



## A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE SURVEYS OF ENGLISH IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*English varies with group in terms of place and class. A survey of one of the English variant refers to an either quantitative or qualitative study conducted to determine the overall state of the English variant used by a group. While a systematic review of surveys of the English is an evaluation of selected surveys conducted on the English used by a group within a period to provide an up-to-date account of the English used in Nigeria. Systematically reviewing the existing surveys on the English used in Nigeria is what has been neglected. Consequently, the study identifies the criteria used by the surveyors for categorising the English used by Nigerian and examines the pattern of development in the surveys. In achieving these, six key surveys of the English in Nigeria, conducted within 1958 to 2025, are selected and systematically reviewed within the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics. The results indicate that linguistics, intelligibility, sociolinguistics, region and social class are the variables used by scholars to categorise the use of English in Nigeria, with the variable of education considered as the most influential. Developments in the English categorisation was first determined by criterion of education, through others to the criterion of sociolinguistics. However, early and frequent exposure to the English are observed to be the overriding criterion for the acquisition of highly categorised competence in the use of English by Nigerians. Using the criterion of early and frequent exposure to the English should therefore be used in further surveys to categorise the English used by Nigerians.*

### Introduction

Two steps in conducting a survey have been identified by Glasow (2005): determining the sampling technique to be used in selecting the sample size from the study population and identifying the population estimate from the sample data and the reliability of such population estimates. By 'survey of English,' this study means the study of English variant used by a group who share certain backgrounds. This, for example, refers to responses to a set of quantitative items or qualitative questions (or both put together) about a subject matter collected from a representative sample of individuals (Ponto, 2015). The responses can be represented by previous surveys conducted on a subject matter (Cummings et al., 2025). In this case, the period of years within which the previous surveys were conducted is normally specified (Jui et al., 2025).



As obtained in this study, it is the previous studies conducted on the English in Nigeria as from 1958 to 2025 that are assessed, bringing to focus how the surveys began and evolved in patterns. As they differentiate it from mere literature review which is roughly narrative, systematic review is evidence-based because it is descriptive, synthetic and, of course, entirely based on empirical results. In a different shade, systematic review refers to the design which combines results of previous studies as data on a subject to principally establish a novel results and conclusion on the same subject (Pollock & Berge, 2018). Thus synthesising the knowledge empirically gathered to serve as basis for new results and conclusion in order to reveal unclear facts and patterns (or trends) which are present in relevant literature forms systematic review (Maeda et al., 2022).

With primarily the interest of Nigerian university students of English in mind, therefore, this study presents a systematic review of surveys conducted on the English in Nigeria, focusing on:

1. identifying the criterion for the categorisation in each survey of the English in Nigeria,
2. examining the pattern of developments in the surveys of the English in Nigeria as from 1958 to 2025.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The English in Nigeria**

Depending on a country, the expression ‘the English in Nigeria’ has been used to demonstrate that English is not native to such country. An American, George Philip Krapp adopts the expression in 1925 as title – *The English Language in America* (Voquent, 2019). He introduces the idea of ‘General American’ – the neutral America accent, to which he refers as something that will endlessly be aimed at but never be achieved. Like America and of course any other country using English as non-native, Nigerian scholars have recognised the displacement of ‘the English in Nigeria’ by ‘Nigerian English’. The latter carries the sense that English is no longer foreign to Nigeria having been adapted because, as Odumuh (1987) says, it has been in Nigeria long enough and has acquired some local distinctive features making it typically Nigerian.

Although authors such as Brosnahan (1958) and Banjo (1971) earlier asked for the English adaptation, twenty-eight years after Odumuh (1987), Jowitt (1915) and Ugorji (2015) renew the call. Jowitt who observes some of the distinctive features of Nigerian Received Pronunciation (RP) says adapting the English in Nigeria requires an endonormative (as opposed to exonormative) approach, a situation where the Nigerian sociolinguistic background will be significantly involved in the process so that the result will bear resemblance with the native RP. This is in addition to the reference he makes to Adegbija (2004) who is convinced that English is equally a Nigeria’s property. For Ugorji, confidence and psychological independence in using the English will be gained when the Nigerian English is developed reflecting the Nigerian identity.

Other scholars who are Pro-British RP include Atoye (1987), Amayo (1988), while the scholars who are anti- RP include Eka (1985), Adetugbo (1987), Dairo (1988) among others. On several occasions, the educated form of English spoken in Nigeria, especially in very formal contexts and by the national news broadcasters have been described as the Educated Nigerian English (ENE) by Olaniyi (2010), Standard Nigerian English (SNE) by Jibril (1982), Eka (1985), and Jowitt (1991, 1996, 2006). Billy & Kaseem (2013) identify the conflicting views as ‘Pro-British’ interest expressed by the native-affiliated judgment and ‘Anti-British’ presented by non-native-affiliated judgment. This emphasises that the term RP is no longer an exclusive term to refer to the Standard British English.

#### **Advent and Spread of the English in Nigeria**

Portuguese, the oldest ally of the English, came to Nigeria in the sixteenth century, precisely in 1472 followed by the English in 1553 as reported by Odumuh (1987), who states that the Portuguese came to Benin in Southern Nigeria after the arrival of Arabians in the Northern Nigeria in 1075. From this, English has been in use in Nigeria for five hundred and forty-seven years. The Portuguese depended largely on translators and interpreters to obtain Nigerian slaves who were taken to Portugal, acquired some basic English and returned to Nigerian. Between 1440 and 1750 pidgin Portuguese was developed as a lingua franca in the bid to speak the well-established Sibir,



the lingua franca used essentially across the Mediterranean for trade. Eventually, the Sibir got replaced by the pidgin Portuguese. When the English colonisers first came to the southern Nigeria in 1553, their interest was to buy slaves. The bought slaves were made to come back home in mass owing to the Industrial Revolution between 1760 and 1820 which rendered their services inefficient, hence the abolishment of the slave trade in 1833.

During the Industrial Revolution, the mass slave returnees found the pidgin Portuguese the less intelligible, as such it got replaced by the more understood English acquired by the returned slaves in 1744 as lingua franca. Lagos in the southern Nigeria was made centre for the colonial administration in 1861 because it was already a commercial and the most cosmopolitan. The Oil Rivers Protectorate of Northern Nigeria took over government of the North. Within the first decade of twentieth century, before the formation of Nigeria, the southern and the northern protectorate passed through what Odumuh calls 'pacification' (making peace with the colonised), 'occupation' (establishing the colonial administration and recruiting of colonized staff) and 'consolidation' (developing infrastructure for education, health, economy, roads, housing and so on). It was the merger of these two protectorates of south and north in 1914 at the instance of the colonisers that formed Nigeria as a country.

Qualification for recruitment into the colonial service was essentially use of English but where the recruited had no minimal proficiency in the English, he had to acquire it in order to be kept in service. Because the English was basically an expression of the English culture and sociolinguistic background, Nigerians had to imitate the native dialect and accent at the beginning. As development continued, the Christian missionaries undertook the task of educating and preparing Nigerians for more professional and technical responsibilities in the colonial service. The recruitment expanded with time but was interrupted by the first and second world wars respectively fought between 1914 to 1918 and 1938 to 1945. As part of the development plan, the first census was conducted in 1952/1953. The population of Nigeria was 32.5 million as revealed by the census, which made her the most populous in Africa and remains so today.

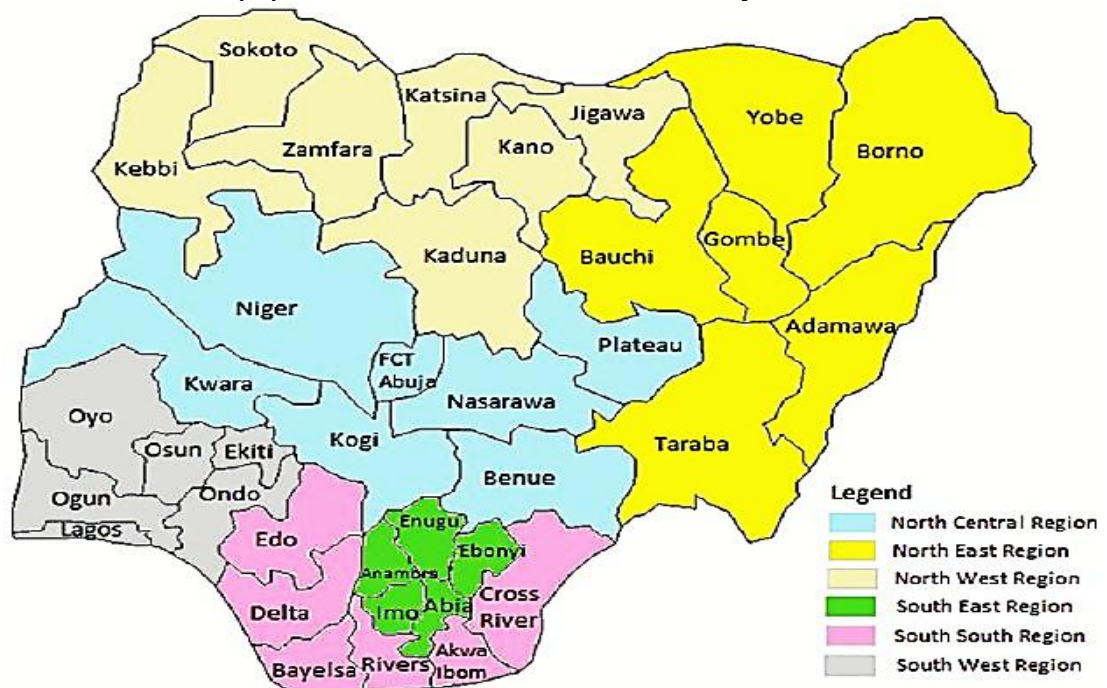


Figure 2.2 Map of Nigeria Comprising Its 36 States and Capital (Abuja)

Demands for more participation in the colonial administration continued alongside constitutional development. As many Nigerians got co-opted into positions of secretaries, senior and permanent secretaries in various ministries, many others had the opportunity to go for further education in United Kingdom. With this high degree of indigenisation of the colonial administration, national awareness increased among the Nigerian elite and the demand for independence heightened.



Pressure groups and political parties were rapidly developed essentially by the Nigerians who got educated abroad and perpetually asked the colonisers to leave.

English fully assumed the language through which not only the colonial administration was facilitated but also through which the political agitation for self-determination was carried out. The colonial administration and Education were the two potent tools for spreading the English, which was both a means of teaching-learning and the most requisite subject taught as it is today. Many of the Nigerians that work as domestic aids to the colonisers also got to learn the English. Because acquisition of the English was made almost entirely the condition for gainful employment and social attractiveness, every average Nigerian wished to have it. These social differences were accountable for the rise and categorisation of Nigerian English into Nigerian Pidgin, Nigerian Non-standard and Nigerian Standard.

Being the most populous and of course, agriculturally, the richest in Africa, foreign nationals found it attractive. Odumuh further reports that in March 1955, there were 12,500 Europeans (mostly British), 1,000 Americans, 250 Indians and 2,500 non-Nigerians. With this multilingual Nigerian setting, the English further got spread and accepted as language of contact, cross-cultural and wider communication. What appears to be most determining was the common knowledge that Nigeria was already heavily multi-lingual without the foreigners, having a total of 250 identified distinct languages. The diversity was further complicated by the coexistence of Christianity and Islam. While English was used to preach Christianity and teaching western education in the south where it was mostly accepted, Arabic was used for preaching Islam in the north. Therefore, apart from the barrier of their language differences, sentiments linked to religious differences tended to make adherents resist each other on the question of adaptation of English whenever the two groups were in either official or informal contact.

This was the situation in which the English struggle to survive while being compelled to adjust to the complex psycho-social needs of the diverse Nigerian people. English was no longer alien to Nigerian elite who could competitively use it with the British. Because all official documents of governance were written in English, by 1960 when independence was gained, Nigerians had to accept, without option, the English by convention rather than policy as her official language. The first post-independent census conducted in 1962 revealed that the population of Nigeria has increased towards twice the population in 1953 – 55.7 million. The regional distribution of the population was north – 29.8 million and south – 25.8 million (further distributed into south east – 12.4 million, south west – 10.2 million, south mid-west – 2.5 million and Lagos – 0.7 million). Although the last census conducted in 2016 puts the Nigeria's population at 140 million, it is presently speculated that the population is over 190 million, as recently confirmed by the Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari who says in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly of 17th September, 2019 that Nigerian population is close to 200 million. Out of the 250 indigenous languages shown above as reported by Odumuh, and up dated by Adegbite (2010) as over 500, the major ones are three: Hausa Igbo and Yoruba, predominantly used in the north, south east and south west respectively.

Today Nigeria is broadly divided into northern and southern regions, with north about twice the size of south. For the convenience of politics, the country is further divided in 6 geopolitical zones: 3 in the north which are north-west, north-east and north-central, and 3 in the south which are south-west, south-east and south-south. Further, while north is divided into 19 states, the south is divided into 17 states, altogether 36 states except for the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, located in the north central, about the middle of Nigeria. Each state is further divided into local government areas, altogether the local government areas are 774: south has 355 and north 419, out of which 6 are in Abuja.

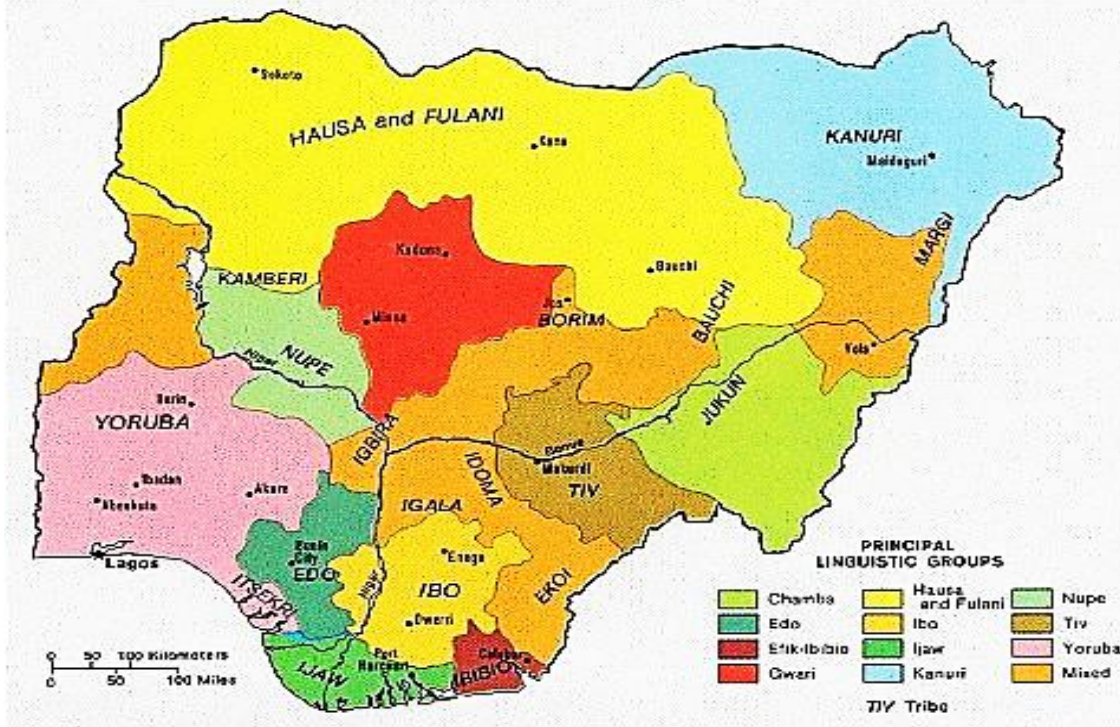


Figure 2.3 Map Showing Locations of Major Linguistic Groups in Nigeria

Before the independence, key agents which facilitated spread of the English were education, communication, transportation, military, indigenous languages and literature (Odumuh, 1987). Being the most influential of all, education allowed pupils from the scratch to go straight for English at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the education (Adegbite, 2010). The Christian Missionary Societies initially undertook the business of educating Nigerians across the two regions, south and north. Those that were identified to have uncommon abilities were sponsored abroad in Europe, America and elsewhere (Jowitt, 1991). With rising population, government schools were established and run alongside the missionary schools to meet the increasing educational demand (Jowitt, 2009). Both men and women were trained as professionals in various fields including English language, who in turn undertook the work of teaching it to others (Josiah & Essien, 2015).

Transportation and communication worked collaboratively in spreading the English. The constructions of roads, railways and air ways facilitated movement of people who established contacts through which English became contact language and lingua franca at various points. In the same process, commercial newspapers, periodicals, cinemas in English were produced and disseminated. Nigerians also got to easily communicate with other English speakers abroad through postal and telephone services which were also made possible because of the developed transportation system. The reason Nigerian indigenous languages became an important agent in spreading the English was obvious. It is because no linguistic group has agreed to officially adopt an indigenous language at the expense of its own. As such English by consensus became a neutral language for the 250 linguistic groups because no group owns it as a native language.

On literature as an agent for spreading the English, Jowitt (2009) notes that are related so much so that a development in one affects the other. In this regard, the rise of Nigerian English literature facilitated the spread of English, not only in its native form but also in its adapted form. In the works of Nigerian authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Charlse Njoku Flora Nwapa and Peper Clark write in adopted English, but authors such as Amos Tutula, Cyprian Ekwensi and Gabriel Okara use adapted, non-standard and pidgin English. These books are read worldwide so much that scholars use them today as basis to understand the nature of English variation in Nigeria.



### Status and Model of the English in Nigeria

In agreement with other usages elsewhere, it has been noted that ‘Nigerian English,’ instead of ‘the English in Nigeria,’ be used. However, until the former is established, the latter will continue to be the case. English in Nigeria is second language (L2), which Crystal (1992) defines as a language acquired to meet communication need and not as a mother tongue. The alternative term that appears preferable to the L2 in Nigerian context is ‘official language’. Because all the occasions of education, broadcasting, adjudication, laws-making and writing books are official responsibilities conducted in English, the English becomes official. How English comes to acquire such an official status in Nigeria can be traced essentially to the colonial times when it was used for such purposes.

Jowitt (1991) refers to section 53 of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution which says Government’s discussion will be transacted in English. This question of ‘official language’, as Jowitt further says, has been discussed since independence alongside the question of ‘national language’. Non-consideration of the key issues about standardisation of the Nigerian English makes Adegbite (2010) to conclude that the official status of English is incomprehensively and arbitrarily provided in the constitution. The amended 1999 Nigerian Constitution states that English is only allowed to be used for instruction when the child is four years and throughout his junior and senior secondary schooling, without mention of what language should be used in his tertiary education.

Choice of the RP as reference accent is made by examining bodies such as West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), National Examination Commission (NECO) and National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB). As such, instructors at the primary school level only see it advisable to use the RP to prepare the primary pupils accordingly for the secondary education. At the University the level, the choice for RP as reference accent is informed by its worldwide popularity, its adoption in *English Pronouncing Dictionary* and *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* which are major sources for teaching-learning and the need to go with the seeming globalised pronunciation.

On the question of the model of English Nigerians imitate, it is difficult to precisely say without findings and conclusions based on empirical research in Nigeria. This is because a lot of factors have interplayed to alter the impression before, during and shortly after independence that Nigerian English is modelled after that of British only because the British introduced Nigerians through colonialism to English. Today factors such as globalism, globalisation, internet, global education system, literature and media (traditional and social) has exposed Nigerians to several models of English, notably British and American (Holmes, 2013). Non-consideration of the British-American English joint use stems from the precedence set by early studies on English in Nigeria. Such studies do not recognise the presence of British and American English in educated Nigerian English and describe it as such. This is evident in Brosnahan (1958), Adesanoye (1960), Banjo (1971), Adekunle (1974) Adeniran (1979) and Pai and Oderinde (1979). Awonusi (1994) and Egwuogu (2006) observe that AME are now affecting the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria, so much that identifying the model to teach is problematic.

### Categorisation of the English in Nigeria

Before the Nigerian independence when the English in Nigeria was rather foreign to Nigerians, Brosnahan (1958) makes its first categorisation into four, strictly in terms of educational attainment. They were Nigerians who have acquired: no formal education (who formed the first form of Nigerian pidgin English), primary education, secondary education, and university education. The reason for using the social factor of education while ignoring other factors by Brosnahan is its direct correlation with English proficiency as at then, and even presently the correlation holds in some specific Nigerian situations. The mesolectal Nigerian English variant accent then was labelled the second category (used by secondary school finishers) who formed most of the English-speaking Nigerians.

In what appears to be a review to Brosnahan’s education-based categorisation, Banjo (1971) forms the linguistic-based variation, similarly into four. The first variant (equivalent of Brosnahan’s



first category) is interfered by mother-tongue features, as a result, users eventually resort to using Nigerian English pidgin. The second variant (equivalent of Brosnahan's second category) in syntactic and semantic terms, is near the British standard, but typically interfered by mother-tongue in phonology and lexis. The third variant (equivalent of Brosnahan's third category), in terms of syntax, semantics and phonology, but are co-variants with the British standards in terms of phonetic and lexical features. The fourth (equivalent of Brosnahan fourth category) is an equivalent of the British standard in syntax, semantics and phonetics without a mention of lexis, which most likely will be at variance with the British Standard variant.

Brosnahan's education-based and Banjo's linguistics-based schemas of Nigerian English use are integrated with an addition of the feature of intelligibility in Odumuh's (1987) sociophonetic schema, as only the phonological features of Nigerian English are considered. Like those of Brosnahan and Banjo, Odumuh identifies non-standard, basic (or general), standard (or educated) and sophisticated (or near-perfect) as the four varieties of spoken Nigerian English. According to Odumuh, the non-standard variety is demonstrated in the performances of beginners whose education in English is scarce and had a limited English speech encounters both in and outside of primary school. As such the linear and non-linear features of their English speech mother-tongue-based, accompanied by improper choice of words and expressions, hence its inability to be accepted and intelligible internationally.

In the basic (general) variety, contrasts in the linear and non-linear features are observed in the English speech of the users who essentially possess the education above the primary and below the university levels and were by accepted models to acquire such a fair proficiency in RP. These Nigerian users have generally mastered the contrasts in linear and non-linear English phonology and use it intelligibly despite deviation in the realisation of some identified variable forms. The standard variety, which is the educated spoken Nigerian English, is used by those who have university education. Their English speech is nationally and internationally accepted and intelligible because of the clear contrast in its linear and non-linear features. In the sophisticated variety, a near-perfect realisation of English variable forms is observed by Nigerians who are not only highly educated but have also had considerably exposed to the native RP through special training, perhaps by the native RP speakers themselves.

In the four varieties and their characterisation shown above as given by Odumuh, the schema is constructed having in mind the RP as the reference accent. The schema is native-affiliated because, as specified in the fourth variety, perfection can be attained in using the RP only by the English-speaking natives whose accent is the model for imitation by the English-speaking non-natives. Understandably, however, such a native accent model together with its imitations as the affected standard (or educated) and sophisticated or (near-perfect) varieties in Odumuh's schema of Nigerian spoken English are 'exonormative', against 'the endonormative' requirement. They are lacking in demonstrating the sociolinguistic and cultural environment of Nigeria (Jowitt, 1992; 2015) and the psycho-social needs of Nigerians (Adegbite, 2010; Ugorji, 2015). The variety that meets the endonormative requirement for the Nigerian English accent is the basic (or general) one, which is the Nigerian mesolect being pursued to be compared with the RP accent with focus on their respective realisations of the English contractions.

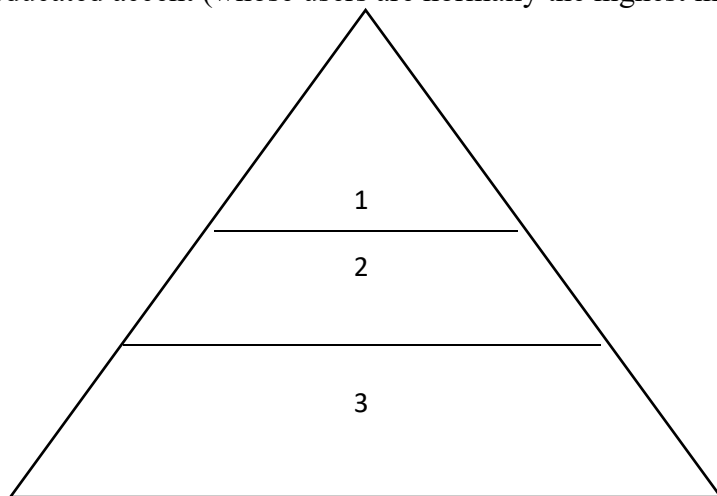
Although Odumuh notes that the basic variety is occasionally marked by certain deviations, the perceived 'deviant' are actually 'variant forms' that are today considered co-variants (in competition) with the RP variants, otherwise comparing the Nigerian standard (educated) or sophisticated (near-perfect) will make no significant variation to derive interest (Wakkai & Gonsum, 2011) and (Olajide & Olaniyi, 2013), (Oladipupo, 2014) and (Oladipupo, 2015). However, the parallel in referring to the RP in the three schemas of Brosnahan, Banjo and Odumuh only represent the unavailability of a reference accent as the basis for all relational or comparative arguments. If every accent is so patterned after another, then every accent is a referent standard.

In a way, Brosnahan, Banjo, and Odumuh's schemas inadequately consider the influence of the Nigerian indigenous languages on the English accent of Nigerians. This inadequacy is observed and explicitly incorporated into the schema formulated by Jowitt (1991). The schema is called



‘Popular Nigerian English’ (PNE). Jowitt says that the accent of every Nigerian is a combination standard (or RP) and the PNE forms. The PNE comprises, in terms of mother-tongue or ethnicity, the Nigerian sub-variant accents of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba native speakers and, in terms of class, variants and errors. The Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba affiliated variants are labelled following their initials as PNE(H), PNE(I) and PNE(Y), where the optional letters are replaceable by any other Nigerian indigenous languages. But the original selection of the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in the schema is because they are by far the major Nigerian languages in terms of number of speakers, spread and standardisation.

While the variants are acceptable forms competing with the reference forms as co-variants, the errors or deviations, when they eventually occur, form a pattern in their occurrence and are considered co-variants (Ekundayo, Teilyano & Longe, 2013; Wakkai & Gonsum, 2016; Obiegbu, 2018). By ‘popular’ in the ‘Popular Nigerian English’ Jowitt means ‘average’, which in turn refers to Nigerian mesolect, as opposed to the Nigerian acrolect – the standard and sophisticated Nigerian accent (whose users altogether are fewer than the mesolectal users) and the Nigerian basilect – the non-standard or non-educated accent (whose users are normally the highest in number).

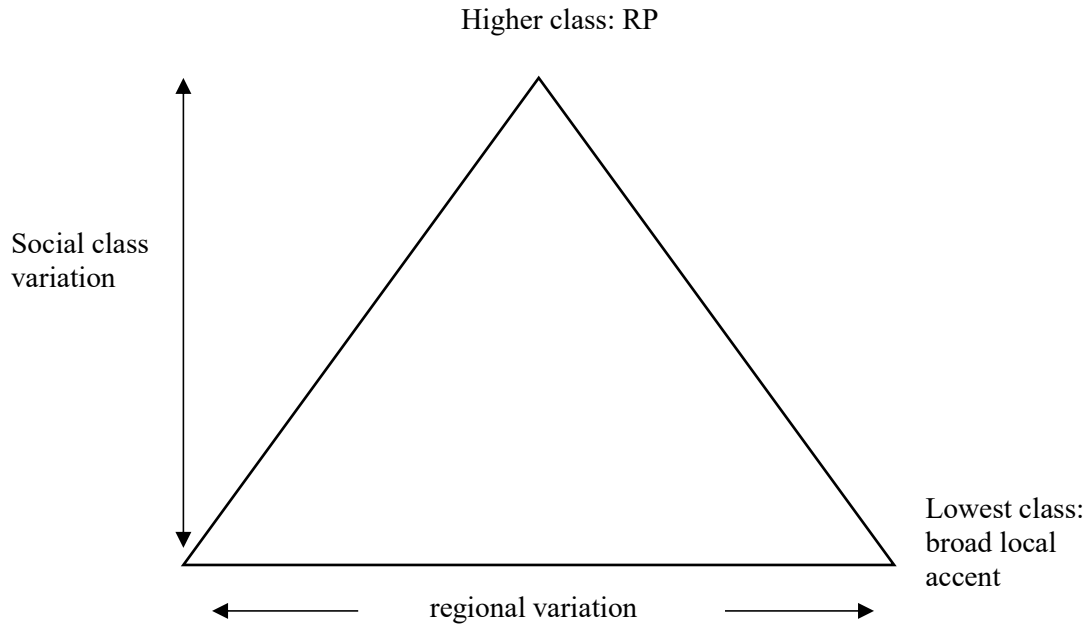


**Figure 2.6 Oladimeji’s pyramid of the three Nigerian varieties of English Oladimeji (2014)**

Oladimeji (2014), like Jowitt, without prejudice to the constraints of education, intelligibility, phonology and standard, categorises the Nigerian English on the basis of considers ethnicity as the most determining factor for Nigerian English variation. However, while Jowitt views the ethnic variant accents as components of the popular or average Nigerian English, Oladimeji proposes for their hierarchical grouping according to degree of popularity (and not number of ethnicities in a group) on the pyramidal triangular.

Oladimeji’s view, Group 1 – the least in membership, comprises the ethnic English accent of the three major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, altogether form the most popular Nigerian English accent. Group 2 is the second ranked in popularity and membership; it consists of the ethnic English accents of Epira/Igara, Egba, Efik, Ibibio, Itsekiri and so on. Group 3 is the third ranked in popularity and membership; it is composed of Nnewi, Ogbaru, Ihiala, Nsuka, Idemili, Oron, Abon, Awka and so on. It is not clear whether ‘the most popular’ means the acrolect, but it is obvious that the determining factor for popularity here is how many the users of a given accent are.

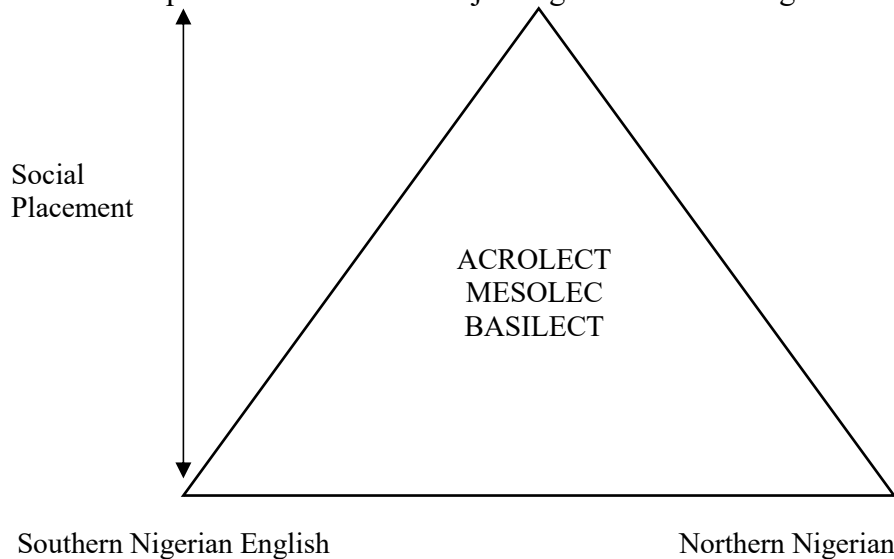
Figure of the classical pyramid illustrating the broad-based lowest regional variant rising to the highest class of the RP is shown below as given by Halfarová (2014):



**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 'Englises' 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) establish 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



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Near British Standard English (in Syntactic and Semantic terms)</li> <li>3. Near British Standard English (in Semantic, Syntactic and Phonological terms)</li> <li>4. British Standard Equivalent English (in syntactic, semantic and phonetic terms)</li> </ul>
3.	Odumuh	1987	Intelligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-standard English</li> <li>2. Basic (General) English</li> <li>3. Standard (Educated) English</li> <li>4. Sophisticated (Near-perfect) English</li> </ul>
4.	Jowitt	1991	Ethnicity (as Individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PNE(H)</li> <li>2. PNE(I)</li> <li>3. PNE(Y)</li> </ul>
5.	Oladimeji	2014	Ethnicity (as Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Group 1 English (most popular with least number of languages) English (Speakers of Nigerian Major Languages)</li> <li>2. Group 2 English (more popular with more number of Languages)</li> <li>3. Group 3 English (popular with most number of Languages)</li> </ul>
6.	Okoro	2017	Social Class and Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Classification</li> <li>1. Acrolectal English</li> <li>2. Mesolectal English</li> <li>3. Basilectal English</li> <li>Regional Classification</li> <li>1. Southern English</li> <li>2. Northern English</li> </ul>

### 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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