

ENG305

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA



Course video is available on our app

Course code: ENG 305
Course title: The English Language in Nigeria
Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria

Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution

Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages

Series 4: Nigerian English and Standard English in Context

Series 5: Impact of Nigerian English on Standard Usage

Proposed Outline for Series 1

Part .1 Colonial Introduction of English

- 1.1.1 Early Contact and Trade Influence**
- 1.1.2 Missionary Activities and Education**
- 1.1.3 Administrative and Political Functions**

Part .2 Expansion through Education and Religion

- 1.2.1 Establishment of Mission Schools**
- 1.2.2 English in Religious Communication**
- 1.2.3 English as a Tool for Literacy and Social Mobility**

Part .3 English in Post-Colonial Nigeria

- 1.3.1 English as Official Language**
- 1.3.2 English in Governance and Law**
- 1.3.3 English in Mass Media and Literature**

Part .4 Contemporary Developments and Challenges

- 1.4.1 English in Globalisation and Technology**
- 1.4.2 English in Nigerian Education Policy**
- 1.4.3 Challenges of Multilingualism and Language Identity**

[Introduction](#)



The English language did not originate in Nigeria, yet today it plays a central role in education, governance, religion, and everyday communication. Its journey into the country was shaped by trade, colonial administration, missionary activities, and later by Nigeria's own post-independence policies. Understanding how English entered and developed within Nigeria provides a foundation for appreciating the varieties of Nigerian English that exist today and their impact on national identity and global interaction.

The aim of this Series is to trace the historical development of English in Nigeria and to equip you with the ability to explain how colonial, educational, religious, and political influences shaped its spread and status.

We shall commence this Series by examining the colonial introduction of English, focusing on early trade contacts, missionary activities, and administrative functions. Next, we will explore its expansion through education and religion, highlighting the establishment of mission schools and the role of English in literacy and social mobility. Following that, we will consider English in post-colonial Nigeria, paying attention to its role as the official language in governance, law, media, and literature. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing contemporary developments and challenges, including globalisation, education policy, and the complexities of multilingualism in Nigeria.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 1.1** define the circumstances under which English was introduced into Nigeria during the colonial period,
- SLO 1.2** explain how missionary activities and education contributed to the spread of English,
- SLO 1.3** analyse the role of English in post-colonial Nigeria, particularly in governance, law, media, and literature,
- SLO 1.4** evaluate contemporary developments that influence the use of English in Nigeria, including globalisation, education policy, and multilingual challenges.

1.1 Colonial Introduction of English

The introduction of English into Nigeria was not a sudden event but a gradual process shaped by trade, missionary activities, and colonial administration. Each of these influences contributed to the spread of the language and laid the foundation for its eventual role as Nigeria's official language. In this Part, we will examine how English first entered the country, how it was promoted through education and religion, and how it became a tool of governance.

1.1.1 Early contact and trade influence



The earliest encounters between Nigerians and English speakers occurred through **trade**, which refers to the exchange of goods and services between different groups. English was initially used as a medium of communication between local traders and British merchants along the coastal regions. Although limited in scope, these interactions introduced English words and expressions into local vocabularies.



Figure 1.1 Trade routes and early English contact in Nigeria

Fill in the blank: English first entered Nigeria through _____ interactions along the coastal regions.

1.1.2 Missionary activities and education

Missionaries played a crucial role in spreading English. **Missionary activities** refer to religious efforts aimed at converting local populations to Christianity. Missionaries established schools where English was the language of instruction. These schools were not only centres of religious teaching but also platforms for literacy and social advancement. Learners who acquired English gained access to new opportunities, including employment in colonial administration and commerce.





Plate 1.1 Missionary school as a centre of English learning

Fill in the blank: Missionary schools used _____ as the language of instruction to promote literacy and religion.

1.1.3 Administrative and political functions

The colonial government adopted English as the language of **administration**, meaning the management of public affairs and governance. English was used in official documents, court proceedings, and communication between colonial officers and local leaders. This gave the language prestige and reinforced its importance in Nigerian society. Over time, English became associated with authority, education, and modernity.

Sector	Purpose & Function	Legacy
The Legal System	Drafting statutes, court proceedings, and the "English Common Law" framework.	Remains the language of the Nigerian Judiciary today.
Governance	Legislative debates, policy making, and the daily operations of the Civil Service.	Established English as the "official" language for statecraft.
Taxation	Recording census data, revenue collection, and land titling systems.	Created a formal written economy dependent on English literacy.
Official Correspondence	Communication between the Colonial Office in London and local administrators.	Standardized a formal, bureaucratic style of "Standard English."

Box 1.1 Selected administrative uses of English in colonial Nigeria



Fill in the blank: English gained prestige in Nigeria because it was used in _____ documents and court proceedings.

Pilot questions 1.1

Which factor first introduced English into Nigeria?

What role did missionary schools play in spreading English?

Why was English associated with prestige during colonial administration?

Identify one benefit of learning English in missionary schools.

Fill in the blank: English was used in _____ to manage public affairs during colonial rule.

1.2 Expansion Through Education and Religion

The spread of English in Nigeria was not limited to trade and colonial administration. Education and religion played a significant role in expanding its use and embedding it into Nigerian society. Missionary schools and religious institutions became key agents in promoting English, while literacy in English opened doors to social mobility and new opportunities.

1.2.1 Establishment of mission schools

Mission schools were among the earliest formal institutions to teach English in Nigeria. A **mission school** is an educational institution founded by Christian missionaries to provide both religious and academic instruction. English was the language of teaching, which meant that learners had to acquire proficiency in it to succeed. These schools produced the first generation of Nigerians who could read and write in English, thereby creating a class of educated elites who later became influential in politics, commerce, and society.



Plate 1.2 Mission school pupils learning in English

Fill in the blank: Mission schools required learners to acquire _____ in English to succeed academically.

1.2.2 English in religious communication

Missionaries also used English in their religious activities. **Religious communication** refers to the use of language in preaching, teaching, and spreading religious messages. Sermons, hymns, and religious texts were often delivered in English, which reinforced its importance in spiritual life. This practice helped English gain acceptance among communities and made it a language associated with moral and spiritual authority.



Figure 1.2 English as a medium of religious communication in Nigeria

Fill in the blank: Sermons, hymns, and religious texts were often delivered in _____, reinforcing its spiritual importance.

1.2.3 English as a tool for literacy and social mobility

English became a tool for **literacy**, which means the ability to read and write, and for **social mobility**, which refers to the movement of individuals or groups to a higher social or economic status. Those who mastered English gained access to jobs in administration, commerce, and teaching. English literacy also allowed Nigerians to engage with wider global ideas through books, newspapers, and correspondence. This created a divide between those who had English education and those who did not, further elevating the status of the language.



Benefit	Description	Practical Outcome
Access to Employment	Eligibility for "white-collar" positions within the colonial civil service and European firms.	Transition from subsistence farming to salaried roles like clerks, interpreters, and teachers.
Social Prestige	English was viewed as the language of the "educated elite" and "modernity."	Elevated status within local communities and the ability to mediate between the public and colonial rulers.
Global Knowledge	Ability to read international news, literature, and scientific texts.	Exposure to global political movements, including Pan-Africanism and democratic ideals.
Legal Protection	Capability to navigate the English-style legal system without relying solely on interpreters.	Improved ability to defend land rights and engage in formal trade contracts.

Box 1.2 Benefits of English literacy in colonial Nigeria

Fill in the blank: English literacy provided access to _____ in administration, commerce, and teaching.

Pilot questions 1.2

What role did mission schools play in expanding English in Nigeria?

How did religious communication reinforce the importance of English?

Define literacy and explain its connection to English in colonial Nigeria.

Why was English considered a tool for social mobility?

Fill in the blank: English literacy allowed Nigerians to engage with _____ ideas through books and newspapers.

1.3 English in Post-Colonial Nigeria

The status of English in Nigeria changed significantly after independence in 1960. While colonial rule had introduced and entrenched the language, post-colonial Nigeria adopted English as a unifying tool in a multilingual nation. In this Part, we will explore how English became the official language, how it functions in governance and law, and how it influences mass media and literature.

1.3.1 English as official language



After independence, Nigeria faced the challenge of managing its diverse linguistic landscape. The country has hundreds of indigenous languages, making communication across ethnic groups complex. To address this, English was retained as the **official language**, meaning the language formally recognised for government, education, and national communication. This decision was practical, as English provided neutrality and avoided favouring any single ethnic language.



Figure 1.3 English as Nigeria's official language

Fill in the blank: Nigeria retained _____ as its official language after independence to unify diverse ethnic groups.

1.3.2 English in governance and law

English became the language of **governance**, which refers to the processes of decision-making and administration, and of **law**, which refers to the system of rules enforced by courts. Official documents, parliamentary debates, and legal proceedings are conducted in English. This ensures consistency and clarity in national administration. However, it also creates challenges for citizens who are not proficient in English, limiting their participation in governance.

Domain	Key Examples of English Use	Legal/Official Basis
National Assembly	Parliamentary debates, drafting of Bills, and published Acts of Parliament.	Section 55 of the Constitution mandates English as the primary language for business.
Superior Courts	Court rulings, legal precedents (Common Law), and formal arraignments.	Established as the "Language of the Court"; all non-English documents must be translated.



Domain	Key Examples of English Use	Legal/Official Basis
Executive Policies	Federal Gazettes, National Development Plans, and official Ministerial memos.	Acts as the "Standard" for inter-departmental and federal-state communication.
Judiciary Maxims	Use of phrases like " <i>Equity acts in personam</i> " or " <i>Equality is equity</i> " in judgments.	Derived from the Received English Law and doctrines of equity integrated into Nigerian law.

Box 1.3 Examples of English use in governance and law

Fill in the blank: Court rulings and parliamentary debates in Nigeria are conducted in _____.

1.3.3 English in mass media and literature

English also dominates Nigeria's **mass media**, which refers to communication channels such as newspapers, radio, and television, and **literature**, which refers to written works of artistic or intellectual value. Newspapers and broadcast stations use English to reach wide audiences, while Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have used English to produce globally recognised works. This has helped project Nigerian culture internationally, even though it raises debates about the balance between indigenous languages and English.



Plate 1.3 English in Nigerian mass media

Fill in the blank: Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe used _____ to produce globally recognised works.

Pilot questions 1.3



Why was English retained as Nigeria's official language after independence?

Define governance and explain how English functions within it.

What challenges arise from using English in law and governance?

How has English influenced Nigerian literature and global recognition?

Fill in the blank: Newspapers and broadcast stations in Nigeria use _____ to reach wide audiences.

1.4 Contemporary Developments and Challenges

The role of English in Nigeria continues to evolve in response to modern influences such as globalisation, technological advancement, educational reforms, and the realities of multilingualism. In this Part, we will examine how these developments shape the use of English today and the challenges that arise from its dominance.

1.4.1 English in globalisation and technology

Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness of countries through trade, communication, and culture. In Nigeria, English has become the primary language for international business, diplomacy, and digital communication. Similarly, **technology** refers to the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, and English dominates technological platforms such as social media, software, and online learning. This has made English indispensable for Nigerians seeking global opportunities.

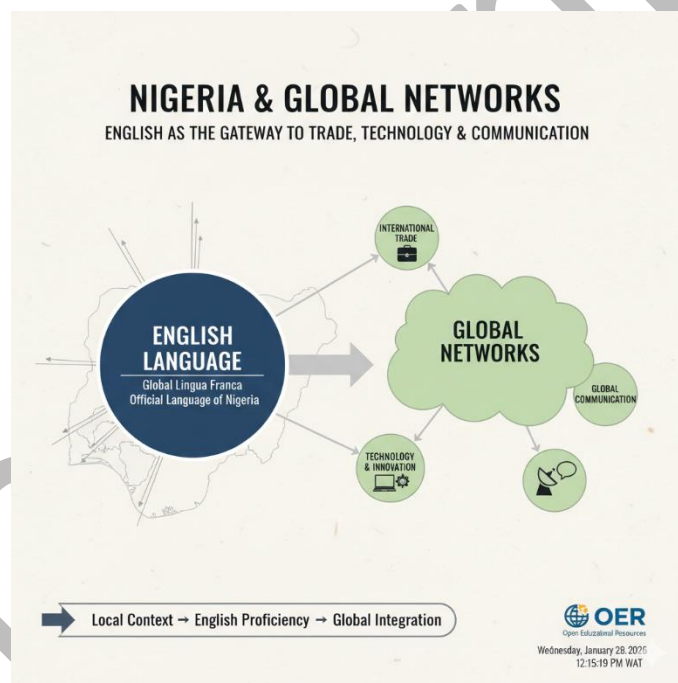


Figure 1.4 English as a tool of globalisation and technology in Nigeria



Fill in the blank: English dominates _____ platforms such as social media, software, and online learning.

1.4.2 English in Nigerian education policy

Nigeria's education system continues to emphasise English as the language of instruction. **Education policy** refers to government decisions and guidelines that shape how schools operate. While English ensures uniformity across diverse ethnic groups, it also creates challenges for learners whose first language is not English. Policies often struggle to balance the promotion of indigenous languages with the need for English proficiency.

Feature	Policy Stance	Strategic Goal
Medium of Instruction	English Language (Primary to Tertiary).	To ensure standardization, improve exam performance, and maintain global competitiveness.
Indigenous Language Status	Promoted as a mandatory subject (Language of Immediate Environment).	To preserve cultural heritage and foster national unity without hindering English proficiency.
Instructional Reversal	Scrapping of the "Mother Tongue-only" early primary policy.	Addressed concerns that early-exit transition to English was causing learning gaps in higher grades.
Multilingualism	Inclusion of French and Arabic as optional or compulsory foreign languages.	Aimed at regional integration within ECOWAS and international religious/diplomatic discourse.
Literacy Goals	Functional literacy and numeracy in English by the end of Basic Education.	To equip the youth with the communication skills required for the modern workforce and digital economy.

Box 1.4 Key features of Nigerian education policy on language

Fill in the blank: Nigeria's education system continues to emphasise _____ as the language of instruction.

1.4.3 Challenges of multilingualism and language identity

Nigeria is a multilingual nation with over 500 indigenous languages. **Multilingualism** refers to the ability of individuals or societies to use more than one language, while **language identity** refers to the sense of belonging and cultural expression tied to a language. The dominance of English sometimes threatens indigenous languages, leading to concerns about cultural erosion. At the same



time, Nigerians often blend English with local languages, creating unique varieties that reflect national identity.



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Plate 1.4 Multilingual classroom in Nigeria

Fill in the blank: Nigeria has over _____ indigenous languages, making multilingualism a central challenge in education and identity.

Pilot questions 1.4

Define globalisation and explain its impact on English use in Nigeria.

How does technology reinforce the importance of English in Nigeria?

What challenges arise from Nigeria's education policy on language?

Explain the concepts of multilingualism and language identity in Nigeria.

Fill in the blank: The dominance of English sometimes threatens _____ languages in Nigeria.

Series Summary

This Series has traced the historical development of English in Nigeria, highlighting its relevance as a foundation for understanding the varieties of Nigerian English and their role in national identity. We began with the colonial introduction of English through trade, missionary activities, and administration, then moved on to its expansion via mission schools and religious communication, where English became a tool for literacy and social mobility. Following that, we examined the post-colonial period, where English was retained as the official language and became



central to governance, law, media, and literature. Finally, we explored contemporary developments, including globalisation, education policy, and the challenges posed by multilingualism and language identity.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the circumstances of English introduction into Nigeria (SLO 1.1), explain the role of missionary activities and education in its spread (SLO 1.2), analyse its functions in post-colonial governance, law, and cultural expression (SLO 1.3), and evaluate the ongoing developments and challenges that shape English use in Nigeria today (SLO 1.4). These outcomes provide you with a clear understanding of how English has evolved in Nigeria and prepare you to engage critically with its present and future roles.

Glossary of Terms

Administration: The management of public affairs and governance, often involving official documents, policies, and decision-making processes.

Education policy: Government decisions and guidelines that shape how schools operate, including the choice of language for instruction.

Globalisation: The increasing interconnectedness of countries through trade, communication, and culture, often requiring a common language such as English.

Governance: The processes of decision-making and administration within a country, including how laws and policies are created and implemented.

Literacy: The ability to read and write, often seen as a gateway to education, employment, and social advancement.

Mass media: Communication channels such as newspapers, radio, and television that reach large audiences and influence public opinion.

Mission school: An educational institution founded by Christian missionaries to provide both religious and academic instruction, usually in English.

Missionary activities: Religious efforts aimed at converting local populations to Christianity, often accompanied by the promotion of English through schools and preaching.

Multilingualism: The ability of individuals or societies to use more than one language, common in Nigeria due to its many indigenous languages.

Official language: A language formally recognised by a government for use in administration, education, and national communication.

Religious communication: The use of language in preaching, teaching, and spreading religious messages, often through sermons, hymns, and texts.

Social mobility: The movement of individuals or groups to a higher social or economic status, often facilitated by education and literacy in English.

Technology: The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, including digital platforms such as social media and online learning where English is dominant.

Trade: The exchange of goods and services between different groups, which introduced English into Nigeria through early contact with British merchants.

Language identity: The sense of belonging and cultural expression tied to a language, reflecting how individuals and communities connect to their heritage.



Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

English was first introduced into Nigeria through: a) Missionary schools b) Trade interactions c) Court proceedings d) Newspapers (*Linked to SLO 1.1*)

Mission schools promoted English primarily as: a) A tool for governance b) A medium of religious and academic instruction c) A language for newspapers d) A form of entertainment (*Linked to SLO 1.2*)

After independence, Nigeria retained English as its official language because: a) It was the most widely spoken indigenous language b) It provided neutrality among diverse ethnic groups c) It was easier to learn than other languages d) It was imposed by the United Nations (*Linked to SLO 1.3*)

Which of the following is a challenge of multilingualism in Nigeria? a) English literacy b) Cultural erosion of indigenous languages c) Globalisation d) Missionary activities (*Linked to SLO 1.4*)

Short-answer questions

Define literacy and explain why English literacy was important in colonial Nigeria. (*Linked to SLO 1.2*)

Explain how English functions in Nigerian governance and law. (*Linked to SLO 1.3*)

What is meant by language identity, and why is it significant in Nigeria today? (*Linked to SLO 1.4*)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the role of missionary activities and education in spreading English in Nigeria. (*Linked to SLO 1.2*)

Evaluate the impact of globalisation and technology on the use of English in contemporary Nigeria. (*Linked to SLO 1.4*)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

- b) Trade interactions
- b) A medium of religious and academic instruction
- b) It provided neutrality among diverse ethnic groups
- b) Cultural erosion of indigenous languages

Short-answer questions



Literacy is the ability to read and write. English literacy was important in colonial Nigeria because it provided access to education, employment, and social mobility, allowing individuals to participate in administration and commerce.

English functions in Nigerian governance and law as the language of official documents, parliamentary debates, and court proceedings. It ensures consistency and clarity in national administration, though it can limit participation for those not proficient in English.

Language identity refers to the sense of belonging and cultural expression tied to a language. In Nigeria, it is significant because English dominance sometimes threatens indigenous languages, yet blending English with local languages creates unique varieties that reflect national identity.

Long-answer questions

Basic response: Missionary activities spread English by establishing schools where English was the language of instruction. These schools promoted literacy and produced educated elites who influenced Nigerian society. *Value-added response:* Beyond education, missionaries used English in sermons, hymns, and religious texts, reinforcing its spiritual importance. This dual role of English in both religion and education accelerated its acceptance and integration into Nigerian communities.

Basic response: Globalisation and technology have made English essential for international trade, diplomacy, and digital communication. English dominates social media, software, and online learning platforms in Nigeria. *Value-added response:* In addition to these functions, globalisation has positioned English as a gateway to global opportunities, while technology has reinforced its role in shaping youth culture and innovation. However, this dominance raises concerns about the marginalisation of indigenous languages and the need for balanced language policies.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1 Colonial Introduction of English

Trade interactions along the coastal regions.

Missionary schools spread English through teaching and literacy.

English was associated with prestige because it was used in administration and court proceedings.

Learners gained access to employment and social advancement.

Official documents.

Part 1.2 Expansion Through Education and Religion

Mission schools expanded English by making it the language of instruction.

Religious communication reinforced English through sermons, hymns, and texts.

Literacy is the ability to read and write, and English literacy opened opportunities in colonial Nigeria.

English was considered a tool for social mobility because it provided access to jobs and prestige.

Global ideas.



Part 1.3 English in Post-Colonial Nigeria

To unify diverse ethnic groups without favouring any single indigenous language.
Governance refers to decision-making and administration, and English is used in official processes.
Citizens with limited English proficiency face challenges in participating fully.
English enabled Nigerian literature to gain global recognition.
English.

Part 1.4 Contemporary Developments and Challenges

Globalisation is interconnectedness of countries, and it increased English use in trade and communication.
Technology reinforces English through digital platforms such as social media and online learning.
Policies struggle to balance English proficiency with indigenous language promotion.
Multilingualism is the use of multiple languages, and language identity reflects cultural belonging.
Indigenous.

References and Attributions [Series 1]

This section compiles all references and illustration attributions used or suggested in **Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria**. The referencing style applied here follows a simplified APA format for clarity and consistency.

General References

- Adegbija, E. (2004). *Multilingualism in Nigeria: The sociolinguistic perspective*. In E. Adegbija (Ed.), *Language, society and politics in Nigeria* (pp. 20–45). Ilorin: University of Ilorin Press.
- Bamgbose, A. (1995). *English in the Nigerian environment*. In A. Bamgbose, A. Banjo, & A. Thomas (Eds.), *New Englishes: A West African perspective* (pp. 9–26). Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers.
- Jowitt, D. (1991). *Nigerian English usage: An introduction*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria.
- OER Commons. (n.d.). *Open educational resources on Nigerian language and education*. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>

Illustrations

Figure 1.1 Trade routes and early English contact in Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian colonial trade routes OER map”. AI prompt: “Generate a map-style diagram showing 19th-century trade routes along the Nigerian coast with British merchants.”



Plate 1.1 Missionary school as a centre of English learning Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria missionary school OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate a historical-style illustration of a missionary classroom in colonial Nigeria with students learning English.”

Box 1.1 Selected administrative uses of English in colonial Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria English administration OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing colonial administrative uses of English in Nigeria: law, governance, taxation, official correspondence.”

Plate 1.2 Mission school pupils learning in English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria mission school classroom OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate a historical-style illustration of Nigerian pupils in a colonial mission school classroom learning English.”

Figure 1.2 English as a medium of religious communication in Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “English language missionary sermons Nigeria OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing English used in sermons, hymns, and religious texts, leading to community acceptance.”

Box 1.2 Benefits of English literacy in colonial Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria English literacy benefits OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing benefits of English literacy in colonial Nigeria: jobs, prestige, global ideas.”

Figure 1.3 English as Nigeria’s official language Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigeria official language English OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Nigeria’s many indigenous languages with English at the centre as the official language.”

Box 1.3 Examples of English use in governance and law Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigeria governance law English language OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of English use in governance and law in Nigeria.”

Plate 1.3 English in Nigerian mass media Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian newspaper English OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of a Nigerian newspaper front page written in English.”

Figure 1.4 English as a tool of globalisation and technology in Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigeria English globalisation technology OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Nigeria connected to global trade, technology, and communication networks through English.”

Box 1.4 Key features of Nigerian education policy on language Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigeria education policy English language OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing Nigerian education policy features on language use in schools.”

Plate 1.4 Multilingual classroom in Nigeria Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigeria multilingual classroom OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of a Nigerian classroom where English and indigenous languages are used together.”



Course code: ENG 305
Course title: The English Language in Nigeria
Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria

Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution

Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages

Series 4: Nigerian English and Standard English in Context

Series 5: Impact of Nigerian English on Standard Usage

Proposed Outline for Series 2

Part 2.1 Historical roots of Nigerian Englishes

- 2.1.1 Influence of colonial legacy on language use**
- 2.1.2 Early adaptation of English to Nigerian contexts**
- 2.1.3 Emergence of localised varieties in speech and writing**

Part 2.2 Varieties of Nigerian English

- 2.2.1 Phonological features of Nigerian English**
- 2.2.2 Lexical innovations and borrowings**
- 2.2.3 Grammatical patterns and structures**

Part 2.3 Nigerian Pidgin and its relationship to English

- 2.3.1 Definition and role of Nigerian Pidgin**
- 2.3.2 Social functions and domains of use**
- 2.3.3 Interaction between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English**

Part 2.4 Towards a standard Nigerian English

- 2.4.1 Efforts at codification and recognition**
- 2.4.2 Nigerian English in education and official communication**
- 2.4.3 Challenges in establishing a standard variety**



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the history of English in Nigeria, tracing its introduction during colonial times, its expansion through education and religion, and its consolidation in post-colonial governance and society. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the emergence of Nigerian Englishes, examining how English has been reshaped by local contexts and how efforts have been made to establish a standard variety. This exploration is crucial because it highlights the dynamic nature of language and the ways in which Nigerians have adapted English to reflect their identity, culture, and communication needs.

The aim of this Series is to analyse the development of Nigerian Englishes and to evaluate the processes that have led towards the recognition of a standard Nigerian English. By doing so, you will gain the ability to explain the distinctive features of Nigerian English, assess its relationship with Nigerian Pidgin, and discuss the challenges of codifying a standard variety.

We shall commence this Series by examining the historical roots of Nigerian Englishes, focusing on colonial influences and early adaptations. Next, we will explore the varieties of Nigerian English, paying attention to phonological, lexical, and grammatical features. Following that, we will consider Nigerian Pidgin and its relationship to English, looking at its social functions and interaction with Standard English. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the movement towards a standard Nigerian English, including efforts at codification, its role in education and official communication, and the challenges that remain in establishing a recognised standard.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 2.1** explain the historical roots of Nigerian Englishes, including colonial influences and early adaptations,
- SLO 2.2** analyse the distinctive phonological, lexical, and grammatical features of Nigerian English varieties,
- SLO 2.3** define Nigerian Pidgin and describe its social functions and relationship with Standard English,
- SLO 2.4** evaluate efforts towards codifying and recognising a standard Nigerian English, particularly in education and official communication.

2.1 Historical Roots of Nigerian Englishes

The emergence of Nigerian Englishes can be traced back to the historical circumstances that shaped the use of English in the country. These roots lie in the colonial legacy, the early adaptation of English to Nigerian contexts, and the gradual development of localised varieties in speech and writing. Understanding these foundations will help you appreciate how Nigerian Englishes evolved into distinctive forms that reflect both global and local influences.



2.1.1 Influence of colonial legacy on language use

The **colonial legacy** refers to the lasting impact of British colonial rule on Nigeria's political, social, and linguistic systems. During colonial administration, English was established as the language of governance, law, and education. This gave English prestige and positioned it as a tool of authority and modernity. Nigerians who acquired English gained access to opportunities in administration, commerce, and education, which reinforced its importance in society.

[Insert Figure here] Short description: A diagram showing the link between colonial administration and the spread of English in Nigeria. Caption: Figure 2.1 Colonial legacy and the spread of English
AI prompt suggestion: "Generate a diagram showing colonial administration connected to governance, law, and education, with English at the centre." Search string: "colonial Nigeria English language legacy OER diagram"

Fill in the blank: The colonial legacy positioned _____ as the language of governance, law, and education.

2.1.2 Early adaptation of English to Nigerian contexts

As Nigerians began to use English in everyday life, they adapted it to suit local realities. **Adaptation** in this context means modifying English expressions, pronunciation, and usage to reflect Nigerian cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, English words were sometimes given new meanings, and pronunciation was influenced by indigenous language patterns. This adaptation marked the beginning of Nigerian Englishes as distinct from British English.

[Insert Plate here] Short description: An image showing Nigerian students in a colonial-era classroom using English in local contexts. Caption: Plate 2.1 Early adaptation of English in Nigerian classrooms
AI prompt suggestion: "Generate a historical-style illustration of Nigerian students in a colonial classroom adapting English to local contexts." Search string: "colonial Nigeria classroom English adaptation OER image"

Fill in the blank: Nigerian Englishes began to emerge as people _____ English expressions and pronunciation to suit local realities.

2.1.3 Emergence of localised varieties in speech and writing

Over time, Nigerians developed **localised varieties**, meaning forms of English that reflect unique Nigerian speech patterns and writing styles. These varieties were shaped by multilingualism, cultural practices, and the need to communicate effectively across diverse groups. In literature, Nigerian writers began to incorporate local expressions into English texts, while in speech, features such as intonation and rhythm reflected indigenous influences. This process laid the foundation for Nigerian English as a recognised variety.

[Insert Box here] Caption: Box 2.1 Features of localised Nigerian English varieties [Insert Box here] Short description: A table-style box listing features such as new word meanings, local expressions, and distinctive pronunciation. AI prompt suggestion: "Generate a text box listing



features of localised Nigerian English varieties: word meanings, local expressions, pronunciation.”
Search string: “Nigerian English localised varieties features OER”

Fill in the blank: Localised varieties of Nigerian English were shaped by _____, cultural practices, and communication needs.

Pilot questions 2.1

What does colonial legacy mean in relation to Nigerian English?

How did Nigerians adapt English to local contexts?

Define localised varieties and explain their significance in Nigerian English.

Give one example of how Nigerian English differs from British English.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian writers incorporated _____ into English texts to reflect local culture.

2.2 Varieties of Nigerian English

Nigerian English is not a single uniform variety but a collection of forms shaped by local influences. These varieties reflect differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and they highlight how Nigerians have made English their own. In this Part, we will examine the phonological features, lexical innovations, and grammatical patterns that characterise Nigerian English.

2.2.1 Phonological features of Nigerian English

Phonology refers to the study of the sound system of a language. Nigerian English phonology is influenced by indigenous languages, which often lack certain sounds found in British English. For example, the “th” sound in words like *think* or *this* is often replaced with *t* or *d*. Stress patterns may also differ, with syllables pronounced more evenly than in British English. These features give Nigerian English a distinctive rhythm and accent.

[Insert Figure here] Short description: A diagram showing examples of phonological differences between British English and Nigerian English. Caption: Figure 2.2 Phonological features of Nigerian English AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing British English sounds with Nigerian English substitutions, e.g., th → t/d.” Search string: “Nigerian English phonological features OER diagram”

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, the “th” sound is often replaced with _____ or _____.

2.2.2 Lexical innovations and borrowings

Lexical innovation refers to the creation of new words or meanings, while **borrowing** means adopting words from other languages. Nigerian English has developed unique expressions such as



long-leg (meaning influence or connections) and *to dash* (meaning to give freely). Borrowings from indigenous languages also enrich Nigerian English, with words like *agbada* (a flowing robe) and *okada* (motorcycle taxi) becoming part of everyday English usage in Nigeria.

[Insert Plate here] Short description: An image showing Nigerian street life with lexical borrowings like “okada” in context. Caption: Plate 2.2 Lexical borrowings in Nigerian English AI prompt suggestion: “Generate an illustration of Nigerian street life showing an okada motorcycle taxi labelled as a borrowing in English.” Search string: “Nigerian English lexical borrowings okada agbada OER image”

Fill in the blank: The Nigerian English word *okada* refers to a _____ taxi.

2.2.3 Grammatical patterns and structures

Nigerian English also shows distinctive **grammatical patterns**, meaning the way sentences are structured. For instance, speakers may use expressions like *I am coming* to mean *I will be back soon*, which differs from British usage. Reduplication, the repetition of words for emphasis, is common, as in *small small* (meaning gradually). These structures reflect the influence of indigenous languages and cultural ways of expressing meaning.

[Insert Box here] Caption: Box 2.2 Examples of Nigerian English grammatical patterns [Insert Box here] Short description: A table-style box listing examples such as “I am coming” (meaning I will be back soon), “small small” (gradually), and “do anyhow” (act recklessly). AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a text box listing examples of Nigerian English grammatical patterns and their meanings.” Search string: “Nigerian English grammar patterns OER examples”

Fill in the blank: The phrase *small small* in Nigerian English means _____.

Pilot questions 2.2

What does phonology mean, and how does it apply to Nigerian English?

Give one example of a phonological feature in Nigerian English.

Define lexical innovation and provide one Nigerian English example.

What is borrowing, and how has it enriched Nigerian English?

Explain one grammatical pattern that distinguishes Nigerian English from British English.

Fill in the blank: The phrase *I am coming* in Nigerian English means _____.

2.3 Nigerian Pidgin and Its Relationship to English

Nigerian Pidgin is one of the most widely spoken forms of English in Nigeria. It serves as a bridge between different ethnic groups and provides a common means of communication across social classes. In this Part, we will define Nigerian Pidgin, examine its social functions, and explore how it interacts with Standard English.



2.3.1 Definition and role of Nigerian Pidgin

Nigerian Pidgin is a simplified form of English mixed with elements from indigenous languages. It is not bound by strict grammatical rules and is often used in informal settings. Its role is to facilitate communication among people who do not share the same mother tongue. Nigerian Pidgin is widely spoken in urban centres and has become a symbol of cultural identity and inclusiveness.

[Insert Plate here] Short description: An image showing Nigerians conversing in a marketplace using Pidgin. Caption: Plate 2.3 Nigerian Pidgin as a language of everyday communication AI prompt suggestion: “Generate an illustration of Nigerians in a busy marketplace conversing in Pidgin English.” Search string: “Nigerian Pidgin English marketplace OER image”

Fill in the blank: Nigerian Pidgin is a simplified form of _____ mixed with elements from indigenous languages.

2.3.2 Social functions and domains of use

The **social functions** of Nigerian Pidgin refer to the roles it plays in everyday life. It is used in markets, transport, entertainment, and increasingly in media such as radio and television. Nigerian Pidgin creates a sense of solidarity and belonging, especially among urban youth. Its domains of use are expanding, making it more visible in popular culture and even in political campaigns.

[Insert Box here] Caption: Box 2.3 Domains of Nigerian Pidgin use [Insert Box here] Short description: A table-style box listing domains such as markets, transport, entertainment, media, and politics. AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a text box listing domains of Nigerian Pidgin use in Nigeria.” Search string: “Nigerian Pidgin English domains of use OER”

Fill in the blank: Nigerian Pidgin is widely used in _____, transport, entertainment, and media.

2.3.3 Interaction between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English

Nigerian Pidgin interacts with **Standard English**, which is the variety of English recognised for formal communication. Many Nigerians switch between Pidgin and Standard English depending on the context, a practice known as **code-switching**. Pidgin influences Standard English by introducing local expressions, while Standard English shapes Pidgin through vocabulary and structure. This interaction reflects Nigeria’s multilingual reality and shows how languages evolve through contact.

[Insert Figure here] Short description: A diagram showing code-switching between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English in different contexts. Caption: Figure 2.3 Interaction between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing Nigerians switching between Pidgin and Standard English in formal and informal contexts.” Search string: “Nigerian Pidgin English code-switching OER diagram”



Fill in the blank: Switching between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English depending on context is called _____.

Pilot questions 2.3

Define Nigerian Pidgin and explain its role in communication.

Identify two social functions of Nigerian Pidgin.

What domains of life commonly use Nigerian Pidgin?

Explain the concept of code-switching in relation to Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian Pidgin influences _____ by introducing local expressions.

2.4 Towards a Standard Nigerian English

The development of Nigerian English has raised important questions about whether a standard variety should be recognised. While Nigerian Englishes reflect diverse influences, there have been efforts to codify and formalise a standard form that can serve education, governance, and international communication. In this Part, we will examine these efforts, their applications, and the challenges that remain.

2.4.1 Efforts at codification and recognition

Codification refers to the process of organising and recording the rules of a language in dictionaries, grammars, and style guides. Scholars and linguists have worked to identify the distinctive features of Nigerian English and to document them systematically. Recognition of Nigerian English as a legitimate variety helps to validate its use in academic and professional contexts, rather than treating it as “incorrect” English.

[Insert Box here] Caption: Box 2.4 Efforts at codifying Nigerian English [Insert Box here] Short description: A table-style box listing efforts such as dictionaries, grammar studies, and linguistic research. AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a text box listing codification efforts for Nigerian English: dictionaries, grammar studies, linguistic research.” Search string: “codification Nigerian English dictionary grammar OER”

Fill in the blank: Codification involves recording the rules of a language in _____, grammars, and style guides.

2.4.2 Nigerian English in education and official communication

Nigerian English is increasingly used in **education**, meaning formal teaching and learning, and in **official communication**, meaning government and institutional correspondence. Teachers often incorporate Nigerian English expressions into classrooms, while official documents sometimes reflect local usage. This shows that Nigerian English is not only a spoken variety but also a written one with growing acceptance.



[Insert Plate here] Short description: An image showing a Nigerian classroom where English is taught with localised expressions. Caption: Plate 2.4 Nigerian English in education AI prompt suggestion: “Generate an illustration of a Nigerian classroom where English is taught with Nigerian English expressions.” Search string: “Nigerian English classroom education OER image”

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English is increasingly used in _____ and official communication.

2.4.3 Challenges in establishing a standard variety

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in establishing a standard Nigerian English. **Challenges** refer to difficulties or obstacles that hinder progress. Nigeria’s linguistic diversity makes it difficult to agree on which features should be standardised. Some argue that codification risks excluding other varieties, while others worry about balancing global intelligibility with local identity. These debates highlight the complexity of creating a standard that is both nationally representative and internationally acceptable.

[Insert Figure here] Short description: A diagram showing challenges in standardising Nigerian English, such as diversity, exclusion, and global intelligibility. Caption: Figure 2.4 Challenges in establishing a standard Nigerian English AI prompt suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing challenges in standardising Nigerian English: diversity, exclusion, global intelligibility.” Search string: “Nigerian English standardisation challenges OER diagram”

Fill in the blank: Nigeria’s _____ diversity makes it difficult to agree on which features of Nigerian English should be standardised.

Pilot questions 2.4

What does codification mean in relation to Nigerian English?

Identify one effort made to codify Nigerian English.

How is Nigerian English used in education and official communication?

What challenges hinder the establishment of a standard Nigerian English?

Fill in the blank: Codification risks excluding other _____ of Nigerian English.

Series Summary

This Series has examined how Nigerian Englishes emerged and evolved, highlighting their importance in shaping national identity and communication. We began by exploring the historical roots of Nigerian Englishes, focusing on colonial influences and early adaptations. Then we analysed the distinctive phonological, lexical, and grammatical features that mark Nigerian English varieties. Following that, we considered Nigerian Pidgin, its social functions, and its interaction with Standard English through practices such as code-switching. Finally, we discussed efforts towards codifying a standard Nigerian English, its role in education and official communication, and the challenges of establishing a recognised standard.



By completing this Series, you should now be able to explain the historical foundations of Nigerian English (SLO 2.1), analyse its distinctive linguistic features (SLO 2.2), define Nigerian Pidgin and describe its relationship with Standard English (SLO 2.3), and evaluate the ongoing efforts and challenges in codifying a standard Nigerian English (SLO 2.4). These outcomes provide you with a clear understanding of how Nigerian Englishes have developed and prepare you to engage critically with their role in both local and global contexts.

Glossary of Terms

Adaptation: The process of modifying English expressions, pronunciation, and usage to suit Nigerian cultural and linguistic contexts.

Challenges: Difficulties or obstacles that hinder progress, such as those faced in establishing a standard Nigerian English.

Codification: The process of organising and recording the rules of a language in dictionaries, grammars, and style guides.

Code-switching: The practice of alternating between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English depending on the context of communication.

Grammatical patterns: The structures and ways sentences are formed in Nigerian English, often influenced by indigenous languages.

Lexical innovation: The creation of new words or meanings within Nigerian English, such as *long-leg* or *to dash*.

Localised varieties: Distinct forms of Nigerian English shaped by cultural practices, multilingualism, and communication needs.

Nigerian Pidgin: A simplified form of English mixed with elements from indigenous languages, widely used in informal communication.

Official communication: Formal exchanges in government and institutions, where Nigerian English is increasingly used.

Phonology: The study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation and rhythm.

Social functions: The roles Nigerian Pidgin plays in everyday life, such as in markets, transport, entertainment, and media.

Standard English: The variety of English recognised for formal communication, often contrasted with Nigerian Pidgin and localised varieties.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

Nigerian English first began to emerge through: a) Codification efforts b) Colonial influences and local adaptation c) Mass media campaigns d) Political debates (*Linked to SLO 2.1*)

The “th” sound in British English words like *think* is often replaced in Nigerian English with: a) s/z b) t/d c) k/g d) f/v (*Linked to SLO 2.2*)

Nigerian Pidgin is best described as: a) A dialect of Yoruba b) A simplified form of English mixed with indigenous languages c) A formal variety of Standard English d) A codified grammar system (*Linked to SLO 2.3*)



Codification of Nigerian English involves: a) Recording rules in dictionaries and grammars b) Using English in informal conversations c) Borrowing words from indigenous languages d) Promoting Nigerian Pidgin in schools (*Linked to SLO 2.4*)

Short-answer questions

Explain how colonial legacy influenced the spread of English in Nigeria. (*Linked to SLO 2.1*)

Give one example of a lexical innovation in Nigerian English. (*Linked to SLO 2.2*)

Define code-switching and explain its relevance in Nigeria. (*Linked to SLO 2.3*)

Identify one challenge in establishing a standard Nigerian English. (*Linked to SLO 2.4*)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the distinctive phonological, lexical, and grammatical features of Nigerian English varieties. (*Linked to SLO 2.2*)

Evaluate the role of Nigerian Pidgin in communication and its interaction with Standard English. (*Linked to SLO 2.3*)

Discuss the efforts and challenges involved in codifying a standard Nigerian English. (*Linked to SLO 2.4*)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

- b) Colonial influences and local adaptation
- b) t/d
- b) A simplified form of English mixed with indigenous languages
- a) Recording rules in dictionaries and grammars

Short-answer questions

Colonial legacy influenced the spread of English by making it the language of governance, law, and education, thereby giving it prestige and authority.

An example of lexical innovation is *long-leg*, meaning influence or connections.

Code-switching is the practice of alternating between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English depending on context. It is relevant in Nigeria because it reflects multilingual realities and allows effective communication across different settings.

One challenge is Nigeria's linguistic diversity, which makes it difficult to agree on which features should be standardised.

Long-answer questions

Basic response: Nigerian English varieties show phonological features such as replacing “th” with “t/d”, lexical innovations like *to dash*, and grammatical patterns such as *I am coming* meaning *I will be back soon*. *Value-added response:* These features reflect the influence of indigenous languages and cultural practices. They also demonstrate how Nigerians have reshaped English to



suit local realities, creating a distinctive rhythm, vocabulary, and sentence structure that mark Nigerian English as unique.

Basic response: Nigerian Pidgin plays a role in informal communication, especially in markets, transport, and entertainment. It interacts with Standard English through code-switching.

Value-added response: Beyond informal use, Nigerian Pidgin is increasingly visible in media and politics, symbolising inclusiveness and cultural identity. Its interaction with Standard English enriches both varieties, showing how languages evolve through contact and adaptation.

Basic response: Efforts to codify Nigerian English include dictionaries and grammar studies, but challenges such as linguistic diversity hinder standardisation. *Value-added response:* Codification also raises debates about balancing global intelligibility with local identity. While recognition of Nigerian English validates its use in education and official communication, disagreements about which features to standardise highlight the complexity of creating a nationally representative yet internationally acceptable variety.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Part 2.1 Historical roots of Nigerian Englishes

Colonial legacy means the lasting impact of British colonial rule on Nigeria's systems, including language.

Nigerians adapted English by modifying expressions, pronunciation, and usage to reflect local realities.

Localised varieties are distinct forms of Nigerian English shaped by cultural practices, multilingualism, and communication needs.

One example is the phrase *I am coming*, which in Nigerian English means *I will be back soon*. Nigerian writers incorporated local expressions into English texts to reflect culture.

Part 2.2 Varieties of Nigerian English

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation and rhythm. An example is replacing the "th" sound with *t* or *d*.

Lexical innovation is the creation of new words or meanings, such as *long-leg*.

Borrowing is adopting words from other languages, enriching Nigerian English with terms like *okada*.

One grammatical pattern is reduplication, such as *small small* meaning gradually.

The phrase *I am coming* means *I will be back soon*.

Part 2.3 Nigerian Pidgin and Its Relationship to English

Nigerian Pidgin is a simplified form of English mixed with indigenous languages, used for informal communication.

Two social functions are creating solidarity and facilitating everyday communication.

Nigerian Pidgin is commonly used in markets, transport, entertainment, media, and politics.

Code-switching is alternating between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English depending on context.

Nigerian Pidgin influences Standard English by introducing local expressions.



Part 2.4 Towards a Standard Nigerian English

Codification means organising and recording the rules of a language in dictionaries, grammars, and style guides.

One effort is the production of dictionaries and grammar studies documenting Nigerian English.

Nigerian English is used in classrooms and official documents, reflecting growing acceptance. Challenges include linguistic diversity, exclusion of varieties, and balancing global intelligibility with local identity.

Codification risks excluding other varieties of Nigerian English.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

This section compiles all references and illustration attributions used or suggested in **Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution**. The referencing style applied here follows a simplified APA format for clarity and consistency.

General References

Bamgbose, A. (1995). *English in the Nigerian environment*. In A. Bamgbose, A. Banjo, & A. Thomas (Eds.), *New Englishes: A West African perspective* (pp. 9–26). Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers.

Jowitt, D. (1991). *Nigerian English usage: An introduction*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria.

Adegbija, E. (2004). *Multilingualism in Nigeria: The sociolinguistic perspective*. Ilorin: University of Ilorin Press.

OER Commons. (n.d.). *Open educational resources on Nigerian language and education*. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>

Illustrations

Figure 2.1 Colonial legacy and the spread of English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria English language legacy OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing colonial administration connected to governance, law, and education, with English at the centre.”

Plate 2.1 Early adaptation of English in Nigerian classrooms Attribution: Suggested OER search string “colonial Nigeria classroom English adaptation OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate a historical-style illustration of Nigerian students in a colonial classroom adapting English to local contexts.”

Box 2.1 Features of localised Nigerian English varieties Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English localised varieties features OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing features of localised Nigerian English varieties: word meanings, local expressions, pronunciation.”

Figure 2.2 Phonological features of Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English phonological features OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a



diagram comparing British English sounds with Nigerian English substitutions, e.g., th → t/d.”

Plate 2.2 Lexical borrowings in Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English lexical borrowings okada agbada OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerian street life showing an okada motorcycle taxi labelled as a borrowing in English.”

Box 2.2 Examples of Nigerian English grammatical patterns Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English grammar patterns OER examples”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of Nigerian English grammatical patterns and their meanings.”

Plate 2.3 Nigerian Pidgin as a language of everyday communication Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian Pidgin English marketplace OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerians in a busy marketplace conversing in Pidgin English.”

Box 2.3 Domains of Nigerian Pidgin use Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian Pidgin English domains of use OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing domains of Nigerian Pidgin use in Nigeria.”

Figure 2.3 Interaction between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian Pidgin English code-switching OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Nigerians switching between Pidgin and Standard English in formal and informal contexts.”

Box 2.4 Efforts at codifying Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “codification Nigerian English dictionary grammar OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing codification efforts for Nigerian English: dictionaries, grammar studies, linguistic research.”

Plate 2.4 Nigerian English in education Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English classroom education OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of a Nigerian classroom where English is taught with Nigerian English expressions.”

Figure 2.4 Challenges in establishing a standard Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English standardisation challenges OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing challenges in standardising Nigerian English: diversity, exclusion, global intelligibility.”

Course code: ENG 305

Course title: The English Language in Nigeria

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria



Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution

Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages

Series 4: Nigerian English and Standard English in Context

Series 5: Impact of Nigerian English on Standard Usage

Proposed Outline for Series 3

Part .1 Phonological properties of Nigerian languages

- 3.1.1 Sound systems and tonal features**
- 3.1.2 Vowel harmony and consonant patterns**
- 3.1.3 Influence of phonology on Nigerian English**

Part .2 Morphological properties of Nigerian languages

- 3.2.1 Word formation processes**
- 3.2.2 Use of affixes and reduplication**
- 3.2.3 Morphological influence on Nigerian English vocabulary**

Part .3 Syntactic properties of Nigerian languages

- 3.3.1 Sentence structure and word order**
- 3.3.2 Use of particles and markers**
- 3.3.3 Syntactic transfer into Nigerian English**

Part .4 Semantic and pragmatic properties of Nigerian languages

- 3.4.1 Meaning and cultural context in language use**
- 3.4.2 Proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions**
- 3.4.3 Pragmatic influence on Nigerian English communication styles**

Introduction

Languages are more than tools of communication; they are carriers of culture, identity, and worldview. Nigeria, with its rich multilingual heritage, offers a fascinating landscape for studying how languages function and interact. In the last Series, we examined the emergence of Nigerian Englishes and their evolution towards a standard form. In this Series, we shift our focus to the distinctive properties of Nigerian languages themselves, exploring how their unique features shape communication and influence Nigerian English.



The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the core linguistic properties of Nigerian languages and to demonstrate how these properties contribute to Nigeria's multilingual identity and the development of Nigerian English. By the end of this Series, you will be able to identify, explain, and evaluate the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic-pragmatic characteristics of Nigerian languages.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the phonological properties of Nigerian languages, focusing on sound systems, tonal features, and vowel harmony. Next, we will move on to morphological properties, examining word formation processes, affixes, and reduplication. Following that, we will consider syntactic properties, including sentence structures, word order, and the transfer of these features into Nigerian English. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing semantic and pragmatic properties, highlighting how meaning, cultural context, proverbs, and figurative expressions shape communication styles.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 3.1** describe the phonological properties of Nigerian languages, including tonal features and vowel harmony,
- SLO 3.2** analyse how phonological systems of Nigerian languages influence pronunciation in Nigerian English,
- SLO 3.3** explain the morphological processes in Nigerian languages, such as affixation and reduplication,
- SLO 3.4** identify examples of how Nigerian language morphology contributes to Nigerian English vocabulary,
- SLO 3.5** examine the syntactic properties of Nigerian languages, including sentence structure and word order,
- SLO 3.6** evaluate the transfer of syntactic features from Nigerian languages into Nigerian English,
- SLO 3.7** define the semantic and pragmatic properties of Nigerian languages, focusing on meaning in cultural context,
- SLO 3.8** illustrate how proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions shape communication styles in Nigerian English.

3.1 Phonological Properties of Nigerian Languages

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language, including how sounds are organised and used. Nigerian languages are particularly rich in phonological features, with tonal systems, vowel harmony, and distinctive consonant patterns that set them apart from English. Understanding these properties will help you appreciate how Nigerian languages function and how they influence Nigerian English.



3.1.1 Sound systems and tonal features

Many Nigerian languages are **tonal languages**, meaning that pitch or tone is used to distinguish word meanings. For example, the same sequence of sounds may mean different things depending on whether it is spoken with a high, mid, or low tone. This makes tone an essential part of communication in languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa.

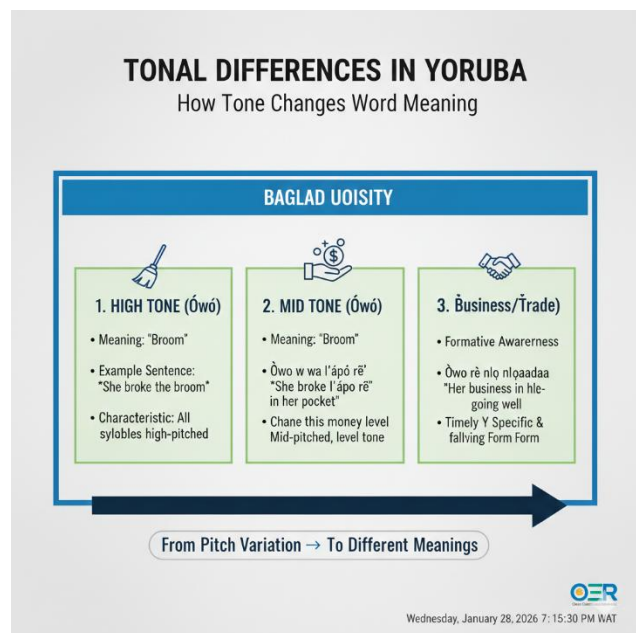


Figure 3.1 Tonal features in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, _____ is used to distinguish word meanings.

3.1.2 Vowel harmony and consonant patterns

Vowel harmony is a phonological process where vowels within a word must share certain features, such as being front or back vowels. This property is common in many Nigerian languages, including Yoruba. Consonant patterns also differ from English, with sounds such as implosives and labial-velar stops (e.g., *gb* and *kp*) being distinctive features. These sounds are unfamiliar to English speakers but are central to Nigerian languages.

Feature	Description	Examples
Vowel Harmony	A constraint where all vowels in a word must share a specific quality (usually tongue root position).	In Yoruba , vowels are often grouped by height. In Igbo , vowels are divided into "Light" (A, I, Ị, Ụ) and "Heavy" (E, I, O, U) sets.



Feature	Description	Examples
Consonant Clusters (Digraphs)	Specific combinations that function as a single sound unit, often involving double articulation.	gb (as in <i>Gbagyi</i> or <i>gbogbo</i>) and kp (as in <i>akpa</i>). These are produced by closing the lips and the back of the throat simultaneously.
Nasalization	Vowels that are produced with air escaping through both the nose and mouth.	Yoruba words like <i>erùn</i> (mouth) or <i>itàn</i> (story), where the final 'n' indicates the vowel is nasalized.

Box 3.1 Examples of vowel harmony and consonant patterns

Fill in the blank: The consonant cluster *gb* is an example of a _____ sound found in Nigerian languages.

3.1.3 Influence of phonology on Nigerian English

The phonological properties of Nigerian languages influence how Nigerians pronounce English. For instance, the absence of certain sounds in Nigerian languages leads to substitutions in Nigerian English, such as replacing “th” with *t* or *d*. Tonal patterns also affect intonation in Nigerian English, giving it a distinctive rhythm compared to British English. These influences highlight the interaction between indigenous phonologies and English.



NIGERIAN ENGLISH PHONOLOGY INFLUENCE

Plate 3.1 Influence of Nigerian phonology on Nigerian English



Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, the “th” sound is often replaced with _____ or _____.

Pilot questions 3.1

What does phonology mean in the study of language?

How do tonal features function in Nigerian languages?

Give one example of vowel harmony in Nigerian languages.

Identify a consonant pattern unique to Nigerian languages.

Explain how Nigerian phonology influences Nigerian English pronunciation.

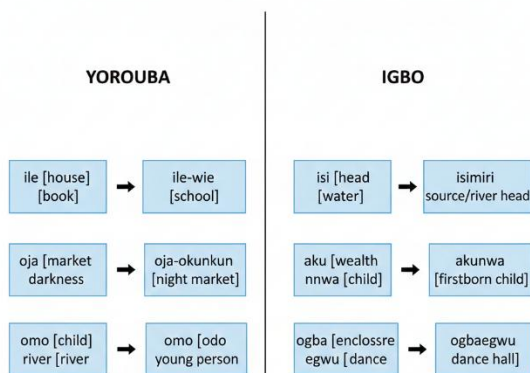
Fill in the blank: Tonal patterns affect _____ in Nigerian English, giving it a distinctive rhythm.

3.2 Morphological Properties of Nigerian Languages

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and how they are formed. Nigerian languages display rich morphological processes that shape meaning and expression. These processes include word formation, the use of affixes, and reduplication. Understanding these properties will help you see how Nigerian languages influence vocabulary and usage in Nigerian English.

3.2.1 Word formation processes

Word formation refers to the ways in which new words are created in a language. Nigerian languages often use compounding, where two or more words are joined to form a new meaning. For example, in Yoruba, *ile-iwe* (house of books) means school. Such processes reflect cultural perspectives and practical ways of naming concepts.



YORUBA AND IGBO COMPOUND WORD FORMATION



Figure 3.2 Word formation through compounding in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: In Yoruba, the compound *ile-iwe* literally means _____.

3.2.2 Use of affixes and reduplication

An **affix** is a morpheme added to a word to change its meaning or function. Nigerian languages use prefixes and suffixes to mark tense, aspect, or plurality. For instance, in Hausa, prefixes can indicate verb tense. **Reduplication** is the repetition of a word or part of a word to express emphasis, intensity, or continuity. In Yoruba, *rere-rere* can mean very good, while in Nigerian English, reduplication appears in expressions like *small small* (gradually).

Morphological Patterns in Nigerian Languages	
Process	Examples
Affixation (Hausa)	ma- + gani (see) = magani (remedy)
Reduplication (Yoruba)	lo (go → lilo (going))
Reduplication (Nigerian English)	slow-slow (very slowly)

Box 3.2 Examples of affixes and reduplication in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: Reduplication in Nigerian English often expresses _____, as in the phrase *small small*.

3.2.3 Morphological influence on Nigerian English vocabulary

The morphological features of Nigerian languages influence Nigerian English vocabulary. Compounding and reduplication are transferred into English usage, creating expressions unique to Nigeria. For example, *to chop money* (to spend extravagantly) reflects compounding influenced by indigenous structures. Similarly, reduplication in Nigerian English mirrors patterns found in local languages, making Nigerian English distinct in its vocabulary and style.





NIGERIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Plate 3.2 Morphological influence on Nigerian English vocabulary

Fill in the blank: The Nigerian English phrase *to chop money* means to _____ extravagantly.

Pilot questions 3.2

What does morphology study in language?

Give one example of word formation through compounding in Nigerian languages.

Define affix and give one example from Hausa.

What is reduplication, and how is it used in Yoruba?

Explain how morphological features of Nigerian languages influence Nigerian English vocabulary.

Fill in the blank: Reduplication in Nigerian English mirrors patterns found in _____ languages.

3.3 Syntactic Properties of Nigerian Languages

Syntax is the study of how words are arranged to form sentences. Nigerian languages exhibit distinctive syntactic features that differ from English, including variations in sentence structure, word order, and the use of particles or markers. These features influence how Nigerians express themselves and often transfer into Nigerian English.

3.3.1 Sentence structure and word order

Sentence structure refers to the arrangement of words in a sentence. While English typically follows a Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) order, many Nigerian languages use different patterns. For example, in Igbo, word order can vary depending on emphasis, while Yoruba often employs



Subject–Verb–Object but with additional markers that clarify meaning. These structures reflect the flexibility and richness of Nigerian languages.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE COMPARISON		
ENGLISH (SVO)	IGBO (SVO)	YORUBA (SVO)
Subject - Verb Object	Subject - Verb Object	Subject - Verb Object
The girl (S) eats (V) rice (O).	Ada (S) na-eri (V) osikapa (O).	Adé (S) jẹ (V) írẹsì (O).

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES SYNTAX

Figure 3.3 Sentence structures in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: English typically follows a _____ word order pattern.

3.3.2 Use of particles and markers

Particles are small words that add meaning to sentences, while **markers** indicate grammatical relationships such as tense, aspect, or focus. Nigerian languages frequently use particles to emphasise or clarify meaning. For instance, Yoruba employs particles like *ni* to mark focus, while Hausa uses markers to indicate tense. These elements enrich communication and highlight nuances that may not be captured in English.



SYNTACTIC MARKERS IN YORUBA AND HAUSA	
Feature	Examples
Focus Particle (Yoruba)	Adé <i>ní</i> ó ra iwé. (It was Adé who bought the book.).
Tense Markers (Hausa)	Sun <i>táfi gida</i> . (They have gone home. - Perfective) Suna are going gida. Imperfective)

YORUBA HAUSA PARTICLES MARKERS SYNTAX

Box 3.3 Examples of particles and markers in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: In Yoruba, the particle _____ is used to mark focus in a sentence.

3.3.3 Syntactic transfer into Nigerian English

The syntactic features of Nigerian languages often transfer into Nigerian English. For example, Nigerian English may use expressions like *I am coming* to mean *I will be back soon*, reflecting indigenous structures. Word order and emphasis patterns also influence how Nigerians construct English sentences, giving Nigerian English its distinctive flavour. These transfers show how multilingualism shapes English usage in Nigeria.





NIGERIAN ENGLISH SYNTAX TRANSFER

Plate 3.3 Syntactic transfer into Nigerian English

Fill in the blank: The Nigerian English phrase *I am coming* means _____ in British English.

Pilot questions 3.3

What does syntax study in language?

What is the typical word order in English?

Give one example of a particle used in Yoruba.

How do markers function in Hausa?

Explain how syntactic features of Nigerian languages transfer into Nigerian English.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English reflects indigenous structures in expressions such as _____.

3.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Properties of Nigerian Languages

Semantics and pragmatics deal with meaning and language use in context. Nigerian languages are rich in cultural expressions, proverbs, and idioms that convey more than literal meaning. These properties shape how Nigerians communicate and influence Nigerian English in both spoken and written forms.

3.4.1 Meaning and cultural context in language use



Semantics refers to the meaning of words and sentences, while **pragmatics** focuses on how meaning is shaped by context. In Nigerian languages, meaning is often tied to cultural practices and values. For example, greetings in Yoruba or Hausa carry social significance beyond simple words, reflecting respect and community ties.

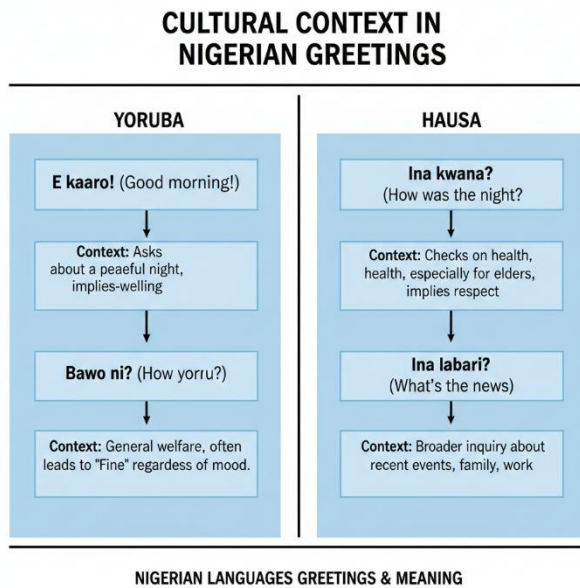


Figure 3.4 Meaning and cultural context in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is shaped by _____.

3.4.2 Proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions

Proverbs are short, traditional sayings that express wisdom or cultural values. **Idioms** are expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal words, while **figurative expressions** use imagery to convey deeper meaning. Nigerian languages are full of these devices, such as the Yoruba proverb *Bi omode ba subu, a wo iwaju; bi agbalagba ba subu, a wo eyin* (When a child falls, he looks forward; when an elder falls, he looks backward). These expressions enrich communication and often appear in Nigerian English.



Figurative Expressions in Nigerian Languages		
Proverbs (Yoruba)	Proverbs (Igbo)	Idioms (Nigerian English)
Ile la n wo, k'ato s'atomno l'oruko (meaning: One considers home before naming a child)	Onye ruru aka, o riri nne (meaning: He who works hard, eats well)	To take person for a ride (meaning: To deceive or trick someone)

**NIGERIAN PROVERBS IDIOMS
FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS**

Box 3.4 Examples of proverbs and idioms in Nigerian languages

Fill in the blank: Proverbs are short traditional sayings that express _____ or cultural values.

3.4.3 Pragmatic influence on Nigerian English communication styles

The pragmatic features of Nigerian languages influence Nigerian English communication styles. For example, indirectness and respect markers in indigenous languages often carry over into English conversations. Nigerian English may include culturally influenced politeness strategies, figurative expressions, and proverbs to convey meaning. This shows how Nigerian English reflects not only linguistic transfer but also cultural values embedded in communication.





NIGERIAN ENGLISH: PROVERBS AND FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Plate 3.4 Pragmatic influence on Nigerian English communication styles

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English communication styles often reflect _____ values embedded in indigenous languages.

Pilot questions 3.4

What is the difference between semantics and pragmatics?

How does cultural context shape meaning in Nigerian languages?

Give one example of a Nigerian proverb and explain its meaning.

Define idioms and provide one example in Nigerian English.

Explain how pragmatic features of Nigerian languages influence Nigerian English communication styles.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English often uses _____ strategies influenced by indigenous languages.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the distinctive properties of Nigerian languages, highlighting how their unique phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic-pragmatic features shape communication and influence Nigerian English. By examining these properties, you have gained insight into the cultural and linguistic richness of Nigeria's multilingual environment and its impact on English usage.

We began with phonological properties, exploring tonal systems, vowel harmony, and consonant patterns, then moved on to morphological processes such as compounding, affixation, and



reduplication. Following that, we considered syntactic features, including sentence structures, word order, and the use of particles and markers, before concluding with semantic and pragmatic aspects such as meaning in cultural context, proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions. By completing this Series, you should now be able to describe phonological features (SLO 3.1), analyse their influence on Nigerian English (SLO 3.2), explain morphological processes (SLO 3.3), identify their contribution to vocabulary (SLO 3.4), examine syntactic structures (SLO 3.5), evaluate syntactic transfer (SLO 3.6), define semantic and pragmatic properties (SLO 3.7), and illustrate how cultural expressions shape communication styles (SLO 3.8).

Glossary of Terms

Affix: A morpheme added to the beginning or end of a word to change its meaning or function, such as prefixes and suffixes in Hausa.

Compounding: A word formation process where two or more words are joined to create a new meaning, for example, Yoruba *ile-iwe* (house of books) meaning school.

Consonant patterns: Distinctive sound combinations found in Nigerian languages, such as *gb* and *kp*, which are not common in English.

Idioms: Expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal words, often used in Nigerian English to convey cultural ideas.

Markers: Small elements in Nigerian languages that indicate grammatical relationships such as tense, aspect, or focus.

Morphology: The study of the internal structure of words and how they are formed.

Particles: Small words used in Nigerian languages to add emphasis or clarify meaning, such as the Yoruba particle *ni*.

Phonology: The study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation, tone, and rhythm.

Pragmatics: The study of how meaning is shaped by context, including politeness strategies and cultural values in communication.

Proverbs: Short traditional sayings that express wisdom or cultural values, often used in Nigerian languages and Nigerian English.

Reduplication: The repetition of a word or part of a word to express emphasis, intensity, or continuity, such as *small small* in Nigerian English.

Semantics: The study of meaning in words and sentences.

Sentence structure: The arrangement of words in a sentence, which may vary across Nigerian languages compared to English.

Syntax: The study of how words are arranged to form sentences, including word order and grammatical relationships.

Tonal language: A language in which pitch or tone is used to distinguish word meanings, as in Yoruba and Igbo.

Word formation: The processes by which new words are created in a language, including compounding, affixation, and reduplication.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions



Nigerian languages such as Yoruba and Igbo are classified as: a) Non-tonal languages b) Tonal languages c) Stress-based languages d) Monosyllabic languages (*Linked to SLO 3.1*)

The consonant cluster *gb* in Yoruba is an example of: a) Implosive sound b) Labial-velar stop c) Nasal consonant d) Fricative sound (*Linked to SLO 3.1*)

Reduplication in Nigerian English, such as *small small*, expresses: a) Negation b) Gradual action c) Past tense d) Possession (*Linked to SLO 3.3*)

In Yoruba, the particle *ni* is used to: a) Mark tense b) Indicate plurality c) Mark focus d) Show possession (*Linked to SLO 3.5*)

Short-answer questions

Define phonology and explain its relevance to Nigerian languages. (*Linked to SLO 3.1*)

Give one example of compounding in Nigerian languages and explain its meaning. (*Linked to SLO 3.3*)

What is an affix, and how is it used in Hausa? (*Linked to SLO 3.3*)

Explain the difference between semantics and pragmatics. (*Linked to SLO 3.7*)

Provide one example of a Nigerian proverb and explain its cultural significance. (*Linked to SLO 3.8*)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the phonological properties of Nigerian languages and their influence on Nigerian English pronunciation. (*Linked to SLO 3.1, SLO 3.2*)

Evaluate the morphological processes in Nigerian languages and how they contribute to Nigerian English vocabulary. (*Linked to SLO 3.3, SLO 3.4*)

Discuss the syntactic features of Nigerian languages and how they transfer into Nigerian English. (*Linked to SLO 3.5, SLO 3.6*)

Illustrate how semantic and pragmatic properties of Nigerian languages shape communication styles in Nigerian English. (*Linked to SLO 3.7, SLO 3.8*)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

- b) Tonal languages
- b) Labial-velar stop
- b) Gradual action
- c) Mark focus

Short-answer questions

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language. It is relevant to Nigerian languages because features such as tone and vowel harmony are central to meaning and communication.

An example is Yoruba *ile-iwe* (house of books), which means school. It shows how compounding creates new words.



An affix is a morpheme added to a word to change its meaning. In Hausa, prefixes can mark tense in verbs.

Semantics is the study of meaning in words and sentences, while pragmatics examines how meaning is shaped by context.

Yoruba proverb: *Bi omode ba subu, a wo iwaju; bi agbalagba ba subu, a wo eyin* (When a child falls, he looks forward; when an elder falls, he looks backward). It reflects cultural wisdom about youth and experience.

Long-answer questions

Basic response: Nigerian languages use tonal systems, vowel harmony, and consonant clusters like *gb* and *kp*. These features influence Nigerian English pronunciation, such as replacing “th” with *t* or *d*. *Value-added response:* Beyond pronunciation, tonal patterns affect intonation in Nigerian English, giving it a distinctive rhythm. This demonstrates how indigenous phonologies shape English usage in Nigeria.

Basic response: Nigerian languages use compounding, affixation, and reduplication. These processes contribute to Nigerian English vocabulary, such as *small small* or *chop money*. *Value-added response:* These morphological transfers enrich Nigerian English, making it culturally expressive and distinct from British English. They also show how Nigerian English reflects indigenous creativity in word formation.

Basic response: Nigerian languages employ flexible sentence structures, particles, and markers. These features transfer into Nigerian English, producing expressions like *I am coming* meaning *I will be back soon*. *Value-added response:* Syntactic transfer highlights how multilingualism shapes Nigerian English. It demonstrates the blending of indigenous structures with English grammar, creating a unique communicative style.

Basic response: Semantic and pragmatic features such as proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions shape Nigerian English communication styles. *Value-added response:* These features embed cultural values into English usage, promoting indirectness, politeness, and imagery. Nigerian English thus becomes a vehicle for cultural identity as well as communication.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1 Phonological properties of Nigerian languages

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language.

Tonal features use pitch to distinguish word meanings.

An example of vowel harmony is Yoruba words requiring vowels to share front or back qualities.

The consonant cluster *gb* is a labial-velar stop sound unique to Nigerian languages.

Nigerian phonology influences Nigerian English pronunciation, such as replacing “th” with *t* or *d*.

Tonal patterns affect intonation in Nigerian English, giving it a distinctive rhythm.

Part 3.2 Morphological properties of Nigerian languages

Morphology studies the internal structure of words and how they are formed.



Yoruba *ile-iwe* (house of books) means school.

An affix is a morpheme added to a word to change its meaning; in Hausa, prefixes mark tense.

Reduplication is repeating a word or part of a word to show emphasis or continuity, e.g.,

Yoruba *rere-rere*.

Morphological features influence Nigerian English vocabulary, producing expressions like *small small* or *chop money*.

Reduplication in Nigerian English mirrors patterns found in indigenous languages.

Part 3.3 Syntactic properties of Nigerian languages

Syntax studies how words are arranged to form sentences.

English typically follows a Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) word order.

Yoruba uses the particle *ni* to mark focus.

Markers in Hausa indicate tense and aspect.

Syntactic features transfer into Nigerian English, producing expressions like *I am coming* meaning *I will be back soon*.

Nigerian English reflects indigenous structures in expressions such as *I am coming*.

Part 3.4 Semantic and pragmatic properties of Nigerian languages

Semantics studies meaning, while pragmatics examines meaning shaped by context.

Cultural context shapes meaning by embedding social values and practices in language use.

Yoruba proverb: *Bi omode ba subu, a wo iwaju; bi agbalagba ba subu, a wo eyin* (When a child falls, he looks forward; when an elder falls, he looks backward). It signifies the difference between youthful optimism and elder reflection.

Idioms are expressions whose meanings cannot be understood literally, e.g., Nigerian English *to chop money*.

Pragmatic features influence Nigerian English through politeness strategies, figurative expressions, and proverbs.

Nigerian English often uses politeness strategies influenced by indigenous languages.

References and Attributions [Series 3]

This section compiles all references and illustration attributions used or suggested in **Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages**. The referencing style applied here follows a simplified APA format for clarity and consistency.

General References

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Jowitt, D. (1991). *Nigerian English usage: An introduction*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria.



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Illustrations

Figure 3.1 Tonal features in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Yoruba tonal language diagram OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing tonal differences in Yoruba words, e.g., owo with high, mid, low tones.”

Box 3.1 Examples of vowel harmony and consonant patterns Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian languages vowel harmony consonant patterns OER”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of vowel harmony and consonant patterns in Nigerian languages.”

Plate 3.1 Influence of Nigerian phonology on Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English phonology influence OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerian students speaking English with tonal and consonant influences from native languages.”

Figure 3.2 Word formation through compounding in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Yoruba Igbo word formation compounding OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Yoruba and Igbo word formation examples, e.g., ile-iwe (school).”

Box 3.2 Examples of affixes and reduplication in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian languages affixes reduplication OER examples”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of affixes and reduplication in Nigerian languages and Nigerian English.”

Plate 3.2 Morphological influence on Nigerian English vocabulary Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English vocabulary chop money OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerian street life with people using expressions like chop money.”

Figure 3.3 Sentence structures in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian languages syntax word order OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram comparing English SVO word order with Igbo and Yoruba sentence structures.”

Box 3.3 Examples of particles and markers in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Yoruba Hausa particles markers syntax OER examples”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of particles and markers in Yoruba and Hausa.”

Plate 3.3 Syntactic transfer into Nigerian English Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English syntax transfer OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerian students speaking English with syntax influenced by Yoruba or Igbo.”

Figure 3.4 Meaning and cultural context in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian languages greetings cultural context OER diagram”. AI prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Yoruba and Hausa greetings with cultural meanings attached.”



Box 3.4 Examples of proverbs and idioms in Nigerian languages Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian proverbs idioms figurative expressions OER examples”. AI prompt: “Generate a text box listing examples of Nigerian proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions with meanings.”

Plate 3.4 Pragmatic influence on Nigerian English communication styles Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Nigerian English communication styles proverbs OER image”. AI prompt: “Generate an illustration of Nigerians conversing in English using proverbs and figurative expressions.”

Course code: ENG 305

Course title: The English Language in Nigeria

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria

Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution

Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages

Series 4: Nigerian English and Standard English in Context

Series 5: Impact of Nigerian English on Standard Usage

Proposed Outline for Series 4

Part .1 Conceptual Foundations

4.1.1 Defining Nigerian English

4.1.2 Defining Standard English

4.1.3 Historical and Sociolinguistic Background

Part .2 Comparative Linguistic Features

4.2.1 Phonological Features

4.2.2 Lexical and Semantic Features

4.2.3 Grammatical and Syntactic Features

Part .3 Domains of Usage

4.3.1 Nigerian English in Education

4.3.2 Nigerian English in Media and Literature



4.3.3 Nigerian English in Government and Law

Part .4 Attitudes and Perceptions

4.4.1 Public Perceptions of Nigerian English

4.4.2 Prestige and Stigma in Language Use

4.4.3 Identity and Cultural Expression

Part .5 Towards Harmonisation and Standardisation

4.5.1 Efforts at Codification

4.5.2 Challenges of Standardisation

4.5.3 Future Prospects for Nigerian English

Introduction

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a marker of identity and culture. In Nigeria, the coexistence of **Nigerian English** and **Standard English** reflects the dynamic interplay between local linguistic realities and global norms. Learners often encounter situations where the two varieties overlap, diverge, or even clash, whether in classrooms, workplaces, or everyday interactions. This Series will help you appreciate the significance of these contexts and understand how Nigerian English functions alongside Standard English within society.

The aim of this Series is to examine the relationship between Nigerian English and Standard English, to analyse their similarities and differences, and to evaluate how they are used in various domains of Nigerian life.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the conceptual foundations of Nigerian English and Standard English, including their definitions and historical background. Next, we will compare their linguistic features, focusing on phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. Following that, we will consider the domains of usage, such as education, media, and governance, where Nigerian English interacts with Standard English. Afterwards, we will examine attitudes and perceptions towards Nigerian English, including issues of prestige, stigma, and identity. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing efforts towards harmonisation and standardisation, highlighting both challenges and future prospects.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 4.1 define Nigerian English and Standard English, highlighting their historical and sociolinguistic foundations,

SLO 4.2 analyse the phonological, lexical, and grammatical features that distinguish Nigerian English from Standard English,



- SLO 4.3** explain how Nigerian English is applied across domains such as education, media, and governance,
- SLO 4.4** evaluate public attitudes and perceptions towards Nigerian English, including issues of prestige, stigma, and identity, and
- SLO 4.5** assess current efforts and challenges in harmonising and standardising Nigerian English for future development.

4.1 Conceptual Foundations

4.1.1 Defining Nigerian English

Nigerian English refers to the variety of English that has developed within Nigeria, shaped by local languages, cultural contexts, and communicative needs. It is not a completely separate language but rather a distinct form of English that reflects Nigerian identity. Nigerian English includes unique pronunciations, vocabulary, and expressions that may differ from what is considered Standard English. For example, words like “go-slow” (meaning traffic jam) and “long-leg” (meaning someone with influence) are widely recognised in Nigeria but may be unfamiliar elsewhere.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English is a variety of English shaped by _____, cultural contexts, and communicative needs.



NIGERIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY

NIGERIAN ENGLISH	STANDARD ENGLISH
Chop money	Spend money
To take person for a ride	frivolously/squander money
Senior bro/sis	To deceive someone
Junior bro/sis	Younger brother/sister
Traffic jam (go-slow)	Traffic congestion/slow-moving traffic
Fell ill	Became ill

NIGERIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY OER



Box 4.1 Examples of Nigerian English vocabulary

4.1.2 Defining Standard English

Standard English is the variety of English that is widely accepted as the norm for formal communication, education, and official purposes. It is characterised by agreed rules of grammar,



vocabulary, and pronunciation, and it serves as a benchmark for correctness in many contexts. In Nigeria, Standard English is taught in schools and used in government, law, and international communication. However, it often coexists with Nigerian English in everyday life.

Fill in the blank: Standard English is the variety of English widely accepted as the _____ for formal communication.

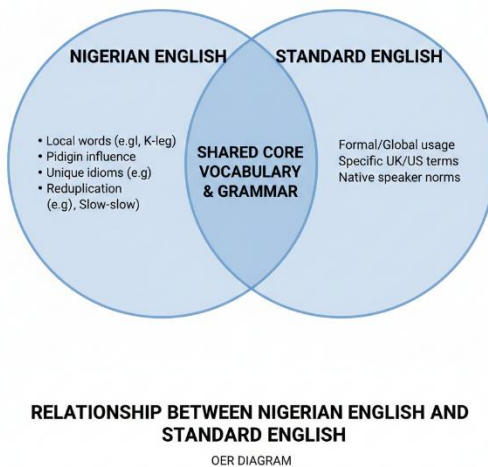


Figure 4.1 Relationship between Nigerian English and Standard English

4.1.3 Historical and Sociolinguistic Background

The development of Nigerian English is closely tied to the history of English in Nigeria. English was introduced during colonial rule and became the language of administration, education, and trade. Over time, Nigerians adapted English to suit local realities, leading to the emergence of Nigerian English. The **sociolinguistic background** refers to the social and cultural factors that influence language use. In Nigeria, multilingualism, ethnic diversity, and the need for a common language have all contributed to the spread and evolution of English.

Fill in the blank: The sociolinguistic background of Nigerian English is influenced by multilingualism, _____ diversity, and the need for a common language.





Plate 4.1 Teaching English in Nigerian classrooms

Pilot questions 4.1

- Which features distinguish Nigerian English from Standard English?
- What is Standard English primarily used for in Nigeria?
- How did colonial history contribute to the spread of English in Nigeria?
- Give one example of Nigerian English vocabulary and its Standard English equivalent.
- What sociolinguistic factors have influenced the development of Nigerian English?

4.2 Comparative Linguistic Features

4.2.1 Phonological features

Phonology refers to the study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation patterns and stress. Nigerian English phonology is influenced by the mother tongues of speakers, which often results in distinctive accents. For instance, many Nigerian speakers tend to pronounce words with syllable-timed rhythm rather than the stress-timed rhythm of Standard English. This means each syllable is given nearly equal weight, unlike in Standard English where stressed syllables dominate.

Another common feature is the substitution of certain sounds. For example, the “th” sound in words like “think” or “this” may be pronounced as “t” or “d” respectively. Such variations are not errors but reflections of the phonological systems of Nigerian languages.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English often uses a _____ rhythm, giving equal weight to syllables.



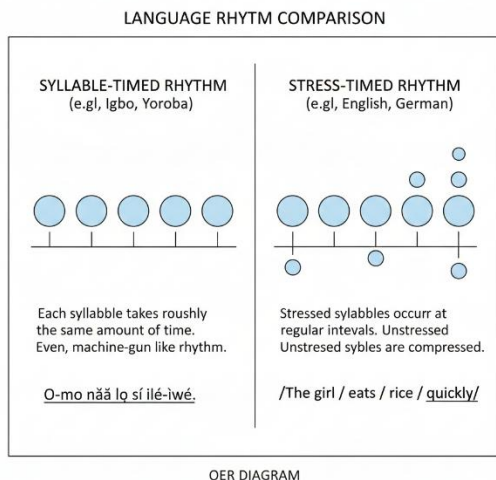


Figure 4.2 Comparison of syllable-timed and stress-timed rhythm

4.2.2 Lexical and semantic features

Lexis refers to the vocabulary of a language, while **semantics** refers to meaning. Nigerian English has developed a rich set of lexical items that reflect local realities. For example, “to dash” means “to give freely” in Nigerian English, while “to chop” means “to eat”. These words carry meanings that are widely understood within Nigeria but may confuse non-Nigerian speakers.

Semantic shifts also occur when existing English words are given new meanings. For instance, “to carry someone” in Nigerian English often means “to give someone a lift” rather than physically carrying them.

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, the word “dash” means _____.



COMMON NIGERIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY

NIGERIAN ENGLISH WORD	MEANING	STANDARD ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
Chop	To eat or consume	Eat
Go-slow	Congested road traffic	Traffic jam
Senior brother	An older brother	Older brother
Flash	To call an phone and hang up quickly	Missed call

NIGERIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY EXAMPLES OER

Box 4.2 Selected Nigerian English lexical items

4.2.3 Grammatical and syntactic features

Grammar refers to the rules governing word forms and sentence structure, while **syntax** refers to how words are arranged to form sentences. Nigerian English grammar often reflects influences from local languages. For example, the omission of articles (“He is teacher” instead of “He is a teacher”) is common. Similarly, pluralisation may differ, as in “furnitures” instead of “furniture”.

In syntax, Nigerian English sometimes uses constructions that mirror indigenous languages. For instance, “I am coming” may be used to mean “I will be back soon”, rather than the Standard English sense of immediate movement.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English sometimes omits _____ in sentences, such as “He is teacher”.



NIGERIAN ENGLISH GRAMMAR COMPARISON		
FEATURE	NIGERIAN ENGLISH	STANDARD ENGLISH
Copula Deletion	He is not a home	Have not at home
Direct Questions	You have eaten?	I have much furniture or
Mass Noun Usage	I have many furnitures	I have much furniture pieces of furniture
Pronoun Use	She is my senior sister	She is my older sister
NIGERIAN ENGLISH GRAMMAR EXAMPLES OER		

Table 4.1 Examples of grammatical differences between Nigerian English and Standard English

Pilot questions 4.2

What is the difference between syllable-timed rhythm and stress-timed rhythm?

Give one example of a Nigerian English lexical item and its meaning.

How does Nigerian English use the word “carry” differently from Standard English?

What grammatical feature is often omitted in Nigerian English sentences?

Provide one example of a syntactic construction in Nigerian English that differs from Standard English.

4.3 Domains of Usage

4.3.1 Nigerian English in education

Education in Nigeria provides one of the most visible contexts for the use of Nigerian English. While **Standard English** is the prescribed medium of instruction, many teachers and students naturally incorporate Nigerian English expressions into classroom communication. This blending helps learners grasp concepts more easily, especially when local realities are better expressed through Nigerian English. For example, a teacher might say “copy it down” instead of “write it down”, reflecting a common Nigerian English usage.

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian classrooms, Standard English is the prescribed medium of _____.





NIGERIAN CLASSROOM ENGLISH TEACHING OER

Plate 4.2 Nigerian English in classroom communication

4.3.2 Nigerian English in media and literature

The Nigerian media, including newspapers, radio, and television, often employ Nigerian English to connect with audiences. Expressions such as “go-slow” or “next tomorrow” are widely used in print and broadcast media. Nigerian literature also reflects this trend, with writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka incorporating Nigerian English to capture authentic voices and cultural settings. This practice enriches literary works and makes them relatable to Nigerian readers.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian writers often use Nigerian English to capture authentic _____ and cultural settings.

Expression	Literary/Media Context	Standard English Equivalent
"Traveling to his village"	Common in novels to denote returning to one's ancestral home.	Going back to one's hometown.
"He is a 'big man'"	Frequently used in newspapers to describe social status.	An influential or wealthy person.
"Off the light"	Found in dialogue to show domestic settings.	Turn off the light.
"I am not 'on seat'"	Used in formal/office settings in literature.	I am not in the office/at my desk.
"Long legs"	Often used in investigative journalism regarding corruption.	Having influential connections (nepotism).



Expression	Literary/Media Context	Standard English Equivalent
"Not on speaking terms"	Common in dramas and prose to describe conflict.	Not talking to each other.

Box 4.3 Nigerian English expressions in media and literature

4.3.3 Nigerian English in government and law

Government and legal institutions in Nigeria rely heavily on Standard English for official documents, legislation, and court proceedings. However, Nigerian English often surfaces in informal communication among officials and in public discourse. For instance, political speeches may include Nigerian English expressions to resonate with citizens. This dual usage highlights the coexistence of Standard English for formality and Nigerian English for accessibility.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English is often used in political _____ to resonate with citizens.

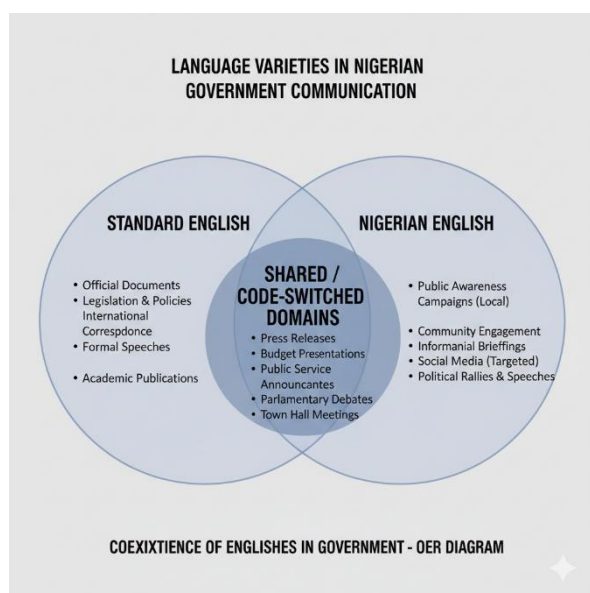


Figure 4.3 Coexistence of Standard and Nigerian English in governance

Pilot questions 4.3

- What role does Nigerian English play in classroom communication?
- Give one example of Nigerian English expression commonly used in Nigerian media.
- How do Nigerian writers use Nigerian English in literature?
- Why is Standard English preferred in government and law?
- In what way do political speeches incorporate Nigerian English?

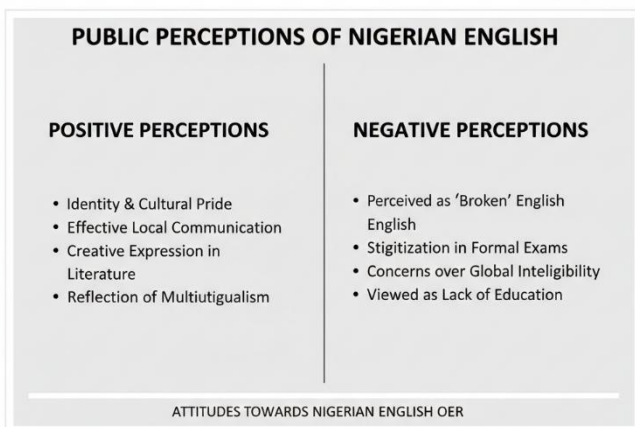


4.4 Attitudes and Perceptions

4.4.1 Public perceptions of Nigerian English

Public attitudes towards **Nigerian English** vary widely. Some view it as a legitimate reflection of Nigerian identity, while others see it as a deviation from Standard English. In everyday life, Nigerian English is often accepted and even celebrated for its creativity and expressiveness. However, in formal contexts such as examinations or official communication, it may be criticised as incorrect. This tension reflects the ongoing debate about what counts as “proper” English in Nigeria.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English is often celebrated for its _____ and expressiveness in everyday life.



Box 4.4 Public perceptions of Nigerian English

4.4.2 Prestige and stigma in language use

Prestige refers to the social value attached to a language variety, while **stigma** refers to negative attitudes or disapproval. In Nigeria, Standard English carries high prestige because it is associated with education, professionalism, and international communication. Nigerian English, on the other hand, may be stigmatised in certain circles, especially when judged against Standard English norms. Yet, Nigerian English also carries prestige in informal contexts, where it signals solidarity and cultural belonging.



Fill in the blank: In Nigeria, Standard English carries high _____ because it is linked to education and professionalism.

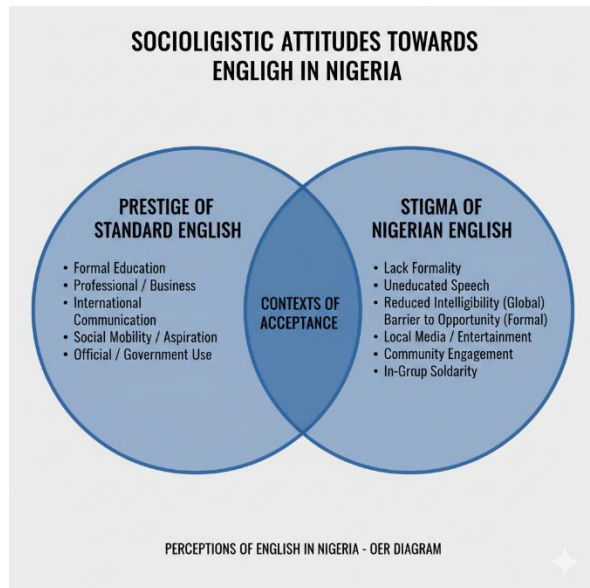


Figure 4.4 Prestige and stigma in Nigerian language use

4.4.3 Identity and cultural expression

Language is a powerful marker of identity. Nigerian English allows speakers to express their cultural background while still communicating in English. Writers, musicians, and public figures often use Nigerian English deliberately to assert national identity and connect with audiences. For example, Nigerian musicians may blend English with local expressions to create lyrics that resonate with listeners. This demonstrates how Nigerian English functions not only as a linguistic tool but also as a cultural symbol.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English functions as both a linguistic tool and a _____ symbol.





Plate 4.3 Nigerian English as cultural expression

Pilot questions 4.4

What are some positive perceptions of Nigerian English in everyday life?
 Why does Standard English carry prestige in Nigeria?
 How can Nigerian English be stigmatised in formal contexts?
 In what ways does Nigerian English serve as a marker of identity?
 Give one example of how Nigerian English is used in cultural expression.

4.5 Towards Harmonisation and Standardisation

4.5.1 Efforts at codification

Codification refers to the process of recording and systematising the rules of a language variety. In Nigeria, scholars and linguists have made efforts to codify Nigerian English by documenting its vocabulary, grammar, and usage patterns. Dictionaries and academic studies have been produced to highlight distinctive features of Nigerian English. These efforts aim to give Nigerian English recognition as a legitimate variety of English, rather than dismissing it as incorrect.

Fill in the blank: Codification refers to the process of _____ and systematising the rules of a language variety.



CODIFICATION EFFORTS FOR NIGERIAN ENGLISH		
Type of Effort	Examples/Description	Key Contributors/Sources
Dictionaries & Glossaries	– A Dictionary of Nigerian English – Oxford World English Dictionary (Nigerian Edition Nigerian English Glossary)	– Prof. Charles Bamgbose – Raji Babunade – Oxford University Press – Collaborative Online Projects
Academic Studies & Journals	– “Nigerian English: A Sociolinguistic Study” – “Phonology of Nigerian English” – “World Englishes” Journal Articles	– Prof. Ayo Banjo – Prof. David Jowitt – Various Linguists & Researchers
Theses & Dissertations	– Numerous university research projects on syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of Nigerian English	– Graduate Students – Graduate Students – University Linguistics Departments (eg. UI, UI, UNLAG, UNN)

CODIFICATION OF NIGERIAN ENGLISH OER

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Box 4.5 Efforts at codification of Nigerian English

4.5.2 Challenges of standardisation

Standardisation is the process of establishing a uniform set of rules for a language variety. Nigerian English faces challenges in this regard because of Nigeria’s multilingual environment and the influence of Standard English as the global benchmark. Many Nigerians are hesitant to accept Nigerian English as a standard, fearing it may limit international intelligibility. Furthermore, regional variations within Nigeria make it difficult to agree on a single standard form.

Fill in the blank: One challenge of standardising Nigerian English is Nigeria’s _____ environment.

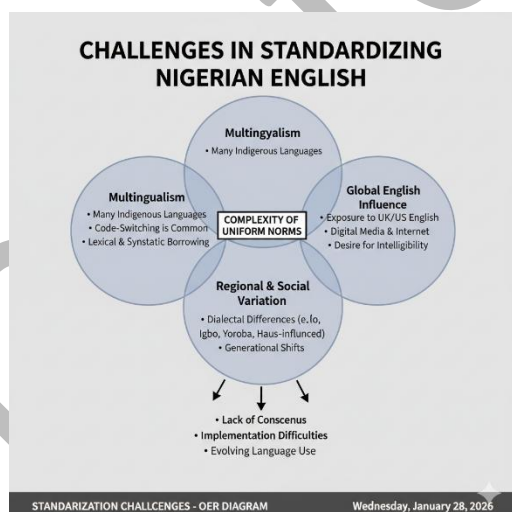


Figure 4.5 Challenges of standardising Nigerian English



4.5.3 Future prospects for Nigerian English

The future of Nigerian English depends on how it is perceived and used by Nigerians themselves. If codification and scholarly recognition continue, Nigerian English may gain wider acceptance as a standard variety. It could serve as a model for other African Englishes, showing how local realities can shape global languages. At the same time, Nigerian English will likely continue to coexist with Standard English, balancing local identity with international communication.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English may gain wider acceptance as a _____ variety if codification continues.

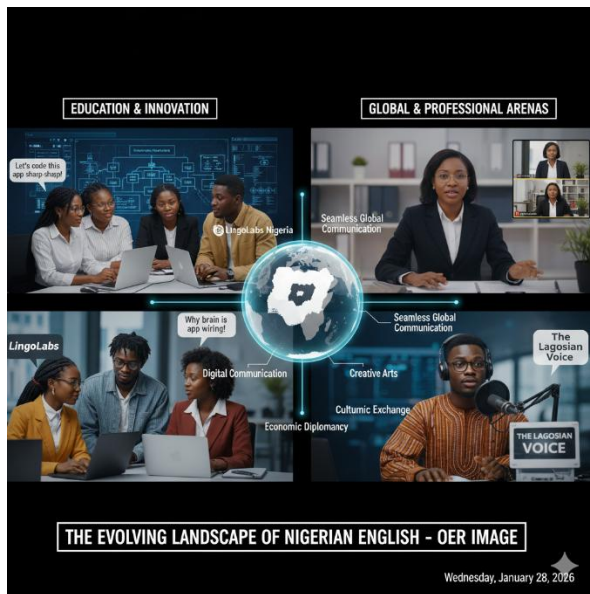


Plate 4.4 Future prospects of Nigerian English

Pilot questions 4.5

- What does codification of Nigerian English involve?
- Why is standardisation of Nigerian English challenging?
- How does multilingualism affect the standardisation process?
- What role can scholarly recognition play in the future of Nigerian English?
- How might Nigerian English coexist with Standard English in the future?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the relationship between Nigerian English and Standard English, highlighting its relevance to education, governance, media, and cultural identity. The purpose was to help you recognise how Nigerian English functions alongside Standard English, and why this interaction is important for communication in Nigeria.



We began by defining both Nigerian English and Standard English, then analysed their phonological, lexical, and grammatical differences. Following that, we explored how Nigerian English is used in classrooms, media, literature, and government. We then considered public attitudes, prestige, stigma, and identity, before concluding with efforts at codification, challenges of standardisation, and future prospects. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define Nigerian English and Standard English (SLO 4.1), analyse their linguistic features (SLO 4.2), explain their domains of usage (SLO 4.3), evaluate attitudes and perceptions (SLO 4.4), and assess harmonisation and standardisation efforts (SLO 4.5).

Glossary of Terms

Codification: The process of recording and systematising the rules of a language variety, such as vocabulary and grammar, to give it recognition and stability.

Grammar: The set of rules that govern how words are formed and combined to create meaningful sentences in a language.

Lexis: The vocabulary of a language, including words and expressions used by speakers.

Multilingualism: The ability of individuals or communities to use more than one language in daily communication.

Nigerian English: A distinct variety of English spoken in Nigeria, shaped by local languages, cultural contexts, and communicative needs.

Phonology: The study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation patterns, stress, and rhythm.

Prestige: The social value or respect attached to a language variety, often linked to education, professionalism, or status.

Semantics: The study of meaning in language, focusing on how words and expressions convey ideas.

Sociolinguistic background: The social and cultural factors that influence how a language is used and evolves within a community.

Standard English: The variety of English widely accepted as the norm for formal communication, education, and official purposes, characterised by agreed rules of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Stigma: Negative attitudes or disapproval directed towards a language variety, often when it is judged against a more prestigious standard.

Syntax: The arrangement of words and phrases to form sentences, reflecting the structural patterns of a language.

Standardisation: The process of establishing a uniform set of rules for a language variety to ensure consistency and acceptance.

Concept Check Questions 4

Objective questions

Nigerian English is shaped by local languages, cultural contexts, and _____. (Linked to SLO 4.1)



Which rhythm pattern is typical of Nigerian English pronunciation: syllable-timed or stress-timed? (Linked to SLO 4.2)

In Nigerian English, the word “dash” means: a) To run quickly b) To give freely c) To throw away d) To borrow (Linked to SLO 4.2)

Standard English is primarily used in Nigeria for _____ communication. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Which of the following carries high prestige in Nigeria: a) Nigerian English b) Standard English c) Pidgin English d) Local dialects (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Short-answer questions

Define Nigerian English and explain how it differs from Standard English. (Linked to SLO 4.1)

Give one example of a Nigerian English lexical item and its Standard English equivalent. (Linked to SLO 4.2)

Explain how Nigerian English is used in Nigerian literature. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

What is meant by prestige and stigma in language use? (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Identify one challenge that makes the standardisation of Nigerian English difficult. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Long-answer questions

Analyse the phonological, lexical, and grammatical features that distinguish Nigerian English from Standard English. (Linked to SLO 4.2)

Basic response: Describe the syllable-timed rhythm, examples of vocabulary like “go-slow”, and grammatical tendencies such as omission of articles.

Value-added response: Extend the analysis by comparing these features with other varieties of World Englishes, such as Indian English or Singapore English, to show how local contexts shape English differently.

Evaluate the role of Nigerian English in education, media, and governance, and discuss its impact on national identity. (Linked to SLO 4.3, SLO 4.4)

Basic response: Explain how Nigerian English is used in classrooms, literature, and political speeches, and how it reflects identity.

Value-added response: Discuss how Nigerian English contributes to language policy debates, cultural pride, and the global recognition of Nigerian voices in literature and media.

Assess the future prospects of Nigerian English in relation to codification and standardisation. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Basic response: Highlight ongoing efforts at codification, challenges of multilingualism, and coexistence with Standard English.

Value-added response: Suggest how Nigerian English could serve as a model for other African Englishes, and propose strategies for balancing local identity with global intelligibility.



Answers to Concept Check Questions 4

Objective questions

- Communicative needs
- Syllable-timed
- b) To give freely
- Formal
- b) Standard English

Short-answer questions

Nigerian English is a variety of English shaped by Nigerian languages and culture, differing from Standard English in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Example: “go-slow” (Nigerian English) means “traffic jam” (Standard English).

Nigerian writers use Nigerian English to capture authentic voices and cultural settings, making literature relatable.

Prestige refers to the social value attached to a language variety, while stigma refers to negative attitudes towards it.

Multilingualism and regional variation make standardisation difficult.

Long-answer questions

Basic response: Nigerian English uses syllable-timed rhythm, vocabulary like “dash” and “go-slow”, and grammar such as omission of articles.

Value-added response: These features parallel other World Englishes, showing how local contexts shape English globally.

Basic response: Nigerian English is used in classrooms, media, and governance, reflecting identity and accessibility.

Value-added response: It also influences language policy, cultural pride, and global recognition of Nigerian voices.

Basic response: Codification efforts exist, but multilingualism and global influence challenge standardisation. Nigerian English will coexist with Standard English.

Value-added response: Nigerian English could become a model for African Englishes, balancing local identity with global intelligibility.

Answers to Pilot Questions 4



Part 4.1 Conceptual Foundations

Nigerian English is distinguished by unique pronunciations, vocabulary, and expressions that differ from Standard English.

Standard English is primarily used for formal communication in Nigeria, including education and government.

Colonial history introduced English as the language of administration, education, and trade, which contributed to its spread.

Example: “go-slow” in Nigerian English means “traffic jam” in Standard English.

Multilingualism, ethnic diversity, and the need for a common language have influenced the development of Nigerian English.

Part 4.2 Comparative Linguistic Features

Syllable-timed rhythm gives equal weight to syllables, while stress-timed rhythm emphasises stressed syllables.

Example: “dash” means “to give freely” in Nigerian English.

In Nigerian English, “carry” often means “to give someone a lift”.

Articles are often omitted, as in “He is teacher” instead of “He is a teacher”.

Example: “I am coming” is used to mean “I will be back soon”.

Part 4.3 Domains of Usage

Nigerian English helps learners grasp concepts more easily in classroom communication.

Example: “next tomorrow” is a Nigerian English expression used in media.

Nigerian writers use Nigerian English to capture authentic voices and cultural settings.

Standard English is preferred in government and law for official documents and proceedings.

Political speeches often include Nigerian English expressions to connect with citizens.

Part 4.4 Attitudes and Perceptions

Nigerian English is celebrated for its creativity and expressiveness in everyday life.

Standard English carries prestige because it is linked to education, professionalism, and international communication.

Nigerian English may be stigmatised in formal contexts such as examinations or official documents.

Nigerian English serves as a marker of identity by reflecting cultural background and solidarity.

Nigerian musicians and writers use Nigerian English to express cultural identity and connect with audiences.

Part 4.5 Towards Harmonisation and Standardisation

Codification involves documenting Nigerian English vocabulary, grammar, and usage patterns.



Standardisation is challenging due to Nigeria’s multilingual environment and global influence of Standard English.

Multilingualism makes it difficult to agree on a single standard form of Nigerian English.

Scholarly recognition can help Nigerian English gain legitimacy and wider acceptance.

Nigerian English will likely coexist with Standard English, balancing local identity with international communication.

References and Attributions [Series 4]

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Bamgbose, A. (1995). *English in the Nigerian environment*. In A. Bamgbose, A. Banjo, & A. Thomas (Eds.), *New Englishes: A West African perspective* (pp. 9–26). Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers.

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F. (2015). *Nigerian English and the media*. *Journal of Language and Society*, 12(2), 45–62.

Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Tables, Boxes)

Box 4.1 Examples of Nigerian English vocabulary AI-generated suggestion. Prompt:

“Create a simple table showing Nigerian English words and their Standard English equivalents.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “examples of Nigerian English vocabulary OER”.

Figure 4.1 Relationship between Nigerian English and Standard English AI-generated

suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a Venn diagram showing overlap between Nigerian English and Standard English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion.

Suggested OER search string: “Venn diagram Nigerian English vs Standard English OER”.

Plate 4.1 Teaching English in Nigerian classrooms AI-generated suggestion. Prompt:

“Generate an image of a Nigerian classroom with students learning English and local languages.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian classroom teaching English OER”.

Box 4.2 Selected Nigerian English lexical items AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create

a table of Nigerian English words with their meanings and Standard English equivalents.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string:

“Nigerian English vocabulary examples OER”.

Table 4.1 Examples of grammatical differences between Nigerian English and Standard

English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table comparing Nigerian English grammar examples with Standard English equivalents.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English grammar examples OER”.



Plate 4.2 Nigerian English in classroom communication AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of a Nigerian classroom where a teacher uses English expressions on the board.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian classroom English teaching OER”.

Box 4.3 Nigerian English expressions in media and literature AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table of Nigerian English expressions commonly used in Nigerian media and literature.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English in literature examples OER”.

Figure 4.3 Coexistence of Standard and Nigerian English in governance AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing overlap of Standard English and Nigerian English in government communication.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English government communication diagram OER”.

Box 4.4 Public perceptions of Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table showing positive and negative public perceptions of Nigerian English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “attitudes towards Nigerian English OER”.

Figure 4.4 Prestige and stigma in Nigerian language use AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing prestige of Standard English and stigma of Nigerian English, with overlap.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “prestige stigma Nigerian English diagram OER”.

Plate 4.3 Nigerian English as cultural expression AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of a Nigerian musician performing lyrics that mix English and local expressions.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian musician English local language lyrics OER”.

Box 4.5 Efforts at codification of Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table listing codification efforts of Nigerian English including dictionaries and academic studies.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “codification of Nigerian English OER”.

Figure 4.5 Challenges of standardising Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing challenges of standardising Nigerian English such as multilingualism and global influence.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “challenges of Nigerian English standardisation diagram OER”.

Plate 4.4 Future prospects of Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of Nigerian students and professionals using English in diverse contexts.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot graphic design suggestion. Suggested OER search string: “future of Nigerian English OER”.



Course code: ENG 305

Course title: The English Language in Nigeria

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: The History of English in Nigeria

Series 2: Emergence of Nigerian Englishes and Standard Evolution

Series 3: Distinctive Properties of Nigerian Languages

Series 4: Nigerian English and Standard English in Context

Series 5: Impact of Nigerian English on Standard Usage

Proposed Outline for Series 5

Part 5.1 Lexical Influence

5.1.1 Borrowed expressions and semantic shifts

5.1.2 Nigerian English vocabulary in everyday Standard English usage

5.1.3 Case studies of lexical diffusion

Part 5.2 Grammatical and Syntactic Influence

5.2.1 Common grammatical patterns transferred into Standard English

5.2.2 Influence of Nigerian English syntax on spoken and written discourse

5.2.3 Examples from student essays, media, and public communication

Part 5.3 Phonological Influence

5.3.1 Pronunciation patterns affecting Standard English usage

5.3.2 Intonation and rhythm in Nigerian English versus Standard English

5.3.3 Implications for intelligibility in formal contexts

Part 5.4 Sociocultural Impact

5.4.1 Nigerian English as a marker of identity within Standard English contexts

5.4.2 Attitudes towards Nigerian English influence in formal communication

5.4.3 Media and literature as vehicles of influence

Part 5.5 Implications for Education and Professional Communication



- 5.5.1 Challenges for learners in mastering Standard English
- 5.5.2 Strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English in classrooms
- 5.5.3 Professional contexts: law, business, and international communication

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored Nigerian English and Standard English in context, examining their features, domains of usage, and the attitudes surrounding them. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the impact of Nigerian English on Standard English usage. This is highly relevant because it helps us understand how local linguistic practices influence formal communication, education, and professional life in Nigeria.

The aim of this Series is to examine the ways Nigerian English affects Standard English usage, and to equip you with the ability to identify, analyse, and evaluate these influences across different linguistic and sociocultural domains.

We shall commence this Series by looking at the lexical influence of Nigerian English, focusing on borrowed expressions and semantic shifts. Next, we will move on to grammatical and syntactic influence, considering how Nigerian English patterns affect spoken and written discourse. Following that, we will explore phonological influence, paying attention to pronunciation and rhythm. Afterwards, we will examine the sociocultural impact, including identity and attitudes towards Nigerian English within Standard English contexts. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the implications for education and professional communication, highlighting challenges and strategies for balancing both varieties.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 5.1 **analyse** the lexical influence of Nigerian English on Standard English, including borrowed expressions and semantic shifts,

SLO 5.2 **explain** how Nigerian English grammatical and syntactic patterns affect spoken and written Standard English usage,

SLO 5.3 **describe** the phonological influence of Nigerian English on Standard English, focusing on pronunciation and rhythm,

SLO 5.4 **evaluate** the sociocultural impact of Nigerian English within Standard English contexts, particularly in media, literature, and identity expression, and



SLO 5.5 **assess** the implications of Nigerian English influence for education and professional communication, identifying challenges and strategies for effective balance.

5.1 Lexical Influence

5.1.1 Borrowed expressions and semantic shifts

Lexical influence refers to the impact of one language variety on the vocabulary of another. Nigerian English has contributed significantly to Standard English usage in Nigeria through borrowed expressions and **semantic shifts**. A semantic shift occurs when an existing English word takes on a new meaning in a local context. For example, “to dash” in Nigerian English means “to give freely”, while “to chop” means “to eat”. These words, though rooted in English, have acquired meanings shaped by Nigerian sociocultural realities.

Fill in the blank: A semantic shift occurs when an existing English word takes on a _____ meaning in a local context.

Word	Meaning in Standard English	Shifted Meaning in Nigerian English
Chop	To cut into pieces with an axe or knife.	To eat or, in a political context, to misappropriate funds .
Dress	A piece of clothing; to put on clothes.	To move or create space (e.g., "Please dress for me on the bench").
Travel	The general act of moving from place to place.	To be out of town or away on a journey (e.g., "My boss has travelled").
Branch	A part of a tree or a local office.	To stop by a place briefly on the way to somewhere else.
Dear	An affectionate term or "expensive."	Almost exclusively used to mean expensive (e.g., "That lace is too dear").
Flit	To move swiftly and lightly.	A generic term for insecticide spray (originally from the brand "Flit").

Box 5.1 Examples of semantic shifts in Nigerian English

5.1.2 Nigerian English vocabulary in everyday Standard English usage

Over time, certain Nigerian English words and expressions have entered everyday Standard English usage within Nigeria. For instance, “go-slow” (traffic jam) and “long-leg” (influence or connection) are now widely used even in formal contexts. This shows how Nigerian English



vocabulary can diffuse into Standard English, enriching it with local flavour. Such diffusion demonstrates the dynamic nature of language, where local innovations gradually become accepted in broader communication.

Fill in the blank: The Nigerian English word “go-slow” is commonly used to mean _____.

Word / Phrase	NE Meaning / Context	Usage Example in Global English
Japa	To flee or emigrate, usually for a better life.	"The country's latest 'japa' wave has led to a shortage of skilled medical staff."
Mama Put	A street food vendor or the stall itself.	"We visited a local mama put to get a taste of authentic jollof rice."
Next Tomorrow	The day after tomorrow (now a formal OED entry).	"I'll have the report ready for you next tomorrow."
Abeg	A plea meaning "Please" or "I beg you."	"Abeg, don't mind him; he's just joking."
419	Used to describe a scam or a fraudster.	"The email looked like a classic 419 scam, so I deleted it immediately."
Gist	(Shifted use) To engage in gossip or a long chat.	"Come over this evening so we can gist about the wedding."
Danfo	The iconic yellow minibuses used in Lagos.	"Navigating the city in a danfo is a quintessential Lagos experience."
Okada	A motorcycle taxi.	"The traffic was so bad I had to hop on an okada to make the meeting."
Biko	An Igbo word for "please" now recognized globally.	"Biko, help me carry this bag; it's quite heavy."

Table 5.1 Nigerian English vocabulary in Standard English usage

5.1.3 Case studies of lexical diffusion

Lexical diffusion refers to the gradual spread of words from one variety into another. In Nigeria, this process can be observed in media, literature, and everyday communication. For example, newspapers often use Nigerian English terms like “next tomorrow” (meaning the day after tomorrow), while novels incorporate expressions to capture authentic voices. These case studies



show how Nigerian English influences Standard English usage, making it more reflective of Nigerian identity.

Fill in the blank: The phrase “next tomorrow” in Nigerian English means _____.

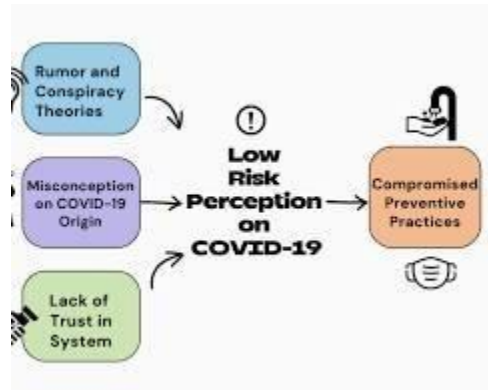


Plate 5.1 Nigerian English expressions in newspapers

Pilot questions 5.1

What is meant by lexical influence in the context of Nigerian English?

Give one example of a semantic shift in Nigerian English.

Which Nigerian English words have diffused into everyday Standard English usage?

What does the phrase “next tomorrow” mean in Nigerian English?

How do media and literature contribute to the diffusion of Nigerian English vocabulary?

5.2 Grammatical and Syntactic Influence

5.2.1 Common grammatical patterns transferred into Standard English

Grammar refers to the rules governing word forms and sentence structure. Nigerian English often transfers certain grammatical patterns into Standard English usage. For example, articles may be omitted, as in “He is teacher” instead of “He is a teacher”. Similarly, pluralisation can differ, with words like “furnitures” or “equipments” appearing in everyday communication. These patterns reflect the influence of indigenous languages, where articles or singular-plural distinctions may function differently.

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, articles are often _____ in sentences such as “He is teacher”.



Feature	Nigerian English Pattern	Standard English Equivalent	Linguistic Explanation
Pluralization of Uncountables	"I have many equipments and furnitures ."	"I have a lot of equipment and furniture ."	NE often treats non-count nouns as countable.
Reduplication for Emphasis	"The water is cold-cold ."	"The water is very cold ."	Borrowed from the syntax of many West African languages.
Omission of Articles	"He is staff of the bank."	"He is a staff member of the bank."	The definite or indefinite article is often dropped in professional titles.
Tense Simplification	"I have been seeing him yesterday."	"I saw him yesterday."	Use of the continuous tense for completed actions.
Focus Markers (It is...)	" It is me that he saw."	"He saw me ."	Using "It is" to emphasize the subject or object of a sentence.
Prepositional Usage	"I will discuss about the matter."	"I will discuss the matter."	Adding prepositions where Standard English doesn't require them.

Table 5.2 Common grammatical patterns in Nigerian English

5.2.2 Influence of Nigerian English syntax on spoken and written discourse

Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and phrases to form sentences. Nigerian English syntax often influences spoken and written discourse in Nigeria. For instance, "I am coming" is frequently used to mean "I will be back soon", rather than immediate movement. Another example is "Let me be going" which is used instead of "I should leave now". These syntactic constructions mirror indigenous language structures and have become widely accepted in Nigerian communication.

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, the phrase "I am coming" often means _____.



Nigerian English Construction	Standard English Interpretation	Linguistic Phenomenon
"I am coming."	"I will be right back."	Semantic/Aspectual Shift: Indicates an immediate future return rather than current motion toward the listener.
"Give me chance."	"Excuse me" or "Let me pass."	Article Omission: Deletion of the indefinite article "a" in fixed phrases.
"They are calling you."	"Someone is calling you."	Indefinite Pronoun: Use of "They" as a generic third-person plural to refer to an unknown individual.
"You are not going, is it?"	"You aren't going, are you?"	Invariant Tag: Using a single tag (is it/isn't it) regardless of the main verb or subject.
"He is too much."	"He is extraordinary" or "He is a handful."	Adjectival Intensification: Using "too much" as a predicative adjective to mean "impressive" or "overwhelming."
"Let me drop here."	"I would like to get off/disembark here."	Verb Substitution: Common in transportation contexts (buses, taxis).

Box 5.2 Examples of Nigerian English syntactic constructions

5.2.3 Examples from student essays, media, and public communication

The influence of Nigerian English grammar and syntax can be observed in student essays, media reports, and public communication. For example, students may write "He travelled last two weeks" instead of "He travelled two weeks ago". Media outlets may use expressions like "next tomorrow" in headlines, while public speakers often employ Nigerian English constructions to connect with audiences. These examples show how Nigerian English patterns permeate Standard English usage in Nigeria, shaping both formal and informal communication.

Fill in the blank: A common Nigerian English expression in media headlines is _____.





Plate 5.2 Nigerian English expressions in student essays and media

Pilot questions 5.2

What grammatical feature is often omitted in Nigerian English sentences?

Give one example of pluralisation in Nigerian English that differs from Standard English.

How does Nigerian English use the phrase “I am coming” differently from Standard English?

Provide one example of a Nigerian English syntactic construction used in everyday communication.

Where can the influence of Nigerian English grammar and syntax be observed in Nigeria?

5.3 Phonological Influence

5.3.1 Pronunciation patterns affecting Standard English usage

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation and stress. Nigerian English pronunciation often influences Standard English usage in Nigeria. For example, the “th” sound in words such as “think” or “this” is frequently pronounced as “t” or “d”. Similarly, vowel sounds may be shortened or altered, reflecting the phonological systems of indigenous languages. These patterns can affect how Standard English is spoken in classrooms, workplaces, and public communication.

Fill in the blank: In Nigerian English, the “th” sound in “think” is often pronounced as _____.



Syllable Structure	Gliding reduction	"cool" for "school"	~4 yrs
Substitution	Stopping	"ton" for "sun"	~3 yrs 6 mo
Substitution	Gliding	"wed" for "red"	~7 yrs
Substitution	Fronting	"doot" for "goat"	~4 yrs
Substitution/Structure	Backing	"guppy" for "puppy"	~3 yrs
Assimilation	Consonant harmony	"tor" for "cot"	~3 yrs

Red Flags for School-Based SLPs

- Persistence of Developmental Processes Beyond Age Norms
- Presence of Atypical Processes (e.g., Initial consonant deletion, Backing)
- Low Speech Intelligibility
- Limited Phonetic Inventory and Inconsistent Errors

BILINGUISTICS

Figure 5.1 Pronunciation patterns in Nigerian English

5.3.2 Intonation and rhythm in Nigerian English versus Standard English

Intonation refers to the rise and fall of pitch in speech, while **rhythm** refers to the timing of syllables. Nigerian English tends to use a syllable-timed rhythm, where each syllable is given nearly equal weight. In contrast, Standard English is stress-timed, with stressed syllables carrying more prominence. This difference can make Nigerian English sound more deliberate and evenly paced. Intonation patterns also differ, with Nigerian English often using rising tones for emphasis.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian English tends to use a _____ rhythm, giving equal weight to syllables.

Feature	Standard English (Stress-Timed)	Nigerian English (Syllable-Timed)
Basic Unit	The stress group (feet).	The syllable .
Timing	Time between stressed syllables is roughly equal.	Each syllable takes roughly the same amount of time.
Vowel Length	Unstressed vowels are reduced (often to a schwa /ə/).	Vowels maintain their full quality and are rarely reduced.
Pacing	Variable; some words are spoken very quickly to fit the rhythm.	Consistent; like a machine gun or a drumbeat.
Example	"I want to go to London ." (4 beats)	"I want to go to Lon-don." (6 beats)

Box 5.3 Intonation and rhythm differences



5.3.3 Implications for intelligibility in formal contexts

Pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm differences can affect **intelligibility**, which refers to how easily speech is understood by listeners. In formal contexts such as education, law, or international communication, Nigerian English phonological features may sometimes cause misunderstandings. For instance, substituting “t” for “th” may confuse non-Nigerian listeners. However, within Nigeria, these features rarely hinder communication, as they are widely recognised and accepted.

Fill in the blank: Pronunciation differences may affect _____, which refers to how easily speech is understood.



Plate 5.3 Nigerian English pronunciation in formal settings

Pilot questions 5.3

What is phonology and how does it relate to Nigerian English?

Give one example of a Nigerian English pronunciation pattern that differs from Standard English.

What rhythm pattern is typical of Nigerian English speech?

How does Nigerian English intonation differ from Standard English?

Why might Nigerian English phonological features affect intelligibility in formal contexts?

5.4 Sociocultural Impact

5.4.1 Nigerian English as a marker of identity within Standard English contexts

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a marker of identity. Nigerian English serves this role by allowing speakers to express their cultural background even when using Standard English. For example, expressions such as “long-leg” (meaning influence or connection) or “next tomorrow” (meaning the day after tomorrow) reflect uniquely Nigerian ways of speaking. These expressions, when used in Standard English contexts, signal solidarity and cultural belonging.



Fill in the blank: Nigerian English serves as a marker of _____ by reflecting cultural background in communication.



Plate 5.4 Nigerian English as identity marker

5.4.2 Attitudes towards Nigerian English influence in formal communication

Attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal communication are mixed. Some view it as inappropriate or unprofessional, especially in academic or legal contexts. Others see it as a natural reflection of Nigerian identity and argue that it enriches communication. These attitudes reveal the tension between the prestige of Standard English and the cultural significance of Nigerian English.

Fill in the blank: Some people view Nigerian English in formal communication as _____ or unprofessional.

Perspective	Positive Attitudes (Nativization)	Negative Attitudes (Prescriptivism)
Identity & Belonging	Viewed as a symbol of national identity and pride; it feels "authentic" and relatable to the local audience.	Often dismissed as "bad English" or "broken English," suggesting a lack of proper education.
Communication Clarity	Expressions like " <i>well done</i> " (as a greeting) or " <i>I'm coming</i> " (meaning I'll be right back) are more effective in local contexts.	Feared to cause international unintelligibility ; purists worry that non-Nigerians won't understand the message.
Social Status	Seen as a mark of a "localized elite"—people who are globally minded but rooted in their culture.	Associated with lower social status or "interference" from mother tongues (L1 interference).



Perspective	Positive Attitudes (Nativization)	Negative Attitudes (Prescriptivism)
Creative Expression	Celebrated in literature (e.g., Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka) for giving English a unique African flavor.	Viewed as a "corruption" of Standard British English (SBE) that should be purged from formal writing and exams.

Box 5.4 Attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal contexts

5.4.3 Media and literature as vehicles of influence

Media and literature play a crucial role in spreading Nigerian English into Standard English contexts. Newspapers, radio, and television often use Nigerian English expressions to connect with audiences. Writers deliberately blend Nigerian English with Standard English to capture authentic voices and cultural realities. This not only normalises Nigerian English but also elevates it as a symbol of national identity.

Fill in the blank: Nigerian writers blend Nigerian English with Standard English to capture _____ voices and cultural realities.

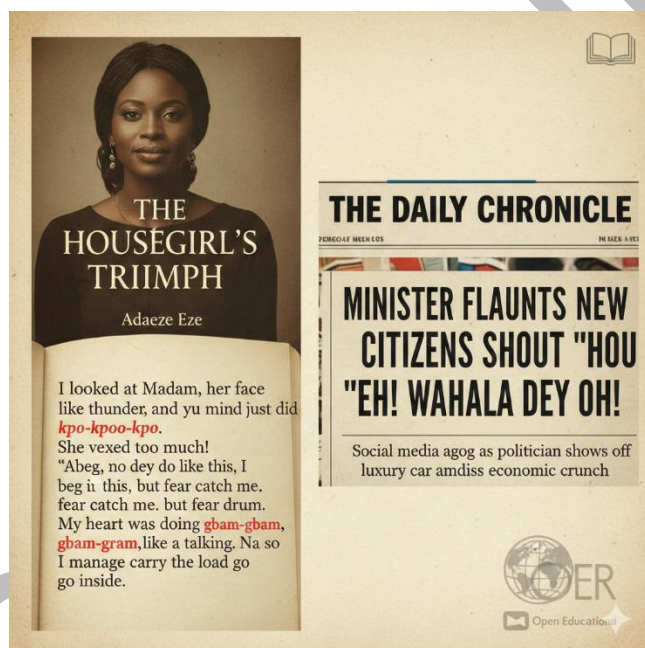


Plate 5.5 Nigerian English in media and literature

Pilot questions 5.4

How does Nigerian English serve as a marker of identity?

What are some attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal communication?



Why do some people consider Nigerian English inappropriate in academic or legal contexts?
 How do media and literature contribute to the spread of Nigerian English?
 Give one example of a Nigerian English expression used in literature or media.

5.5 Implications For Education And Professional Communication

5.5.1 Challenges for learners in mastering Standard English

Learners in Nigeria often face challenges when trying to master **Standard English** because of the strong influence of Nigerian English. For example, expressions such as “next tomorrow” or “go-slow” may slip into formal writing, even though they are not recognised internationally. These challenges are compounded by the multilingual environment, where learners are constantly switching between indigenous languages, Nigerian English, and Standard English. Teachers must therefore work harder to help students distinguish between informal and formal usage.

Fill in the blank: Learners may struggle with Standard English because Nigerian English expressions often slip into _____ writing.

Nigerian English Expression	Meaning / Context	Standard English Alternative
"I am coming."	Used to mean you will be back shortly.	"I'll be right back" or "I'm on my way."
"Well done."	Used as a general greeting for someone working or just passing by.	"Hello" or "Keep up the good work" (if actually praising work).
"I want to barbing my hair."	Using "barbing" as a verb.	"I want to get a haircut" or "I'm going to the barber."
"Flash me."	Asking someone to call their phone and hang up quickly to signal them.	"Give me a missed call" or "Ping me."
"He 'offed' the light."	Turning a noun (off) into a verb.	"He turned off the light" or "He switched off the light."
"I'm not hearing you."	Used when the volume is low or the connection is bad.	"I can't hear you" or "I can't make out what you're saying."
"Travelled"	Used as a status: "My manager has travelled."	"My manager is away" or "My manager is out of town."



Nigerian English Expression	Meaning / Context	Standard English Alternative
"Borrow me your pen."	Using "borrow" instead of "lend."	"Lend me your pen" or "Can I borrow your pen?"

Box 5.5 Challenges for learners in mastering Standard English

5.5.2 Strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English in classrooms

Educators can adopt strategies to balance Nigerian English and Standard English in classrooms. One approach is **contrastive analysis**, where teachers explicitly compare Nigerian English expressions with Standard English equivalents. Another strategy is encouraging students to use Nigerian English in creative writing, while reserving Standard English for formal assignments. This helps learners appreciate both varieties without confusion.

Fill in the blank: One strategy for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English in classrooms is _____ analysis.

Strategy	Description	Practical Application
Contrastive Analysis	Explicitly comparing the structures of Nigerian English (NE) and Standard English (SBE) side-by-side.	Have students list common NE phrases (e.g., "I'm coming") and find the SBE equivalent ("I'll be right back").
Code-Switching Exercises	Teaching students to choose the appropriate "gear" for their audience.	Role-play a scene twice: once as a casual conversation with a friend, and once as a formal job interview.
Creative Writing	Encouraging the use of NE in dialogue to develop authentic character voices.	Assign a short story where the narration is in SBE, but the dialogue reflects the vibrant local syntax of Lagos or Abuja.
Translanguaging	Allowing students to use their full linguistic repertoire (L1, NE, and SBE) to grasp complex concepts.	Let students discuss a science topic in NE or Pidgin first to ensure understanding before writing the formal report in SBE.
Formal vs. Informal Assignments	Setting clear linguistic expectations based on the task type.	Labeling a blog post as "Informal/Local" and a cover letter as "Standard/Global" to clarify grading criteria.



Table 5.2 Strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English

5.5.3 Professional contexts: law, business, and international communication

In professional contexts such as law, business, and international communication, the influence of Nigerian English can be both enriching and challenging. While Nigerian English expressions may foster solidarity and cultural identity, they can also cause misunderstandings in international settings. For example, using “go-slow” in a business report may confuse non-Nigerian readers. Professionals therefore need to be aware of when to use Standard English to ensure clarity and global intelligibility.

Fill in the blank: In international communication, Nigerian English expressions may cause _____ if not replaced with Standard English equivalents.



Plate 5.6 Nigerian English in professional communication

Pilot questions 5.5

- Why do learners struggle to master Standard English in Nigeria?
- What is one strategy teachers can use to balance Nigerian English and Standard English?
- How can creative writing help learners appreciate Nigerian English?
- Why is Standard English important in professional contexts such as law and business?
- Give one example of a Nigerian English expression that may cause confusion in international communication.

Series Summary



This Series has focused on the impact of Nigerian English on Standard English usage, highlighting its relevance to education, professional communication, and cultural identity. The purpose was to show how Nigerian English influences vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and broader sociocultural practices, and why these interactions matter for learners and professionals in Nigeria.

We began by examining lexical influence, including borrowed expressions and semantic shifts, before moving on to grammatical and syntactic patterns that shape spoken and written discourse. We then explored phonological features such as pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, followed by the sociocultural impact of Nigerian English in identity, attitudes, and media. Finally, we considered the implications for education and professional communication, including challenges and strategies for balancing both varieties. By completing this Series, you should now be able to analyse lexical influence (SLO 5.1), explain grammatical and syntactic impact (SLO 5.2), describe phonological features (SLO 5.3), evaluate sociocultural dimensions (SLO 5.4), and assess implications for education and professional contexts (SLO 5.5).

Glossary of Terms

Articles: Small words such as *a*, *an*, and *the* that are used before nouns in Standard English but are often omitted in Nigerian English.

Contrastive analysis: A teaching strategy where two language varieties are compared side by side to highlight differences and similarities.

Grammar: The set of rules that govern how words are formed and combined to create meaningful sentences.

Intelligibility: How easily speech can be understood by listeners, influenced by pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.

Intonation: The rise and fall of pitch in speech, which can change meaning or emphasis.

Lexical diffusion: The gradual spread of words or expressions from one language variety into another.

Lexical influence: The impact of one language variety on the vocabulary of another, often through borrowed words or new meanings.

Multilingual environment: A setting where multiple languages are spoken and interact, such as Nigeria.

Phonology: The study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation, stress, and rhythm.

Prestige: The social value or respect attached to a language variety, often linked to education or professionalism.

Semantic shift: When an existing word takes on a new meaning in a local or cultural context.

Standard English: The variety of English widely accepted for formal communication, education, and professional contexts.

Stigma: Negative attitudes or disapproval directed towards a language variety, often when judged against a more prestigious standard.

Syntax: The arrangement of words and phrases to form sentences, reflecting the structural patterns of a language.



Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

- Nigerian English has influenced Standard English usage through _____ such as “dash” and “go-slow”. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
- Which grammatical feature is often omitted in Nigerian English sentences? (Linked to SLO 5.2)
- Nigerian English tends to use a _____ rhythm, giving equal weight to syllables. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
- Which of the following is considered a marker of identity in Nigerian English? a) Semantic shift b) Prestige c) Expressions like “long-leg” d) Syntax (Linked to SLO 5.4)
- In international communication, Nigerian English expressions may cause _____ if not replaced with Standard English equivalents. (Linked to SLO 5.5)

Short-answer questions

- Define lexical influence in the context of Nigerian English. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
- Give one example of a Nigerian English syntactic construction and its Standard English equivalent. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
- Explain how Nigerian English intonation differs from Standard English. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
- What are some attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal communication? (Linked to SLO 5.4)
- Identify one challenge learners face when trying to master Standard English in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 5.5)

Long-answer questions

- Analyse how Nigerian English vocabulary has diffused into Standard English usage, with examples. (Linked to SLO 5.1)

Basic response: Describe borrowed expressions like “go-slow” and semantic shifts such as “dash”.

Value-added response: Extend the analysis by comparing Nigerian English lexical diffusion with other varieties of World Englishes, such as Indian English or Singapore English.

- Evaluate the impact of Nigerian English grammar and syntax on formal communication. (Linked to SLO 5.2, SLO 5.5)

Basic response: Explain omissions of articles, pluralisation differences, and syntactic constructions like “I am coming”.

Value-added response: Discuss how these features affect clarity in professional contexts and propose strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English.

- Assess the sociocultural significance of Nigerian English in media and literature. (Linked to SLO 5.4)



Basic response: Highlight how Nigerian writers and media use Nigerian English to capture authentic voices.

Value-added response: Explore how Nigerian English contributes to national identity, cultural pride, and global recognition of Nigerian creativity.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

Borrowed expressions and semantic shifts

Articles

Syllable-timed

c) Expressions like “long-leg”

Misunderstandings

Short-answer questions

Lexical influence is the impact of Nigerian English on Standard English vocabulary through borrowed words or new meanings.

Example: “I am coming” (Nigerian English) means “I will be back soon” (Standard English).

Nigerian English often uses rising tones and syllable-timed rhythm, unlike the stress-timed intonation of Standard English.

Some view Nigerian English as inappropriate in formal contexts, while others see it as enriching and identity-affirming.

Learners often struggle because Nigerian English expressions slip into formal writing, causing confusion.

Long-answer questions

Basic response: Nigerian English vocabulary includes expressions like “go-slow” (traffic jam) and “dash” (to give freely).

Value-added response: Similar lexical diffusion occurs in other Englishes, showing how local contexts shape global English varieties.

Basic response: Nigerian English grammar omits articles, pluralises words differently, and uses constructions like “I am coming”.

Value-added response: These features can reduce clarity in professional contexts. Strategies such as contrastive analysis help balance Nigerian English and Standard English.



Basic response: Nigerian writers and media use Nigerian English to reflect authentic voices and cultural realities.

Value-added response: Nigerian English strengthens national identity, promotes cultural pride, and enhances global recognition of Nigerian literature and media.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

Part 5.1 Lexical Influence

Lexical influence refers to the impact of Nigerian English on Standard English vocabulary.

Example: “dash” means “to give freely” in Nigerian English.

Words such as “go-slow” and “long-leg” have diffused into everyday Standard English usage.

The phrase “next tomorrow” means “the day after tomorrow”.

Media and literature spread Nigerian English vocabulary by using expressions in headlines, stories, and dialogue.

Part 5.2 Grammatical and Syntactic Influence

Articles are often omitted in Nigerian English sentences.

Example: “furnitures” is used instead of “furniture”.

“I am coming” means “I will be back soon”.

Example: “Let me be going” is used instead of “I should leave now”.

The influence can be observed in student essays, media reports, and public communication.

Part 5.3 Phonological Influence

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language, including pronunciation and rhythm.

Example: “think” may be pronounced as “tink”.

Nigerian English uses a syllable-timed rhythm.

Nigerian English often uses rising tones for emphasis, unlike Standard English.

Phonological features may affect intelligibility in formal contexts such as education or international communication.

Part 5.4 Sociocultural Impact

Nigerian English serves as a marker of identity by reflecting cultural background in communication.

Attitudes vary: some see Nigerian English as enriching, others as inappropriate in formal contexts.

It is considered inappropriate in academic or legal contexts because of the prestige of Standard English.

Media and literature spread Nigerian English by blending it with Standard English to capture authentic voices.

Example: “long-leg” is used in literature and media to mean influence or connection.



Part 5.5 Implications for Education and Professional Communication

Learners struggle because Nigerian English expressions slip into formal writing.

One strategy is contrastive analysis.

Creative writing allows learners to use Nigerian English while distinguishing it from Standard English.

Standard English ensures clarity and global intelligibility in professional contexts.

Example: “go-slow” may cause confusion in international communication.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

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Lexical influence refers to the impact of Nigerian English on Standard English vocabulary.

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References and Attributions [Series 5]

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Illustrations (Figures, Plates, Tables, Boxes)

Box 5.1 Examples of semantic shifts in Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion.

Prompt: “Create a table showing Nigerian English words with semantic shifts compared to Standard English meanings.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “semantic shifts Nigerian English vocabulary OER”.

Table 5.1 Nigerian English vocabulary in Standard English usage AI-generated

suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table comparing Nigerian English words adopted into Standard English with usage examples.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English vocabulary diffusion OER”.

Plate 5.1 Nigerian English expressions in newspapers AI-generated suggestion. Prompt:

“Generate an image of a Nigerian newspaper headline using Nigerian English expressions.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian newspaper Nigerian English expressions OER”.

Table 5.2 Common grammatical patterns in Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion.

Prompt: “Create a table comparing Nigerian English grammatical patterns with Standard English equivalents.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English grammar examples OER”.

Box 5.2 Examples of Nigerian English syntactic constructions AI-generated suggestion.

Prompt: “Create a table listing Nigerian English syntactic constructions with Standard English interpretations.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English syntax examples OER”.



Plate 5.2 Nigerian English expressions in student essays and media AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image showing Nigerian student essays and newspaper headlines with Nigerian English expressions.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English student essays media expressions OER”.

Figure 5.1 Pronunciation patterns in Nigerian English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Nigerian English pronunciation substitutions compared to Standard English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English pronunciation patterns diagram OER”.

Box 5.3 Intonation and rhythm differences AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table comparing syllable-timed rhythm in Nigerian English with stress-timed rhythm in Standard English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “syllable-timed vs stress-timed rhythm OER”.

Plate 5.3 Nigerian English pronunciation in formal settings AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of a Nigerian student presenting in English with Nigerian English pronunciation features.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English pronunciation classroom OER”.

Plate 5.4 Nigerian English as identity marker AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of Nigerians in a professional setting using English with Nigerian expressions.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English identity marker OER”.

Box 5.4 Attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal contexts AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table summarising positive and negative attitudes towards Nigerian English in formal communication.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “attitudes Nigerian English formal communication OER”.

Plate 5.5 Nigerian English in media and literature AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image showing a Nigerian novel excerpt and newspaper headline with Nigerian English expressions.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English media literature examples OER”.

Box 5.5 Challenges for learners in mastering Standard English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table listing Nigerian English expressions that learners mistakenly use in Standard English contexts.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English challenges in education OER”.

Table 5.2 Strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Create a table outlining teaching strategies for balancing Nigerian English and Standard English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “teaching strategies Nigerian English vs Standard English OER”.

Plate 5.6 Nigerian English in professional communication AI-generated suggestion. Prompt: “Generate an image of Nigerian professionals in a business meeting, with one participant presenting in Standard English.” Tool: Microsoft Copilot. Suggested OER search string: “Nigerian English professional communication OER”.



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