

## **MODULE 3 CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ENGLISH**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Form and Function in Contemporary English        |
| Unit 2 | Contemporary Nigerian English (NE)               |
| Unit 3 | Popular Nigerian English (PNE)                   |
| Unit 4 | Other Varieties of Contemporary Nigerian English |
| Unit 5 | Select English Language Varieties in Africa      |

### **UNIT 1 FORM AND FUNCTION IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH**

#### **CONTENTS**

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.0 | Introduction                                 |
| 2.0 | Objectives                                   |
| 3.0 | Main Content                                 |
| 3.1 | General Overview                             |
| 3.2 | Form and Function in Contemporary Grammar    |
| 3.3 | Form and Function in Contemporary Writing    |
| 3.4 | Form and Function in Contemporary morphology |
| 4.0 | Conclusion                                   |
| 5.0 | Summary                                      |
| 6.0 | Tutor-Marked Assignment                      |
| 7.0 | References/Further Reading                   |

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, we shall be able to study the concepts of ‘form’ and ‘function’ in contemporary English grammar. The form of a language is the basic grammatical patterns or the parts of speech used in generating sentences while the function explains the proper uses of each form in sentences. For the second language learner, complying with the rules of form and function application in English may not be very easy. This is because the intrusion of the learners’ L<sub>1</sub> coupled with other interferences might lead to certain linguistic creativities which may violate the rules of form and function. Considering the various roles words play in sentences, the possibility of generating unique grammatical forms abounds but the question of correctness is the bane of second language learners. We shall restrict this study to the form and function of words in sentences and the morphology (or the internal structure of words) of generating new words because these are the basic areas where violations of form and function are common in Contemporary English (CE).

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of form and function in Contemporary English;
- distinguish between form and function in Contemporary English
- recognize the proper use of forms and function in Contemporary English;
- avoid wrong use of form and function in Contemporary English; and
- identify the misapplication of form and function in Contemporary English.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 General Overview

Knowing ‘form’ and ‘function’ is beneficial for us to realize the different parts of speech within a sentence because it will enable us to correctly position these in a sentence. “Form” can be broadly defined as “what it is” and “function” as “what it does” within a sentence. For example, knowing a word is an adjective allows us to place it before a noun or after a “verb to be”, example: 1) *A diligent man*. And 2) *Akin is diligent*.

Other than the different parts of speech, another aspect of grammar that is of great importance is the difference between “form” and “function”. Examples of “form” are verb (or verb phrase), noun (or noun phrase), adjective (or adjective phrase) and adverb (or adverb phrase). Examples of “function” are subject, predicate, object, adjectival, adverbial and complement. It is critical to know the differences because (1) we can grammatically position or arrange all the parts within a sentence and (2) some “forms” can have many “functions” within a sentence, as in the following examples: (1) *The students are studying* And (2) *The students are completing the assignments*. In these sentences, “the students” and

“the assignments” are both noun phrases. However, “the students” is the subject while the “the assignments” is the object. More examples can be seen in the following:

- 1) *The man is gone.*
- 2) *Uche is standing under the tree.*
- 3) *Ahmed has placed the vase on the dinner table.*
- 4) *Roy is a belly dancer.*
- 5) *We have voted Peter the president of the video Club.*

In (1), “the man” – form: noun phrase; function: subject / “gone” – form: verb (past participle form); function: adjectival / “is gone” – form: verb phrase; function: predicate.

In (2), “Uche” – form: noun phrase (proper noun); function: subject / “under the tree” – form: prepositional phrase; function: adverbial / “is standing under the tree” – form: verb phrase; function: predicate.

In (3), “the vase” – form: noun phrase; function: object / “on the dinner table” – form: prepositional phrase; function: complement / “the dinner table” - form: noun phrase; function: object of preposition / “dinner” – form: noun; function: adjectival.

In (4), “a belly dancer” – form: noun phrase; function: complement / “belly” – form: noun; function: adjectival

In (5), “we” – form: noun phrase (pronoun); function: subject / “Peter” – form: noun phrase (proper noun); function: object / “the president of the Video club” – form: noun phrase; function: object complement. Good grammar books should have all the forms and functions explained thoroughly.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Carefully distinguish *form* from *function* in English grammar. Use adequate examples in your answer.

### **3.2 Form and Function in Contemporary Grammar**

Form and function in contemporary English seemed to have different perspectives. It is possible in Contemporary English to have forms which are used in different functions because of the high linguistic creativity of the users of Contemporary English. Grammatical forms are meant to function in stated ways in order to convey the linguistic meanings and at the same time following the rules of English language learning and communication. Every form is supposed to restricted

function but considering the varieties of usage as we observed in module one. The varieties of usage implant new forms and new functions to grammatical categories. We have seen special uses where the nouns are meant to function as verbs and even the modifiers occupy the nominal range. Examples:

- (1) *She is the beautiful*
- (2) *Man the boat for me*
- (3) *She is the kill*

In (1), “the beautiful” – form: noun phrase; function: complement / “is” – form: verb (present form); function: predicate/ “she”- form: pronominal; function: noun phrase.

Note that the NP –“The beautiful” is a combination of two forms: “the” (determiner/ article) and “beautiful” (modifier/adjective). The group functions as noun phrase but the form “beautiful” has been applied to function as nominal in a creative sense. This type of variety is common in social settings and where certain linguistic idiosyncrasies are required. It is more of variety according to attitude.

In (2), “Man” – form: verb phrase (noun); function: predicate/ “the boat” – form: noun phrase; function: object / “for me” – form: prepositional phrase; function: adverbial.

Note that the VP – “Man” is a nominal but has been conditioned to perform a verbal function. Even the pronominal “me” has been brought to function inside a prepositional phrase. Thus “man” and “me” are forms applied to function for a special purpose beyond the real functions they do in grammar.

In (3), “she” – form: noun phrase; function: subject / “is” – form: verb phrase; function: predicate / “the kill” - form: noun phrase; function: subject complement

Note that the NP –“The Kill” is a combination of two forms:“the” (determiner/ article) and “kill” (verb). The group functions as noun phrase but the form “kill” has been applied to function as nominal in a creative sense. This type of expression or usage is common in the same variety that we explained in example (1) above.

As stated in Module 1, many reasons such as interference, especially the transliteration of the mother tongue (L<sub>1</sub>) in the second language (L<sub>2</sub>) could result in such ‘form and function’ aberrations. In Nigeria, for example, we have such expressions as:

- (4) *He has no shadow.*  
 (5) *His eyes speak volume.*  
 (6) *He is loving me now.*

Inasmuch as these expressions have the forms in their proper functional places, the problem of semantics occurs. Most of the expressions in (4), (5) and (6) above are examples of Nigerian English which results from the users attempts at transmitting his L<sub>1</sub> into the L<sub>2</sub> situation. In this case the issue of form and function is sacrificed on the altar of meaning. This is one of the problems of realizing a true Standard English.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

In the generation of sentences, form and function may affect meaning. Explain with adequate examples.

### 3.3 Form and Function in Contemporary Morphology

English words have structures but the second language users often misapply the structure. The field of English that studies the structure of words is called Morphology. Morphology identifies morphemes as distinct part of word structure. There are two types of morphemes: *Free* and *Bound Morphemes*. The free morphemes are those parts of a word that could stand on its own and make meaning while the bound morphemes are the parts of a word that depend on the free morpheme for its meaning. Bound Morphemes are mainly affixes like prefix, suffix and other forms of affixation. Examples are:

|                 |                                |                               |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Kindness</i> | <i>kind-</i> (free morpheme)   | <i>-ness</i> (bound morpheme) |
| <i>Faithful</i> | <i>faith-</i> (free morpheme)  | <i>-ful</i> (bound morpheme)  |
| <i>Members</i>  | <i>member-</i> (free morpheme) | <i>-s</i> (bound morpheme)    |
| <i>Revisit</i>  | <i>re-</i> (bound morpheme)    | <i>-visit</i> (free morpheme) |

The other ‘free morphemes’ are function words which carry mainly the grammatical information or logical relation in a sentence. Typical function words in English include articles [a, an, the], demonstratives [this, these, that, those], pronouns [I, me, you] and conjunctions [but, and, however].

### Roots, Stems and Bases

The root of a word is the part that is always present sometimes with some modifications. In the set of words ‘go, going, goes, gone’, the root which is ‘go’ is always present. Thus, the root is the permanent member in the structure of words from where other members are hinged. The stem of the word is the part to which the last morpheme is added. It is

thus the part in existence before any inflectional affixes (those additions required by the grammar such as indicators of number in nouns, tense in verbs). In the words ‘cats’ and ‘learners’ the {s} morpheme is added to the root ‘cat’ while the agentive morpheme {-er} is added to the root ‘learner’ to mean ‘one who learns’. In ‘learners’ the root is ‘learn’ while ‘learner’ is the stem to which inflectional morpheme {-s} is added to give the additional meaning of ‘more-than-one’. A Base on the other hand is a unit to which any affix can be added. The affix may be inflectional (selected for grammatical reasons). Or derivational in which case it alters the meaning or grammatical category of the base. A root to which no affix has been added like ‘girl’ can be a base since it can take an inflectional affix like {-s} to form the plural ‘girls’ or a derivational affix like {-ish} to turn the noun to an adjective ‘girlish’. *In effect, all roots are bases but all roots are stems when they take inflectional suffixes. Thus, all roots are bases not all roots are stems.* In the word ‘faithfulness’, ‘faith’ is the root, stem of the whole word; it is also the stem of ‘faiths’ and the base of ‘faithful’ while ‘faithful’ becomes the base for ‘faithfulness’.

In this regard the forms are most times misapplied because of the second language learners’ attempts at using the language to serve their desired purposes undermining the correctness. Affixations are wrongly applied to form words that will serve the desired purposes undermining the fact that it is against English morphological rules. Hence we hear such morphological aberrations as: *Faithfulnessly, unconsciousness, revisitedly, assistedly, impotent, illustrated, kindnessly* etc. However, there are several other ways by which words are formed in English all these you will study in your course: *English Morphology*.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the various morphological problems caused by the form and function of English words to second language learners.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Form and function of words have been of concern to linguists because from old English times to the present, new words have continuously been added to the English language. English has borrowed a lot of words from many languages and each of these words represents forms with different functions. The continuous changes in morphology have occurred in the shape of words as affixes are borrowed from many languages to make new words, the tendency to misapply the rules abounds. As we have observed, morphological forms could be misapplied to generate wrong meanings. Form and function are useless where meaning is sacrificed on the altar of structure. The second

language learners of English have the tendency of violating the application of these concepts because of the possibility of errors occurring in the learning process.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

Linguistic change occurs over time but some concepts are permanent. Recognizing forms is identifying the part of speech while recognizing function is applying the parts of speech correctly. Even in English morphology, there are forms that help in the generation of words and these words have different functions. The recognition of the morphological forms and the generation of correct words to function properly in expressions are necessary for the second language learners. There are bound to be the problem of differences in spelling, pronunciation, morphology and semantics. When one word changes from limited to expanding use it is called *semantics broadness* and this occurs regularly. The second language learner of English, being conscious of these forms and their functions, will understand the nature of the language and the proper means of applying the rules.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

- i. What are the differences between form and function in English?
- ii. Identifying the forms is not a guarantee for proper function. Discuss?
- iii. Generate ten sentences and explicate the forms and functions of the syntactic components
- iv. Explain the possible morphological forms often misapplied by second language learners
- v. Explain other possible areas of violation of form and function in Contemporary English

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Oha, Anthony C. (2000). *Studies in Grammar*. Benin City: Headmark.
- Oha, Anthony C. (2005). *Explicative Morphology of English*. Benin City: Ava.
- Romanine, Suzanne (1994). *Language in Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **UNIT 2            CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ENGLISH (NE)**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 General Overview
  - 3.2 Evidence for Nigerian English
  - 3.3 Variation in the Spoken Form
  - 3.4 Variation in Lexical and Grammatical Forms
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit we will study the English usage in Nigeria. English language is a second and national language to Nigeria. Hence, it is an important tool of cohesion among the vast multilingual structure of Nigeria. We will study the nature, structure and applications of Nigerian English in the contemporary time. The issues concerning the existence, acceptability and adoption of the type as a form of pedagogy will be examined. More so, we will assess the relevance in contemporary usage of English.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand Nigerian English as a form of contemporary English usage;
- describe the nature of usage in Nigerian English;
- distinguish Nigerian English from other English usage;
- identify the pattern of Nigerian English in Nigeria; and
- assess the relevance of Nigerian English in Contemporary times.

### **HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT**

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.



- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 General Overview

Nigerian English is the English language variety as used in Nigeria. Nigerian English is the variety of English that has been used in the region of the Niger, West Africa, for purposes of trade since at least the 18th century, at missions since the 19th century, and increasingly in education, administration, the media, and the 20th-century workplace, especially since the formation by the British of a unified Nigeria in 1914. The existence of a single Nigerian English continues to be debated and disputed within the country, in which there is a spectrum of usage from West African Pidgin English through varieties influenced by local languages, such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, to a general usage similar to other English-speaking West African countries.

All varieties do not pronounce *r* in words such as *art*, *door*, and *worker*. There is a tendency toward full vowels in all syllables (e.g., seven pronounced "seh-ven," not "sev'n"). There is often no distinction between words like *chip* and *cheap* and ones like *caught*, *cot*, and *court*. In grammar, there is a tendency toward pluralizing nouns that are singular in Standard English (as in *I gave them some advices*) and the pronoun *themselves* is often used instead of *one another* (as in *That couple really love themselves*). Distinctive vocabulary includes borrowings and loan translations from local languages, e.g. *danshiki* from Hausa and *Agbada* from Yoruba ("a gown worn by men").

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the major influences in Nigerian English usage

#### 3.2 Evidence for Nigerian English

Kachru (1992b) has described English Language in terms of three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. According to this classification, Nigerian English belongs to the Outer Circle, defined by Kachru as regions of the world that were formerly colonized by Britain and the US, where English Language was the language of empire building. In this circle, societal penetration has resulted in the development of different sub-varieties, depending on the geographical, cultural and linguistic contexts. The identifying features of these varieties given by Kachru include elements from phonology,

grammar, lexis, collocations, idioms, discourse and style, code-mixing and code-switching, and a lack of homogeneity.

Phillipson (1992) recognizes the existence of a variety of English Language known as “Nigerian English” (NE). He described the dialect as “The varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English” (88). Some linguists of the new English essay: there exists at the moment a single super ordinate variety of Standard English in Nigeria which can be regarded as ‘Nigerian English.’ Several other linguists have either written about, or made passing references to this variety of English Language. Finally, Ayo Bamgbose, in his article, “Standard Nigerian English: Issues of Identification”, not only identifies Nigerian English, but also analyzes some of its identifying features. However, not everyone believes in the existence of a Nigerian English. Some contend that what has been identified as Nigerian English is in reality “errors of usage.” They find it quite derogatory and rather insulting to refer to such a variety of English Language. They would rather see any departure from the British variety (which was imported into Nigeria) as either deviant or incorrect. This same kind of situation prevails in the United States with regards to Ebonics, or African American Vernacular

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

There are still scholarly debates on the existence of Nigerian English. If you accept the existence of this variety, state your proof with basic examples

### **3.3 Variations in the Spoken Form**

The regional variations in English in Nigeria are embedded mainly in the spoken form of the language. The greatest influence on the pronunciation of English by Nigerians is from the sound systems of the regional languages. According to Bamgbose (1971), most of the phonetic characteristics in the English of Nigerian can be traced to the transfer of features from their local languages. An example of such a typical feature is that Igbo speakers of English, even well-educated ones, tend to transfer the vowel system of their language into English. They usually pronounce /folo/ for the word ‘follow’ instead of /foleu/ because the sequence of /o/ and /eu/ in two successive syllables is not permissible in Igbo. The Igbo speakers of English are also found of pronouncing /proler/ for the word ‘problem’ instead of /problem/ thus replacing /o/ with /o/. Hausa speakers of English tend to replace /p/ with /f/ in words like ‘people’, ‘problem’ ‘pyramid’ and soon. They tend to pronounce /fi:fl/, froblem/ , /firomid/ instead of /pi:pl/ , /problem/ and /piramid/.

They also tend to insert a vowel between a syllable-final consonant and the initial consonant of an immediately following syllabic, for instance, /rezigineɪsn/ instead of /rezignesn/ for the word 'resignation'. In the same way, Hausa speakers of English also realize the dental fricatives /t/ and /d/ as /s/ and /z/ which are alveolar fricatives. They tend to pronounce /sɪn/ instead of /θɪn/ for the word 'thin' and /zə/ instead of /də/ for the word 'the'. An interesting example according to Bamgbose (1971) is the case of the phonemic distinction between /i:/ and /ɪ/ as in 'seat' and 'sit', 'bead' and 'bid'.

Most Yoruba speakers of English do not make this distinction because it does not exist in their first language. Also, they generally nasalize English vowels, which are preceded by nasal consonants, for example, they pronounce /mɔɾɪn/ instead of /mɔɾ:nɪŋ/ for the word 'morning'. Some other variations in English are due to Yoruba dialectal interference. For example, an Ekiti speaker of English usually pronounces /saɪld/ instead of /tʃaɪld/ for the word 'child', while an Ibadan or Ijesa speaker of English usually pronounces /sua/ instead of /suə/ for the word 'sure'.

Generally, most Yoruba speakers of English pronounce the following words faultily: /ferɪ/ instead of /veri/ for the word 'very', /tɔ:t/ instead of /θɔ:t/ for the word 'thought' /deɪə/ instead of /ðeə/ for the word 'there' etc. All these are due to the fact that the phonemes /m/, /v/, /θ/ and /ð/ are not present in Yoruba phonology; so, they tend to replace these sounds with others that are near to them in Yoruba phonology. On this, Ubahakwe (1979) contended that it has been observed that there is a great deal of similarity not only in the English accents of all the Southern Nigerian ethnic groups like: Edo, Efik, Tiv, Igbo and Yoruba, but also all along the West Coast of Africa. Similarly, as one moves up North, one notices a great deal of similarity in the English spoken by members of the numerous ethnic groups who inhabit the area, like: Kanuris, Fulani, and Hausa etc.

In a language contact situation such as it exists in Nigeria, it is to be expected that there will be an interaction between the local languages and English which leads to regional variations of the second language (English). The influence of the local languages on English is more relevant here - in that the patterns of the languages phonological, lexical and grammatical tend to be transferred into English.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss the effect of Nigerian languages on the spoken forms of Nigerian English

### 3.4 Variations in the Lexical and the Grammatical Forms

There are some variations in the use of English Language in Nigeria, which could be noticed in the lexical and the grammatical aspects. According to Bamgbose (1971), some of the more common lexical forms include borrowings like 'kiakia bus' (a Volkswagen bus; 'kiakia' is a Yoruba word for 'quickly', and this is so named because it goes very fast). This is an example of the mixture of English with vernacular expressions which linguists call 'language interlarding'. We also have it in idiom translations like the common greetings exchanged by two people on meeting each other: 'How?' 'Not bad'; which is a near translation of the Igbo; 'kedu?' 'odimma' ('How are you?' 'It is fine'). There is another example like: 'I hear the smell'. The word 'hear' is a literal translation of Hausa word 'ji' which means 'hear'. Sometimes, the translation is indirect. This varies from region to region.

On the level of syntax and semantics, the variations could be noticed in the translation of different local proverbs and expressions into English. Examples could be found in novels of Nigerian writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Aluko, Okara, Ekwensi etc who are from different regions in Nigeria. Let us consider the following: (i) 'the lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did', (ii) 'you can tell a ripe corn by its look' (Achebe, 1958:18). Also, in Okara's novel *The Voice*, we have this proverb: 'If you roast a bird of the air before a fowl, the fowl's head aches' (p.89). We also have the following sentence extracted from a letter written by a son to his father in Aluko's *One Man One Machet: It is with much gladness in my heart that I write this letter to you*, (p.51). In Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, we have the following: *The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched*. These examples show that though they are all writing in English, there is the glaring influence of their local languages on the structures of their sentences and in the type of images they used. The regional languages have different influences on English language because of both positive and negative transfer of their accents into English, though the varieties still manifest the same 'langue' of the English language.

Grieve (1965) opined that the problem posed by the co-existence of these varieties is probably most keenly felt by examiners of English who are found to decide between 'right' and 'wrong' English. However, on the whole, the attitude of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has been that, while Standard English should form the basis of examinations and tests, varieties (which experiences have shown are acceptable to educated members of the appropriate community) may be accepted for examination purposes.

The problem of choosing a national language has been so complex since the first Republic that the governments have so far been avoiding taking any decision on the issue because of the multi-lingual nature of the country. The prospect for the foreseeable future is that a decision on the question will continue to be avoided. This means that English will still remain the Nigerian national and official language, and this buttresses the suggestion that the regional varieties of English in Nigeria should be brought together and standardized so that a Standard Nigerian English (SNE) will evolve in contemporary usage eventually.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Comment on the possibility of a Standard Nigerian English.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

From the brief account of the regional variation in English in Nigeria, certain recommendations and conclusions may be made and drawn. But the questions one will ask are: How much local or regional variation should be accepted? What is genuinely a regional variant and what is merely an error? How much regional variation can be allowed without reducing the ability of the Nigerian speaker or user of English to communicate effectively with users of English from other countries? What pronunciation model should teachers aim at? On these, Bamgbose (1971) explained that it is generally agreed that the aim is not to produce speakers of British Received Pronunciation (RP) (even if this were possible), but to evolve a local variety of English pronunciation such as will satisfy the minimum requirements of national and international intelligibility. In view of the existence of Nigerian languages alongside English, which causes regional variations according to Bamgbose (1971), the suggestion has often been made in the legislatures and also in the newspapers that the country should decide one national language, it is generally agreed that the choice should be between one of the regional languages and English.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The first goes to the teachers of English in our schools and colleges. The paper recommends that the teachers should focus mainly on the areas of dissimilarity between the regional languages and English for contrastive studies. This focus should be on the areas of phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. More assistance should be given to learners in the areas of dissimilarity between English and the local languages in order to facilitate learning and mastering the used of the language. Secondly, since it is apparent that English has been firmly established as a second language in Nigeria bearing in mind that it is the official language, and it

is likely to remain so for a long time, the regional varieties which are inevitable, should be brought together and standardized for use as contemporary Nigeria English. According to Salami (1968), with time many of the features of the regional varieties are likely to become 'stable and eventually standardized and which will result in the emergence of a distinct Nigerian variety of English, probably associated with a certain level of education' as it is now.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions with adequate examples:

- i. What are the differences between NE form and SE form?
- ii. Nigerian English is a conglomeration of languages. Comment on this.
- iii. Discuss the phonological problems in Nigerian English.
- iv. Explain the possible morphological forms often found in Nigerian English.
- v. Comment on the possibility of a Standard Contemporary Nigerian English.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Achebe, Chinua (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann.

Aluko, T. M. (1964). *One Man One Matchet*. London: Heinemann.

Bamgbose, A. (1971). "The English Language in Nigeria" in J. Spencer (Ed) *The English Language in West Africa*. London: Longman Group.

Grieve, D. W. (1965). *English Language Examining*. Lagos: African University Press.

Okara, G. (1964). *The Voice*. London: Heinemann.

Salami, A. (1968). "Defining a Standard Nigerian English". *JNESA*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 99-106.

Ubahakwe, E. (ed.) (1979). *The Teaching of English Studies: Readings for Colleges and Universities*. Ibadan: University Press.

## UNIT 3 POPULAR NIGERIAN ENGLISH (PNE)

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 General Overview
  - 3.2 Emergence of PNE
  - 3.3 Forms of PNE
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the emergence of Popular Nigerian English which was made popular by David Jowitt in 1991. According to him, there are regular linguistic features which are conversant in every expression of Nigerians. The use of this form of English cuts across ethnic and educational divide. Nigerian English (NE) is the English Spoken in Nigeria but Popular Nigerian English (PNE) is common among Nigerians within Nigeria even though it is not a standard form. We will study the emergence and forms of this variety in order to see the regularity of the form in contemporary Nigerian English usage.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- understand what Popular Nigerian English means;
- recognize that Nigerian use PNE commonly everyday;
- know the various forms and structures of PNE;
- see PNE as constituting contemporary Nigerian English Usage; and
- distinguish between PNE and other varieties of English.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.

- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 General Overview**

Each of the new Englishes in the world has distinct characteristics, as well as distinct linguistic and cultural identities, largely due to the different historical, geographical, political and socio-cultural factors that gave birth to them. Thus, Nigerian English will differ from either Ghanaian or Indian English. Each variety, however, will also have various sub-varieties or dialects, reflecting its multilingual environment. The depth of impact at various linguistic levels in each variety will be determined by the degree of localization of English. The unique nature of new Englishes poses several problems, among which are those of definition, identification, classification, norm and intelligibility. The designation “Nigerian English” for instance, is somehow deceptive: does an Hausa speaker of NE use English exactly the same way as a Yoruba, or an Igbo speaker? If the answer is in the negative – which happens to be the case in this instance – then the next question is: what then constitutes NE? The arguments advanced by both language specialists and teachers of language indicate that there is really no consensus yet as to what constitutes NE. The opinions range from an outright rejection of its existence, to those who take its existence for granted and use the term without defining or questioning it. In between these two extremes is a continuum of various definitions, descriptions and analyses.

Another issue touched upon is that of language attitudes. The opinion of most analysts seems to be that NE does not yet have full acceptance among Nigerians, although the reasons advanced have been mostly non-linguistic in nature. This unfavorable attitude might be attributed to the activities of purists who feel the recognition of an NE will spell doom for EL in Nigeria. Numerous linguistic data abound, with sound theoretical arguments, to prove the existence of a localized and acculturized form of EL that can be safely referred to as Nigerian English. Not minding the arguments of purists, however, more and more people are beginning to recognize and to have a positive attitude towards NE, although it may still take a while before it receives wide acceptance among the general populace. The following quote from Adekunle (1985:36-38) is quite revealing and appropriate at this point:

The English language has, as a result of many years of active use in the Nigerian speech community ... becomes part of Nigeria's contemporary environment and behavior.



[...] It is an artifact whose foreign derived components have in the process of its evolution combined with native Nigerian elements to make it local.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Comment on the characteristics of Nigerian English.

### **3.2 The Emergence of PNE**

David Jowitt in his book *Nigerian English Usage* (1991) identified certain consistent linguistic forms associated with the way Nigerians use English language in their daily communication. He identified the popular forms which have remained acceptable among the vast ethnic, academic and social divide. He called these acceptable forms of Nigerian English Usage 'Popular Nigerian English' (PNE). The issue of intelligibility of these forms is also dealt with in the work. The most representative opinion on this, however, is that PNE is indigenous to Nigeria and its most basic usage is intra-national, which it does well. On the question of international intelligibility, according to Jowitt, the opinion is that PNE is to a large extent intelligible and that whatever difficulties encountered along those lines are not peculiar to PNE alone, but also to the users of all the other varieties of English Language worldwide. The difficulties encountered by the PNE speakers communicating with an American English speaker will be similar in many respects to that encountered by an Australian English speaker communicating with a New Zealander.

The features that have been proposed as identifying characteristics of PNE are mostly similar in nature at the levels of phonetics and phonology, syntax, lexis and semantics; discourse, speech acts and stylistics to the other varieties of English worldwide. These features share a lot of common ground with those of the new Englishes and several others. Using the theory of language change and linguistic variation, Jowitt puts forth cultural needs, geographical and linguistic factors as responsible for changes in English Language usage in Nigeria. These changes, according to him, are rapid and most far-reaching in the semantic component of the language and are the result of inexorable pressure in the social environment of the language. Therefore, PNE is an aggregate of heterogeneous grammatical structures common to Nigerian usage, having varying pronunciation peculiarities as well as socially constrained usage of some lexical items.

Jibril (1982) is quick to warn that there is no unanimity in the assessment of Nigerian linguists as to what he calls the "citizen status" of NE. He nevertheless proceeds to argue that PNE does not have to

possess a common linguistic feature to qualify it as Nigerian, since even British English (BE) itself has local variations and dialectal features. Thus, English Language does not have to be homogeneous to qualify as being indigenous to Nigeria.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Differentiate Nigerian English (NE) from Popular Nigerian English (PNE).

### 3.3 Forms of PNE

The following are some clearly marked out but consistent expressions that are common in the form of Nigerian English which Jowitt (1991) christened 'Popular Nigerian English'. The identifying features of this variety include elements from phonology, grammar, lexis, collocations, idioms, discourse and style, code-mixing and code-switching, and a lack of homogeneity:

#### i. **Category Shift: Reclassification of noun/adjective/adverb as verb**

*Horn before overtaking!*

*Off the light!*

*It tantamounts to fraud*

*I was not chanced/opportuned to come.*

#### ii. **Reclassification of countable nouns as uncountable**

*give chance*

*take bribe*

*make mistake*

#### iii. **Progressive in State Verbs**

*I am seeing/hearing/smelling.*

*I am not having much money.*

*Let me be going.*

#### iv. **Object Patterns**

*He allowed them go.*

*She made him to work hard.*

*The child refused going to bed.*

*She avoided to meet him.*

*She didn't arrive on time – she always likes to disappoint.*

*It was a wonderful party - we enjoyed!*

#### v. **Prepositional and Non-Prepositional Verbs**

*You should dispose your car.*

*Why did you not reply my letter?*  
*The library comprises of many sections.*  
*They are demanding for money.*  
*He emphasized on the importance of rest.*  
*I regret of not arriving earlier.*  
*Let us request for more lectures.*

**Misapplied Prepositions:**

in --> at: *at my old age,*  
 of --> at: *as at now,*  
 on --> at: *at my arrival,*  
 at --> on: *on the table,*  
 in --> on: *to deal on,*  
 in --> with: *with the belief,*  
 for --> to: *I left Lagos to Ibadan,*  
 except --> unless: *Nobody knows the answer, unless myself,*  
 unless --> except: *You cannot receive the money except you show your I.D. card*

**vi. Double marking**

*He did not went.*  
*Did she wanted him?*  
*Did you forgot the issue?*

**vii Spelling Odds**

Wrong Formation of Parts of Irregular Verbs: *hitted, splitted, grinded, beated*  
 Inflection of Relevant Words of Idioms: *They ran for their dear lives.*  
 Spelling Errors (faulty inflexions due to wrong analogy): *dinning, strenght, maintainance*

**viii Tense**

Past Perfect Instead of Present Perfect:

*In 1986 the nation was selling her crude oil at 28 Naira per barrel. Today, the price of oil had tumbled to an all-time low of 10 Naira per barrel.*

Might Have: *After the referee might have arrived the match will begin*

Reported Speech: *Yusuf said he is entering the house when his brother drove off.*

**ix Copying (syntactically redundant use of words):**

Subject Copying: *My father he works under NEPA*

Object Copying in Relative Clauses: *The car which he bought it last year is already giving trouble.*

Relative and Possessive Sequence: *I know the man who his father died.*  
 Of Before which: *It was a very horrible experience of which I hope it will not happen again.*

Other Cases:

in case -->*should in case*,  
 better -->*more better*,  
 can -->*can be able*,  
 repeat -->*repeat again*

## x. Loan Words

Food:

*akara* (Yoruba: small deep-fried bean balls),  
*buka* (Hausa: cheap eating-place),  
*ogbono* (Igbo: soup based on the seed of the Williamson tree),  
*ogogoro, kai-kai* etc. (various languages: local gin)

Dress:

*agbada* (Yoruba: large gown worn by men, often embroidered at the neck and cuffs and with flowing sleeves that can be hitched over the shoulders),  
*danshiki* (Hausa: gown with wide armpits reaching to the knees)

Forms of Address and Titles:

*alkali* (Hausa: Muslim who has been to Mecca),  
*oba* (Yoruba: primarily a specific title, often used loosely to refer to any traditional ruler), *obi, eze* (Igbo: specific titles),  
*oga* (Yoruba: big man, master, fairly general in the South),  
*baba* (Hausa, Yoruba: father, old man, fairly general in the West and North)

Traditional Religion:

*babalawo* (Yoruba: diviner),  
*Ifa* (Yoruba: oracle),  
*chi* (Igbo: personal god),  
*ogbanje* (Igbo: changeling)

Interjections, Discourse Particles:

*a-a!* (Yoruba: strong surprise, disbelief),  
 ... *abi?* (Yoruba: isn't it?),  
*kai, chei* (Hausa, Igbo: strong surprise),  
*ooo!* (various languages: yes),  
 ... *o(h)!* (Yoruba: appendable to almost any word, indicates speaker's personal involvement, implications according to context, e.g.: *sorry-oh!*)

**xi. Mixture of Styles**

Formal style in informal context:

*How are you? I hope you are in good health.*

*For your information, I arrived home on the 28th of March.*

Informal style in formal context:

*I was sorry to hear that your mother kicked the bucket.*

Clichés:

Clichés of formal style:

*in the final analysis,*

*in no small measure,*

*to mention but a few,*

*the order of the day*

Clichés of informal style:

*men of the underworld,*

*the national cake,*

*spread like a bushfire in the harmattan,*

*we have a long way to go*

Proverbs:

SE proverbs:

*(What is) sauce for the goose is (also) sauce for the gander.*

*(There is) no smoke without fire.*

NE proverbs:

*Nobody is above mistake.*

*God never sleeps.*

*What a man can do a woman can also do.*

Direct translation from MT:

*When two elephants fight, the grass suffers.*

Pidgin proverbs:

*Monkey dey work, baboon dey chop.*

*Do me I do u, God no go vex*

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

“PNE is a compilation of grammatical errors not a standard”. Discuss this proposition.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The question of whether there is PNE should not arise, since it is a known fact that in language contact situations a second language (L<sub>2</sub>) is bound to be influenced by its linguistic environment. The existence of different Englishes has a wide acceptance among linguists internationally. The three different approaches to usages in Nigerian English, according to Bamgbose (1982) are the interference, the deviation and creativity approaches. Thus, PNE usages are influences from local languages (from “interferences” from the mother tongue – L<sub>1</sub>). PNE ignores the normal processes of language development such as semantic extension and the creation of new idioms, which cut across all L<sub>1</sub> backgrounds. Although, PNE in comparison with “native English” could be labeled as “deviant model” but certain typical PNE usages are the results of creativity. PNE is popular because it utilizes the resources of local languages as well as English Language to create new expressions and idioms or give newer lives to old clichés. It must also be remarked here that not all PNE usages can be said to have arisen out of linguistic creativity.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In all the examples of the forms of PNE given here, none of them is solely an adequate criterion to characterize the entire spectrum of PNE. There are often recurrent issue of how and where to draw the line between usages that are genuinely Nigerian in nature and those that are outright errors of usage. PNE is not really the usage to be used as the model or standard. All usages not in conformity with the British model is a deviation and a corruption and places PNE at the backdrop of linguistic inferiority since it has no defined form. In PNE we see what Bamgbose (1982:105) calls the “natural and spontaneous usage of the local educated Nigerian user of English”. PNE cuts across educational levels. It is the language of the public for the public by the public. It even has influence in formal settings in Nigeria.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

- i. Discuss the syntactic aberrations in PNE.
- ii. Explain the effects of code switching in PNE.
- iii. What factors are responsible for the popularity of PNE.
- iv. “NE is a higher version of PNE”. Explain this proposition.
- v. Assess the type of recurring errors common in PNE.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Adekunle, M. A. (1985). *The English Language in Nigeria as a Modern Nigerian Artifact*. Jos: University of Jos Press.
- Bamgbose, A. (1982). "Standard Nigerian English: Issues of Identification". In Braj B. Kachru (Ed.) *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Jibril, M. 1982. "Nigerian English: An Introduction" in J. B. Pride (Ed.) *New Englishes*, pp.73-84.
- Jowitt, D. (1991) *Nigerian English Usage: An Introduction*. Ikeja: Longman.
- Odumuh, A. (1987). *Nigerian English (NigE)*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Ogu, J. (1992). *A Historical Survey of English and the Nigerian Situation*. Lagos: Kraft Books.
- Salami, A. (1968). "Defining a Standard Nigerian English" in *JNESA*. Vol. 2, No. 2:99-106.

## **UNIT 4 OTHER VARIETIES OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ENGLISH**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 General Overview
  - 3.2 Nigerian Pidgin English
  - 3.3 Nigerian Creole English
  - 3.4 Contemporary Forms of Nigerian Pidgin and Creole
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, we will examine two other most important aspects of Nigerian English: Pidgin and Creole. This complements units 2 and 3 of this module. Most Nigerians, whether educated or not, prefer to communicate effectively within their environment. This effective communication format involves the use of the commonly used forms of English in order to function effectively as members of their communities. Pidgin English has grown to the status of urban English while Creole is almost emerging from it. Here, we will study Nigerian Pidgin and Creole forms in the light of their contemporary relevance in Nigerian use of English.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- trace the beginning of pidgin and creole in Nigeria;
- see Pidgin and Creole as varieties of Nigerian English;
- distinguish pidgin from Creole in Nigerian English;
- assess the importance of Pidgin and creole in Nigeria; and
- discuss Pidgin and Creole as part of Nigeria's linguistic development.



### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 General Overview

A pidgin is a simple language that arises from contacts between people with different mother tongues, in situations where relatively uncomplicated ideas are being exchanged. It is the *corrupt* form of any language. The speech is generally slow and supported by mime and gesture; the vocabulary is basic and taken mostly from the language of the most important group of speakers; and the grammar has much in common with that typically used by native speakers talking to non-native speakers, or by mothers talking to young children. A simplified pidgin can develop rapidly: if it proves useful, it becomes more complex, and hence flexible. If it becomes a mother tongue, it is expanded to fulfill all its speakers' needs. Such mother tongues are known as *creoles*. Developed pidgins are most likely to be found in multilingual communities, where they are invaluable as lingua francas. They can be found in Papua New Guinea, for example, where there are over 700 languages for an estimated population of five million, and in West Africa, where as many as one-fifth of the world's languages occur.

Pidgins have probably existed for millennia. Evidence suggests that pidginized versions of Latin evolved into the Romance languages, and there was certainly a medieval lingua franca in use during the Crusades. Pidgins with vocabularies from European languages developed extensively in the wake of European expansionism from the 15th century onward. Each pidgin, like each language, is unique but they share some characteristics: word order is fixed; there is little or no inflection; negation usually involves a "no" word in front of the verb; nouns and verbs are regular; the small vocabulary is used creatively; and speakers use local idioms, metaphors, and proverbs.

There is a closed relationship between pidgin and creole. A pidgin becomes a creole when it has grown to the status of becoming a mother tongue in a given linguistic setting where many languages are in use. Pidgins and creoles are products of multilingual settings. Creoles are products of a multilingual settings but purposely used for social interaction within the vast complex linguistic make up of a given geographical setting. A creole in some sense can become a standard pattern for social interaction but it contains elements of pidgin varieties and elements of the standard language forms in the community.

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Pidgin and Creole are unconscious linguistic forms in Nigerian English usage. Assess this proposition properly.

### 3.2 Nigerian Pidgin English

Nigerian Pidgin is related in a way to the other “Pidgin” of West Africa and the Caribbean’s. People from various linguistic backgrounds migrate into urban towns or cities for one reason or the other. Because they are from different linguistic backgrounds this brings about a search for a common language for communication. The language that evolved in the case of Nigeria is called *Nigerian Pidgin English* (NPE) and its origin can be traced back to the arrival of the Portuguese and English speaking missionaries including colonialists in large numbers in the Southern part of Nigeria in 1842. Although, these missionaries were resisted by the natives at the initial stage, some of them wanted to establish closed relationship with the Whiteman. These groups of Nigerians were employed in the mission houses, the European firms, centres and hospitals. Some were employed either as cooks, stewards, gardeners, interpreters or teachers. These groups of Nigerians needed to communicate with the Europeans.

With independence and mass urban migration coupled with the growth of many towns, many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria began interacting linguistically. In fact, much of what is observed and called *Nigerian Pidgin English* in Nigeria by the uninitiated is either ‘bad’ (incompetently constructed English); English passed off as ‘Pidgin’ by the well-educated elite proficient in the use of Standard English, or ‘broken’ (manifestly incompetent) English connected by the uneducated and minimally educated, in other words, spontaneous *ad hoc* English like language constructed to meet certain imperative communicative needs in a given urban or social setting.

Agheyisi (1984) has identified two varieties of Nigerian Pidgin English: varieties A and B. Variety A is what she calls the *Nigerian dialect of the original English based on West Africa Pidgin*. This variety is spoken by people who have a high fluency in the language and who need to use it regularly like traders, mechanics, small business entrepreneurs, taxi-drivers and messengers in offices. Variety B is the one used by people who lack linguistic competence in the language and covers all the degrees of fluency that fall into the range of the state called *inter-language stage in second language learning*. She says that Variety A approximates to the purest form of the English based Pidgin.

The status of Nigerian Pidgin as a language is a point that is still in contention. Some linguists believe that Nigerian Pidgin English has reached a stage in its development where it can be accorded the status of a language. Others are of the opposite view that the pidgin has not attained the status of a language. There is no doubt that when Nigerian Pidgin English emerged, it was meant to serve as a means of

communication between Nigerians and Europeans first for trade purposes and then later between Nigerians of different ethno-linguistic groups. English language is the superstratum while the indigenous languages – Nigerian languages – serve as substrata, depending on the area where the pidgin is spoken. Even though the colonialists have left, the Nigerian Pidgin still remains and has even developed. It is now used mainly in culturally heterogeneous areas like urban areas especially in Port-Harcourt (Rivers state), Warri, Sapele (Delta State), Benin City (Edo State) and Lagos (Lagos State). It is also used in culturally homogenous areas in rural areas like Abraka, Ughelli, Sapele (Delta State), Aba, Umuahia (Abia State) etc.

Nigerian Pidgin English has also been very seriously proposed as Nigeria's national language. The basis for this proposal is that Nigerian Pidgin English is the most, widely used language of communication in Nigeria and the easily acquired second language in Nigeria – according to the proponents of this option. Both claims just mentioned are actually erroneous. The coastal regions of Nigeria which had the earliest sustained contacts with the British and their English language, especially the Warri Delta Zone, is the main geographical base for Nigerian Pidgin English; the language is also well used in parts of Edo State in the former Midwestern Nigeria; less used in Northern Nigeria.

Nigerian Pidgin English itself, like any other natural language, is a complex communication tool. As such, it is not the language of most Nigerians, and definitely needs a considerable period or dedicated learning as a second language before most Nigerians can become proficient in its use. Much more seriously, Nigerian Pidgin English is not yet really indigenous to Nigeria: although its semantic base is largely indigenous; and its form (sound and writing) is evolving according to the formal rules of indigenous Nigerian languages, English language is still the perceived source for the words, concepts, and even sentence structure of Nigerian Pidgin English.

The principal users of Nigerian Pidgin English, in Nigeria, do indeed identify with the language so closely that they consider it indigenous to Nigeria and assume erroneously thereby that the rest of Nigerians relate psychologically towards the language as they do. But, in actual fact, Nigerian Pidgin English is foreign to most Nigerians, foreign to the well – educated elite, very proficient in English, who do not want any other 'English' to 'corrupt' their English, and foreign to the uneducated or semi-educated who are forced to learn it as their 'English'. As a language created originally to serve the local and mostly unsophisticated needs of people from many different linguistic backgrounds, the communication potential of Nigerian Pidgin English is low – as regards its importance in contemporary realities of science and technology.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Assess the status of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) in Nigerian linguistic Environment.

### 3.3 Nigerian Creole English

The name *creole* comes from Spanish *criollo* meaning "native." In the 16th century, a "creole" was a person of European ancestry born in the New World. Over the next two centuries, it was applied to children of mixed race and then to Africans born in the Americas. By the early 1800s, "creole" could be applied to a language. There are clear historical, geographic, and linguistic factors linking all the Creole Englishes in West Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and the United States. There are four main creoles in the United States: (1) *Gullah*, or *Geechee*, is spoken mainly in the Sea Islands, Florida, Carolina (especially the Carline Low Country), and Georgia. It is the language used at home by perhaps a quarter of a million people in this region and several thousand more who have migrated to New York. Its names probably come from either the Gola people of Liberia or from the Ogeechee River plantations of Georgia. (2) *Afro-Seminole* is a Creole English spoken mainly in parts of Texas and Mexico. It is almost certainly derived from Gullah when 18th-century slaves escaped from Florida and Georgia and settled with Seminoles. (3) *African American Vernacular English*, or *U.S. Black English*, covers the entire spectrum from standard U.S. English to varieties similar to Gullah, which probably developed on plantations in the southern states from Texas to Virginia (at the time of the Civil War, over 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South). (4) *Native American Pidginized English* is a form of pidgin English that was probably used between some Native Americans and English speakers and there may be relics of it in the words of Native American languages that were common currency both in U.S. English and Native American languages, for example *papoose* and *chuck* (food).

Creole languages are found in communities where a pidgin language earlier served as a useful lingua franca. Creoles are often the sole language of a community and so are capable of fulfilling all their speakers' linguistic needs. In being transformed into a creole, a pidgin's vocabulary is expanded and its structures made increasingly subtle, flexible, and precise. Creoles, which involve a language shift, are often caused by the disruption of normal speech communities. The best-known examples are found in the Caribbean. Caribbean creoles evolved as a result of the slave trade, when as many as ten million Africans, speaking perhaps 500 different mother tongues, were sold into slavery.

Africans working on plantations were obliged to relinquish their ancestral languages and communicate in pidgin forms of a European tongue. According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (2008) “Children born into slave communities used the pidgin for all their communication needs and thus transformed it into a Creole. More recently, creoles related to English have developed in many other places including Cameroon, Nigeria, Hawaii, and Papua New Guinea. In such areas, speakers found that the pidgin lingua franca helped communication between different groups so much that it was increasingly spoken at home and children acquired it as a mother tongue.” Thus, a creole emerges for interaction within a social milieu where many languages are in use. It is a product of necessity because it emerges when there is the need for a generally accepted pattern of communication that cuts across the various languages, social classes and educational status.

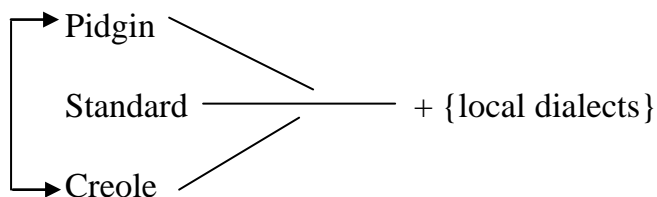
### **Warri English as Creole**

Warri is a popular commercial town in the Niger-delta region of Nigeria. It was one of the towns that had early interaction with the European merchants on the shores of West Africa. The area is known for palm produce and wood. More so, with its closeness to the Atlantic, Warri was also one of the important routes for Slave trade. With the discovery of oil, Warri became one of the popular oil cities with the settlement of the major oil companies in the area and the siting of one of Nigeria’s refineries. The early European traders that came to Warri included the Portuguese, the Dutch, The British and the Italians.

Warri has a complex linguistic make up. There are over 10 languages struggling for prominence in the city. They include Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Ijaw, Okpe etc. Itsekiri is a language with residues of the Yoruba language inherent. The traditional ruler of Warri is known as the Olu of Warri and is the traditional ruler of the Itsekiri people. Many people see his position as a political imposition by the then Midwestern region government because of the Itsekiri and Yoruba linguistic and cultural affinity. The Itsekiris are not the most populated tribe in Warri. The Urhobos and the Ijaws are more in population but with intermarriages the Itsekiris seem to have anchor in almost all the major tribal groups within the area.

The English language form in Warri began first as pidgin because of the need to interact with the European traders and slave merchants. Then the rise of Standard English form as a result of western education and the rising educational level of the inhabitants of Warri coupled with the settlement of Europeans who came in as oil explorers in the area. Then there is the emergence of Creole forms which resulted from the need to

interact across tribes, status and education in the region. We have this developmental pattern of English in Warri:



Creole in Warri is not for official interaction but used as a generally acceptable form for interaction in social and other settings. It is also possible for staff of companies to interact in creole while maintaining Officialese in the written interaction within the office. Creole is mainly an oral thing. It is not written down as an official language form but is generally and consciously accepted by the people for daily interaction. Considering the popularity of this form of English in use in Warri, it was nicknamed *Wafarian Langwa* meaning *the language of Warri inhabitants* even though this form of social language is already in use in the outskirts of Warri and nearby towns like Sapele, Ughelli, Asaba and even Benin City. The use of this form is also commonly experienced in even far away towns like Lagos and Abuja due to urban migration.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the possible reasons for the emergence of Creole in Warri?

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

English language is mainly used by the elites, Hausa by the Hausa speaking people of North, Yoruba in the West, Igbo in the East and other minor languages scattered here and there. But Pidgin English is understood and used by people from all the groups named above especially for interaction and business transactions. Apart from its use in advertisement, it is also used in political campaigns, News in Pidgin, church sermons and even in the print media where in newspaper columns we have Pidgin English extensively used. Pidgin English is also equally used in the transmission of some programmes both at the National and state levels by different television houses. At the National level, “Soap Opera” programmes like “The New Masquerade”, “Second Chance” and various messages especially on Expanded Programmes on Immunization (EPI), anti-drug war, all uses Pidgin English in getting their messages across to people. In Warri, the creole is used in the media, interaction and business. Pidgin and Creole English have been able to provide some concrete evidence for a Nigerian variety of English. There is a preponderance of evidence for the existence of a Nigerian variety of English. The general users of the English language

in Nigeria, has been influenced by the local languages, customs, belief systems and cultures, enough to give it a flavor and characteristics that could be distinctly identified as Nigerian.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

All social classes in Nigeria now understand and use Pidgin English. On the individual level, it is fast becoming a favourite especially amongst students and youths. The main argument against Pidgin English being a language is that it is a hybrid of two languages and it is not an autonomous linguistic system. But looking at Nigerian Pidgin today, we see that it has undergone a lot of changes and development and it is taking on a shape different from that of the languages of its derivation. Another thing is that, it is fast becoming an integral part of everyone's repertoire, thus, even in the midst of people who speak or who are from the same ethnic group, preference is usually given to Pidgin English rather than to the common language. Also, for the inhabitants of Warri, creole and/or Pidgin English has become the first language of the inhabitants and serves as the "mother tongue" for the growing children because it is the first language they encounter and learn. It is obvious from the above that when two or more languages come into contact, there is, of necessity, going to be mutual influences. It is clear to note that English influenced the languages with which it has come into contact around the world, but English itself has been – and continues to be – influenced by other languages, and this influence is responsible for the new forms of English mushrooming all over the globe. The implication of this is quite significant, not only for contact linguistics, but also for the teaching and the learning of English to, and by the speakers of other languages.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

- Explain the factors that gave rise to Nigerian Pidgin.
- Discuss the reasons for the emergence of creole in Warri.
- Carefully analyze the roles of Pidgin English in Nigeria.
- Assess the extent of acceptance of Pidgin English in Nigeria.
- Is it possible to have more creoles in Nigeria?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Agheyisi, R. (1984) "Linguistic Implications of the Changing Roles of Nigerian Pidgin".

*English Worldwide*. (Ed.) John Benjamin. Amsterdam: Hopkins.

Egbe, D. (1980) "Some Linguistic Characteristics of Nigerian Pidgin" in *Lagos Review of English Studies* Vol. II, 58.

Hymes, D. (1971). *Pidginisation and Creolization of Language*. Cambridge: CUP.

Spencer, J. (1971). *The English Language in West Africa*. London: Longman.

Todd, L. (1974). *Pidgin and Creoles*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London and Boston.

Ubahakwe, E. (1979) *Varieties and Functions of English in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Africa University Press.



## **UNIT 5     SELECT ENGLISH LANGUAGE VARIETIES IN AFRICA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 General Overview
  - 3.2 South African English
  - 3.3 Ghanaian English
  - 3.4 Liberian English
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, we shall study select dialects of English in Africa. We shall study the dialects of English in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia. There are other English speaking countries in Africa like Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, Namibia etc. Cameroon is the only officially bilingual country in Africa with English and French spoken widely. The countries are selected randomly because of their significance in Africa. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and out of every six blacks in the world a Nigerian is one. Ghana had earlier independence and has had established English dialect because of its multilingual setting. South Africa, has had years of apartheid as a result of the emigration and occupation of the country by many white races. The English in South Africa is unique because of the standard form of the dialect. Liberian English is also unique because of the influence of America after the abolition of slave trade.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recognize African English dialects;
- prove the existence of such varieties;
- use the varieties within the limits of their acceptance;
- assess the level of acceptability of the dialects;
- compare African English dialects with those of Britain and America; and
- distinguish the marked linguistic form in each African dialect of English.

## HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 General Overview

It is now a commonplace to say that languages change over time and space and that this change is, indeed, an essential characteristic of human language. The view that language should be fixed and unchanging for all time is now thoroughly discredited, at least among applied linguists and language teachers. How entirely natural, therefore that English used in environments different from those in which it grew up so to speak, should mutate to suit its new environments. There is, however, a difference between acknowledging language development and change in a developing society in which the main force for change comes from first language speakers and accepting the same kind of changes and developments occurring in an environment where English is seldom used in the home and where another language or languages may directly or indirectly influence those processes.

The situation is common in many former British colonial territories, among them, for example, Anglophone Africa, the Indian Sub-Continent, Malta and Singapore. In these environments, English may be used for any or all of a variety of official purposes, such as policing, military activities, the Civil Service, etc. English may also be the medium of education for any or all levels of state and/or private education. (Indeed, this situation is also found in some countries where Britain had no colonial interests; for example, Ethiopia.) A fairly typical example is seen in Ghana, where roughly 9 million inhabitants share some fifty-plus languages (Sey 1973). English is officially the medium of secondary and tertiary education and virtually all the public services. Major newspapers are published in English and there is considerable exposure to English on the public broadcasting service. This exposure has been in place since well before World War II; it is therefore the case that, particularly in ethnically mixed urban environments, many Ghanaians have grown up in situations encouraging the acquisition both outside and inside the classroom (though not necessarily in the home) of a local variety of English. It is not theoretically adequate to explain,

therefore, the development of these Local Varieties (LV's) in individual speakers solely by reference to "interference" or "transfer" from the various other languages spoken in the environment; the evolved forms of English in common currency must also be taken into account here.

This is not to say that there is now no influence at all from these other languages rather, the acquisition processes relating to LV's of English are qualitatively different from those experienced by a German or a Japanese learner of English, since the opportunities to acquire the language outside the classroom in Germany or Japan are fewer. There is, however, often a greater availability of the native speaker model (on language learning tapes, etc.). The influence of the L1 is that much more direct given the more restricted access to any forms of the target language; the target variety is almost certainly a metropolitan version. Kachru (1992) calls the latter "Performance Varieties" (where the learners' output is influenced hardly at all by English in use locally), as opposed to "Institutionalized Varieties" (where locally used English has a profound effect) in Second Language environments. The four criteria he advances for the existence of Institutionalized Varieties are:

- an extended range of uses, as described above
- an extended range of registers or styles (for example, the English used in a market between fellow nationals not having a common language as compared to that of an undergraduate lecture)
- nativisation of registers and styles, formal and contextual
- a body of nativised English literature, marked linguistically as localised (for example the writings of Amos Tutuola or Gabriel Okara in Nigeria)

A further point is the localised forms of English, together with the local language(s), which form a 'register range' for bi-lingual speakers such that certain contexts call forth different languages and different varieties of each. This register range will include mixing both the two codes (code switching) and/or, for effect, two or more varieties. This in essence is the case with the local varieties of English in Africa. Most countries in Africa are purely multilingual, for example Nigeria is a country of over 140 million people with over 1000 languages and thousands of dialects. English, therefore, became the unifying language for communication amongst the heterogeneous society. It will not be surprising having a unique Nigerian dialect of English with influences and effect from the vast Nigerian society and culture. This is the peculiar case of English in Anglophone African states

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the reasons for the likelihood of non-existence of Standard English Variety in Anglophone Africa.

### 3.2 South African English (SAEng)

South African English is a dialect of English spoken in South Africa and in neighbouring countries with a large number of Anglo-Africans living in them, such as Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. South African English is not unified in its pronunciation: this can be attributed to the fact that English is the mother tongue for only 40% of the white inhabitants (the remainder mostly having Afrikaans as their mother tongue) and only a tiny minority of black African inhabitants of the region. (In addition some 94% of the 1.1 million inhabitants of Asian descent, and 19% of the 4 million Coloured, or mixed race, inhabitants are English mother tongue speakers.) The dialect can be identified, however, by the multiple loanwords drawn largely from Afrikaans, but increasingly also from Zulu and other indigenous languages as well as Greek, Portuguese and various Indian languages. Some of these words, like "trek", have seeped into general English usage throughout the globe.

The dialect was exposed to a humorous treatment by Robin Malan in his book 'Ah Big Yaws', first published in 1972. The book is concise, and conforms more or less to the spoken dialect of Cape Town in 1974–76, in the Northern Cape Town suburbs of Bellville and Durbanville, where Malan resided, and in the University town of Stellenbosch, where he was at the time a lecturer of spoken English. This book is often considered a high point of South African written wit, although it is now considered an important cultural time-capsule, as it also gives a pocket outline of white South Africa immediately before the social and political chaos of the 1980s. The fourth edition of the *Dictionary of South African English* was released in 1991, and the *Oxford Dictionary* released its South African English dictionary in 2002.

The first codification and characterisation of the dialect was done in 1971 by Robin Malan, then a lecturer in English at Stellenbosch University. His monograph, called "Ah Big Yaws", was intended to be a humorous look at the Afrikaans-influenced English of white, urban Afrikaans-English speaking South Africans (WUESA's in acronym, humorously renamed 'Woozers' by Malan). In his foreword, Malan noted that there are a lot more permutations on English Dialects in South Africa, e.g. English modified by Bantu languages such as Xhosa, Sepedi, Zulu and so forth, and noted there are many permutations where English would be a secondary, tertiary or even more remarkably a quaternary language for many speakers. He therefore confined his

monograph to the dialect he had most contact with. Malan also noted that his work is the same vein as 'Let Stalk Strine' and 'Fraffly Well Spoken' by Afferbeck Lauder, humorous digs at Australian English and the accent of the British upper class.

### **Pronunciation**

With respect to phonology, South African English is closely related to Australian and New Zealand English and to the English of southeastern England, in which the Southern Hemisphere dialects have their roots. Afrikaans and Xhosa have heavily influenced only those living in largely Afrikaans or Xhosa areas. The most noticeable difference in South African pronunciation is probably the flat "i". This is a part of the vowel shift that has occurred in South Africa as well as New Zealand. One difference between British South African English and New Zealand English is in the pronunciation of 'ar' and 'ow', as in the pronunciation of the sentence 'park the car downtown'.

While there are similarities with Australian English, there are also a number of key differences. For instance, South African English does not have the rising intonation found in Australian English. English spoken by mother-tongue speakers of Bantu languages is often influenced by intonation and pronunciation of their languages.

### **Vocabulary**

There are words that do not exist in British or American English, usually derived from Afrikaans or African languages, although, particularly in Durban, there is also an influence from Indian languages. Terms in common with North American English include 'freeway' or 'highway' (British English 'motorway'), 'cellphone' (British and Australian English: mobile) and 'buck' meaning money (rand, in this case, and not a dollar). South Africans generally refer to the different codes of football, such as soccer and rugby union, by those names. There is a great difference between South African English dialects: in Johannesburg the local form is very strongly English-based, while its Eastern Cape counterpart has a strong Afrikaans influence. Although differences between the two are sizeable, there are many similarities. Some words peculiar to South African English include 'takkies', 'tackie' or 'tekkie' for sneakers (American) or trainers (British), 'combi' or 'kombi' for a small van, 'bakkie' for a pick-up truck, 'kiff' for pleasurable, 'lekker' for nice, 'donga' for ditch and 'jol' for party.

Several South African words, usually from Afrikaans or native languages of the region, have entered world English: *aardvark*; *apartheid*; *commando*; *veld*; *impala*; *mamba* and *trek*.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Identify and explain the areas of convergence between South African English (SAEng) and Australian English (AusE).

### 3.4 Ghanaian English

English is the official national language of Ghana, a country which has up to 50 indigenous languages and a population of nearly 19 million. The pronunciation of English by speakers of three of the indigenous languages, Akan (Fante and Twi), Ewe and Ga., including not only segmental phonetics and phonology, but also the supra-segmentals of accentuation or stress, and intonation have influence of the variety. Ghanaian English (GhE) is assumed to be spoken by those who have, at least until recently, taken British English Received Pronunciation (RP) as a target model. By beginning with the basic phonetic and phonological descriptions of some Ghanaian languages and those of the English Language, one will be able to establish the existence of a Ghanaian English accent that possesses its own historical and linguistic peculiarities.

Like other Englishes, Ghanaian English has several regional and social dialects. Ghanaian English is shaped not only by L<sub>1</sub> characteristics but also by spelling, analogy and other native Englishes. The relationship between Ghanaian English and other Outer and Inner Circle Englishes is very prominent. Ghanaian English incorporated speech patterns from different Englishes, especially, British English and, quite recently, American English (due to the rise of the United States as a political and economic power). Furthermore, Ghanaians' English speech patterns is influenced by their level and type of education, social and economic backgrounds, regional or geographical locations, personal motivation, and their attitude to the English language is in line with current trends in Second Language Acquisition and general Sociolinguistics.

Sey (1973) examined GhE from multi-dimensional linguistic viewpoints. Working from the basic assumption that Ghanaian English remains largely British norm-dependent, the speech patterns of educated young adults of different sexes who had lived for long in Ghana largely exhibit this. Essentially, the outer circle users of English are from three major linguistic groups (Akan, Ewe and Ga) in Ghana and have varying degrees of proficiency in English. The speech repertoire of respondents reflects a wide variety of choices along a unilinear continuum of style: word list, reading and connected speech

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Many linguists studying English in Africa believe that Ghanaian English is the closest to BrE in Africa. If you support this position state your reasons.

### 3.5 Liberian English

Liberian English is a term used to refer to the varieties of English spoken in the African country of Liberia. There are four such varieties: Standard Liberian English or Liberian Settler English; Kru Pidgin English; and Vernacular Liberian English. Normally, Liberians do not use these terms and instead refer to all such varieties simply as 'English.' Additionally, the term 'Liberian English' is sometimes used for all varieties except the standard. Standard Liberian English is the language of those people whose African American ancestors immigrated to Liberia in the nineteenth century. This variety is a transplanted variety of African American Vernacular English. It is most distinctive in isolated settlements such as Louisiana, Lexington, and Bluntsville, small communities upriver from Greenville in Sinoe County. According to 1993 statistics, approximately 69,000 people, or 2.5% of the population, spoke Standard Liberian English as a first language.

Vernacular Liberian English, the most common variety, is the Liberian version of West African Pidgin English though it has been significantly influenced by *Liberian Settler English*. Its phonology owes much to Liberia's Niger-Congo languages. *Vernacular Liberian English* has been analyzed having a post-creole speech continuum. As such, rather than being a pidgin wholly distinct from English, it is a range of varieties that extend from the highly pidginized to one that shows many similarities to English as spoken elsewhere in West Africa.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

English language use in Liberia is a special variety because of the influence of America. Explain properly.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Data from other areas of the world tend to support this suspicion of local forms; for example, children in Sierra Leone are deeply concerned about the pronunciation and forms of English spoken by teachers. Sey (1973) in Ghana indicates how public speakers are judged at least as much by the grammatical correctness of their speeches and that a politician who seemingly errs in using English will forfeit much of the impression that s/he may have made, whatever the correctness of the political content. A

very fine line must be trodden by public figures using English in such environments between sounding too local on the one hand and too expatriate on the other. An illustrative case is that of a Ghana Broadcasting Service continuity announcer, educated in the UK, who proved unpopular with listeners, not for producing sounds that were too localised, but rather for sounding too "English", this leading to his R.P. induced redundancy. The devaluation of home-grown language forms is strengthened by the effects of both local and international examining boards. These set up models of English phonology and syntax that not many teachers who use the language as a medium to teach curriculum subjects, or even local teachers of English would adhere to, except in very careful speech. Assiduous teachers will vainly attempt to teach out locally recurring forms thus using time that could appropriately be devoted to more productive activities, exposing learners to more of the target language, and developing their communicative ability. The issue of "localisms" is a one issue with teachers in many countries. It is not uncommon for teachers to feel that the worst errors are those which either infringe a rule taught early in the learner's career (the classic example being the third person present indicative -s) or which shows interference from the pupil's main language.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

English language varieties in Africa have undergone several changes resulting from the environment. However, many educated Africans still see the language as relics of imperialism. A case against the view that English *necessarily* carries with it a tide of cultural imperialism is well put by Bisong (1995), who regards the view as patronizing to users of English in the Third World; and states, "it is possible for some analysts to label the English Language 'imperialistic' because some behaviours exhibited somewhere by some English speakers appear to result in the subjugation of other languages (or their speakers)". A clear distinction needs to be made between the users of the language and the code *tout court*. In Kachru's terminology, 'nativised' varieties would seem to move towards this end, where English loses much of the metropolitan cultural load and takes on local attributes. However, it is clear that history shows us that *mixing* and *switching* are not unusual; the major East African language, Swahili, arose through just such a process of merging Arabic and the local coastal languages. It would seem that, linguistically at least, there is little difference between these two phenomena. Why, one wonders, should the ability to switch between languages not be equally highly valued? This is the case of English in Africa where the local dialects romance with English in order to create special varieties of English using African experiences and linguistic medium as yardstick.



## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions carefully:

- i. South African English seemed more standardised than any other English dialect in Africa. Explain this statement.
- ii. Assess the effect of local dialects on Ghanaian English (GhE).
- iii. State clearly the marked linguistic effects that indicated the existence of a Nigerian English (NE).
- iv. Explain the effect of the local dialects on the variety of English in Liberia.
- v. Explain the possible causes of ineffective English usage among Anglophone English countries in Africa.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Afolayan, A. (1984). "The English Language and Development-Oriented Education in Nigeria". In R. Freeman, R. and M. Jibril, (Eds.) *English Language Studies in Nigerian Higher Education* (pp.35-56). London: British Council.

Atchison, J. (1981). *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* London: Fontana.

Bamgbose, A. (1982) "Standard Nigerian English: Issues of Identification" in *Nigerian Educator Vol. 6:12*.

Bisong, J. (1995). Language Choice and Cultural Imperialism: a Nigerian Perspective. *ELT Journal* 49/2: 122-132.

Kachru, B. (1992). *The Other Tongue*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Norrish, J. A. (1983). *Language Learners and Their Errors*. London: Macmillan.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sey, K. (1973). *Ghanaian English*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.