

## A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MORPHOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH AND NIGERIAN ENGLISH

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### **Abstract**

This paper dwells on the Contrastive Analysis of the Morphological Structure of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) and Nigerian English. Lado's theory of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis will be adopted in this study. The paper sets out to identify the morphological structures of both languages. A contrastive analysis of both varieties of English shows that some words are modified in a number of ways including blending, borrowing, clipping, extension, reduplication etc. It is also observed that Nigerian Pidgin English has no standard orthography or unified codification, no expanded vocabulary, no definite syntactic structure, it has a limited display of inflection in its morphological structure. Nigerian Pidgin English displays a little or no affixation in terms of inflection, it has no defined spelling pattern and cannot be used in a formal setting like education, government or workplaces. While Nigerian English on the other hand has been re-domesticated to accommodate the culture and tradition of the people, and as such, has acquired local colour and distinguished itself from the native speaker variety with unique linguistic structures, which are reflected at the morphological, phonological, syntactic and semantic levels.

**Keywords:** Contrastive Analysis, Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), Nigerian English, morphological structures

### **Introduction**

Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English coexist linguistically. Both languages serve as a lingua franca amidst over 400 other languages that are spoken in Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin English as a contact language is viewed by many as a corrupt form of English thereby relegating the language to the status of unofficial language in Nigeria, while Nigerian English to an extent has an official status and it is acceptable in a formal communication setting.

Existing studies on the domestication of English language in Nigeria have concentrated on the Nigerian variety of English and the Nigerian pidgin English, with emphasis on the features of Nigerian English usage and Nigerian pidgin (Bamgbose 1995, Osoba 2004, Adegbija 2004). These studies delved into the phonological, grammatical, lexical, morphological, semantic and pragmatic peculiarities of both languages. The Nigerian pidgin is fast becoming a lingua franca in Nigeria. It has been well employed in the social and informal discourses including music, advertising, radio programs etc. (Esizimotor 2004). A critical observation of the status of Nigerian pidgin show that it has the tendency to perform the domestic/cultural functions and it is

well understood and used by both the educated and the non-educated classes.

While Nigerian English which is in its second language status is used for official purposes and for communication among different language groups. This is also the status of English language in countries like Singapore, Malaysia, India, Tanzania, Zimbabwe etc which fell under British colonization, and this is quite in contrast with the situation of English language in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, New Zealand etc where English is used as the first language and a nativized code, with noticeable environmental differences that are obtainable in the second language variety.

In Nigeria, we have often heard people talk about a "Nigerian English". Ogu, (1992) and cited Walsh N G (1967) as among the first to draw attention to the existence of a variety of English language known as Nigerian English. Ogu quoted Walsh as he opines:

The variety of English spoken by the educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English (1992:88).

The concern of this paper therefore is to provide a contrastive analysis of the morphological structures of Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English, with a view of bringing their areas of differences to the limelight.

### **The Nigerian Pidgin English**

Pidgin has been described as a contact/trade language (Elugbe and Omanor 1991:1). When two individuals from different language backgrounds come in contact, the need for communication between them often produces a pidgin language. Pidgin is therefore the language which arises when there is a need for communication between two people who have no common language. Pidgin is also termed a trade language since people of different language backgrounds are often brought together for business reasons or other purposes. Our submission in respect to pidgin borrows largely from Elugbe and Omanor (1991) and supports the view that there is more to pidgin (English) than just Nigerian Pidgin English. Since pidgin is a language that evolves out of contact situations, it therefore follows that every contact between two mutually unintelligible speakers is capable of yielding to pidgin.

Following the submissions that pidgin is the linguistic outcome of contact between two or more mutually unintelligible speakers, the origin of Nigerian Pidgin can be traced to the contact between the Portuguese and the Nigerians along the coastal region. Elugbe and Omanor (1993:3), Banjo (1996) and Bamgbose (1995) have pointed out that the first contact was made by the Portuguese in 1469. This was followed by the arrival of the Dutch in 1653 as pointed out by Egbokhare (2001:106). In Ofulue's (2004:267) view, the birth of Nigerian Pidgin English can be traced to the contact between the British who had their first contact along the Nigerian coast in 1553 and their trading partners.

Obviously, disparities have evolved among historians and linguists on the facts and figures about Nigerian Pidgin English and how the language has actually come to be, whether it first came through and developed from trade contact between Europeans and Nigerian traders or from the influence of missionaries from Sierra-Leone (Faraclas 1996:3). If we consider all these from the view point of dates, the Portuguese contact

obviously predates the British contact. However, the emphasis given to the British contact may not have been unconnected with Egbokhare's (2001:106) view that all the previous contacts soon faded away while the British English dominated trade from 1650.

Since we do not intend to add to the controversy already created by these divergent notions, we therefore conclude that Nigerian Pidgin English arose out of contact between the visiting European groups (including the Portuguese, British, Dutch etc) to Nigeria. Hence Nigerian Pidgin English is a product of contact between English and other Nigerian indigenous languages. On one hand, the variations that we have in Nigerian Pidgin English can be traced to the various European countries, for instance, the word 'Lagos' is traceable to the contact with the Portuguese. On the other hand, it may be connected with the contact the European languages had with the more than one indigenous language in Nigeria. Hence each indigenous Nigerian language has at least a word or more contributed to the vocabulary of the Nigerian Pidgin English. The varieties of Nigerian Pidgin English which evolved from these have further posed a great difficulty on agreeing on a particular orthography for the language.

### **The Nigerian English**

Nigerian English, also known as Nigerian Standard English is a variety of English spoken in Nigeria. It is based on British English, but in recent years, it has been influenced by American English from the United States of America. Additionally, loanwords and collocations have emerged from the native languages in Nigeria, which arose from the need to express concepts specific to the culture of the nation. Nigerian English is a nativized form of English, its nativization and development as a new variety of English correspond roughly with the period of colonization and post-colonization by Britain. Nigerian English is a nativized language that functions uniquely within its own cultural context.

Also, many linguists of high repute have endorsed their stamp on Nigerian English as a legitimate variety and a socio-linguistic reality and have shifted their concerns to the issues of its identification and characterization. It is not in any

way a derogatory term or one characterized by errors and non-standard forms as language purists tend to view it, neither is it one of an inferior status to others like British, American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand English etc.

The English language in Nigeria has undergone "domestication" (Achebe,1975), "localization" (Kachru,1983:13) and "Nativization" (Odumuh,1993). These nomenclatures are central to explaining the fact that English has come to stay with us in all our endeavours and we are in the process of transferring, planting and developing the language in a non-native environment. Thus, Achebe is of the notion that Nigerian English should be used in such a way to accommodate our thought patterns and perform tasks suitable to us instead of looking at it as the language of the colonizers.

After so many years of the implantation of English on the Nigerian soil, and the fact that a large number of Nigerians have grown up to understand English not so much again as the language of the colonizers, but as a language in which virtually all the school subjects are taught, and as a language in use across the length and breadth of the country, it will seem really strange and unjust if English should continue to be seen as a foreign language in our midst. Ashiko (2002) has shown concerns to this when he rightly observes that:

There are Nigerians now for whom English is the language which allows them to express themselves the way no other language does. Their sensibilities, their thought processes, their instinctive verbal responses are canalized through English.

It is a linguistic fact that quite a number of young Nigerians born and bred in this country can claim English as their mother tongue according to this definition:

Mother tongue can also be defined as the language in which a bi or multilingual person conducts his everyday activities and in which he/she has the greatest linguistic facility or intuitive knowledge (Akindele Adegbite 1992:39-40)

However, the English language that the colonial masters bequeathed to us and which the native speakers use is not exactly the same English as we use in Nigeria. Though there are certain common core features running through these varieties as there are sets of grammatical and other linguistic features that are common to both the native-speaker variety and the Nigerian variety of English, ours is a variety that is different in a number of features. These differential features of Nigerian English may be phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic etc in meaning.

### **THEORETICAL ISSUES ON CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS**

The theoretical foundation of what is known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was formulated in Robert Lado's *Linguistic Across Cultures* (1957). In this book Lado claimed that "those elements which are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult ". While it was not a novel suggestion, Lado was the first to provide a comprehensive theoretical treatment and to suggest a systematic set of procedures for the contrastive study of languages, which involves describing the language, comparing them and predicting learning difficulties.

During the 1960s, there was a widespread enthusiasm with this technique, manifested in the contrastive descriptions of several European languages, many of which were sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC. It was expected that once the areas of potential difficulty had been mapped out through contrastive analysis, it would be possible to design language courses more efficiently. Contrastive analysis, along with behaviourism and structuralism exerted a profound effect on SLA curriculum design and language teacher education, and provided the theoretical pillars of the audio-lingual method.

In its strongest formulation, the contrastive analysis hypothesis claimed that all the errors made in learning the L2 could be attributed to 'interference' by the L1. However, this claim could not be sustained by empirical evidence that was accumulated in the mid- and late 1970s. It was soon pointed out that many errors predicted by

Contrastive Analysis were inexplicably not observed in learners' language. Even more confusingly, some uniform errors were made by learners irrespective of their L1. It thus became clear that contrastive analysis could not predict all learning difficulties, but was certainly useful in the retrospective explanation of errors.

In response to the above criticisms, a moderate version of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) has developed which paradoxically contradicts Lado's original claim. The new CAH hypothesizes that the more different the L2 is with one's L1, the easier it is for one to learn the target language. The prediction is based on the premise that similarities in languages create confusion for learners.

With the help of technological advancement, contrastive analysis has adopted a more efficient method in obtaining language data, a corpus-based approach, which generates vast amount of juxtapositions of language differences in various fields of linguistics, for example lexis and syntax. For a considerable period, research on second language development was dominated by the simple fact that languages were more or less different and that the most implication of these differences was that they represented lessons and tasks that must be learnt for an effective learning of second language (L2) vis-a-vis language comparison. Contrastive analysis was used extensively in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s as a method of explaining why some features of a target language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the Behaviourist theories prevailing at that time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits.

Apart from second language teaching and learning, contrastive analysis is also applicable in the field of contrastive linguistics. Contrastive linguistics is a practice-oriented linguistic approach that seeks to describe the similarities and differences between two languages, hence it is occasionally called **Differential Linguistics**. While traditional linguistic studies had developed comparative methods (comparative linguistics), chiefly to demonstrate family relations between cognate languages, or to illustrate the

historical developments of one or more languages, modern Contrastive Linguistics intends to show in what ways the two respective languages differ, in order to help in the solution of practical problems. Sometimes the terms diachronic and synchronic linguistics are used to refer to Comparative and Contrastive Linguistics.

Contrastive linguistics, since the inception of Robert Lado in the 1950s has often been linked to aspects of Applied Linguistics to avoid interference of errors in foreign-language learning. Contrastive linguistics is also concerned with finding lexical equivalents in the process of compiling bilingual dictionaries. Contrastive descriptions can occur at every level of linguistic structure: speech sounds (phonology), written symbols (orthography), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax) etc. Various techniques used in corpus linguistics have been shown to be relevant in intra-lingual and inter-lingual contrastive studies

Contrastive analysis is informally divided into two; the Strong Version and the Weak Version. The first called the strong version claims that interference from the learner's native language is the main obstacle to second language learning and also the greater the difference between the native language and the target language, the greater the difficulty. The difficulties can be predicted with a systematic and scientific analysis. The proponents of this strong version believe that the result of contrastive analysis can be used as a reliable source in the preparation of teaching materials, course planning and the improvement of classroom techniques. While the second version which is also known as the weak version suggests that linguists are able to use the best linguistic knowledge available to them in order to account for the observed difficulties in second language learning.

Many scholars have contributed immensely to the field of contrastive analysis. McDonough (2002:58) is of the notion that the differences posed by contrastive analysis represented lessons that had to be learnt. The difficulty of the lesson was therefore to be measured in the degree of difference between the native and the target language in that particular item of grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation.

Corder (1967:161) opines that learners may know a correct generalization or rule about a target language and forget to apply it in the stress of producing or comprehending an utterance or they may have an incorrect rule from whatever source which they operate consistently.

Taylor (1975:73) confirms the weakness of the inter-lingual transfer-based theory of errors in his study on the use of overgeneralization and transfer learning strategies by the elementary and intermediate students learning English as a second language. Lado (1957) concludes that the major reason for the failure of contrastive analysis is that the theory lies in the fact that structural similarities and differences between two linguistic systems and the processing of linguistic means in actual production and comprehension are two quite different things. He posits that contrastive analysis is concerned with the former, while acquisition has to do with the latter. Thus, a learner with a given first language background may find it easy to learn a specific language structure, but hard to produce that structure because, his ability of producing that structure does not necessarily depend on his ability of comprehending it.

Despite the shortcomings of contrastive analysis, the writer observes that the major objective of contrastive analysis is to pin down what is universal in both languages with a view of at least, identifying what is minimally different between the two languages. It provides a grammar and structural explanation of both languages. Contrastive analysis equips the language teacher with the basic knowledge of what to teach and how to teach in language learning process by pointing out the differences in both languages. Contrastive analysis also shows the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic differences between two languages.

#### **Methodology**

Some of the texts used in this study were gotten from textbooks and normal daily conversations with the speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English. Some of the data were also gotten from the daily broadcast of Flo Fm Umuahia Abia State, the writer as a speaker of both languages also serves as a veritable researchable source too.

#### **CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE**

#### **MORPHOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH AND NIGERIAN ENGLISH**

In drawing the contrastive analysis of both languages, this paper focuses on the following areas:

**Borrowing:** One of the commonest ways of creating new words in human language is borrowing. According to Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (1999:64) "borrowing simply means the process of taking words from one or more languages to fit into the vocabulary of another ".It is crucial to note that virtually all human languages are involved in borrowing. According to Donwa-Ifode (1995:132):

Two or more languages are said to be in contact if they are used by the same individuals or group of persons alternately. The individual using the language is referred to as the **locus** of contact. The language that borrows from the other is said to be the **recipient** language, while that from which the item is borrowed is known as the **donor** language

According to Donwa-Ifode (1995:135) "a recipient language has lifted from a donor language to mean the same object and practice to which it originally referred in the donor language ".A contrastive study of Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English shows that Nigerian Pidgin English borrows more from the indigenous languages thereby giving rise to some of its varieties as **Warri pidgin, Port Harcourt pidgin, Lagos pidgin, Enugu pidgin, Kaduna pidgin etc.** While Nigerian English maintains one standard variety that is devoid of any ethno-linguistic colouration because of its minimal borrowing from the Nigerian indigenous languages. Some of the indigenously influenced vocabularies in Nigerian Pidgin English include:

**Aboki**, a friend (Hausa origin), **wahala**, problem (Hausa), **mugu**, a fool (Yoruba), **yeye**, unserious minded (Yoruba), **gbege**, problem (Yoruba), **nnaa**, a friend (Igbo), **mmanya**, alcohol (Igbo).

It is observed that Nigerian Pidgin English borrows extensively from the substrate

languages and English language too, while Nigerian English borrows minimally to substitute some words that are not present in the Standard English. Both Nigerian pidgin and Nigerian English have a plethora of loanwords that have no direct English equivalents, but have rooted themselves into both languages and have a unique meaning. Examples: Agbada (cloth for men, it is of Yoruba origin), babariga (a kind of long loose cloth for men, it is of Hausa origin), banga soup (special soup prepared by the Ibibios) etc.

**Compounding:** The uniqueness of Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English have been observed at the level of compounding. Compounding is basically found in content words; hence nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are the major classes often used in compounding. According to Ozomekuri (1999:70)

"compounding is a process of joining two or more formally independent roots to form a single word. A word formed in this way is known as a compound". Compounding is a very useful morphological process in words creation in many languages. The process of compounding is not restricted to words from a particular part of speech, rather it cuts across other grammatical categories in the sense that, words from different grammatical classes or parts of speech can string together and form a compound. It is observed that both languages make common use of some compounding in words formation that are unique to both languages but deficient in Standard English. While Nigerian English on the other hand shares some compound words in common with Standard English, such vocabularies may not be found in Nigerian Pidgin English.

Some examples of compounding and compound words in Nigerian English:

NIGERIAN ENGLISH	WORD CLASS	WORD COMPOSITION
Long-leg	Noun	Adjective + Noun
Barbing-salon	Noun	Verb + Noun
Mama-put	Noun	Noun + Verb
Cross-carpet	Verb	Verb + Noun

Some examples of compounding and compound words in Nigerian Pidgin English:

NPE	MEANING	WORD CLASS	WORD COMPOSITION	SOURCE
Trowe	Throw away	Verb	Verb + Adverb	English
Plos inkludin	Together with	Conjunction	Verb + Verb	English
Won taim	At once	Adverb	Adverb	English

**BLENDING:** This involves the merging together of two or more words such that at least one of them loses a part of its original form. NPE blends two English words together by removing some sounds of either or both words. Examples:

TEXT	WORD	FORMATION
NPE	Comot	Come + Out
NPE	Wunjure	Wound + injure

**REDUPLICATION:** Unlike Nigerian English which duplicates words through the doubling of a given syllable, NPE duplicates words by doubling the given word and at times syllables. In other words, it repeats a particular word twice, either together or separated with a hyphen. Examples:

TEXT	WORD	MEANING	WORDCLASS
NPE	Well-well	Very well	Adverb
NPE	Fek-fek	Fake	Adjective
NPE	AT ol at ol	Not at all	Adverb

**Coinages:** Coinages though similar to loanwords, function as a sort of colloquialism that is

obtainable in Nigerian English but has a unique cultural meaning. Coinages are prolific in Nigerian English and some of them have been officially entrenched into the English lexicon, while NPE is yet to be accorded such official status and usage. Examples: **long-leg, tight-friend, money bag** etc.

**Semantic Extension:** Often in Nigerian English, there is the extension of the semantic boundaries of existing English words to cover strange meanings, which Akindele and Adegbite (1992:55) refer to as "the addition of meanings to a standard English word". Such morphological transformation is not obtainable in NPE. Examples:

- (1) I gave the policeman **kola nut** (bribe).
- (2) He has a **stranger** (visitor) this evening.
- (3) Musa **hears** (understands) English language very well.

**Morpho-Semantic Shift:** Semantics involves the study of meanings in linguistics, and it is wholly concerned with the study of the meaning of words. In Nigerian English, semantic shift occurs in the re-appropriation of the meaning of English words for Nigerian purposes and uses. This can cause the original English words to have a shifted, restricted or extended meaning. By doing so, the central context of words become marginalized. Such morphological changes are not original to NPE. Examples:

- (1) His **machine** broke down (machine for motorcycle)
- (2) NEPA took the **light** (light for electric power supply)

**Morpho-Semantic Reduplication:** Most of the Nigerian English expressions contain unnecessary repetitions of the same ideas. This phenomenon is referred to as tautology that is, saying the same

more than once without making meaning clearer. Examples:

- (1) **Repeat** what you said **again**
- (2) Nigeria's **past history** is worth studying

**Morpho-semantic narrowing:** The meaning of some existing English words is semantically narrowed to have another scope of meaning in Nigerian English, such morphological operation is not obtainable in NPE. Examples:

- (1) Kerosene is more expensive than **fuel** (petrol)
- (2) My **globe** (electric bulb) shines brighter than yours

However, it is pertinent to note that most of the contrastive areas between Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English are interwoven. There is no absolute linguistic boundary that divides both varieties of English language in the sense that, both languages are involved in most of morphological operations mentioned or contrasted, but the difference is that one may have a higher level of adaptation than the other.

### Conclusion

Having x-rayed the diverse contrastive areas between Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English which include; borrowing, compounding, blending, reduplication, coinages, morpho-semantic extension, morpho-semantic shift, morpho-semantic reduplication, and morpho-semantic narrowing, it was observed that both varieties of English share some similarities and differences in their morphological operations. However, apart from the aforementioned contrastive areas between the two languages, it is crucial to note that NPE does not have a unified spelling pattern, does not show a proper display of inflections and does not have standardized officially accepted variety.

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