

## **Language Variations or Language Change? Lexical Innovation Processes in Nigerian English**

**Dr. Judith A. Mgbemena**

Federal University Wukari  
Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines vocabulary development processes in a world regional variety of English – Nigerian English (NE). Divergent views exist on variations on NE lexemes; while some studies consider the variant lexical items as deviations, some others as innovations. This paper examines variant lexical items in NE as innovations and in addition highlights the subtle impact of its turnover in English vocabulary as an indication of language change in progress. Data for this study were derived from spoken English in Nigerian society, in particular in areas predominantly inhabited by the Igbo speaking group, through informants, participant observation, elicitation and interviews. The data derived were analysed under some identified linguistic typologies. This study also examined and highlighted the influence of some social structures and cultural factors on the forms, functions and development of the invented lexical items. Findings from this study reflect NE as a dynamic variety of English which develops itself and also contributes to the development of English as a global language.*

**Keywords:** *lexical innovation, Nigerian English, language variation, language change, language development .*

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### **1. PREAMBLE**

The global expansion of English has inevitably resulted in the diversification of its forms and functions (Alterton, Skandera, Paul, Tschichold & Cornelia 2002). The terms New Englishes or World Englishes, as well as the names given to regional varieties of English – Indian English, Liberian English, Nigerian English (NE), etc., no longer constitute semantic ambiguity. New Englishes have continued to attract scholarship, especially in linguistics and English language studies. However, studies in these regional varieties of English seem to concentrate on the documentation and description of the peculiar forms of each variety at different linguistic levels, without due consideration of the socio-cultural context of use, which directly determine the functions as well as the trends in usage.

Mckay and Hernberger (1996: 4) aptly observe that the varieties of English and norms for use emerge in response to the communication needs of the users. A variety of a language does not develop in isolation; its development is dependent on the communicative needs of the users (Platt, Weber, Lian 1984: 87). This gives rise to the need to study the forms of a variety of English in consideration of their functions in the society. Hence, this study examines the vocabulary of Nigerian English, using data from enterprising cosmopolitan cities as case study. The aim is to examine the lexical innovative processes and to highlight their forms and functions. The paper also attempts to identify the socio-cultural variables that directly determine their patterns of usage and development.

Notable studies on lexical variations in Nigerian English such as Bokamba (1982), Adebija (1989) Jowitt (1991), Bamiro (1994), Bamgbose (1998), Igboanusi (1998) etc., have tried to generally describe and classify variant lexical items in NE. These studies also view the variations from different perspectives. For example, Olagoke (1981) and Bokamba (1982) consider variations in NE as deviations (non standard usages). On the other hand, studies such as Adebija (1989) and Igboanusi (1998) see variations as innovations, “as signpost of acculturation of English in the new socio-cultural and linguistic context” (Igboanusi 1998: 87). This study adopts a similar view with the later group which views lexical variations as innovations in language use.

Bamgbose (1998) has provided some parameters for accepting variant lexical items as innovations – number of speakers, geographical spread, codification, use by authority and acceptability. This study

cannot claim that all the samples presented as data adequately meet the criteria and has noted that some items included in the data are used in restrictive circles. But, Coulmas (1997: 5) explains innovation as “an act of the speaker (or speakers) which may or may not become part of a language”. Although an innovation in language use may not penetrate into the linguistic system of that language, it may mark a language change which displays a regular pattern of variation. It is in this vein that this study considers NE lexical variants recorded in this paper as innovations. Some of the items may not gain codification into the corpus. But, they exhibit a regular pattern of variation which indicates a change in progress. It is worthy to note that, “the variations which many people try to ignore are quite often indications of changes in progress”, (Aitchison 1991: 53). This study therefore records the innovations as unfolding change; scripting language change as it occurs.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, this study surveys actual NE usage in Nigerian societies. This involves field work and a combination of sociolinguistic and linguistic approaches to language study. English words and expressions are used in almost all the domains of communication in Nigerian urban society; they form part of the register and trade vocabulary in the different contexts of language use. The study population cuts across different ages, sexes, vocation and educational qualification. Random samples of spoken English in formal and informal conversations – trade transactions, discussions, conversations and other forms of interactions in different domains in Aba metropolis serve as data for this investigation. The instrument for data collection include; informants, participant observation, elicitation and interviews. This study adopts some conventions of linguistic and sociolinguistic models to explain the lexical features of Nigerian English collected in this study as data. In particular, Systemic Functional Grammar which considers the functionality of language provides the framework for analysing variant lexical items based on their functions, while the Labovian variationist paradigm serves to explain the influence of the various social structures in determining the patterns of variations and change in English.

These two theoretical concepts are considered appropriate for this study. Systemic Functional grammar (SFG) is a grammatical model developed by M. A. K. Halliday which involves a descriptive approach to language study with focus on how language functions in relation to its usage in a particular context rather than a formal description of the properties of language. Berry (2005: 2) explains SFG as a social semiotic approach to language which poses such questions as “what are the social functions of language? How does language fulfil those social functions?” SFG in essence investigates how people employ language in their social activities and how the social world is in turn created with language (Schmitt 2010: 63). SFG, thus, studies language in relation to the function it performs and considers such variables as subjects, context of use, social relationships, social distance as they relate to language use in their metafunctions. On the other hand, Labovian paradigm studies variations in language use and relates it to social variables such as gender, class, age. The theory is popular in explaining how social structures can influence language use. Therefore, it becomes appropriate in this study which aims to highlight the social cultural influences on lexical innovations in NE.

## **2. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS: TYPOLOGIES OF NE LEXICAL ITEMS**

### **2.1. Acronym**

Acronyms are words derived from the initial letters of other words; these initial letters become frozen into a single word. Acronym is a basic morphological process in English but the peculiarity of NE acronyms lies in their derivation process. Consider these samples:

1. ABSUTH	Abia State University Teaching Hospital
2. AMATA	Ariaria Market Traders Association
3. NUPENG	Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers
4. DELSU	Delta State University
5. COLAMRUD	College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development

### **2.2. Analogy**

Analogy is a term used in language acquisition to refer to a process in which a new linguistic object is created by aligning it with certain properties of an existing form in a target language. The new object often has corresponding properties or pattern with the existing ones. For example, from the verb ‘invite’, a noun ‘invitee’ has been derived through the affixation of a noun forming suffix ‘-e’ which is used to derive words such as ‘employee’. Analogy has semantic orientation as some of the words

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are invented based on their similarity in meaning with existing words in English. In NE, analogical lexical items are often derived through the process of affixation or compounding. Consider these samples:

6. convocate	to convoke; an analogy of matriculate. <i>The convocating students are in the procession.</i>
7. crossing-belt	suspenders; a belt that crosses. <i>My wife gave me the suspenders as my birthday gift.</i>
8. fabricator	a craftsman who uses iron to fabricate things. The suffix ‘-or’ is used to derive the noun form of the verb fabricate. <i>I need a fabricator to construct a new iron bars for my house.</i>
9. gossip	gossip; overgeneralization of the ‘-er’ noun suffix. (English irregular system can be a candidate for this form because nouns and verbs do not usually have the same form). <i>Do you realise that your friend is a notorious gossip?</i>
10. insulting	insulting; ‘-ive’ is an adjective deriving suffix, as in ‘supportive’. <i>The manager’s secretary is so insulting.</i>
11. pepperish	full of pepper; analogy of such words as ‘feverish’. <i>The suya is tasty but pepperish.</i>
12. radiomechanic	a person that repairs a car is a car mechanic, one who repairs a radio becomes a radio mechanic. <i>Mr Sunday is the best radio mechanic in this area.</i>
13. reoccur	recur; analogy based on the use of ‘re-’ for again as seen in words such as ‘reappear’. <i>The cough reoccurs every month.</i>
14. tiler	a person who pastes tile; an analogy is based on ‘-er’ which is used to derive nouns such as ‘teacher’. <i>Amadi is a very good tiler.</i>
15. trickish	a trickster; an analogy based on the use of ‘-ish’ as a noun deriving suffix as in ‘selfish.’ <i>My last son is trickish.</i>
16. upliftment	used as the noun form of the verb ‘uplift’; analogy of words such as ‘enhancement’. <i>The recent reduction in the price of kerosene will yield to the upliftment of people’s standard of living.</i>
17. vulcaniser	from the word vulcanise, a person who does vulcanising job is a vulcaniser (often pronounced as fukunizer). <i>A vulcaniser needs to gauge the tyres before you hit the highway.</i>
18. watch-repairer	someone who repairs wrist watches and clocks. There is also handset repairer, bicycle repairer, etc. <i>There is a good watch repairer around my house.</i>
19. watch night	a security personnel especially one who works at night. There is also watch day. <i>The job of watch night is quiet risky without arms.</i>

Analogical derivation is often employed in creating words which form part of the vocabulary of fashion and household items. The names are often descriptive and are mainly derived through compounding. Samples of items derived through analogy in fashion and house-hold items include: *a-line gown, pencil skirt, pick and drop braids, face towel, food flask, hand towel, soup-bowl, turn-garri (ladle), and washing-hand basin.*

### 2.3. Borrowing/Loan Transfer

Lexical borrowing occurs in language contact situation; this entails transfer and adaptation of lexical items from the indigenous languages in Nigeria and Nigerian Pidgin into English. Borrowed words, which are also called loans, fill communication gaps which English is unable to, as they convey the exact nuances of the culture and experiences in which the words are used. A glossary of loan items in NE reflects words relating to indigenous food, traditional music, clothing, traditional religion and cultural ceremonies, flora and fauna; the borrowed lexical items often reflect the culture and context of language use. Loan items in NE include:

20. afang	Ibibio	a vegetable used in preparing soup – <i>afang</i> soup
21. agbada	Igbo	a locally manufactured kitchen utensil, often broad like frying pan used to fry garri
22. akpuruka	Igbo	something or a person that is believed to possess extraordinary strength. <i>Flat boot Mercedes is akpuruka, I have used mine for thirty five years.</i>
23. atuere	Igbo	a disease which starts as a boil and later develops into a sore. This disease is believed to have no western medical explanation nor cure <i>The herbalist said that he is a specialist in curing atuere.</i>
24. dash	Pidgin	a gift; to give freely without demanding for something. <i>My boss dashed me his car.</i>
25. Iwa akwa	Igbo	a traditional ceremony which marks initiation ceremony into manhood <i>Ikechukwu invited all members of staff to his iwaakwa ceremony.</i>
26. ogbanje	Igbo	a reincarnated child; a child that dies and is reborn to the same parents. <i>It is obvious that this girl is ogbanje.</i>
27. omugwo	Igbo	a cultural practise which marks the period a woman spends with her daughter who has given birth to a baby. <i>My secretary wants to use her annual leave for her daughter’s omugwo.</i>

## 2.4. Calquing

Calquing also known as loan translation is a lexical derivation process that involves the creation of a new vocabulary through direct translation of words in an existing language; calquing in NE involves a direct translation of words/expressions in Nigerian languages into English. Samples of lexical items in NE derived through calquing include:

28. bad-heart	wicked or malicious person <i>Nneka has a bad heart</i>
29. big-eyes	a greedy or covetous person <i>Children of nowadays have big eyes.</i>
30. bitter kola	a type of nut that is bitter <i>Do you have any bitter-kola?</i>
31. bush-man	uncivilized or unpolished person <i>The new lecturer dresses like a bushman.</i>
32. hand-work	one's vocation, especially used for artisans and craftsmen <i>Every man should be proud of his handwork.</i>
33. hard-hand	stinginess <i>Okafor's hard hand will not allow him to buy good food for himself.</i>
34. home people	one's relative or people from his village <i>I need to travel to the village to see my home people.</i>
35. hot drink	hard drink, alcoholic drinks <i>Pregnant women are advised to stay away from hot drink.</i>
36. incorrect head	mental imbalance/psychological imbalance <i>Your actions show that your head is not correct</i>
37. long-mouth	loquaciousness <i>I couldn't confide in her because of her long mouth.</i>
38. long-throat	gluttony, used to describe a greedy person <i>What will kill the chairman is long throat.</i>
39. old-hand	experienced person. <i>We need an old hand to fix the car.</i>
40. on one's head	one's responsibility. <i>The collection of the burial levy is on my head.</i>
41. put-head	to go into something <i>Ike's brother in law needs to understudy someone before putting his head into the business.</i>
42. put-mouth	to make an input or suggestion about something <i>Who invited you to put mouth into this discussion?</i>
43. sweet tongue	flattery <i>My friend's sweet tongue can even make a cow to buy milk from her.</i>

Some of these words derived through calquing are often used in idiomatic sense. For example, 'bad heart' as used in expressions such as *Nneka has a bad heart* does not denote a poor health condition but a malicious heart.

## 2.5. Clipping

This is a morphological process which involves cutting off some syllables of a word or even lexical items from compound words or expression. It is not synonymous with abbreviation. Clipped words still retain the original meaning of the full word. Clipping is not peculiar to NE; there appears to be a global trend towards simplification, but the form and usage sometimes results in words that are peculiar to this variety of English. Some words in NE which are derived through clipping include:

44. air con	air conditioner <i>Is your vehicle air con still working?</i>
45. attach	attachment seat, to be attached to somebody's accommodation; a synonym of squatting, attachment hair; fibre used in braids <i>It is better to sit on the attach than to stand in a commercial bus.</i>
46. graduate	university graduate <i>A graduate should be able to express himself very well.</i>
47. highlife	highlife music <i>The DJ played highlife throughout the party.</i>
48. luxury	luxurious bus <i>We boarded luxury to Lagos.</i>
49. park	car park, popularly known as motor park. <i>The easiest place to get a commercial vehicle is at the park.</i>
50. set	handset, also musical set <i>He switched off his set after answering your call.</i>
51. shake me	shake my hands <i>You have done well. Shake me!</i>
52. steering	steering wheel <i>Don't allow your child to touch your steering while driving.</i>
53. text	text messages <i>I texted you the details last night.</i>

## 2.6. Coinage

Coinage is a lexical derivational process of inventing new words from an existing one in English, the mother tongue or a combination of the two languages. The sociolinguistic realities of English as L2 in Nigeria gives rise to this trend which is described as the most productive process in NE (Bamiro 1994: 57). For example, no English word exists to denote money that comes through ritual, which involves the sacrifice of human life; hence the society coins the expression *blood money* to denote wealth derived through rituals that involve human sacrifice. Other coinages in NE include:

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54. aba made	locally manufactured goods <i>Aba made shoes are usually durable and less expensive than imported ones.</i>
55. brain-master	a clever person/ a trickster <i>Okoro is a brain master and will definitely outwit you.</i>
56. carry go	used to denote immediate action; a synonym of 'go ahead' <i>The masses urged President Goodluck Jonathan to 'carry go' with the transformation agenda.</i>
57. face-me-I-face-you	a residential building with rooms facing one another <i>The challenges of living in a face me I face you kind of building is enormous.</i>
58. figure 8	a female whose figure resembles the graphic representation of letter 8 (conceived as a positive quality) <i>Men always go for ladies with figure 8.</i>
59. going-bus	a bus that picks passenger as it moves; a bus that does not load at a bus station (this word is used by commercial bus drivers and their mates). <i>Oga, enter this is a going-bus.</i>
60. hard-starting	used to describe a mechanical fault in a vehicle which makes it difficult for the engine to rev when ignited, also used informally to describe a person that stammers. <i>You need to check the battery if your vehicle is experiencing hard starting especially in the morning.</i>
61. I pass my neighbour	a small generator set; possession of an electric power generator is seen as a status marker. <i>The commonest generator in this neighbourhood is 'I pass my neighbour'.</i>
62. lock-up shops	shops or market stalls that have doors, often built in rows <i>Lock-up shops are more expensive than open shops.</i>
63. money-doubler	a dupe who claims to have the power to multiply money <i>The money doubler promised to make him an instant millionaire.</i>
64. no shaking	no cause for alarm <i>No shaking, Chelsea will still win the match.</i>
65. nothing mega	nothing is happening, no cause for alarm; a combination of English and Igbo; <i>nothing mega, this vehicle will take all of us home.</i>
66. open and close set	a flip cell phone <i>Nokia just introduced a new open and close handset.</i>
67. pan	a brand new automobile, an acronym of Peugeot Automobile Nigeria, but extended to new products especially electronics. <i>The jeeps given to the five managers were all pan.</i>
68. panel beat	a term used for repairing the body of a car, but has been extended to other context to mean restructuring. <i>You have to panel beat this paper to make it publishable</i>
69. public yard	a commercial residential building occupied by many tenants <i>He lives in a public yard because he cannot afford to rent a flat in this city.</i>
70. pure water	water packaged in nylon bags <i>The state government has banned the sale of pure water in the cities.</i>
71. ritual killing	ritual murder; the murder of human being for ritual sacrifice usually for power, wealth, protection, etc. <i>Ritual killing is usually rampant during festive periods</i>
72. shifting-glass	slide windows, used to describe the windows of a bus that can be moved from side to side (popularly used by commercial road transport workers) <i>The yellow bus is better than the others because it has a shifting glass.</i>
73. shine your eyes	be alert <i>There are a lot of fake products in the markets so you need to shine your eyes.</i>
74. tear rubber	a brand new automobile, especially one that still has the cellophane covering on the seats. <i>Chief only buys tear rubber cars.</i>

Administrative words which are coined by government sometimes permeate into the societal vocabulary as exemplified by these samples:

75. monitization	a term used to denote the policy of converting some benefits in civil service to monetary value <i>I don't need a birthday card, monetize it for me.</i>
76. reform	a term adopted to express an exercise in civil service which led to the retrenchment of some staff <i>All the reformed workers have been paid their entitlements</i>
77. rightsizing	the act of trimming down the civil service strength for efficiency. <i>The rightsizing exercise in my district affected a lot of pastors.</i>
78. due process	the award of contract following government guidelines <i>He followed the due process in his traditional wedding</i>

### 2.7. Collocation Extension

Some words typically have associated relationship with other words in all natural languages. This is called 'selection restriction', for example, the English verb 'eat' is associated with 'food' but not with 'sand' or 'money'. But in NE, the word 'eat' collocates with money and sand - *eat money, eat sand*. Bodha (1994: 253) describes such combination as 'contacting new relations'. In NE, this new relationship between words often result in new meaning and figurative use of words as seen in these samples:

81. appetite for reading	desire for reading <i>A student who has no appetite for reading can never excel in academics.</i>
82. big money	a lot of money <i>He started his business with big money.</i>
83. do friendship	keep/have friends <i>I don't do friendship.</i>
84. eat money	to extort money or to spend recklessly, to embezzle money. <i>Kunle is fond of eating his school fees.</i>
85. get message	receive message <i>Did you get the text I sent you about the notice of meeting.</i>
86. hear smell	perceive an odour, fragrance, aroma <i>The Director complained that he heard the smell of crayfish in the office.</i>
87. join bus	board a bus <i>Just join a bus to the main campus and stop at the first bus stop.</i>
88. do meeting	to meet <i>None is permitted to do meeting without the Manager's consent.</i>
89. wash film	develop film <i>The price of washing the films has increased so I couldn't pay for all the photographs.</i>

### 2.8. Duplication/Redundancy

Duplication involves the repetition of lexical items in an expression. Sometimes it entails the repetition of the same lexical items while in some usages, lexical items which serve as synonyms are used in a sentence, this often results in some form of tautology. Observe these samples:

90. lower down	something cannot be lowered up, the adverb 'down' becomes redundant. <i>Lower down the volume of the radio.</i>
91. return back	to return means to come or go back; <i>back</i> is a redundant item. <i>She returned back the unused answer booklets</i>
92. reverse back	reverse or to go back. <i>The okada man hit him as he was trying to reverse back</i>
93. repeat again	repeat or do it again. <i>Everybody pay attention as I will say it once and will not repeat again.</i>
94. Mr chairman	when the chairman of an event is a man the use of 'Mr' becomes unnecessary. <i>Mr chairman sir, I want to ...</i>
95. sabbatical year	sabbatical is usually for a period of one year, 'year' becomes redundant. <i>She spent her sabbatical year with the institute.</i>
96. 2 <sup>nd</sup> year birthday	birthday is an annual event, the word 'year' becomes redundant. <i>My daughter is celebrating her second year birthday.</i>

Bodha (1995: 258) explains that repetition of items in West African Englishes can be used to achieve plurals, emphasis and new meaning. These functions are evident in NE as demonstrated in the samples below:

*Small small* children were affected by the riot. (emphasis)

The widows were given *fifty fifty* thousand naira. (plural)

There are *clean clean* guys in that company. (the repetition does not connote innocence or purity but comeliness).

Sometimes, it exemplifies transfer from Mother Tongue. For example, the expression; *It comes every month, every month* can be seen as a direct transfer of Igbo expression – *O na a bia n'onwa n'onwa*. This type of transfer is bound to occur where people have limited facility in the target language.

### 2.9. Euphemism

Euphemism entails the use of neutral or pleasant words or phrases to express harsh, embarrassing, unpleasant situations or concepts such as death, disease, body parts, body fluid, sex and some occupation which are considered to be of low prestige in the society. Euphemistic expressions are common in English, but their usage in NE reflects the socio-cultural tint. Some social structures pose inhibition in the use of certain words relating to sex, body parts, body fluids, among others; these words are considered to be taboo words, hence are expressed with euphemisms.

97. bad boys	hoodlums/criminals
98. call to glory/eternal rest/sleeping in the Lord	death
99. doctor	patent drug seller
100. fast guy/sharp guy	fraudster
101. man body/manhood	male genitals
102. meeting a man or woman/sleeping together	sexual intercourse
103. time	menstrual period
104. private part/private	sexual organs
105. take in	pregnancy
106. to be put in a family way	to become pregnant often outside wedlock

**2.10. Idioms**

Idioms are fixed group of words whose meaning cannot be derived from the literal meaning of the individual words. Idiom is universal, it exists in all natural languages, but its usage in NE is peculiar as the process of derivation shows more of transfer and adaptation of idioms and language forms from the source language, rather than an invention with the tools available in English. Examples of idioms in NE include:

107. eye service	false loyalty; acting to please a boss only when he/she is around <i>The pastor cautioned members to eschew eye service as God hates hypocrisy.</i>
108. let my people go	used in the higher institution to denote the lowest pass grade in an examination <i>Let my people go is regarded as a weak pass.</i>
109. something that has no head	a useless or fruitless activity or venture <i>The journey I made last week has no head, I did not even make any profit</i>
110. suffer head	one who experiences hard luck <i>Austin is a typical example of a suffer head. I keep wondering when his woes will be over.</i>
111. to clear road	to go as a forerunner, an analogy of pathfinder or pioneer <i>Those who cleared the road for you during the election should not be forgotten by your government.</i>
112. to give face	to adopt a friendly disposition towards a person <i>I have apologised several times yet during my last visit to his house, he couldn't even give me face.</i>
to knock peoples head together	to play one person against the other <i>Ola gained prominence in this company by knocking people's head.</i>
114. to put heads together	to confer or come to agreement over an issue <i>The family decided to put heads together to find solution to Nkechi's wayward behaviour.</i>
115. to put legs in one trouser	to have a quarrel or a fight <i>If you do not pay me the money you owe me, you and I will put our legs in one trouser.</i>
116. to put pepper in ones eye	to show wickedness to someone <i>I told my friend that she needs to be careful otherwise her house-help will put pepper in her eyes.</i>
to see pepper/to show someone pepper	to pass through difficulty/to make another person to suffer. <i>She has indeed seen pepper.</i>
118. to turn one's head	to fall in love or to become crazy about something. <i>From the first day I set my eyes on my wife, she just turned my head.</i>
119. to wash	to celebrate an achievement <i>Dr Akpan invited members of the department to his house to wash his graduation ceremony.</i>

Some English idioms undergo some modifications and adaptation in NE usage. Consider these samples:

NE	BE
120. birds of the same feather	birds of a feather
121. handwriting on the wall	writing on the wall
122. more grease to your elbow	more power to your elbow
123. picking up a quarrel	to pick a quarrel
124. to add petrol/kerosene to the fire	to add fuel to fire
125. to drag one's name through the mud	to drag one's name through the mire
126. to search nook and corner	to search nook and cranny
127. to sleep like a log of wood	to sleep like a log

**2.11. Semantic Extension**

This involves extending the meaning of an existing lexical item. In this process, existing words in English acquire additional meaning in NE usage; only the meaning changes but the word retains its form.

128. applicant	a jobless or unemployed person <i>All applicants in the church were exempted from paying church dues.</i>
129. auntie	an honorific term for a female, especially older woman, who may not be related, the word is used to address female teachers, neighbours, friends, etc., the same applies to the other kinship terms such as; mummy, brother, sister.
130. borrow	lend <i>I borrowed her my wrapper.</i>
131. boy	a male who is learning a trade under a master; trendy name members of a peer group use to address themselves
132. branch	to call at <i>Please branch at the post office and collect our mails before coming.</i>
133. chance	space, vacancy, opportunity <i>come in there is chance at the back seat; sorry I've not been chanced to see you.</i>

134. check	visit, look for, patronize <i>Customer, check for me.</i>
135. cram	to learn by heart <i>My daughter crammed and recited Psalm 23.</i>
136. credit	recharge card, telephone airtime <i>I shall call you if I have enough credit on my phone.</i>
137. cup	glass, tumbler, measuring cup, are all referred to as cup
138. customer	any person in the market is seen as a potential buyer, so is addressed as a customer
139. dress	shift, <i>Please dress there is still space for one more person.</i>
140. fellow	includes a female
141. foam	mattress
142. glass	things made of glass; window panes, doors, flower vases, cups
143. globe	electric bulb and other substances that are shaped like a globe such as the glass side of a lantern
144. imitation	goods of inferior quality
145. kill	stain <i>The ink killed the yellow Tshirt</i>
146. lean	emaciated
147. line	a row of shops <i>Philip and my wife are in the same line</i>
148. local	unrefined character <i>He is a local man!</i>
149. miss	disappear <i>How did you miss from the room?</i>
150. original	goods of high quality
151. pursue	to drive away <i>Am I the one that pursued you out of your husbands house?</i>
152. rubber	plastic container for storing water
153. shed	shop <i>I bought some items from your shed in the new market last week</i>
154. stranger	a guest
155. stuff	the quality of a fabric. Also used to denote the qualities of a person
156. tailor	a seamstress and any body who makes any type of clothing <i>Her niece is a tailor.</i>
157. wash	to fade or to run colour <i>The bed sheets I bought from you has washed.</i>
158. wounded	injured <i>My son has been wounded by that firewood.</i>

### 2.12. Semantic Shift

This involves a lexico-semantic process in which a word does not just acquire additional meaning but loses its original meaning; in this process, an English word is given a new meaning in NE usage. English words which have undergone semantic shift in NE usage include:

159. bag	to obtain or to be awarded a certificate/degree <i>Dr Ahmed bagged a doctorate degree from ABU Zaria in 1980</i>
160. balance	change <i>I gave the store keeper N100.00 and bought N60,00 biscuit, my balance should be N40,00.</i>
161. dirty	rubbish/garbage <i>Anyone who dumps dirty in front of his/her shop will be penalized.</i>
162. knicker	short or brief worn by both male and female <i>Who hung the blue knicker by my window?</i>
163. lift	to give someone a ride <i>He refused to give me a lift.</i>
164. record	music, used to mean music plate <i>I'm sure I have Osadebe's record but I don't know where I kept it.</i>
165. thrift	savings and loan <i>The easiest way for a civil servant to purchase a car will be through thrift.</i>
166. trek	a short distance walk <i>I trek round the field every Saturday.</i>

### 2.13. Recycling of Old English Words

Some words from old English are observed in the societal lexicon. This trend is directly influenced by the church; old king James bible version. Some examples include: *blessed, thou, thee, brethren, longeth, partake, bind, cast, loose, surpasseth, it is well.*

### 2.14. Malapropisms

Malapropism is “that type of solecism (the conspicuous and unintended violation of standard diction or grammar) which mistakenly uses a word in place of another that it resembles” (Abrams 2005: 155). This use of malapropism cannot be explained as a lexical innovative process but we observe a trend in using words out of context, which significantly has an impact on the development of NE. Malapropism usually arouses laughter and sometimes pose problem of intelligibility. But, we note that these wrong usages curiously do not have any comic effect and pose no problem of intelligibility in this society. Some of these words have fossilized in some people’s lexicon; constant teaching of the right forms may not to achieve any positive impact. Below are some samples:



## Language Variations or Language Change? Lexical Innovation Processes in Nigerian English

Standard English	Nigerian English
168. ban→	bound <i>Government wants to bound importation of rice.</i>
169. lining→	landing <i>She needs white landing for the lace material.</i>
170. allocate→	locate <i>The house was originally located to my mother.</i>
171. rival→	arrival <i>Charlie's shoe doesn't have arrival.</i>
172. stark→	stract <i>That woman is a stract illiterate.</i>
173. imbecile→	imbecide <i>Watch that imbecide!</i>
174. riff raff→	riff rat <i>Imagine! That riff rat wants to marry me!</i>
175. post pone→	pros poned <i>The meeting has been pros poned</i>
176. adjournment→	adjoiment <i>Who is moving for adjoiment?</i>
177. specs (spectacle)	space <i>The okada man broke his space.</i>
178. glove(lamp globe) →	glove <i>How much is that glove?</i>
179. baf→	bath tub, also used for big rubber basin that is used for bathing babies and washing clothes. <i>I need to buy a new blue baf.</i>
180. outset→	onset <i>It was clear to all that the marriage will be peaceful from the onset</i>
181. off-head→	off hand <i>I don't have my husband's phone number off-head.</i>
182. step down→	stand down <i>The Chairman was asked to step down.</i>

### 2.15. Slang

Slang expressions are used informally; they are often invented by a particular group in the society to exclude people outside the group from their communication. We observe that students are already inventing slang expressions from the register of Information and Communication Technology. Consider these slang expressions:

183. a recycle bin	one who goes for what others rejected
184. browsing	to caress, or to have sex
185. cd rom	womb
186. chairman	a benefactor
187. click	to mount pressure on someone to yield to relationship/sexual overtures
188. data	gossip; information about someone
189. delete	to die or to kill
190. download	to bury, to excrete, to get full detail
191. error	ugly guy or lady
192. flashing	temporary appearance
193. hard disk	human brain
194. hardware	male genitals
195. laptop	flat buttocks, used to describe a slim lady with a flat buttocks
196. mouth browsing	gossip
197. scanner	an observer, to scan means to observe or to size up someone
198. server	a person who spies on others and gives information about them
199. sign out	to end a relationship, to end a discussion
200. virus	a pest, a troublesome fellow

## 3. DISCUSSION

This work has presented variations, which have been described as innovations in NE lexemes and has also tried to classify the data according to the different lexico-semantic processes employed in their derivation. This section attempts to identify the functions of the innovative forms, account for the social-cultural variables that influence the patterns of usage and highlight the social group that popularise their usage and development.

### 3.1. Acronym

Acronyms are words derived from the initial letters of other words or names. Acronym is a universal lexical derivation process that appears in most natural languages. It is popular in NE. Acronyms in this variety reflect peculiar names that are common in the society. NE users' penchant for acronyms is evinced in its variant derivation process. The acronyms do not strictly obey the morphological rule of the use of the first letters. Sometimes two or more letters of a word are used in the bid to form a word and possibly for rhythm, as seen in samples 1-5. Thus, the process of derivation could be described as blending – COLARMUD, DELSU Delta State University. In fact, a good number of acronyms denoting names of universities and other institutions in Nigeria are mainly derived through the process of blending than acronyms. The usage does not pose any communication bridge. The possible

explanation for this trend is its economy of effort; it is easy on memory. It can be seen as a universal trend in simplification. The peculiar names and features observed in NE mark its creativity and authenticity.

Some NE users do not sometimes know the full words which the letters represent. For example, the researcher asked some subjects to provide the full meaning of NAFDAC and NUPENG. Some indicated that they do not know the individual words represented by the letters but that NAFDAC is associated with food and drugs and NUPENG with petroleum. However, in most situations of use, it is assumed that the words are generally understood among the interlocutors; people use acronyms without first explaining the full meaning.

### 3.2. Analogy

Analogy in lexical innovation involves the derivation of new words based on its similarity in meaning with existing words in a language. For example, the word 'cross belt/ crossing belt', used for 'suspenders' is derived through analogy. 'Belt' is used to hold the trousers; suspenders becomes a *cross belt* – a belt that crosses. Even the English word 'suspenders' is also derived through analogy – something that suspends the trousers.

The sociolinguistic realities of English as a second language in this society encourage the trend. The exigencies of urban life necessitate the use of English by educated and non-educated users. Basically, the proliferation of foreign culture has led to the introduction of words which Igbo and many other indigenous languages have no word for. NE users' often resort to the use of descriptive words to denote such concepts/situations. Equally, some people with limited exposure in English need to use some English words and expression, sometimes as part of their trade vocabulary – 'wash hand basin', 'hard starting' 'going bus'. These ones often resort to describing with the use of analogy. Thus, some of these words are invented by people with low educational qualification, but they eventually get into the system, as the highly educated class sometimes cannot provide an alternative word. Even when they do, the words may not gain popularity, so they resort to the use of the popular analogies which initially appear to be non-standard. This situation presents an instance of language change being initiated from the base and tends to support McMahon (2002: 4) observation that "change does not always come from the middle class imitating the upper class".

### 3.3. Loan Transfer

The borrowing of lexical items from the different languages is one of the factors that have facilitated the ascendance of English into the position of a world language. English lexicon comprises words from different languages it came in contact with. Lexical items from Nigerian languages and Pidgin have been transferred and adapted into NE not just in diglossic situation in spoken medium, but even in the written medium. Barber (2000: 182) explains that languages use loans either for utilitarian purposes or for 'braurie' – for mere ostentation. The use of lexical items in NE serves more of utilitarian purposes, but in some situations, one can deduce ostentation in the transfers.

The loans often perform some functions which English cannot fulfil, as they aptly convey the shades of meanings, the feelings, experiences that are encapsulated in the cultural item and which will be lost if translated in English. For example, the literal interpretation of an Igbo cultural rite '*Iwa akwa*' is 'wearing of cloth'. This translation can neither succinctly capture the cultural significance nor the ebullience associated with this initiation ceremony; the meaning is tied to the culture where it is practised. Similarly, the cultural practise of *omugwo* cannot be effectively conveyed with an English word. The names of some items relating to food and health condition do not exist in English; some food items have only botanical names. The use of the botanical names will invariably bridge communication in the society, as it will not be understood by all. The use of lexical items from the Nigerian languages in NE does not show inadequacy in the users or in the variety. Rather, it shows dynamism in the language and in the users' ability to adapt items from a language into another language, thereby making a second language to fill the role of a first language.

### 3.4. Coinage

Coined words in NE are invented from existing words or ideas from English, Nigerian languages or a combination of the two. Sometimes, coinage involves the transfer of meaning from Nigerian environment into English; coined words in NE show creativity and adaptation in language use. For example, the word, *brain master*, which is used to refer to a trickster, is a direct transliteration from

Igbo. The word ‘master’ in Igbo culture does not just mean one in authority but one in control of the life of another. The word ‘brain’ is a synecdoche of intelligence. Hence, *brain master*, connotes ‘a master of intelligence’; one who uses intelligence to control and outwit others.

Coined expressions such as, *carry go, nothing meega, no shaking*, which emanated from the transport and commercial class (often from non-educated users) have gained even international spread. These words are imported in different domains, especially in manufacturing and performing acts. For example; the expression *carry go* which emanated from this group has permeated to the other sectors of the society. Different versions of the expression are used in the entertainment industry, manufacturers, political and religious rallies, etc., a version – ‘car go’ serves as the brand name of a motorcycle manufactured in Japan. This also shows that coinage, like analogy subtly introduces language change from the base.

Also, while some coined items in NE such as *carry go* are used in informal situations, some others such as *blood money, cash and carry, tokunbo* are used in formal situations, in print media and literary writing. Government terminologies also contribute to data on NE coinages as shown in samples 55-80.

### 3.5. Euphemism

Euphemism is a term which is used to denote serious or unpleasant things in a mild or pleasant way. In many societies, euphemism is employed to express words relating to sex, body parts and body fluids, as well as lowly rated jobs.

Euphemism as used in NE reflects the cultural twist. Generally in the society, lexical items pertaining to sex, body parts and body fluids are regarded as taboo words. It also has gender connotation. The females in this society often feel inhibited to express such words and resort to the use of euphemism. Even in health care delivery sectors such as hospitals, family planning units, the researcher observes that women still feel socially inhibited to use these words. For example, in one of the episodes in a hospital consulting room, a female patient complained of having a problem with her ‘woman body’. When the doctor asked her to be specific, she bent her head (apparently shy) and said, *the inside one is paining me*.

This study notes that the communication context, as well as the participants determines the use of euphemism. For example; a child that is talking to the father about body parts and fluids is bound to use euphemism. Euphemisms are also popularly used in the church, to express matters relating to sexual relationships and misfortunes. Thus, Christianity also influences the use of euphemism in NE; some groups forbid the expression of misfortunes and conditions of ill health. The belief is that what one confesses inadvertently happens; therefore members are encouraged to maintain positive confession in the face of adversity. Euphemistic expressions are used to express adverse situations such as; death, sickness, loss of property, etc. The word *obituary* is fast disappearing and is being replaced with expression such as; *Call to glory, Sleeping in the Lord, Glorious exit*. A condolence message to one who has suffered calamity is often, *It is well*.

The cultural influence in NE euphemisms is seen in the expressions such as; sex – *being touched by a man*, meeting a man or a woman, female genital organs – *woman body or private*, male genital organs – *manhood or private part*.

### 3.6. Semantic Extension and Semantic Shift

Semantic extension entails a process in which an existing word in English acquires additional meaning in its NE usage, while in semantic shift, the word acquires a new meaning. These two morphological processes are directly influenced by the socio-cultural context of English as L2 in Nigeria and they also mark changes in language use. The factors that influence these trends range from inadequate knowledge of the language to cultural transfer.

The influence of culture is seen for example in the additional meaning kinship terms acquire in the Nigerian environment – the word ‘brother’ has acquired the African belief that a man’s neighbour is his brother. Hence, the meaning of ‘brother’ enlarges to incorporate cousins, neighbours, friends, church members, to even people from one’s community and state of origin.

Improper learning or inadequate exposure is another candidate. It often results in over generalisation of the meaning of words. The word ‘shed’ which is used to denote a small building for storage and

shelter is extended to incorporate an outlet in a house that is used as a shop and further extended to denote a shop in the market. Equally, the word 'pursue' is used as a synonym of 'drive away'. Thus, the expression – 'Am I the one pursuing you?' means 'Am I the one driving you away?'

Semantic extension and shift indicate language development and change. The etymology of English words reflects some English lexical items which have undergone this process. For example, the word 'nice', which initially had negative connotation of foolishness has overtime acquired positive denotation; a synonym of 'kindness'. NE users have also adopted these processes to develop new meaning and use their limited vocabulary to achieve communication.

### 3.7. Idiom

Idioms are fixed group of words whose meaning can not be inferred from the separate meaning of the words. It is a way of using language that comes natural to native speakers of the language. Non-native speakers of a language often find it difficult to 'acquire control' of the idioms in the target language (Platt et al 1984: 107). In the case of NE, the users create idioms through the process of transfer; the idiomatic innovations are more of transfer of speech mannerism and idioms from the Mother tongue.

Igbo just like many African languages is rich in idioms. The transfer of idioms from the background language injects cultural flavour and meaning into the use of English. For example, Igbo expresses covetousness as *anya ukwu* which literarily means 'big eyes'. The use of 'big eyes' vividly encapsulates and expresses one whose eyes bulges at what belongs to another person. Equally, 'bad blood' encapsulates envy as something that incites 'bile', hence, 'bad blood' into one's system.

The use of idioms in NE shows the acculturation and development of English as L2 in Nigeria. Some of these idioms may not gain internationally intelligibility but they are generally understood among most users of NE.

### 3.8. Collocation Extension

Collocation Extension occurs in NE when words which do not co-occur in British English are used together. For example, the verb 'eat' is associated with nouns such as 'food' in English, but not with 'money'. In NE, 'eat' acquires extended relations and can collocate with 'money'; 'eat money' – 'spend/embezzle money'. Although, collocation extension can be seen as a form of transfer, it also marks creativity in language use. Some of these usages are peculiar to NE basilect and mesolect as people tend to overcome such usage as their facility in English improves. However, we observe forms such as 'eat money' in the English usage of some acrolectals.

### 3.9. Slang

Slang expressions involve informal use of language by a particular group of people. Slang words come handy to both literate and non-literate users of English in Nigeria. "It is a language that takes off its coat, spits on its hands and goes to work" (Aitchison, 1991). This can be seen in the way students and even some people who do not have adequate facility in English invent and use slang. For example, we recorded at a mechanic workshop that the expression 'hard starting' which is used for a mechanical fault in a vehicle that makes it not to rev as soon as the engine is ignited is also used for 'stammering'. This exemplifies a functional creative use of language. Sometimes these usages become popular in the society.

Slang expressions do not just mark creativity in language use, sometimes they influence language change. Redmond (2005) has rightly observed that "slang is one of the vehicles through which language changes and becomes renewed". Slang has marked one of the productive processes of vocabulary development and language change in NE. The invention of slang expressions with ICT terms does not just reflect innovation but also adds refreshing touch to NE. Consider these expressions:

Faith is the *password* to *download* heaven's blessings.

He was busy *browsing* another man's wife when his own was at the point of death in the hospital.

At this point, I want to *sign out*, keep a date with us same time next week.

### 3.10. Re-introduction of Old English Words

Historical linguistics shows that words can be recycled, in this process some obsolete words can be reintroduced in the societal usages. This trend is seen in the use of some obsolete English words such

as; 'bind' for modern English 'tie'; 'cast' for 'throw away'; 'it is well' 'I am good/I am fine'. This trend is traced to the church, especially the Pentecostal sect. But, some of these old English words have become popular and are used outside the church domain, although with allusion to Christian practices – *I bind every attempt to include my name in the retrenchment list.*

### 3.11. Malapropism

As stated in the data presentation and analysis, this trend cannot be described as a lexical innovation process but its impact on NE cannot be ignored. Malapropism entails the unintentional wrong use of words and these forms are evident in some NE expressions. Malapropism usually occurs as a result of improper learning or confusion. Words which are used in this form include – 'cloth landing for cloth lining'. We note that words such as; 'baf' (tub/ bath tub), 'riff rat', 'imbecide (imbecile) do not exist in English. So, the use of the forms should be described as mispronunciation and not malapropism, but the case is that the words sound English and the users consider them to be English words.

One peculiar factor that characterises English usage in the society under study is that sometimes, those who use the wrong forms know the correct forms, as in the case of 'baf' for 'bath tub' and shimi for waist slip, which is popular even among the highly educated NE users. It is evident that some of the educated users know the correct forms, but, they tend to conform to the wrong popular societal forms to achieve communication. For example, if one goes to the market to ask for a 'bath tub' or 'tub', or 'waist-slip' he may not be able to achieve his purpose, so he has to adapt to the wrong form in order to be understood. This describes a situation of language accommodation. This is also one of the candidates for the popularisation of wrong forms. Such forms sometimes fossilize and interfere with the teaching and learning of English.

## 4. CONCLUSION

"Language does what it has to do for efficiency and gets away with what it can" (Aitchison, 1991: 135). This statement aptly captures the functional use of English as a second language in the dynamic Nigerian society. In the bid to communicate contemporary realities in an ever changing world, NE users (both literate and non-literate) manipulate English vocabulary to carry the load of their peculiar communicative needs. This results in rapid turnover of vocabulary through different morphological processes, characterized by creativity and variations in language usage. The variations in lexical items are contributing not just to the development of NE vocabulary but also to language change in English.

This study has tried to examine the influence of some social groups in the trends as well as the functions which the lexical items are meant to perform in the society. It is worthy to note that there is a form of convergence in the use of English in certain domains. For example, some people who have acquired a high level of proficiency in English tend to use the variety that is popular (both standard and non-standard forms) in order to communicate. Thus, the use of English in the society does not necessarily correlate with one's proficiency, as some people have different varieties in their repertoire and use each according to the social context of use. This trend towards language accommodation directly influences the usage and spread of variant forms.

English as a world language has acquired prestige. Apart from the need to communicate, people who have not acquired the necessary competencies and facility in English are apt to use the language. This shows a form of aspiration. The preference and use of English vocabulary in all domains indicates a process of language shift. In addition, the use of English by people who do not have adequate facility in English results in transfers and nativisation. Some popular variant lexical items discussed in this study are traced to this category of speaker. This indicates a subtle language change from the base. In fact, from the commercial class who are predominantly not educated, but are influential in the society.

Although some of the items recorded in this study are peculiar to Igbo English, but they conform to NE lexical derivation processes as studies in NE lexical features reflects. Hence, data from this study serve to enrich the corpus data bank on NE vocabulary as some of these innovative items potentially gain popularity and spread by reason of the volume of interaction Aba has with other regional varieties of NE due to its commercial enterprising nature.

In conclusion, Aitchison (1991) assertion "that time changes all things and there is no reason why language should escape this universal law" appears to be apt here. The innovations in NE vocabulary recorded in this study evince that this variety of English is an authentic vibrant communicative tool, which undergoes variations and changes in the bid to serve the needs of the users. Thus, this study

therefore concludes that there is a subtle change in progress; the innovations observed in NE lexical items do not just mark variation in language use but shows evidence of language change.

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