates in the same manner with educational institutions designed to prepare Nigerians for proficiency in English. The workplace is of course hierarchically structured with people of higher education at the top echelon of the organizational structure. Since this structure involves both top-down and bottom-up communicative interaction among the employees across professional levels, the difference in English usage based on education, become somewhat muted the longer an

⁴ Mainly structural and stylistic errors

employee remains a member of the work environment. The differentials in error detection among the participants become noteworthy where the average percentage separating the lowest detection from the highest is greater than 45.0.

Those in the WASC/GCE category show a significant increase from 12.6 percent average error detection performance in the first 5 years of work experience to more than four times that average with 62.2 percent with additional 10 or more years. The inter-level educational differentials in error identification are minimal between Class IV and WASC/GCE categories. This is understandable given that only one school year separates the two. Compared with those in the tertiary category, however, there is a marked difference. Between their individual group capacities (WASC/GCE categories) for error detection which stands at 10.7 percent on the average and that of their counterparts on the tertiary level with an average of 68.5 percent is 57.8 percent differentials. Although error affirmation improves significantly with major educational categories, but not so remarkable is the increase in error detection between the embedded subcategories: Class IV and WASC/GCE on the one hand and NCE/P-Cert. and C-Graduate on the other. What this demonstrates is a major discrepancy in error recognition in English usage, determined more clearly by the educational category (tertiary/non-tertiary) than by the differences in educational levels contained in each of the categories. This observation is explored later in the discussion. Table 3 provides a conceptual aspect of expectation-actuality comparison by category-subcategory equation.

Table 3. Relative Performance Adjustment Result

Education Level	N	Error Detection		Transition Index			
		expected N %	actual N %	education %	work experience %		
Class IV	28	728	19.4	101	2.7 (16.7)	13.9 (86.1)	8.2
WASC / GCE	44	1144	30.6	498	13.3 (17.3)	43.5 (56.5)	49.6
NCE / P - Cert.	44	1144	30.6	773	20.6 (10.0)	67.6 (32.4)	5.9
C - Degree	28	728	19.4	563	15.0 (4.4)	77.3 (22.7)	16.5
Total	144	3744	100	1935	51.6 (48.4)	-	-

In the lowest and highest educational levels, expected in each level was 19.4 percent of the total error detection, but 2.7 and 15.0 percents were respectively detected. Inversely, participants with lowest education relatively account for the higher percentage of undetected error which stands at 16.7 of the total to only 4.4 among those with highest education. Similarly, participants in the intermediate educational levels in separate categories exhibit percentage differential in the number of undetected errors. They are, in the two levels, separated by over 7 percentage points. Yet, nowhere is the inter-level discrepancy in error affirmation more pronounced than where the transition index (tr-index) is used in the context of fusion of education and work experience. All participants with Class IV education, regardless of the duration of individual work experience, identify on the average, 13.9 percent of the total errors expected, leaving 86.1 percent unidentified errors. But there is a significant jump to 43.5 percent error detection among those with WASC/GCE qualification. The highest tr-index is generated by college graduates who provide 563 frequency of errors and of 728

expected, they affirmed an impressive 77.3 percent errors. Statistically, the overall result is compelling, howbeit more so with the utility of education instead of work experience as the primary variable.

Where the focus is on work experience, the statistical differentials in error detection are minimal except with the participants with WASC/GCE qualification. Calculated from the subtraction of the lowest average percentage in error detection as an incidental correlate of lowest work experience from the highest average matched by longest experience, the work-oriented tr-index indicates improvement in participant capacity to identify errors in NE usage based on work experience. What this suggests therefore is that the workers' continuous exposure to a more proper English usage in the workplace contributes to their improved proficiency. That participants' performance in the test improves with work signals gradual deviation from NE. But again what is really striking is not so much the outcome configuration of this survey but the argument it generates as a matter of course. The workplace in Nigeria is a professional community where workers without tertiary education constitute the majority. And if the tendency in this place is for the users of English to strive for greater deviation from NE; the real argument is whether or not NE can in effect assume functional and national legitimacy where two primary national institutions: bureaucracy and education provide minimal support for its functional viability and perhaps standardization. To engage this argument adequately of course, requires more than singular reliance on these institutional variables to provide all the answers, hence some complementary data were acquired from participants reactions to text stimuli. These data were analyzed where the main goal is to test group attitude toward NE and its artistic value based on the variable of ethnicity.

4.2 SOCIAL ATTITUDE

Antithetic to the idea that social structure anchored in cultural cleavages still defines English usage by educated Nigerians (Obanya et al. 1979, Akere 1982) is the contention that, in pervasive use among this group of Nigerians, is a super-ordinate variety, which is "fundamentally the English usage of Nigerians in its totality", (Jowitt 1991:47). Essentially, the claim is that this variety maintains national patterns and distinctiveness that defy prejudicial determination given its establishment and evolution in Nigeria's national character. The sense generated from this assessment is the question of what defines the nation's character; is it basically the agglomerate of cultures congenial to it as a nation-state? Or, should such character be affirmed on the basis of its social manifest measured in inter-group relations or lack thereof? In a nation where pan-ethnic constructs are still governed by factional ideological refuge in parochial political agendas rather than in collective subscription to the ideals of nationhood; that an unmarked code with national linguistic legitimacy exists in this nation seems to defy logic. Yet, as an existing claim in variance with other assertions, it is worth some consideration that the simple empirical tests here address. What the tests sought were relevant data results capable of illuminating the inter-group attitude to NE usage. Essentially, what is employed in this regard is ethnicity utilized basically as a variable for testing linguistic convergence where the language of such convergence is NE. The motivating factor was not really how much of NE usage remains immersed in "culture-bound speech pattern" (Sridhar 1982) but the degree to which linguistic

chemistry has evolved socially among the distinct Nigerian geo-ethnic communities in their acceptance of NE.

Granted that acceptability is a fluid concept, what remains feasible and viable in the Nigerian context are social patterns that afford its approximation via attitudes inspired by ethno-cultural conditions. For that reason, ethnic-based sentential features common to NE were adopted in the construction of the error-affirmation tests. The aim was to ascertain the extent of cross-cultural accommodation of ethnically peculiar English usage not as a measure of the degree of its linguistic nativization, but rather as a gauge of usage convergence underscored by inter-group tolerance for the mutation of differences in usage. A major condition for participant selection was ethnicity complemented by education. Only those with tertiary education, $N=72$, were selected and distributed into four categories by ethnicity: Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and others (minorities). A total of 20 sentences, 15 of which derived from ethnic input involving the three major groups, and 5 unmarked by their approximation of SBE were utilized. With the others, i.e. minorities, as the monitoring group, the total error-affirmation frequency expected was 1080.

Now, in the absence of an official classification of speakers of Nigeria's languages, over 60 percent of the population has been estimated as speakers of the majority languages, (Jibril 1990), which according to Odumuh (1987) are the major contributors to NE. But, the basic tenet of this survey category was like the previous one very straightforward. The position was that, for the minorities that account for more than 35 percent of the nation's population, (Ayida 1990), to fully accept the country's emerging new language, NE, there is a need for them to identify socially with this language as a unique national code and not as one that is established through errors-in-usage bearing the majority language signature. This notwithstanding the assumption was that the minorities are more likely than their majority counterparts to identify more errors in NE usage inspired by majority languages. Where this is feasible two claims could be made: (i) minority recognition of the contexts that instruct the errors as source of interference, and (ii) questionable naturalization of NE where a large segment of the population only participate marginally in the establishment of its "citizenship".

To minimize interference from attitudes ingrained in Nigeria's ethnic-based linguistic stereotyping, the tests were conducted without reference to the actual sources of the materials used. Also, these materials were deliberately rooted in the traditional usage rather than usage with emergent indexical markers that remain transient in their functional relation with the existing NE. Consider the following ⁵sentence items taken from the samples to which participants were instructed to assign error (E) if any, and with as much frequency as the amount of errors observed. The number of errors contained in each sentence were predetermined but not revealed to the participants. Letter 'n' stands for unmarked, neutral form with SBE approximation where 'h', 'i' and 'y' respectively refer to marked Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba variants (Jowitt, *ibid*).

(1) I hear the smell of gas coming from the kitchen (y/59)

(2) He always goes to church on Sundays [attends church service] (n/236)

⁵ Abstracted from the overall samples provided to participants for consideration

- (3) A: What did he want you for? B: That let me accompany him to town (h/247)
- (4) This may lead to inflation if precautions are not taken [if care is not taken]
(n/195)
- (5) (i) I saw your friend, the one that always speaks through the nose (i/215)
- (6) The meat is too hard (h/243)
- (7) He was admitted to the hospital and second day they operated on him (y/236)
- (8) Had it been that you informed me (*italics*) that you were coming I would have
cooked food (i/188)

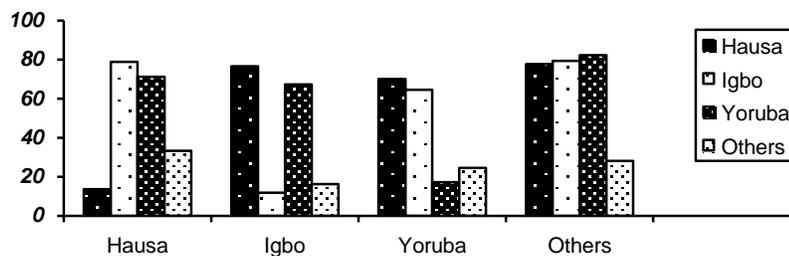
All the examples above are forms of familiar expressions used in NE. While some of the errors the participants were unlikely to observe could be perceived as stereotypical, the sense still remains that factors that determine the characterization of these errors as stereotypes are not so obvious if not investigated. And these are factors this section intends to address via testing of the above data samples abstracted from Jowitt (*ibid*). The adjacent inscriptions to the letters in parenthesis are the source numbers marking page reference, with the exception of those tagged 'n'. All the examples, according to Jowitt demonstrate MT-transfer. The claim is that their usage began as "idiosyncratic errors" manifesting dialectal peculiarities, yet with usage regularity; they have graduated to "common" or "fossilized" errors that rarely impede wider communication. But Table 4 shows an interesting outcome based on the data generated from the responses of the survey participants to these forms of usage. Here, the focus was not on intelligibility, but rather on the recognition of linguistic peculiarism. Also, the emergent indexical markers were not particularly favored in the analysis proposed. The reason is because of their socially transient character. So, where only two major values: *Acceptance* (A) and *Rejection* (E) are tested, the outgroup recognition of ethnic-based interference in English usage in Nigeria became apparent

While intra-group error recognition was generally minimal, less than 20.0 percent respectively among ethnic majority, the Hausa participants found close to 80 percent errors in Igbo generated NE, (NE(i)) and equally high percentage 71.1 with Yoruba-based NE, (NE(y)) constructions. But they found only 33.3 percent errors with constructions based on SBE. That they found that high percentage of errors in SBE examples is independently significant perhaps as a marker of the weakness or gap in their level of proficiency in English. However, a challenge vis-à-vis the methodology adopted here concerns the question of testing reliability in regard to the English variety Nigerians believe they speak. While it is true that many of the NE speakers tested believe that they speak SBE; what cannot be discarded is what the testing itself affirms empirically. Most Nigerians who claim to speak English in fact do not speak SBE but NE marked by ethno-culturally predicated linguistic peculiarism. The question of whether the respondents know what constitute errors was not an issue directly determined on the basis of their knowledge of SBE. But rather, it was investigated on the grounds of their determination of NE marked by outgroup linguistic influence as a variety fraught with errors. The basic concern was whether Hausa NE speakers perceive errors in the NE variety favored by Igbo speakers and vice versa.

While ingroup participants may not recognize much of the errors peculiar to their group; they, surely, were able to identify errors in the English variety associated with outgroups. This was more than significant in questioning the nativist argument of English nationalization in Nigeria. Where functional incongruity is observed between NE variety spoken by Igbo speakers and that spoken by their Hausa counterparts; then on what theoretical measures should NE be accorded universal national character? Indeed, it is not what separates a language into different varieties that determines *nationalization* or *standardization* but rather what causes the language in its variation to coalesce into a uniquely cohesive social system. The outcome of the testing in fact reinforced the argument that the errors are not nationally transparent but instead, they tend to be group-based. Here again, the performance of the participants begs the question of whether or not they were aware of linguistic differences between NE and SBE. The answer to this observation is that educated Nigerians observed in the survey have been exposed to SBE through textbook reading and familiarity with the British media to make educated determination of the differences between the two codes, NE and SBE. Given the educational level of the participants chosen for the survey, they were impressively aware of errors.

The Igbo and Yoruba participants like their Hausa counterparts found high number of errors in the constructions based on outgroup interference. What the high percentage of error recognition demonstrates is the delineation of English usage by ethnicity often acknowledged in linguistic terms as ‘Hausaenglish’, ‘Engligbo’ and ‘Yorubaenglish’. From all the data categories, however, the entity sought with greater curiosity was the input from the minority participants. The issue was how they, as representatives of a significant sector of the nation’s population, perceive the majority language influence on NE usage. The response is overwhelmingly negative. To only 28.1 percent error assigned to SBE constructions, no majority language-based constructions are marked down for less than 75 percent rejection base on error criterion.

Table 4. Error Affirmation by Ethnicity



Yet, what is more significant is the level of minority awareness of the actual linguistic sources of the errors. When asked where those constructions marked ‘E’ are commonly used in Nigeria, given the choices: (a) North, (b) East, (c) West, (d) nowhere and (e) no idea; the responses were conclusive. Over 65 percent of the data observed were appropriately matched with the regions of the ethnic languages that instruct their peculiar constructions. For further clarification, certain segments of the participants’

responses were employed to generate supplementary data. An instance was the request that participants describe how they consider themselves; the option was between (a) speakers of Standard English (SE), and (b) speakers of other English variety. Given their level of education in the tertiary category, the expectation was hardly challenged, an overwhelming 91.3 percent identified with the (a) category. Even, more statistically intriguing was the outcome of what they consider as SE where the options were: (a) NE, (b) SBE and (c) others. Less than 12 percent chose (a) to 86.7 that identified the (b) option. Again what is significant is not whether or not Nigerians believe that they speak SBE; but rather that the popular English variety Nigerians speak is not only unique in its character and deviation from SBE but also that by empirical measures, this character is rooted in disparate linguistics features that reflect uncoordinated ethno-cultural input rather than a cohesive national intervention predicated on policy or ideology for that matter. The fact that Nigeria constitutes the context of usage showed little effect in this situation, particularly, where answers to the question about which forms they consider more advantageous between NE and SBE, exhibit over 55 percentage differential in favor of SBE.

The outcome derived from the ensuing data is that those with higher education in the country, indeed do not consider themselves speakers of NE. By desire or default it shows their sense of detachment from the customization of English usage that can, in their view, accrue them only a limited benefit. Still, the argument abounds in the idea that educated Nigerians tend to be timid in their usage of the standard variety that is more than not associated with class divide, impersonality and social snobbism. This indeed is debatable. In a status-conscious, prestige-oriented and title-peddling society such as Nigeria's, this suggestion is difficult to contemplate let alone sustain. Nigerians are by and large entrapped by their romance with titles and socially-guided sense of entitlement as made manifest in Nigerianisms that form a big segment of NE lexis. In Nigerian society where everybody seeks if not demand respect, honor, and more importantly, recognition, it is not uncommon for Nigerians to coin titles with English terms, and assigned to them, functions outside their traditional usage. An important aspect of NE is the introduction of titles well outside the conventional ones such as "Dr." (for a doctor, medical or otherwise) "Mr." (for a gentleman), "Madam" or "Mrs." (for a married woman) and "chief" (for someone with chieftaincy commission).

But in today's Nigeria, we have "*Lawyer Odeku*", "*Barrister Chiwenzu*", "*Biologist Ali*", "*Engineer Chukudi*", "*Zoologist Jaja-Benson*" "*Architect Okon*", "*Archeologist Kasare*". In the frenzy of social demands for self-recognition that the public accommodates in NE as "*Bigmanism*", some of these titles are more often than not combined to reinforce social significance and status of the individual bearers as is the case with "*Chief, (Dr.) Alhaji Akeredolu*" "*Evangelist, Reverend, Dr. Akenzua, Esquire*" and "*Prince, Biologist, Otunba Oyedola*". The desire of the Nigerian elite to associate with the masses is minimal and lacking social incentives, giving the customary economic divide that insures social polarity between the two groups. Moreover, according to Melchers and Shaw (2003:151), "the motivation for learning English is integration with the local elite" and not the reverse. What this suggests is the desire for upward convergence by the masses, a situation that is hardly replicated by the elite that tends to resist voluntary indulgence in downward convergence to the social or communicative level of the masses. That they do not want to appear snobbish does not

constitute sufficient incentive for them to engage in downward convergence. The nationwide celebration and adherence to status-driven social exuberance tends to negate just that.

This observation was supported by the data from the inquiry on whether the participants are likely to use the construction they marked 'E' if those constructions were afforded credence by rules and prescribed as the standard. A high percentage, 73.9 provided negative responses. The attitude that predominated was that of distaste for the elevation of error-driven usage into a national standard. This only goes to confirm Jowitt's (ibid: 28) assertion that where Nigerians uncover Nigerianism in some of the expressions they normally use, "[they] resolve, perhaps almost unconsciously, to cease using [them] forthwith and to use the BE expression[s] instead". Nigerianisms to them therefore become errors to be corrected and denied functional validity. It appears that between ethnic and cultural dynamics that implant NE into Nigeria's macrostructure there are social attitudes predicated on education that guide language alignment where the choice is between NE and SBE. It is also valid to recognize that choice in language usage is affected by both domains and relationship between interlocutors. Adekunle (1995), in his survey of language use in Jos, Northern Nigeria affirmed this observation. But that this is a valid observation does not negate the fact that the choice interlocutors make with regard to SBE and NE is indeed a measure of their individual knowledge and familiarity with the two English varieties.

But then, where the interlocutor speaks a single variety, which happens to be NE, the tenet that supports the idea of choice is therefore neutralized. Also, that a speaker finds the language of his/her addressee intelligible does not obstruct that speaker's capacity to observe peculiarism in the addressee's language; and that is what the data in Table 4 supports. The Standard British English SBE represented by Oxford dictionary and the Standard American English SAE exemplified by Webster dictionary are mutually intelligible. But then, this does not necessarily mean that these languages with their disparate linguistic features are absolutely identical, they are by no means one and the same beyond the syntax that orients their respective usage. NE and SBE are not absolutely identical codes, and interlocutors can use either or both where the conditions of choice are met, i.e. adequate familiarity with both codes. While cognizance of SBE as an Inner Circle Variety (ICV) does not necessarily determine the linguistic choices that speakers of NE as the Outer Circle Variety (OCV) make, yet the preference of these speakers for ICV can only mean that the evolutionary trajectory of OCV is no doubt constrained by the conditions dictated by ICV. With the participants' choice that tends to favor SBE in this study, the functional errors, "established", "fossilized" or "institutionalized" (Jowitt 1991, Kujore 1997) tend to be rejected. But this tendency is not absolute and in some cases, it is tempered by factors that intervene outside the bounds of attitude. One of these cases includes the context where the communicative values of NE are considered.

4.3 FUNCTIONAL ACCEPTABILITY

Amidst the contradictions generated by the multifarious accommodation of NE and its status among Nigerians, are certain utility conditions that influence the usage of this language beyond its association with vulgarity fraught with errors. That the reaction to NE by the nation's educated elite is largely negative inevitably brings into focus the

imperatives implicit in its firm entrenchment in imaginative literature. Does this domain of usage appreciation, in obvious variance with the elitist perception of NE, support the idea that, in the creative realm, the language amounts to a literary dialect rather than the contrary (Romaine 1994)? Given that, by and large, creative endeavors in the country rarely exhibit clear departure from standard usage based on SBE convergence; where disregard for standard is observed, usually, it is established as a stylistic option supported by creative intentions. Still, should the prominence of NE in literary production be confined wholesale to stylistic choice and given functional label as a literary vernacular aimed at generating effects in reflection of parochial cultural values? Involved are issues that are conceptually elastic and indeed parasitic to a major concern: the pragmatic frontier between artistic creativity and linguistic reinvention.

Does the former, i.e. artistic creativity, maintain sufficient theoretical base in NE studies so as to serve as a catalyst in the development of the latter, i.e. NE invention? Most of the existing studies in this area have neglected this question; the focus instead, has been on the analysis of the stylistic differences between NE and SBE when utilized in the works of literature by Nigerian literati. Of particular interest in this work, however, was the attitude of Nigerian English users toward these differences in the presentation of literary events. To test for attitude here, two categories of written texts: the ⁶Africanized (Nigerian) Version (AV) and the ⁷non-Africanized Version (n-AV) about a unique ⁸situation (Achebe 1964, 1985), were presented to the participants for comparative consideration using certain basic conceptual parameters: (i) familiarity, (ii) creativity, (iii) effectiveness, (iv) standardization and (v) preference (Table 5). The objective was to gauge participants' assessments of the texts in terms of the degree to which the individual variables apply in the determination of their attitude toward the language used. Controlling for education, the findings revealed that all the participants are well aware and are accustomed to the two styles of presentation however they consider the AV to be more proper. More significant is the data result on the creative potency of the texts; an overwhelming majority between 60 and 65 percent, without concern for educational level, believe that AV is more creative.

⁶ Based on the text abstracted from Achebe's (1964) Novel: *The Arrow of God* that reads: "I want one of my sons to join this people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring back my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying, 'had we known' tomorrow"

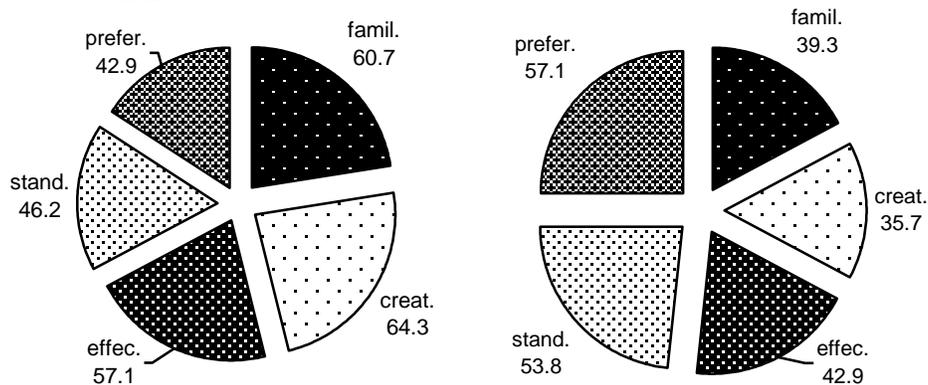
⁷ A reproduction or translation from the original form in *The Arrow of God*, using a non-Africanized register that reads: "I am sending you as my representative among these people – just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight."

⁸ Presented by Chinua Achebe (1985) in his work: *English and the African Writer* reprinted from *Transition* 4:18 (1965)

⁹ Used in variance with the Inner Circle (IC) language. See Jenkins, 2003

What is equally noteworthy are the responses acquired from those with least regard for NE, that is, those with tertiary education. Among them, less than 45.0 percent think that n-AV is more creative, while over 55 percent think otherwise and chose AV instead. Very instructive here is the support for Romane's (ibid.) claim; NE, to this group, is viable as a creative vernacular class and not as a standard register. There are marked differences, however, among the educational levels in relation to other variables. Those in the non-tertiary category are split almost evenly about which of the versions is more effective. But by 60.0 to 40.0 percent their counterparts on the tertiary level chose n-AV. In effect, they observe important differences in the communicative efficiency of the texts. This same group, in the absence of errors in usage, considers AV to be less standard suggesting that expressive customization is viewed as a modal interference with the standard. But those with lower education are once again split on the standard parameter, the same way they are on preference. In actuality those with CLASS IV education prefer n-AV mode of situational presentation less than they do AV.

Table 5. Comparative Assessment of Texts: Africanized Variant and Non-Africanized Variant



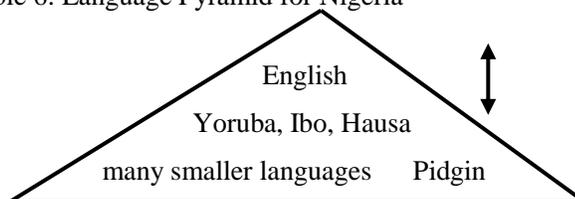
What was observed from the data is that preference shifts in favor of n-AV the higher the education. Approximately, 80 percent of those on the tertiary educational level prefer the n-AV mode. In sum, the AV language class fared reasonably well in three categories (familiarity (60.7); creativity (64.3); and effectiveness (57.1)) regardless of educational level, but the two significant conditions (standardization and preference) under which the authenticity and status of NE (as AV) can be validated received weak scores. Do these data results once again translate as an aversion of Nigeria's educated elite to customized or nativized English usage even in situations where error or vulgarity occurs as a matter of creative choice? Or, is what the nation's elite considered proper usage (standard) a product of separation of language tradition with purist overtone from acquired efficiency in usage defined by native dispositions? Whatever the character these questions assume, a trait they all share is the value or worth they acquire through social attitude towards the different competing forms of usage. With the role education continues to play in the social accommodation of English usage in Nigeria, a truly native variety can hardly evolve outside a concrete

educational policy that elevates this variety into greater functional significance. Nonetheless, established in the interim are series of questions making empirical characterization of NE as an authentic national language system all the more difficult.

4.4 FILLING THE GAP

What the above assessment represents mainly is a simple empirical consideration of more complicated issues about the authentic identity of the popular English spoken in Nigeria. Some of these issues are better accommodated analytically through a concerted examination of the nation's policy position toward this language. When English in Nigeria was accorded socio-political credence as the language of instruction in education (1977) and, two years later (1979), ordained constitutionally as the nation's official and administrative language along with three national languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, what precisely was the language system or variety the policy makers have in mind for official role? Given the possible co-emergence of two varieties of English with two usage dynamics: one that is infused with native cultures and languages (hybridization) and the other that is preserved from the colonial language tradition (conservation), did the nation's policy design with regard to English usage involve institutional maintenance whereby functional choice between the two varieties, nativized and non-nativized can be made readily? And if the foreign (British) components of English in Nigeria "have in the process of its evolution combined with native Nigerian elements [hybridization] to make it local" (Adekunle 1985:36), should the nation's policy directives on education curriculum be predicated on the goal of harmonizing native input with the adaptive potency of the target language? As these questions germinate into greater need for clarification, conspicuously rendered in the nation's language politics has been a calculated indulgence in policy ambiguity. The language policy featuring three-tier triglossic approach with the Official Language (OL)—English at the apex of the linguistic pyramid, and National Languages (NL)—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in the middle and Mother Tongues (MT) often perceived in terms of the minority languages, (Table 6) is riddled with awkwardness on the level of implementation (Bamgbose 1991).

Table 6: Language Pyramid for Nigeria



Source: Melchers and Shaw, 2003, p. 151, Fig. 5.4.

Meanwhile, the appetite for aggressive pursuit of linguistic conservation strategy particularly in Nigeria's educational systems has thrived in asymmetrical symbiosis with the dynamics of the socially-inspired usage hybridization. This established in the country diverse forms of English usage with social morass sustained by variables oriented by achievement (education-profession), ethnic peculiarities and geo-linguistic

compartmentalization maintained by low cross-cultural mobility. Problems with the policy management of English in Nigeria have resonated awkwardly in diverse social sectors where the language is used: administration (documentation), politics (legislation), education (learning and instruction) and media/para-public services (information dissemination). Also, there is a persistent effort among the nation's citizens to strive for the non-nativized English variant as a marker of their mastery of the language. The need to master English where SBE is the target language derives partially from the socio-economic privileges and political opportunities associated with this variety and partially from the centralization of this language in the pejorative perception of NE in its parochial character.

Where, in the views of Melchers and Shaw (2003:140-141), "[standard] English remains the language of education, administration and business", the desire for such mastery is understandable. The language constitutes the access code to good employment and skill development, (Banjo 1997). But Nigerians strive for SBE because "success in examination based on the standard model was the indispensable condition for obtaining [even] a low clerical post (...)" (Jowitt *ibid*: 15). Job-placement itself is guaranteed through a credit-pass in English as a matter of employment practice in Nigeria. Also, where the government is the biggest employer accounting for over 65.0 percent of the bureaucratic workforce (Bienen 1983); evoked is a strong suggestion of government rejection of NE since credit-pass in English based on SBE constitutes the basic condition for employment, government or private. Where gravitation toward SBE usage as a correlate of deviation from NE is as much as education-driven enterprise as it is a response to government policy; the idea of NE standardization is, in effect, difficult to validate. Thus, on what grounds does NE really maintain conceptual authenticity as a truly Nigerian code given the government language policy and attitude rendered through the existing institutional and employment practices? Such attitude, no doubt, threatens the perception and acceptance of NE as a national code.

If the majority of English speakers that are not in school are employed by government that marginalizes NE and, where by estimate (Bamgbose 1983, Heine 1990, Elugbe 1997), less than 20.0 percent of the population is proficient in English, how, in the light of this demographic ratio, does NE even with a little larger social base, assume universal (national) character? That the 2002 figures provided by Melchers and Shaw (2003:146) show that over 40.0 percent of Africa's speakers of English reside in Nigeria is, indeed, demographically relative and does not change the minority status of the language within the country (Bamgbose 1991). In fact Wolf (2001: 43) maintained: "only a comparatively small portion of the population in Anglophone West African states speaks standard English in part due to the British colonial policy". English, whatever the variety SBE or NE remains, in the country, an elitist or upper-class language. Findings in this study and others (Adesanoye 1979, Jowitt 1991) have shown that the higher the education and the longer the work experience, the greater the deviation from NE. Jowitt's model (Table 1) indeed suggests that where educational attainments and the attendant occupational levels correspond in vertical ascending order with the determination of SBE approximation, NE as a national variant thus become an attribute of low achievement conditions.

And, given its general association with low achievement rates in the two primary domains, education and occupation, how then is the social status of NE affected as a national code? Citing the survey by the Human Resources Research Unit of the University of Lagos, Nnaji-for (1990: 7) revealed that primary school leavers account for 80.0 percent of the employed in Nigeria. This population constitutes a group with minimal knowledge of English and within which the Pidginized variants tend to thrive. Also, the 1988 Labour Force sample survey by the Manpower Board Division of the nation's Ministry of National Planning found urban unemployment among secondary school leavers at 68.9 percent. The unemployed at the tertiary level accounted for another 8.0 percent. In education the statistics are equally discouraging. The country boasts, on the annual average, 3.1 million primary school leavers with less than 40.0 percent proceeding to secondary school. Much less than this percentage make it to the tertiary level, less than 10.0 percent according to Adesina (1980). Unesco (1983) estimated 9.4 percent transition rate between secondary and tertiary education.

If an overwhelming majority of Nigerians with certain forms of education requiring English usage is excluded from the workforce, which in the light of this study, accounts for growth in English mastery, it appears that the pervasive usage of NE may have stemmed from Nigeria's weak dispensation for economic growth. How can the citizenry deviate from NE usage if the conditions (education and employment) that support such deviation are insufficient or even non-existent? Also, the low transition rate between secondary and tertiary education means that majority of English users in Nigeria are WASC/GCE 'O' Level (SS) Certificate holders. Apart from two-thirds of them that are unemployed, indicating proficiency stagnation; consistently, their performance in Standard English tests has plummeted often to the lowest ebb triggering national alert (Table 7). On the average, less than 10.0 percent of those who took English in the landmark SSC Examination between 1988 and 1990 passed (Akere 1997). Before then, between 1983 and 1985, an average of 69.1 percent failed the SSC equivalent, the GCE 'O' Level (Awoniyi 1987). Compared to the performance in other languages, particularly those without socio-cultural constituencies in the country, French and Arabic, secondary school leavers have fared relatively poorly in English.

Perhaps this should be blamed on the fallen standard of education (Banjo 1997), or be attributed to policy failure in establishing curriculum buffer between two competing, language-driven pedagogical approaches: preservationist (with adherence to prescriptive tradition) and adaptive (reflecting dynamism through hybridization). Higher performance in languages with native curricula, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, (Table 7) underscores the preceding observation. Nonetheless, where tertiary education as a condition for English mastery and marked deviation from NE is an exclusive privilege; and performance in standard tests in the language is fraught with mass failure, created is a premise where the argument that defines NE as an authentic national language is faulted. Should the status of NE be authenticated through usage consistent with open-ended indigenous interventions without institutional mechanism for its control and standardization? Or, should poor government investment in English (Adejare 1987) and clumsy pursuit of language policy directive be construed as a "healthy context" for linguistic acculturation whereto English owes its Nigerianness?

The heavy reliance on prescriptive pedagogy in Nigeria means rejection of the adaptive dynamism of English. The prescriptivists, although form a small segment of

Nigerian society, wield disproportionate social authority as teachers, journalists, writers, intellectuals and politicians. The motivation to accommodate NE development has been thwarted by this group not only because of the potential of NE to neutralize their elitist privileges, but also because of their affinities to the ethno-cultural constituencies they represent. Political integration and historical contact among these diverse constituencies in the country have not, in earnest, established usage consensus or communicative blending, sustained effectively to promote group-neutral national variant. In Nigeria's social configuration where no ethnic collectivity is particularly dominant, linguistically or demographically per Jibril's (1982) estimation, gravitation towards usage features or conventional parameters of a particular group can only be incidental.

Table 7: Performance in the Major Languages: SSC Examination (1988-90)

Language	1988			1989			1990		
	Total Sitting	Credit Pass	%	Total Sitting	Credit Pass	%	Total Sitting	Credit Pass	%
English	92,529	7,022	7.7	91,665	8,213	9.0	195,840	12,382	6.3
Hausa	33,194	6,151	18.5	38,826	13,520	34.8	46,848	11,398	24.3
Igbo	26,833	11,989	44.7	25,845	15,504	60.0	45,245	18,539	41.0
Yoruba	230	156	67.8	568	261	46.0	30,907	10,951	35.4
Arabic	609	248	40.8	479	421	87.9	758	361	47.6
French	376	140	37.2	304	99	32.6	394	115	29.2

Source: West African Examination Council, Yaba; Senior School Certificate Examinations, June 1988 and Nov./Dec. 1988-90. Nigeria Statistics of Entries and Results; cited in Akere 1995:195.

And, where according to Melchers and Shaw (2003:150), English is assigned institutional functions without being "the link language for informal communication between ethnic groups"; what is rendered inevitably is a disharmonious subscription to the national usage of the language. In effect, should the degree of NE nativization be defined outside the extent of linguistic interaction among the nation's various ethnic subsystems? Rejection of ethnic-oriented hybridization has been observed in this study and if indeed the existing linguistic heterogeneity creates variations in NE usage, at what level should the argument of interference be advanced in relation to the evolvement of a new standard national code? There are legitimate reasons to introduce developmental conditions into the discussion of NE as a language in healthy socio-cultural transition, however, whether these conditions produce sufficient criteria for the accreditation of NE as a national language is altogether a different question. For that reason, to claim the existence of a bona fide NE with all inclusive, converging national character is to arrive at an assertion and conclusion motivated by awkward premise. The nativist argument seems to have fallen victim to non-sequitur conceptual predispositions. The premise is yet to justify adequately the conclusion so far reached by the nativists particularly.

5. CONCLUSION

Language, like the culture that informs it, is nuanced in the dictates of time and space as the invariable attributes of its evolvement. Here, the question is whether or not,

there exists, one truly Nigerian English or several forms of this code loosely connected by incidental social forces? Per the nativist proposition, NE derives its national character from a linguistic process based on pluricentric evolutionary model. This raises the question as to what indeed constitutes the conceptual or linguistic loci on which the pluricentric evolution of NE is based. In other words, what languages constitute the substrates codes wherefrom NE has overtime, evolved? Is the evolution of this language based solely on the linguistic influence of Nigeria's three national languages or on 300 or more languages existing within the country's geographical borders? Indeed, what are the centripetal forces that drive the emergence and convergence of the various group-based features of NE toward a cohesive language sub-system with absolute national character? How do these forces from the multiple linguistic sources converge to define the uniqueness of NE? Are these forces licensed by the imperatives of political policy? Or, are they a construct of social mobility of the Nigerian citizenry? The acknowledgement here is that there is, in existence, an institutionalized pejorative disposition toward NE in Nigeria.

Additionally, Nigeria's political policy has, for some time, been tempered by federal character philosophy that has with time degenerated to awkward socio-political paradox. It is a paradox no doubt marked by indigenization ideology featuring partisan fortification, cleavage vitalization, sectarian entrepreneurship, elitist opportunism, group territorialization, administrative compartmentalization and ethnicization of employment that, in sum, motivate restriction in social access, linguistic inter-permeation and outgroup mobility. And hence, how can Nigeria manage to claim one English variety where there are no centralized conceptual maxims or institutions that intervene to integrate or regulate its cohesive evolution? Another factor to consider is that if it took hundreds of years to bestow legitimacy on the Romance languages: Italian, Portuguese, French and Spanish that derived from Vulgar Latin, should NE, in its contemporary status distinguished by, among other things, low preference and institutional stigmatization, be accrued national authenticity given its short history? By the same token, should the language be accorded the benefit of wholesale legitimacy if the conditions that guarantee and sustain such development are either incidental or non-existent? That NE usage and acceptance tend to diverge rather than converge as a result of education, profession and ethnicity suggests its lack of conformity to a specific language standard. What then defines the national legitimacy of NE where the standard that establishes common subscription to its usage is devalued?

The vitality of the language cannot be affirmed outside the character of its distribution and functional assignment within the national policy schemes and the benefit such distribution and assignment attract. Efforts to define NE holistically have been tempered by the "national mentality" with attendant attitudes that promote the social prestige of English through SBE-centered convergence on the one hand, and by transparent social disharmony among the nation's subsystems: cultures, languages and ethnicities on the other. For NE to maintain social status in conformity with the hypothesis that characterizes it as "a legitimate national variant", questions surrounding its authenticity ought to be explored well beyond conceptual ambiguity. If NE is indeed a new code "still in full communion with its ancestral home" (Achebe 1965); how has it been "altered to suit its new surrounding" not narrowly but broadly? What exactly is the

role of this language, and what really determines its transition into a nationally-customized variant?

Demonstrated in this study is that NE maintains marginal standard features and that its functional credentials, for most part, lack maintenance apparatus if broader institutional guidelines are considered. Also, if linguistics pedigree of which NE is a part hardly constitutes a conglomeration of expressions selected randomly and weaved together arbitrarily to accomplish communicative goal, indeed should rule perversion outside collective social consensus or convention, be treated legitimately as aspect of linguistic growth as in the case of NE? When do native-oriented errors stop being errors and become variants? How elastic are the finite rules of a language to permit social adaptation and customization through an open-ended native usage re-invention? English has, no doubt as a product of the "concentric circle" (Kachru 1992), gained access to important spheres of the Nigerian social life, yet, unguided institutionally in its dynamism and values, standard quintessential to it as a system have been altered leaving it bastardized in the views of its critics. To these critics, English usage sanctioned by political policy is the standard and targeted pedagogically. The 1980 National Curricula for both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools (JSS and SSS) established acquisition guidelines and official goals for English targeting the High (H) standard variant (SE). School textbooks are prescribed within a unique language (other than NE) standard rigidly managed by teachers with conservative attitude, if not aversion to language adulteration or customization.

Thus, where NE as an ¹Outer Circle (OC) language is devalued in Nigeria's educational policy; it is difficult for it to evolve beyond what Jenkins (2003:61) describes as "[an] *interlanguage*, a learner language which has not reached the target, containing incorrect forms that have 'fossilised' [where] learning has ceased short of *nativelike* competence". English, particularly what its place ought to be in Nigeria's overall socio-political scheme, continues to be a daunting question. The deeper the infusion of the language into the national character, the more complex is the test for its authentication as a national code. Given the congenial character of the nation's ethnic base, the question to answer is whether or not linguistic re-invention of English as a nationally marked language (NE) is readily feasible? Gauging by the ambiguity in Nigeria's language policy tempered by both intra-national cleavages and the elitist predisposition to conservative/prescriptive language approach, affirming NE as a truly national language constructed on the linguistic hybridization theories so far seems to thrive not really in the answers it provides but in the questions it indeed raises.

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