

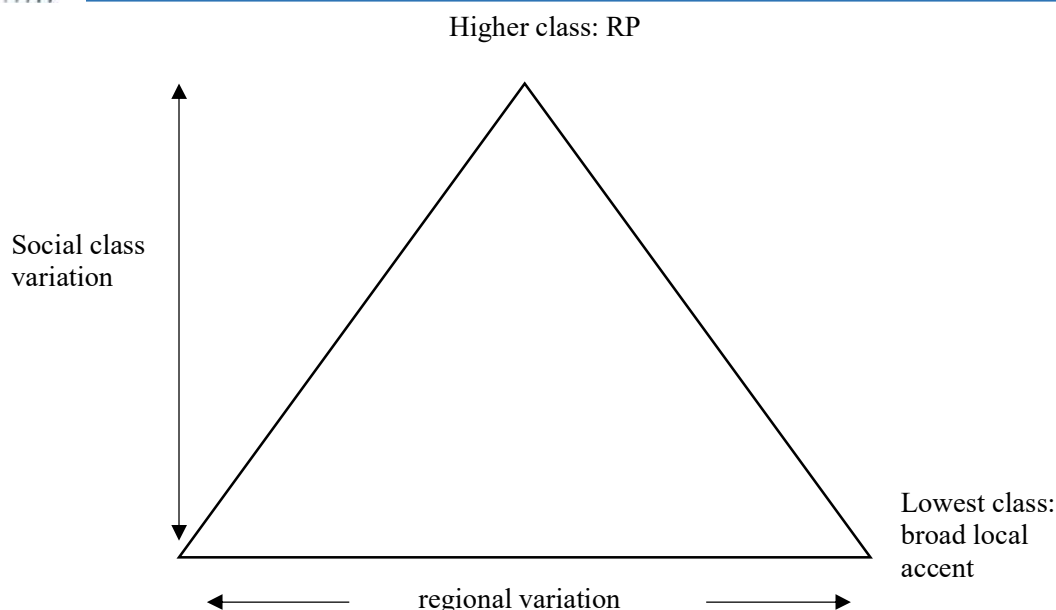


Figure 2.4 The Class Variation Pyramid (Halfarová, 2014)

Trudgill (2019) states that the relationship between the social and regional variations in accent was originally presented on diagramme of a cone as reported by Ward (1929), from where it has been modified to an equilateral triangle. He further reports that, because there is reasonable phonological variation among the regional accents, it is placed at the broad base of the triangle, and as the base rises to form peak of the triangle, the regional phonological variation decreases and narrows towards the top. At the top where the angle is formed variation ceases to exist to signal the RP variant. Because there is no definable point where one variant accent begins to exist and terminates, English continuum is established, with the equilateral triangle effectively presenting the RP as social variation in Britain.

In adapting the variation equilateral triangle for Nigerian situation, (Okoro, 2017) considers Jowitt's incorporation of the three major Nigerian mother-tongues.

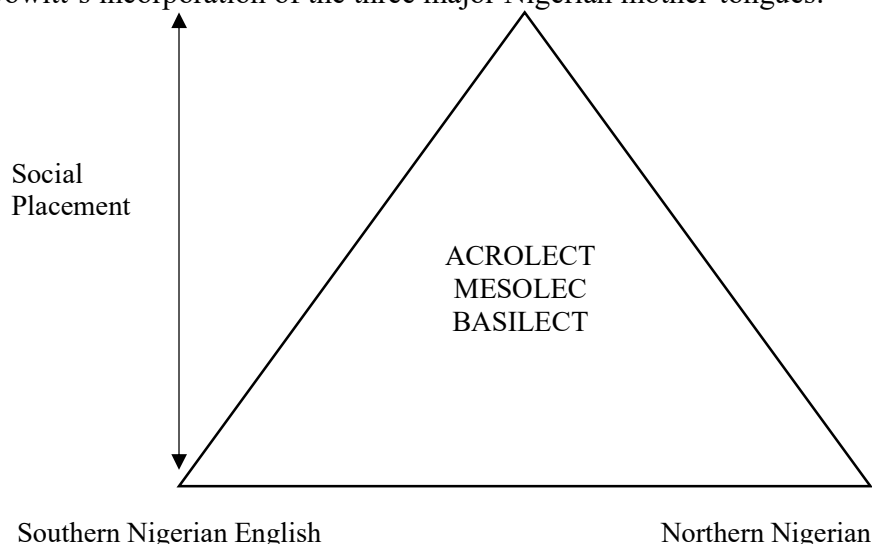


Figure 2.5 Okoro's Pyramid of Nigerian English Continuum (Okoro, 2017)

Trudgill's explanation on the classical equilateral triangle showing the British English variation above is the same for its replication by Okoro. In addition, however, the northern and southern Nigerian 'Englishes' are respectively the Jowitt's PNE(H) on the one hand and PNE(I) and



PNE(Y) altogether as both the I(gbo) and the Y(oruba) are geographically situated in the south. The variation between them at the base of the triangle is reasonable but as they acquire more education and get more exposed to the RP, the variation decreases with the triangle getting narrower towards the top. While the phenomenon of English continuum also exists in the Nigerian situation, acrolect and basilect are extreme variants with the variation between them very wide, but each of them is close to mesolect. Therefore, while comparing the acrolect to the RP, as stated above, will make no significant difference, comparing basilect to RP will make too much difference to handle.

Theoretical Framework

Clearly from the two preceding and of course the proceeding sections, the preoccupation of this study is language and society. Sociolinguistics, therefore, suitably becomes the framework within which this study is conducted. Precisely, it is the unavoidable influence of the social variables of ethnicity, education, region and social class on use of English by Nigerians that form the basis on which surveys are conducted on the English in Nigerian. Wardhaugh (2006) considers the influence of the social variables as one of the three approaches to sociolinguistics, emphasising that it is the commonest approach used since the development of modern sociolinguistics (Labov, 1963; 1966).

From the seminal work of Trudgill (1974), ‘sociolinguistics’ equals ‘language’ and ‘society’. In this study, however, it is sociolinguistic surveys that are reviewed. Any discipline whose object of study equally relates to society is bound to interface with sociolinguistics. This represents the view of Farr (2013) on sociolinguistics as multidisciplinary. Although sociolinguistics falls under the subfield of applied linguistics – as opposed to the subfield of theoretical linguistics – it forms the nucleus of the applied linguistics as it explains why the two are sometimes equated under the umbrella of linguistics. Tollefson (2011) is convinced by this equation to label their merger as ‘Applied Sociolinguistics’. In effect, when a sociolinguistic theory is applied to solve societal problems linked to, for example, ethnicity, education, region and social class, the sociolinguistics becomes applied. Thus ‘applied linguistics’ is considered as ‘applied sociolinguistics’ in this study.

Methodology

In line with the primary objective of the study – assessing the results of selected previous surveys on the English in Nigeria – systematic review is the design used for conducting the research. It is a process by which research evidence are brought together, having met the eligibility criteria, to address a specific, set objective (Wischlitzki et al., 2020). The eligibility criteria in selecting the studies for systematic review is recognised by Khan et al. (2003) as one of the five steps to conducting systematic review in social-related subject. As adopted for this study, the five steps are (1) framing questions for a review, (2) identifying relevant work, (3) assessing the quality of studies, (4) summarising the evidence and (5) interpreting the findings. However, Wischlitzki et al. (2020) establishes three elaborate steps for conducting the systematic review, while collapsing the steps one and two shown above as ‘search strategy’, steps four and five as ‘data extraction and analysis’ and step three standing as ‘eligibility criteria and study selection’.

Results

Results for Objective I

Having formulated the two objectives of this systematic review study, six relevant works were identified during the literature search strategy are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Categorisations of the English Usage in Nigerian

S/No	Name of Author	Year of Publication	Criterion for Categorisation	Number of Categories
1.	Brosnahan	1958	Education	1. Non-formal Education English (Nigerian Pidgin English) 2. Primary School English 3. Secondary School English 4. University English
2.	Banjo	1971	Linguistics	1. Interfered English



				2. Near British Standard English (in Syntactic and Semantic terms) 3. Near British Standard English (in Semantic, Syntactic and Phonological terms) 4. British Standard Equivalent English (in syntactic, semantic and phonetic terms)
3.	Odumuh	1987	Intelligibility	1. Non-standard English 2. Basic (General) English 3. Standard (Educated) English 4. Sophisticated (Near-perfect) English
4.	Jowitt	1991	Ethnicity (as Individual)	1. PNE(H) 2. PNE(I) 3. PNE(Y)
5.	Oladimeji	2014	Ethnicity (as Group)	1. Group 1 English (most popular with least number of languages) English (Speakers of Nigerian Major Languages) 2. Group 2 English (more popular with more number of Languages) 3. Group 3 English (popular with most number of Languages)
6.	Okoro	2017	Social Class and Region	Social Classification 1. Acrolectal English 2. Mesolectal English 3. Basilectal English Regional Classification 1. Southern English 2. Northern English

Results for Objective II

Towards the attainment of independence in 1960, acquiring education through English was promoted by both public and private groups as the primary means for total development in Nigeria. Thus, using the criterion of education by Brosnahan (1958) became almost the singular factor for determining the variation in the use of English in Nigeria, on the assumption that the transforming power of education will eliminate almost all other limitations encountered by Nigerians in using the English. Achieving this goal will eventually equalise the English competencies of all Nigerian English speakers, thereby unifying the Nigerian English as higher attainment in education leads to better use of English.

The focus on education shifts to linguistics in Banjo (1971) who emphasises the inherent features of the variants of the Nigerian English, paying roughly no attention to education. This underscores the fact that one can acquire the competence in English without necessarily being to school, provided the exposure to good English is gained in early life. As much as education is key to acquiring English competence in Nigeria, where teaching-learning is conducted in English, right from the beginning, exposure to using English outside of the school is more crucial to acquiring better English competence.

In Odumuh (1987), intelligibility becomes the criterion for defining the Nigerian English variants, with emphasis on the spoken form, the phonological features. In this shift, pronunciation determines how well a spoken text is understood. Such intelligibility is conditioned by the Nigerians' levels of education. Similar to that of Brosnahan, education is considered crucial in the comprehension and production of intelligible English speech by Nigerians.

Other social variables such as region, class and mother tongue are added to education by Jowitt (1991) to produce his sociolinguistic criterion for determining English competence. Such English sociolinguistic criterion is considered more comprehensive as education is only one of the



variables that influences the comprehension and use of English by Nigerians. In a remarkable way, contact (with English native speakers), region, social class and mother tongue, as obtained elsewhere, influence the acquisition of English by Nigerians.

While Oladimeji (2014) refers to the variable of mother tongue as ‘ethnicity,’ Okoro (2017) considers that Nigerians acquisition of English is a product of the interaction of the variables of region and class. In their separate entities, they give rise to regional and social class dialects. However, these two criteria given are only viewed as a part of Jowitt’s English sociolinguistic criterion, in which several other social variables can be considered

Discussion and Conclusion

This study confirms the approach that it is the social variables which influence language as Wardhaugh (2006) states. In each of the six surveys presented above, the categorisation of the English in Nigeria supports Ugorji’s (2015) view that unless the English is used by Nigerians to express their identity, confidence and psychological independence will not be gained. Such confident and psychologically independent Nigerian English variants, categorised as ‘University English’ by Brosnahan (1958), ‘Near British Standard English’ and ‘Standard British Equivalent English’ by Banjo (1971) and ‘Standard English’ and ‘Sophisticated English’ are consistent with the descriptions given by Olaniyi (2010) and Jowitt (1991, 1996, 2006) as ‘Educated Nigerian English’ and ‘Standard Nigerian English’ respectively.

In the surveys conducted on the English in Nigeria, the focus on education as the dominant variable influencing English production is contingent upon the role English has been made to perform as language of education. However, the assumption that the higher ones’ educational attainment, the more competent one becomes in the production of the English is falsifiable. Frequent, early exposure to the production of English primarily enables high competence in the production of English. This has the high tendency to override the influences of region and social class on the production of English, as speakers with roughly the same level of education and exposure to the production of English will tend to produce the English with roughly the same competence regardless of their differences in terms of region and social class. It thus means that the region and ethnic group a Nigerian belongs do not really influence his English production, but among whom he was raised early and lives frequently. These, among other variables, significantly contribute to accounting for the production of English by Nigerians today.

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