

EDUCATED NIGERIAN ENGLISH PHONEMES

Chika Glory Opara

Directorate of General Studies, Federal University of Technology Owerri

ABSTRACT: *There has been a natural desire for linguistic independence among language experts as the English language has continued to function as a medium of communication in Nigeria since 19th century (Jowitt 2007, Banjo 1971). The realism is seen on the interest in the development of National variety of English and the volumes of scholarly article on the variety of Nigerian English. Some of these articles have adequately proved that grammatical, lexical and phonological systems have attained appreciable standard. But the general publications on these studies have not been harmonized and appropriated. The objectives of this study is to determine and document the common core features of Educated Nigerian English Phonemes (ENEP). The study also analyzes the contexts, the nature and root causes of the emergence of stable phonemic forms of ENE. The researcher also determine whether the distinctive forms are nationally acceptable and internationally intelligible and by so doing, establish the standard ENE Phonemes. Two hundred Nigerians of varied educational backgrounds and levels were selected by a random sampling technique from thirty linguistic groups and different occupational levels in Nigeria. The study reveals that there are stable phonemic features that differ slightly from SBE Received Pronunciation (RP) but cut across all the levels of education as well as the regional varieties. The study recommends that such features should be accepted as national the standard.*

KEYWORDS: Nigerian English, educated Nigerian English, English phonemes

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the English language to Nigeria became imperative in 19th century because of the need for a medium of communication between the Europeans and the host of Nigerian communities. There was an obvious need for interpreters as the Portuguese Merchants who were the first Europeans to come to Nigeria, do not speak English, they were interested in trade (Omolewa 1974, Omadiagbo, 1992). By t 19th century attempts were made by the British who supplanted the Portuguese to introduce the English language as a medium of communication and to encourage Nigerians to learn the English language (Osuafor 2003) The English language became a medium of communication between the natives speakers and the citizens .

By mid 19th century the British missionaries began their efforts to establish schools where the teaching of English would be given prominence. The schools were tied to Christianity and were established basically for the propagation of Christian faith. However, the missionaries were interested in teaching English only for evangelism (cf Omodiagbo 1990) and they were unable to take the language to the hinterlands. As Jubril (1982) expresses most of the earliest teachers in Nigerian were nonnative speakers , these include the Americans, the West Indians who came with

the missionaries from Church of Scotland, the Sierra-leonian freed slaves and liberated semi-literate slaves of Yoruba origin. The Scottish and Irish native speakers who were present at that time were unable to penetrate the hinterlands because of high mortality rate they suffered as a result of hostility from the natives and sickness caused by mosquito bite and poor weather condition (Josaiiah & Essien 2013). This means that Nigerians were not completely taught by the native speakers from inception and even after many centuries.

The Phelps strokes fund, an American Philanthropic International Education Board came into the scene by 1920. The Phleps strokes fund set up a commission to look into education in Nigeria. This ran counter to the conscious efforts made by the missionaries and colonial authorities to teach the same native variety of English that was taught in England (Omolewa 1974, Omadeagbo 1992). As the English language expanded from the mission schools to the hinter-lands, Nigerians had to learn English as a matter of practical necessity and for official transactions . Since the English language has been taken outside it's environment to Nigeria, bilingualism of different sorts automatically manifested. Lexical items, syntactic pattern, semantic and phonological features filtered from one language to another and the variety that resulted developed into a vigorous system of communication with its distinctive features known as Nigerian English(Akere , 1981,Eka 2000). .

The English language has gain worldwide prominence, but it is not a monolithic language. Tray ((1982: 28) observes that a unitary agreed on and codified standard does not exist, because there are many stakeholder countries. Nevertheless, Adegbija (1998) stresses that it is not all the linguistic features of NE that exemplify Nigerian English, should be accepted as ENE. The fact is that ENE needs to be identified and documented, so that the language will not be so diluted and diversified that Nigerian will not only lose effective international communication but also need interpreters to be understood internationally.. There is the need to codify and harmonize common core features of ENE. We shall be analyzing ENE phonemes and also determine the international intelligibility of ENE phonemic features.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian English

The first scholar to recognize this unique variety of English (Nigerian English) was Walsh .C, who in 1967 observed that the variety of English spoken by educated Nigerians no matter what their dialects and level of education have enough features in common to mark off a general type which may be called NE (Walsh 1967). According to Walsh NE is English as spoken and written in Nigeria. Bamgbose (1995:26) on his part defines NE as a distinctive variety that has been nativized, and twisted to express unaccustomed concepts and model of interaction. This means that English is well adapted in Nigeria. Udofot (2012) explains that the English language has not only been nativized but also the nativized variety is the one that is being taught in Nigerian institutions, because there are not many native speakers of English within Nigeria to provide any substantive influence . So NE is a variety that has a touch of Nigerian colour. Eka (2000;p.15)

captures the whole picture as he defines NE as a variety of English learnt, spoken and written in Nigeria, which is today recognized as a variety of world English.

Indeed Nigerian English exists, yet the nativized variety has not been codified or documented. As Salami (1968) expresses there are yet no acceptable definition or documentation of ENE. Josaiiah and Babatunde (2011) even concur as they state that the general published article on spoken Nigerian English are generally discordant. According to these scholars, research efforts in this area lack co-ordination and definite criteria for variety differentiation. As such there is the need to harmonize and codify spoken educated Nigerian English because English has come a long way in Nigeria.

Educated Nigerian Spoken English

The Empirical study on spoken varieties of Nigerian English started in early 1950's (Josaiiah and Babatunde 2011). Using the level of education as his major criteria, Brosnahan (1958) identified four levels of NE. Level I is the variety he termed Pidgin English and it is used by illiterate class. Level II is spoken by primary school graduates. Level III is spoken by those who have had secondary education and is marked by increased fluency, wider vocabulary and conscious avoidance of L1 Usage. Level VI is close to Standard English but retaining some features of level II & III, spoken by those with university education. The question Brosnahan failed to answer is how close NE is to SBE.

Banjo (1971) made a similar classification of NE into four varieties. Variety one is spoken by semi-illiterate people whose level of education is not higher than primary school education hence, there is a great deal of linguistic transfer from speaker's L1 to English usage. Phonology and syntax are poor. Variety two is characterized by passable syntax. Phonologically there is negative transfer from speaker's LI. It is spoken by Up to 75% of those who speak English in the country, socially acceptable in Nigeria but with low international intelligibility. Variety 3 is close to SBE in syntax and semantics, similar in phonology but different in phonetic features, socially acceptable and internationally intelligible spoken by less than 10% of population. Variety 4 is identical with SBE. It has phonological and phonetic features of SBE RP, internationally intelligible but socially unacceptable. It is spoken by a handful of Nigerian born and brought up in England. Banjo categorizes variety III NE usage as educated Nigerian English. That means that other varieties cannot be classified as educated Nigerian English and that only 10% Educated Nigerians speak standard English.

Eka (1987) made a comprehensive study of the variety of spoken Nigerian English and concluded that there are three varieties of spoken Nigerian English, these are: the non-standard variety, the basic and the near native variety. The non-standard variety, the source described as that spoken by Nigerians who are barely educated in the language who have minimum exposure to it both in school and outside, often primary six certificate holders. According to the Eka this variety is replete with evidence of interference from speaker's L1 and evidence of fair mastery of segmental and non-segmental distinctions in English and can be understood. They are speakers that have secondary education. The near native variety according Eka shows evidence of appropriate

segmental and non-segmental distinction and can be understood and accepted nationally and internationally.

More recently Udofot (2004) presents a re-classification of the variety of English spoken in Nigeria. Again using the educational parameter Udofot identified three main categories of speakers namely, the non-standard, the standard, and the sophisticated varieties. The non-standard variety of NE, Udofot states, is spoken by primary school graduates and some secondary school graduates, university freshmen, some second year university undergraduates, holders of OND and NCE certificates and primary school teachers. This group is unable to make vital phonemic distinctions. The variety two comprises those who speak Standard English. The exponents are third and final year undergraduates, university and college lecturers with secondary school teachers of English and holders of higher national diploma. The third variety is the sophisticated variety, which includes; university lectures of English and Linguistics, graduate of English and those who live in mother tongue areas. Indeed, Udofot's classification is a more realistic representation of the present day English usage in Nigeria (Jowitt 2007). Her classification shows that some holders of OND, NCE and even master's degree holders speak non-standard English.

Jowitt (1991) has a different observation. He explains that the English usage of Nigerians is so diverse to be represented in a neat hierarchy. Jowitt observes the problem of singling out a sub-type of NE as the sole custodian of ENE. According to Jowitt, Nigerianisms are found in all sub-varieties of Nigerian English though not in uniform regularity. He states that stable Nigerianisms occur in the usage of near totality of NE speakers. He stresses the need to characterize NE and establish its standard and non-standard forms. Jowitt introduced the concept of Popular Nigerian English (PNE) into the study of NE. He defines PNE as the English usage of Nigeria in general which is made up of errors and variant. Jowitt has it that PNE variants that are stable and widespread may in future be accepted as a national standard.

The fact about NE is not just that it is different from British or America English, rather that there are varieties of English in Nigeria which ranges from non-standard to standard which can be accounted for either as deviant or deviations, errors or variants, acceptable or non- acceptable forms. Hence, deviations that do not stray too far from (SBE) and are wide spread or stable should grow into the national standard (Adeniran, 1987, Dadzie, 2004). This study analyzes wide spread and stable deviations in Educated Nigerian spoken English with the attempt to identify and document Standard Nigeria English Phonemes.

The Educated Nigerian

For the purpose of this, study educated Nigerian is defined as any Nigerian who has at least completed a course of formal instruction in primary and secondary school in Nigeria. This course is twelve year in duration and the medium of instruction is mainly English. Most Educated Nigerians are bilinguals and their language vary considerably depending on the nature of Bilingualism. Since there is a correlation between level of education and degree of bilingualism and also level of proficiency in language, two sets of bilinguals will be examined in this study namely; early and late bilinguals.

METHODOLOGY

The subject of this research were 200 Educated Nigerians of varied educational background selected through stratified random sampling technique from thirty linguistic groups from the four major geo- political zones in Nigeria using the number of years of exposure to English language learning, the process of acquisition of the language and the level of education as the criteria. The subjects were grouped into three. Group one comprised senior secondary school graduates who have been exposed to formal English learning for the period of ten to twelve years. Group two was made up undergraduates who have been exposed to English learning and use, for twelve to fifteen years. Group three consist of post graduates students of different fields of occupation who have higher level of English use.

We acknowledged that there is a correlation between the level of education and nature of bilingualism and that the process of acquisition of the English language affects speakers. Hence the subjects were further categorized into two main types of bilinguals: group A, the Early bilinguals who came from educated homes where English is spoken as well as the mother tongue. In this category the subjects acquired the two languages (L1 & L2) simultaneously, for them the two languages represent alternate means of communicating singular thoughts (Eka 2000) and group B the late bilinguals, those who after acquiring their L1 learn another language . They come from illiterate homes where L1 is exclusively the medium of communication; these two factors can determine the level of one's competence. We also ensure that the subjects were taught by English teachers of Nigerian origin. There were 100 subjects in each categories. The study lasted for a period of one year. The social cultural groupings of the subjects are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Types of Bilinguals and their Groupings

Early Bilinguals	No of Subjects
Group A Senior secondary school graduates	30
Group B University Undergraduates.	30
Group C Post graduates of varied occupations: Civil servants, lecturers, secondary school teachers as engineers, doctors etc. .	40

LATE BINLINGUALS	
Group A Senior secondary school graduates	30
Group B University undergraduate	30
Group C Post graduates of varied occupations: Civil servants, lecturers, secondary school teachers as engineers, doctors etc.	40

Table2: Ethnic Groups and their Populations

S/Nos	ETHNIC GROUPS	Populations
1	Hausa (Doka, Birnin-Gari and Kangara)	3
2	Igbo Onitsha, Nssukka, Owerri, Mbaise, Mbanjo, Abakiliki	7
3	Yoruba	7
4	Efik	12
5	Ibibo	10
6	Urhobo	14
7	EleleAlimini	11
8	Idogbo	6
9	Nembe	16
10	Igala	10
11	Ikwere	12
12	Edo	10
13	Ogoni	10
14	Gokana	14
15	Eleme	12
16	Okirika	11
17	Tiv	15
18	Kala	9
19	Ijaw	11
20	Nupe	13
21	Idoma	7
22	Iyalla	3
23	Buguma	1
24	Chamba	10
25	Jokun	11
26	Batta	12
27	Abavo/ Agbor	11
28	Etinan	12
29	Etche	7
30	Opobo	1
	Total	300

Two educational institutions in Nigeria from the south east geo-political zone were chosen - University of Port-Harcourt and Federal University of Technology Owerri and two secondary

schools, Federal Government Girls College owerri and Federal Government Boys College Portharcourt. The civil servants working in the institutions were observed. The selection of the subjects from federal government institutions is significant because it is expected to have among its students/staff population, speakers from different ethnic groups. It will also ensure uniformity in the qualitative approach adopted in the analysis. The subjects were instructed to indicate their tribes.

Data collection procedure

Three major procedures were adopted in data collection. First, the spontaneous discussions of the students, teachers and other professionals were carefully observed in the schools/offices unnoticed. The second procedure was structured observation, here each subject was engaged in a conversation structured to determine distinct phonemes in their usage. The third was an experimental observation. Five poems were constructed with emphasis on the forty four English sounds and were given to the subjects to recite individually, they were also asked to speak freely on the topic, 'a day I will never forget', pronounce the forty four English sounds as a unit sound, say words that represent each sounds. To achieve the objectives of the study, 2000 sentences, comprising the identified problem phonemes were read by the subjects. The sentences consist of 1,900 words. One hundred words that equally enhance the distinct phonemes were given to the subjects to pronounce. This was to enable the researcher analyzed how the distinct phonemes are pronounced in different phonetic environment (in words and sentences). A corpus comprising about 2000 words (both sentences and words) were recorded. The tape-recorded productions were played back for analysis. As the researcher alone cannot observe 200 subjects accurately, the researcher engaged the services of two qualified English lecturers from each school.

Analytical Procedure

The performances of the early and late bilinguals were analyzed to determine wide spread and stable features of ENE. The frequency count of the deviations were calculated. The result was analyzed and based on the results the characteristic features of ENE phonemes were determined. A careful identification and classification of the peculiar ENE phonemes were done and the reasons for the deviations were analyzed. The services of four competent assessors were engaged to analyze the national and international intelligibility of ENE phonemes. While the two native assessors were Scottish employee of Shell Company working in Port-Harcourt, the other two were non-native speakers of Nigeria origin, lecturing in the universities. They assisted the researchers in analyzing and evaluating the data and also accessing the international and national intelligibility of ENE Phonemes. The peculiar linguistic features were identified. The forms isolated as ENE phoneme were those that have high frequency of occurrences and wide distributions. A quantitative approach using frequency count was used for the frequency distribution.

The data were further subjected to an intelligibility test. According to crystal (1977) an intelligibility test is one judged by the native speaker to be easily understood. So, the degree of intelligibility of ENE phonemes was therefore determined by evaluating the level of the assessors' comprehension of the subjects' productions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) propounded by Giles (1979). The theory is basically designed to account for the behavioral changes people make to attune to their communication with their partner and the extent which they perceive their interlocutors as appropriate attuning to them. It focuses on the links between language, context and identity. Giles (1979) has it that people adjust or accommodate their styles of speech to suit one another. The theory investigates the pattern of convergence and divergence of communication among people for communication efficiency and social identity.

Convergence according to Giles refers, to strategies through which individuals adapt to each other's communication behaviour so as to reduce the linguistic differences. Divergence refers to instances in which individuals accentuate the speech and non-verbal differences between themselves. The CAT sought to explain the motivation underlying shift in people's speech style. Jenkin (2002) in Josiah & Essien (2013) sees CAT in terms of the mutual phonological intelligibility and acceptability between speakers of inner circle English. According to Jenkins, speakers need to develop the ability to accommodate their pronunciations according to the communicative situation in which they find themselves.

As CAT provides explanation for the motives behind linguistic peculiarities it can apply to Nigerian context. Nigerians have to adjust their ways of interacting nationally, as a multilingual society and internationally. Since English is a global language, there is also the need for both native and nonnative speakers to adjust their speech style to facilitate mutual interaction. Hence the theoretical model adopted in this study is relevant to the study.

FINDINGS

It was observed in ENE data that there were distinct phonemic features of Educated Nigerian spoken English which distinguished ENE from SBE RP. However, the distributions of the phonemic features varied at the three stages observed in both early and late bilinguals. ENE phonemes diverge from SBE phonemes in the following ways:

Shortening of long vowels

The research findings established that ENEP deviates from SBE RP in the pronunciation of the long vowels. The subjects shortened the long vowels. Early bilinguals had 352 instances of this deviation while late bilinguals had 389 instances. From the analysis of the study data we observed the transitional competence of the subjects, however, shortening of long vowel is a stable feature of ENE since it occurs at the three levels of education (see tables 3 and 4 below). The subjects shortened the long vowels /i:/ to /i/, /u:/ to /u/ /a:/ to /æ/ or /a/, /ɔ:/ to /ɒ/ and /ɜ:/ to /e/. Such habit neutralized the distinction between words pairs, such as, seat /sit, eat /it, march/match, park/pack, hard/had, pool/pull etc. However, the words were better understood in contexts. The implication is that the ENE speakers tend to have reduced the number of the pure vowels from twelve to seven. Since they do not mark the relevant quality. Eka (2001) equally observes that ENE speakers tend to have reduced the number of vowels in their repertoire.

Vowel Substitution

The pronunciation of the centering vowels in ENE is different from SBE 'RP'. Generally these vowels: /ɜ:/, /ʌ/ and /ə/ were difficult for all the subjects to pronounce. The subjects therefore substitute the vowels as follows: /ʌ/ for /ɜ:/, /ə/ for /æ/ or /a/ and /ɜ:/ for /e/. The early bilinguals recorded 270 instances of this type of deviation as against 274 for late bilinguals. These types of deviations create confusion in their communication as words like birds were pronounced as bed, burn as born, bus as box, cup as cop, words like love, uncle come, blood etc, were wrongly pronounced. Substitution of vowels is not peculiar to ENE speaker. Gimson (1970) points out that substitution of /ɔ:/ for RP /ʌ/ is common in British English.

Vowel epenthesis:

The data manifested few epenthetic vowels, out of 2000 words used for the study analysis, the study recorded 206 (10%) occurrences of epenthetic vowels. Examples are in these words 'etiquake' earthquake, 'peaciful' for peaceful, 'cilean' for clean, 'stopu' for stop 'postupone' for postpone particularz for particulars, 'departiment' for department, 'subsititution' for substitution etc. Vowel epenthesis is a feature of speech that is common at stage 1 early and late bilinguals. They subjects employ them for emphasis or commands. Epenthetic vowels are hardly ever observed among stage 2 and 3 speakers because the tendencies are so conspicuous that they are noticed and corrected at the early stage. However, this feature also affect their spelling forms at this stage.

Coalition of Impure vowels to pure vowels : The subject conflated some diphthongs in the data. This feature is common in all the three stages. For instance /ei/ is pronounced as /e/, /tek/ for /teik/, /let/ for /leit/, /eu/ pronounced as /o/ example /go/ instead of /geu/. While /ea/ and /iə/ are conflated into /iə/ for instance care /kea/ and year /yiə/ are pronounced as /kiə/ and /yiə/. There were 470 occurrences of this feature in the subjects' productions. This characteristics has a wide distribution in the pronunciation of all the subjects under study. It is therefore a stable characteristics of Educated Nigerian spoken English. It was observed that this type of deviation persists even up to post graduate stage.

Deviations involving consonants

-Consonant substitution: This is another common feature observed in the subjects' productions. The consonants that were most frequently substituted were the fricatives: /s/ -- /z/, /ʃ/ /ʒ/, /ð/ and /θ/. For example; the word 'was', was realized as /wez/ instead of /wɒs/, 'then' and 'den' as /ðen/ instead of /den/, /θink/ as /tink/ etc. These tendencies were more frequent at stages one and two early and late bilinguals than stage 3.

-Consonant Reduction

In an environment of clustered consonant, the subjects reduce mostly the final consonants or add vowels to them. The subjects reduced consonant clusters usually by one in their productions, particularly stages one and two bilinguals. For example; the word christ is produced as /krais/, first as /fe:s/, priest as /pris/, task as /taz/, /æsk/ as /æs/. It was further observed that the subjects

retained consonant clusters in inflected words example are in these words; talked, Faster, worked, walked, loaded, handled etc. ENEP had a total of 592 distributions of consonant reduction.

-Consonant Addition

Consonant addition is another persistent deviant usage in ENE. The letter ‘g’ in ‘/ŋ/’ ‘ing’ ending words are silent in most English words. The subjects clearly pronounce ‘g’ in nearly all the /ŋ/ ending sequence in words. This is common in ENE pronunciation even at the post graduate level. Examples are in these words; sing/sinŋg/ singer /sinŋger/ wrong , among /amongŋ /, king /kiŋg /, ringing /riŋŋgn/ etc.

-Voicing of plosives endings. Again just as the case of /ŋ/, every plosives / b/ending words were fully exploded by the subjects. Examples are in these words; bomb, climb, plumber, womb, dumb, comb, tomb, bomb, numb etc. Terminal ‘b’ were made audible in the productions of these words. A total of 511 occurrences of voiced plosives ‘b’ ending words were noted in the spoken English of the subjects.

-Consonant Elision

It was also observed that /t/ sound was made audible where it should be silent. In an environment where the /t/ should be audible the subjects omitted it and where it should be silent they made it audible it. Examples are in these words: castle, rustle, bustle, hustle, whistle, thistle, etc (see tables 3 and 4 below).

Devoicing of final consonant

The subjects devoiced voiced consonants. This tendency was common in word final positions than at word initial positions for examples the final consonants in these words were devoiced; conceive, proud, sieve , five, wife etc. The frequency of devoiced consonants in the data was low in the spoken English of the subjects. Early bilingual recorded 216 occurrences while late bilinguals had 226 giving a total 442 for the two groups.

Table 3: Summary of the distribution of the ene phonemic features-- the early bilinguals 4

S/N	Deviation Types	STAGE 1		STAGE 2		STAGE 3	
		Freq/	%	Freq/	%	Freq	%
1	Shortening of long vowels	136	13.85%	128	14.91%	88	13,68%
2	Substitution of vowels	102	10.39%	92	10.72%	76	11.81%
3	Vowels epenthesis	52	5,29%	30	3,49%	10	1.55%
4	Coalition of Diphthongs	88	8.96%	78	9.09%	62	9.64%
5	Consonants substitution	126	12,83%	112	13,05%	88	13.68%

6	Consonants reduction	98	9.97%	98	11.42%	86	13,37%
7	Consonant addition	88	8.96%	92	10.72	68	10.57%
8	Consonant elision	86	8.75%	78	9,09%	52	8.08%
9	Voicing plosives .b' endings	110	11.20%	82	9.55%	61	9.48%
10	Devoicing of final Consonants	96	9.77%	68	7.92%	52	8.08%
	Total	982	100%	858	100	643	100%

Table 4 :Summary of the distribution of the ene phonemic features--the Late bilinguals

S/N	Deviation Types	STAGE 1		STAGE 2			STAGE 3	
		Freq/	%	Freq/	%	%	Freq	%
1	Shortening of long vowels	156	14.81%	138	15.16%		89	13.14%
2	Substitution of vowels	102	9.68%	98	10.76%		74	10.93%
3	Vowels epenthesis	58	5.50%	38	4.17%		18	2.65%
4	Coalition of diphthongs	92	8.73%	88	9.67%		62	9.16%
5	Consonants substitution	136	12.91%	118	12.96%		93	13.73%
6	Consonants reduction	112	10.63%	102	11.20%		96	14.18%
7	Consonant addition	98	9.30%	86	9.45%		74	10.93%
8	Consonant elision	92	8.73%	78	8.57%		58	8.56%
9	Voicing of plosive 'b' endings	109	10.35%	88	9.67%		61	9.01%
10	Devoicing of final Consonants	98	9.30%	76	8.35%		52	7.68%
		1053	100%	910	100%		677	100%

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study confirmed that there are wide-spread distinctive ENE phonemic features that distinguished ENE phonemes from Standard English phonemes. Both early and late bilinguals shortened the long vowels. They were unable to distinguish the centering vowels, in the face of such troublesome vowels the subjects substituted the vowels with another vowel similar to them or common in their repertoire. These types of deviations were common in the data, but the frequency was slightly higher in stages one and two early and late bilinguals, as shown in tables 3 and 4 above.

It was observed that the twelve English pure vowels were reduced to seven vowels in ENE phonemes because the subjects were unable to observe the sound variation in some phonemic environments.

More so, the frequency of distribution of the distinct forms among the subjects varied from stage one to stage three in both groups. This shows that there is a cline of usage. The usage of the ENE speakers is in a state of continuum (Jowitt 1991). Although the subjects exhibit a cline of proficiency, the deviations were regular and wide spread. They deviations are therefore the distinctive features of ENE.

Furthermore, it was also observed that the subjects conflated diphthongs into monothongs . Such substitutions are not common to Nigerian English speakers. Gimson (1960) remarks that /i/ is sometimes replace by /i:/ and /ʌ/ by /a:/ in certain London and Australian English. The implication is that Nigerian school teachers may have been influenced by some native speakers from the onset. Jubril (1982) also confirms that there were no sufficient native speakers tutors from the onset So the subjects' difficulties in producing the centering vowels may be trace to the fact they were no model teachers to teach with correctness.

The research findings established that ENE also deviates from SBE RP in the production of consonants. There were deviant usage in pronunciation of consonants in ENE. The persistent deviation types in the data occurred in contexts where consonants were either reduced or omitted where they were required or added where they were not required. Again some consonant were also substituted or devoiced and some consonant that are supposed to be silent were fully voiced. These features are common in the productions of the six groups observed. They are therefore common core features of ENE.

The reasons for consonant reduction, elision and addition is as a result of faulty analogy and accidental pronunciations which may have been fossilized. For instance the word plumber is wrongly pronounced as /plʌmber/ instead of /plʌmer/, even when the correction was made, ENE speakers still pronounce it as /plʌmber/ subconsciously. Other contributory factors may be, hyper correctness tendency among ENE speakers and influence of the model teachers. There are cases of hyper correctness where some of the ENE speakers were so conscious of their speech

production, hence final consonants were given heavy stress and plosives were fully exploded despite their phonetic environments.

More so, the subjects were taught by Nigerian English speakers who were born and trained in Nigerian linguistic environment. Jubril (1982) observes that the earliest teachers of the English language were non-native speakers. The implication is that since non-native speakers and semi-literate Africans were involve in the teaching of the English language in the southern Nigeria where the language took off, one would not expect Nigerians to magically acquire the SBE RP. Most Nigerians were not taught by native speakers. So they should not be expected to speak exactly like the native speakers. The influence of non-native English speaking teachers who taught Nigerians from the onset also account for the deviations.

Despite these observations, ENE does not deviate significantly from SBE (Adetugbo 2004). Indeed NE will not deteriorate to unintelligible language because of slight deviations from SBE RP. The fact is that NE develops and shades some peculiar features on its own as the users' proficiency increase. The stable and regular divergences are therefore negligible. .

Intelligibility Test

Analysis here is aimed at establishing the intelligibility of ENE phonemic features. To determine whether the ENE phonemic features are intelligible internationally .Two hundred words and simple sentences [100 words and 100 sentences taken from the corpus] were replayed , with emphasis on the identified tendencies or deviant pronunciations, for the native/ nonnative speakers assessors to determine the level of intelligibility of the ENE phonemic features. The assessors were Scottish shell staff residing in Nigeria and the other two were Nigerians. They were lectures at the two university under study who speak and understand the three major Nigerian languages. The degree of understanding of the distinct usage by the assessors determines whether ENE phonemic features are intelligible (Crystal 1974) . The summary of the result is presented in the table 7 below.

Table 7: Intelligibility Test of Phonemic Feature

S/N	A	NSA			NSA	
		B	C	D	F	E
	DT	NIU	WU	NWU	WU	NWU
1	Shortening of vowels	20	13	6	20	_
2	Substitution of vowels	20	14	4	20	--
3	Vowel epenthesis	20	6	12	20	--
4	Coalition of diphthongs	20	16	4	20	_
5	Consonant substitution	20	15	6	20	_
6	Consonants reduction	20	16	7	20	_
7	Consonant addition	20	16	3	20	_
8	Consonant elision	20	14	5	20	_
9	Voicing of plosive 'b' endings	20	16	4	20	_
10	Devoicing of final consonant	20	14	6	20	_
	Total	200	140 (70%)	60(30%)	200 (100%)	_

DT – Deviation type

NSA – Native speakers assessors

NNA- Non Native speakers assessors

NWT – Number of words used

WU – Well understood

NWU – Not understood

The result presented in table 7 revealed that ENE phonemes are internationally intelligible. Column A presents the deviation types while B shows the number of phonemic items used for evaluation. Columns C and D the number of phonemic features understood or not understood by the native speakers assessors when used in words and sentences, columns E and F show the number of items understood by the non native speakers assessors. The grand total was given on the last row of the table. The intelligible test revealed that out of 200 ENE peculiar phonemic items 145, (70%) were understood in words and sentences, while 60 (30%) phonemic items (%) were not understood. The implication is that distinctive ENE phonemic features do not hinder international intelligibility, especially when used in contexts. The assessors were able to understand the words more when they were used in contexts. This observation buttresses Haward Giles CAT theory that context enhances communication. Hence ENE spoken English is 70% internationally intelligible and 100% acceptable and intelligible nationally.

CONCLUSION

Nigerians have always aspired to proficiency in the use of English from the inception. However, despite the many centuries of study and practice on spoken English in Nigeria, ENE phonemic features remain slightly distinct from SBE phonemes. It is therefore suggested that the stable or common core features that are nationally and internationally intelligible and occur at the three stages of ENE, should be accepted as the national standard RP. It is important to codify and document the distinctive ENE phonemes. Though not all the Nigerian distinctive features should be accepted because the English language is not a chameleon that blends with any context. The fact is that stable distinct phonemic features of NE have evolved and should be documented as ENE Received Pronunciation.

References

- Adeniran, A. (1987). On formally characterizing Nigerian English. *Lexicon Acoustic reinforcement System*, 9(1):85-99
- Adetugbo, A. (1979). Nigerian English and communication competence. In Ubahakwe, E. (Eds) *Varieties and function of English in Nigeria* Ibadan: African University Press, pp.176.
- Adetugbo A . (2004). "Problem of standardization of Nigerian English phonology". In Dadzie, k.&
- Awonusi, S.(eds). *Nigerian English :influences and characteristics*. Lagos:Concept Publications ,pp179-199.
- AKere, F. (1981).Socio Linguistics Consequences of Language contact; English Versus Nigerian Languages. *Science*, 3(2) 282-304.
- Adegbija, E. (2004).The Domestication of English in Nigeria. In Awonusi, S. and Babalola, E.A. (Eds).*Domestication of English*. Lagos, University of Lagos Press pp:221.
- Adeniran, A (1987). On formally characterizing Nigerian English. *Lexicon Acoustic Reinforcement system* 9(1): 85-99
- Bamgbose, A. (1995). English in Nigerian Environment. In Bamgbose A. (Ed.) *New English, a West African perspective*, Ibadan: Mosuro, pp. 161-184
- Banjo, L.A. (1971), Towards a Definition of Standard Nigerian Spoken English: *Actes du 8 congress de la Sociele Linguistique de l' Afrique Ouidentale*, 6, 165-175.
- Brosnahan, C. F. (1958). English in Southern Nigeria. *English studies* 39, 97-110
- Crystal, D. (1997). English as a global Language. Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, p4
- Dadzie, A.B.K. (2004). The concept of Nigerian English. In Dadzie, A.B.K. and Awonusi, S. (Eds) *Nigerian English influences and characteristics*. Lagos: Concept Publications , pp. 101-132
- Eka, D. (1987). The phonology of Nigerian English. In: odumuh, A.E (Ed) *Nigerian English selected essays*. Zaria ABU Press, pp.57.
- Eka, D. (2000). Issues in Nigerian English Usage. Uyo: Scholar Press Ltd, pp.121
- Eka, D. (2005). *From change to Divergences: Reflection on Global English*. 13th inaugural lecture of the University of Uyo; Uyo, the University of Uyo Press Ltd. pp-281.
- Gimson, A.C. (1970). *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*. London: *Edward Arnold*.
- Giles, H, & St. Clair, R (1979) *Language and Psychology*. Oxford: *Basil Blackwell*.

- Giles, H. Coupland, N. & Coupland I. (1991) *Contexts of accommodation: developments in applied Linguistics* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, I. (2000). *The Phonology of English as an International Language: New Models New Norms New Goals* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jibril, M. (1982) *Phonological Variation in Nigerian Spoken English*. Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, University of Lancaster.
- Josiah, U.E & Babatunde, S.T. (2011). “Standard Nigerian Spoken Nigerian English Phonemes: the crisis of modelling and Harmonization” In *World Englishes*, 30 .2. pp. 200-218
- Josiah, U.E & Essien, N.M (2013). *Six Decades of Phonemicization in Nigerian English and Implication for Expanding Circle Englishes*. In *Journal of Nigerian English and Literature* (9). Pp63-85.
- Jowitt, D.H (1991). *Nigerian English usage: An Introduction*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria PLC.
- Jowitt, D.H (2007). “Standard Nigerian English: a re-examination”. In *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association* (NESA) 3(I) 58-68.
- Omodiagbe, S.A. (1992). 150 years of English in Nigerian School system – Past, Present and Future. *Journal of English Language Teaching* 46 (1): 19-28
- Omolewa, M. (1974). The Ascendancy of English in Nigeria Schools: 1862-1960: A study of Language in Colonial Nigeria. *Journal of English Language Studies* 7(1) :12
- Tay, M.W.J. (1982). The uses of English In: Prides, J.B (Ed) *New Englishes*: Newbury: Rowley Mass, pp.8
- Udofot, I.M. (2004). “Varieties of Spoken Nigerian English”. In Awonusi, S. & Babolola, E.A (Eds). *The Domestication of English in Nigeria*. A Festschrift in Honour of Abiodun Adetugbo. Lagos: University of Lagos Press. Pp93-113.
- Udofot I.M. (2007). A tonal Analysis of Standard Nigerian English. In: *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*, 3 (10) pp58 -68.
- Udofot, I.M. (2011). The English Language and Education in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigerian English Association*, 14 (2): 14-21
- Walsh, N.S. (1967). Distinguishing Types and Varieties of English in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigerian English Association* (JNESA) 2(1). pp47-55.