Phonetics and Phonology of Nigerian English

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Abstract

In this paper, the features of the pronunciation of English in Nigeria as observed in the productions of selected Nigerians have been isolated. This goes to confirm that Nigerian English has features that can identify it from other varieties of world Englishes. It has been shown that there are particular segmental phenomena and practices that are peculiar to Nigerian pronunciation.These include: fewer vowels and consonants resulting from the approximations of some English segments to close equivalents of Nigerian languages' sounds. Some vowel and consonant processes have also been identified some of which include:final consonants nonrelease, simplification of consonant clusters and monophthongisation of diphthongs and triphthongs. With the supra segmental phenomena, a tendency to have a proliferation of stressed syllables resulting from non-reduction of vowels was identified. This feature of Nigerian performance is shown to cut across varieties and linguistic groups and to be significantly different from the performance of a native speaker. With regard to intonation, the characteristic feature of Nigerian pronunciation identified include a preference for unidirectional intonation tunes rather than bidirectional ones with the level tones being rarely ever used. Nigerian English rhythm cannot be neatly categorized as either 'stress-timed' or 'syllable-timed'; rather, there is a tendency in one direction or the other since Nigerian English as RP has peaks of prominence in connected speech but the weak syllables of RP speech are stronger in Nigerian English thus there is a tendency towards stress timing. The tonal structure of Nigerian English has been described as being similar to those of tone languages. Standard Nigerian English is shown to have more level tones and very few contour tones. There is a tendency to produce stressed syllables with a high tone and unstressed ones with a low tone There is also a right-spreading tone rule on multi-syllabic words especially when the multi-syllabic words are in company. In each case, the feature identified tends to reduce with greater proficiency which leads to closeness to the native speaker's variety.

Keywords: Segmental Features, Stress, Tone. Rhythm, Intonation. Ninglish

Introduction

There have been earlier attempts to describe the features of Spoken English in Nigeria. These include (Adetugbo 1977), (Brosnahan 1958), (Banjo 1971, 1996), (Bamgbose 1982, 1995), (Eka 1985, 1993), (Jibril 1982, 1986), (Udofot 1996, 1997,

2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011. Ugorji, 2010 and Jowitt 2019) among others. These works investigated aspects of Spoken English in Nigeria. Some of the most often quoted descriptions of Spoken Nigerian English are examined in this section Section 2 presents the features of Spoken Nigerian English, both segmental and supra segmental. In Section 3, a reclassification of Spoken Nigerian English is done while Section 4 presents the summary and conclusion.

The earliest varieties differentiation of Nigerian Spoken English was Brosnahan (1958). According to this source, it is possible to isolate four varieties of Spoken Nigerian English in an ascending order of quality. Variety one is spoken by those who have no formal education. This variety is equated with Pidgin English. Variety Two is identified as the one spoken by holders of the First School Leaving Certificate and this variety, according to the author, is the one spoken by most Nigerians. The third variety is associated with secondary school leavers and is characterized by greater fluency and a more elaborate vocabulary while Variety Four is the one spoken by those who have had university education and is close to Standard British English.

Brosnahan's pioneer work made two viable contributions. First, that the level of formal education is one criterion for assessing proficiency in spoken English in Nigeria because of perceivable standards of linguistic performance often characteristic of certain levels of education. Next, that all things being equal, the standard of oral performance in English improves with exposure to formal education, especially as English is the language of education in Nigeria.

(Udofot 1997, 2003) observed some problems raised by Brosnahan's classification. One is the description of the first variety as Pidgin English and a language of the uneducated. Attitudes of linguists in Nigeria and other places point to the fact that Nigerian Pidgin is not a variety of Nigerian English but a contact language which developed between Nigerians and European traders on the coasts, but which grew with urbanisation and became important in some towns (Mafeni 1971, p.98, Elugbe and Omamor 1991, 4-16). Nowadays, pidgin is also used by university students and secondary school students use pidgin out of the classroom. The classification of Nigerian Pidgin as a variety of Nigerian English is therefore disputable. Also, the description of the second variety as the brand of English used by most Nigerians and equated with the language of those who have had primary education has been rendered obsolete by socio-linguistic realities. My research experience has shown that the average primary school leaver nowadays can hardly communicate in English. The situation may have been different in the nineteen fifties and sixties when, among other reasons, secondary and university education could only be got by a few and the curriculum of the primary school was quite elaborate.

A more realistic classification which is close to the present-day realities is that of (Banjo 1971) which also classifies the continuum - Spoken Nigerian English into four varieties. The yardstick of classification again is formal education. According to this classification, Variety One is spoken by people with elementary school education and semi-literate people. It features a high rate of negative transfers from the phonological system of the mother tongue and is unacceptable even nationally. Variety Two is associated with post primary school leavers who exhibit minimum transfer from the mother tongue's sound system but do not however make vital phonemic distinctions. This brand of English is largely intelligible and acceptable nationally. Variety Three is associated with university education. It makes vital phonemic distinctions and is accepted and understood nationally and internationally. Variety Four is described as being identical with Standard British English (henceforth RP)and though internationally acceptable is ridiculed in Nigeria because it sounds affected and may not be understood by the average Nigerian.

There is a case of a woman who arrived Lagos from London where she had spent some years and wanted to be identified as a *been-to*. She saw a hawker and wanted to buy fried ripe plantain popularly referred to as '*do do ki do or do do'* in short. Our newly arrived sister wanted to be identified as such and she only slightly raised her voice with all the polish of a finishing school English lady and called: '*deu deu; deu deu* 'until the hawker who did not stop all the while because he did not identify what she was saying with what he was carrying was almost out of sight. Our "been- to" then dropped her guard and shouted: 'dodo' and the hawker came back.

Many scholars have a high regard for Banjo's classification: it is said to be realistic and a good starting point for many attempts in this regard. However, while Banjo's classification was adequate at its time of study, it is doubtful whether the varieties of (Banjo 1971) can be said to aptly describe the levels of spoken English in the present day Nigeria what with (Jibril's 1982, 1986) observations that some university lecturers speak the Non-Standard or 'Basic' Variety of Nigerian English and (Banjo's 1996) amendment of his 1971 classification by including 'home background and the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels' as very important factors which affect Standard (Variety Three) performance.

 The Brosnahan (1958) and Banjo (1971) models are each primarily based on phonological data, as is that of Jibril (1979, 1982, 1986). In contrast to Banjo, Jibril distinguishes 'Northern' from 'Southern' pronunciation. In his model (Jibril 1982, 1986) the 'Northern' accent has become the 'Hausa' accent, characteristic of what today are the states of the North. The Southern accent is used by southerners and large numbers of non-Hausa Northerners, and younger Hausas. Jibril then identifies three influential pronunciation 'types' in Nigeria: 'Type 1 is RP, Southern is Type 2,

and Type 3 is Hausa. He admits that differences exist within the Southern type, but also believes that these are less significant than the differences between Type 2 as a whole and Type 3. Jibril at the same time incorporated a major educational or developmental dimension into his model. Each of the two local varieties, Hausa and Southern, was seen as a continuum of usage, between the polarities of Sophisticated (or more educated) and Basic (or less educated); Sophisticated Hausa and Sophisticated Southern being similar and also close to RP. As with other models that emphasize the idea of a continuum of usage instead of discrete varieties, Jibril's model can be understood to mean that features that occur at the Basic level might also occur at the Sophisticated level, and vice versa. As Jowitt illustrates; if we take one example of the operation of the model, the STRUT vowel is commonly realized as [a] in Basic Hausa and as [ɔ] in Basic Southern; but at the Sophisticated level of each variety, [ʌ] is more likely to be used in place of these Basic variants (2019, p41). Jibril's work marked the beginning of an 'ethnic' or regional differentiation of varieties of Nigerian English. However, very few works on regional varieties have been published one of which isAnyagwa (2015) which reasserts the importance of recognizing regional varieties. Her work focusses on suprasegmentals in Igbo English.

A more recent developmental model, rivalling Jibril's model in comprehensiveness, is Ugorji (2010). It adopts the 'lectal' triad (basilect-mesolect-acrolect). Ugorji uses recordings of 405 educated Nigerian subjects, divides them into three groups on the basis of level of educational attainment and treats the collective utterances of each group as representing one of the three lects. The subjects are broadly representative of the ethnic composition of Nigeria, but Ugorji is not concerned with an 'ethnic' differentiation of varieties or lects. Like so many Nigerian linguists, Ugorji was interested in possible prescription as well as description, since he wished to identify which one, among the variants of a particular phoneme, should qualify for adoption in the phonology of an endonormative Standard Nigerian English.

2.   Features of Spoken Nigerian English

Udofot (2004) described the features of Spoken English in contemporary Nigeria by analyzing the speeches (spoken prose and spontaneous speeches) of sixty Nigerians from twenty linguistic groups in Nigeria and of various levels of education and a native Briitish English speaker who served as the control. The sample was grouped into three categories:. GroupOne, the Non Standard Variety, consisted of those who have studied English for 9 – 12 years covering primary and secondary education. Group Two, the Standard Variety, was made up of those who have had or were in the process of having tertiary education and have studied English for 12 – 14 years while Group Three, the Sophisticated Variety, comprised those who have learnt English for over fifteen years and have had specialized training in the pronunciation of English. Each group consisted of twenty subjects.

The educational qualificationof the members of the experimental group ranged from the Junior School Certificate to the Doctor of Philosophy The final sample consisted of twelve university lecturers, four secondary school teachers, four administrative officers,five broadcasters, two bankers two librarians, two television/ radio programmes producers, four clerical and technical staff, two fashion designers and two members of the National Youth Service Corps. Their ages ranged between seventeen and sixty years. The control was a native British English Speaker, aged sixty years who was born and brought up in England. She had her primary to tertiary education in England and her post graduate studies in America. She has a a clearly distinguishable British Public school accent although she had lived and worked in Nigeria for twenty years.All the subjects spoke on a common topic:'The High Cost of Living in Nigeria' for three minutes guided by the headings in a cartoon from *Vanguard Newspaper* of Friday, November 4th, 1994. They also read a passage adapted from Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (p.53)

The aim was to identify segmental and non-segmental phenomena that can be said to characterize the pronunciation of English in Nigeria across diatopic varieties. The analyses combined perceptual, statistical and instrumental approaches. Hitherto, linguistic analyses of features of spoken Nigerian English had been largely perceptual. This study therefore helped to introduce acoustic analysis into studies in Nigerian English. The studies also aimed at reclassifying the varieties that make up the continuum – Nigerian English in the light of the findings made.

2.1   Segmental Features

With regard to identifying the performance features of Nigerians in the areas of segmental features, the following tendencies have been noted by Udofot (2002 and 2004}):
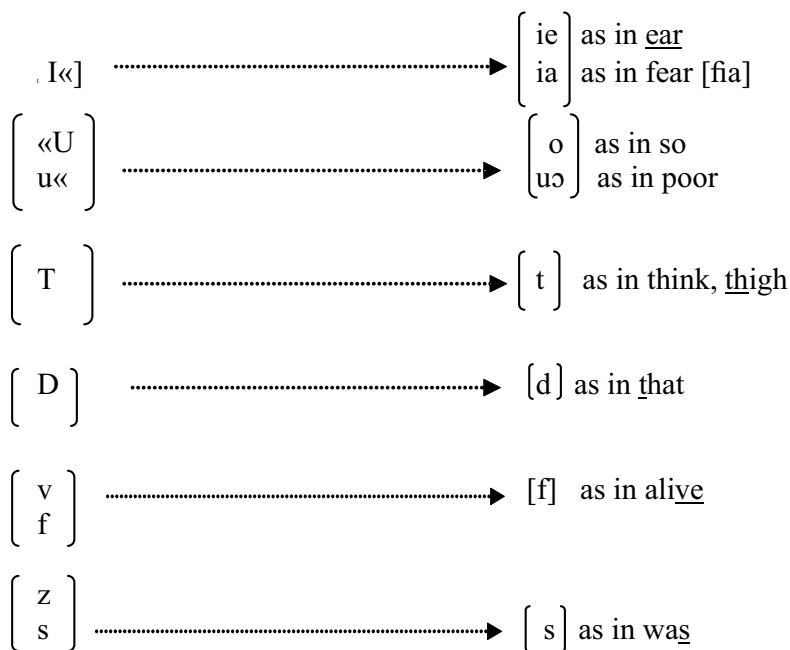
Control's Output/Experimental Group's Output/ BE (British English)

NE (Nigerian English)

$$\begin{bmatrix} i: \\ I \end{bmatrix} \cdots\cdots\cdots\cdots\blacktriangleright [\,i\,] \text{ as in mosqu\underline{i}to hum\underline{i}liated;}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} e \\ eI \end{bmatrix} \cdots\cdots\cdots\cdots\blacktriangleright [\,e\,] \text{ as in aw\underline{ay}}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \\ I \end{bmatrix} \cdots\cdots\cdots\cdots\blacktriangleright \begin{bmatrix} \mathsf{ɔ} \\ e \end{bmatrix} \begin{array}{l} \text{as in m\underline{os}quito, fl\underline{oor}} \\ \text{as in humiliat\underline{ed}} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} a: \end{bmatrix} \cdots\cdots\cdots\cdots\blacktriangleright [\,a\,] \text{ as in p\underline{a}ssed}$$

ˌI«] ·····························▶ ⎧ ie ⎫ as in <u>ear</u>
                                  ⎩ ia ⎭ as in fear [fia]

⎧ «U ⎫ ·····························▶ ⎧ o ⎫ as in so
⎩ u« ⎭   ⎩ uɔ ⎭ as in poor

⎡ T ⎤ ·····························▶ ⎡ t ⎤ as in think, <u>th</u>igh

⎡ D ⎤ ·····························▶ ⎡d⎤ as in <u>th</u>at

⎧ v ⎫ ·····························▶ [f] as in ali<u>ve</u>
⎩ f ⎭

⎧ z ⎫ ·····························▶ ⎡ s ⎤ as in wa<u>s</u>
⎩ s ⎭

The following can be said to be the segmental features of Nigerian English
Monopthongs:[i , e, E, a, ɔ, o, u]

Diphthongs> [ai. ia,ea, au, ɔi, uɔ]

Consonants:[p ,t, k, b , d, g ,f, v.S,Z, s, z, T, D, h, tS,dZ,l,r, m, n,N,w,j]

Dialectal variations exist but generally, the dental fricatives[T, D,] are the most problematic sounds for Nigerians from the southern part who tend to produce them as alveolar plosives[t,d], because the dental fricatives do not occur in the sound inventory of any nigerian language. While northern dialects, particularly the Hausa speakers, have the tendency to realize them as [s] and [z] respectively.

/s/ is realized as in RP but among certain speakers it also replaces certain other consonantal sounds, as shown above. /z/ is generally realized as in RP. However, certain indigenous languages do not possess /z/, notably Yoruba, Igala, Ibibio, and the tendency for speakers of those languages is to realize it in English as [s], the voiceless counterpart" (Jowitt, 2019,p.53).

Certain vocalic and consonantal processes are also observable. These include:
(i)   Monopthongisation of diphthongs and triphthongs or change to glides as in
         <u>away</u> /«we / being produced as [ewe] or [awe] and <u>power</u> / 'paU« / produced

as [pawa].

(ii)   Word final consonants are often devoiced as in <u>was</u> /w«z/ produced as [wɔs]and <u>alive</u> /lav/ produced as [alaif]

(iii)   Simplification of word final clusters as in <u>child</u> and <u>told</u> /tSald, t«Uld/ being simplified to [tSal] and [tol] or [t«Ul].

(iv)   Insertion of epenthetic vowels between consonant clusters as in <u>scratched</u> and <u>skeleton</u> /skrtSt/ and /skeletn/ which were produced as [sikratS] and [sikeleton] mostly by Nigerians from the northern part of Nigeria.

2.2   Supra segmental Features of Nigerian English

2.2.1   Stress and Duration

'Stress' is used here to refer to what is generally a combination   of factors that collectively serve to define 'accent' or 'prominence' and include pitch, duration, and vowel quality**.** Udofot (2003), has noted that in Spoken Nigerian English the duration of unstressed syllables is longer than that of a native speaker represented by the control while the duration of stressed syllables is shorter than that of a native speaker resulting in a tendency to have more or less even duration (cf Jowitt 1991, 1997). This implies that syllables that should normally be unstressed in a native speaker's speech are stressed in Nigerian English resulting in a proliferation of stressed syllables which characterises Nigerian English and other non native Englishes (cf Bansal 1990). This means that Nigerians tend to stress or give prominence to more syllables than native speakersas shown in the following example:

Do you LIKE RICE rendered as DO YOU LIKE RICE?

This tendency to stress more syllables than a native speaker is more pronounced as one descends the ladder of quality from the Sophisticated (Variety Three) to the Standard (Variety Two) to the Nonstandard (Variety One). These findings were arrived at through acoustic measurements of syllable duration in spoken Nigerian English as shown in the table below:

3   Table 1: Duration in Spoken Nigerian English

Informants	[ ]	[ki:t]	[«U]	[went]	[«]	[weI]
*MS 62 Control	198.73	139.83	154.30	197.25	75.31	251.08
MS 61 Variety III	216.84	117.45	196.69	212.26	130.93	162.56
MS 52 Variety II	201.74	57.9	123.56	247.12	140.01	201.01
MS 53 Variety I	248.02	113.41	182.69	252.34	168.95	218.40
Mean Duration	222.2	96.25	168.31	237.24	146.63	193.99

*MS   =   Main study Informant.

2.2.2.   Rhythm

Rhythm is the most problematic and the least investigated aspect of Nigerian English.

"The study of rhythm in spoken English presupposes the study of stress in connected speech. The rhythm of spoken Nigerian English has not been much studied; Udofot (1997) made it the principal focus of research for the first time" (Jowitt 2019, p.68).

There have been only a few descriptions of the rhythm of Nigerian English. (Adetugbo 1977) describes it as syllable -timed because of the influence of the syllable-timing of Nigerian languages. This description is upheld by (Bamgbose 1982) and (Jowitt 1991). Jibril 1982) disputes the description of Nigerian English as syllable timed. The source argues that English has a "tendency to re-distribute accents according to the length of the utterances so that two accents may not occur next to each other" (Jibril 1982, 274) and "that this important difference from Nigerian English" is not fairly accounted for by the notion of stress versus syllable-timing (Jibril 1982, p.275). (Eka 1993) also rejects the syllable-timing description and goes further to describe the rhythm of the educated variety of Spoken NigerianEnglish as "in-elastic timed" because of a tendency to have more prominent syllables than the native speaker. The many prominent syllables are ascribed to an inability to "squeeze in or "stretch out" the syllables in a given rhythm unit within the given time as a native speaker who uses 'elastic- timed' rhythm.

Udofot (1993) studied the rhythm of the spoken English of final year secondary school students whose level of spoken English can be compared to Banjo's Variety –Two which approximates our Non Standard Spoken Nigerian English The analysis confirmed the preponderance of prominent syllables in the speech of this group of Nigerians and a tendency towards a syllable - timed rhythm not syllable-timing in its pure form. (Udofot 1997) which combined both perceptual and instrumental analysis also noted the proliferation of prominent syllables in the speech of Nigerians of varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds and puts this situation down to a tendency to speak both long and short vowels with equal duration. The study concluded that the rhythm of Spoken Nigerian English sounds more like the pulsations of an African drum, heard as rhythmic but hardly varying its tempo.

It was (Udofot 2003) that made a more definitive statement in this regard. In this study perceptual, statistical and acoustic analyses of both read and spontaneous speeches were combined and the existence of three varieties of Spoken Nigerian English identified in (Udofot 1997) and characterized by their disposition to stress

and speech rhythm: the Non standard, the Standard and Sophisticated Varieties were also assumed. The common performance features noticeable in the three varieties include: a tendency to stress more syllables in words than the native speaker who served as control. This feature which is traceable to the influence of the syllable – timing rhythm of the subjects' mother tongues, tends to characterize the Nigerian accent of English; but whereas the Non Standard Variety conforms to the syllable-timing description the Standard and Sophisticated Varieties require further investigation and suggested an alternative description: full vowel timing because the rhythm of Nigerian English does not depend on the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables nor does it vary to reflect full and reduced vowels but depends on the pattern formed by full and reduced vowels with the full vowels predominating. So rather than describe the continuum Nigerian English as syllable – timed which only describes a sub variety- Nonstandard Nigerian English, Full-Vowel timing was suggested. (Udofot 2011) investigated the rhythm of Standard Nigerian English using twenty Nigerians who could be said to speak 'Standard' Nigerian English'. The corpus-based research method was used to collect four sentences from each subject: two from answers to questions they answered in their own words and two from a read passage. The stress patterns of the sentences were analysed using (Schane's 1979) modified version of the Metrical theory. The sentences produced by six of the subjects and that of the control were randomly selected and acoustically analysed using the Praat speech analyses software by building textgrids of the selected sentences. It was consistently shown that Standard Nigerian English is not stress- timed rather it has more full vowels than reduced vowels which supports (Udofot's 1997) observation and that the Nigerian speaker uses tone on each word causing the native English speaker to interpret the pattern as if the stress and therefore the pitch accent comes on the wrong word. Dauer (1983), as mentioned in Fuchs, (2016) has, however, suggested that on the parameter of 'timing', varieties of English cannot be neatly categorized as either 'stress-timed' or 'syllable-timed'; rather, there is a tendency in one direction or the other, so that, for example, Indian English or Nigerian English is further removed than British English from the 'stress-timed' polarity. Only with this qualification would it then be legitimate to say that spoken Nigerian English is syllable-timedCf Jowitt, 2019, p.68). Jowitt (2019,) went on to say that this more qualified view is in effect developed by Udofot (2002, 2003).

> She shows that in Nigerian English, as in RP, peaks of prominence occur in connected speech, but that the weak syllables of RP speech are in Nigerian English made stronger, without being made as strong as the 'strong' ones: thus there is a tendency towards stress-timing (p 68).

1.2.3.   Intonation

Intonation describes variations of pitch, that is the way the voice rises and falls when we speak (cf Udofot and Eshiett 1996, p.44).English Language has its own melody which results from these characteristic rises and falls at appropriate places. If this melody is lacking, English sounds monotonous. Most Nigerian languages (except Fulfulde) are tonal; that means that the voice rises and falls on words (not sentences) or words of sentence status. When English is spoken with tones of Nigerian languages it sounds funny to the native speaker. Also, much attitudinal meaning conveyed by intonation in English is lost. Apart from this, intonation has grammatical meaning too in English. A certain tune is used to speak a statement and another one used to speak a question and a request. Thus if one uses the tune used for a statement to speak a request he may sound rude. According to (O'Connor 1980, p.108) the expression 'Thank you' spoken with a falling tune in British English, suggests genuine gratitude but when spoken with a rising tune only shows politeness or a routine. If one were to receive a favour and use the rising tune, one would be considered rude.

Unfortunately not much of intonation is taught in Nigerian schools, although some secondary-school textbooks attempt to teach understanding and uses of the simple nuclei (or tones). Jowitt 2019 has noted that:

> Scholars at one time gave little attention to the intonation of Nigerian English. Stevenson (1974) was an early butbrief and general study. Tiffen (1974) showed that the problem of 'intelligibility', of Nigerians to native speakers and vice versa, lay principally in the area of the supra - segmentals, including intonation. Banjo (1976) made the observation, much quoted by Nigerian scholars, that the appropriate use of stress and intonation is "the final hurdle, which a vast majority of speakers of English as a foreign language never manage to cross" (p.70).

More work has been done on intonation in Nigerian English recently. Available studies include Eka (1985), Amayo (1986), Ufomata (1990), Jowitt (2000 2007), Udofot (2002), Gut (2005), Atoye (2005), and Akinjobi and Oladipupo (2005). A consensus of views as to the principal features of Nigerian English intonation from these studies taken together, are as follows:

- The great majority of tones used by Nigerians are unidirectional or simple (are either falls or rises).
- Bidirectional tones are rarely used; the one that is mostly used is the fall-rise.
- The tones of Nigerian English speech have grammatical functions, but not attitudinal ones.

- A falling tune is used for statements, wh- questions, and commands; a rising tune for yes-no questions.
- The level tone is hardly ever used.

As pointed out by some scholars, the Nigerian English intonation pattern is limited compared to that of RP or GA (Ufomata 1990). Its details are substantiated, or modified, in the work of particular researchers.

To make up for the failure to use intonation to convey the shades of meaning other than for questions and answers, Ufomata (1995) observes that Nigerians tend to use more words, longer utterances and gestures in place of using tonic placement to agree, disagree or express doubt. Udofot (2002), attempted a description of the intonation of the brand of English spoken by a cross section of Nigerians. The analysis revealed that in spite of differing educational backgrounds the intonation of Nigerian English is characterized by the use of more unidirectional tones than bidirectional ones and the absence of the characteristic fluctuation typical of English speech. This means that a statement like:

Cxwould normally be produced by the average Nigerian with unidirectional tones especially the fall. This tendency has been confirmed by my researches, those of (Jowitt 2000) and (Gut and Milde 2002). The tendency to use bi-directional tones increases as the proficiency in English usage increases.

2.2.4.   Tone in Nigerian English

Tone is speech melody when it is the property of a word unlikentonation which operates on a sentence or an utterance of sentence status. It has been suggested that the melody of Spoken Nigerian English reflects the prosodic structure of the speakers' native language in a way that stressed syllables are associated with a high tone and unstressed syllables with a low tone (Wells, 1982). In fact, proposals have been made to treat Nigerian English as a tone language with tone on every syllable (Gut 2002).

Gut and Milde (2002) further suggest that 'words of particular grammatical categories seem to be associated with specific tones and that articles,prepositions and conjunctions tend to have a low tone, whereas nouns, verbs and adjectives are usually produced with a high tone'. (Udofot 2007) analyses the tonal structure of the brand of English spoken by educated Nigerians, that which can be regarded as standard Nigerian English to corroborate or refute these assertions and possibly characterize the tonal structure of Nigerian English.

What (Udofot 2007) set out to do was to examine previous descriptions of the tonal structure of Standard Nigerian English and carry out a preliminary investigation into

the tonal structure of Standard Nigerian English. This preliminary investigation was to examine the description of the stress pattern and tonal structure of Standard Nigerian English by non-Nigerians (Wells 1982, Gut, 2002, Gut and Milde, 2002) from the perspective of a speaker of Standard Nigerian English. The two previous studies on the prosody of Standard Nigerian English though done acoustically in combination with the TOBI System for analysis used five Nigerian subjects and were done as part of a larger study of the prosody of Standard Nigerian English. My study concentrated on the analysis of the tonal structure and only analyzed pitch accents and stress because they have to do with tone. Also twenty speakers of Standard Nigerian English chosen from a wider spread of linguistic backgrounds were used as subjects so as to have more representativeness of the sample. The TODI System (cf Gussenhoven, Rietveld and Terken 1999) which has already been used to analyze the tonal structure of Standard British English was used for the analysis.

The results corroborate the earlier findings to some extent. Standard Nigerian English is shown to have more level tones and very few contour tones; the few contour tones tend to occur at intonation phrase boundaries and utterance finally. The tendency to produce stressed syllables with a high tone and unstressed ones with a low tone as proposed by (Wells 1982) was found to be true to some extent but not consistently. The results also showed that generally, Standard Nigerian English features more stressed syllables than expected in a native variety and all the stressed syllables do not correlate with tones, rather some stressed syllables are produced with low tones.

The proposal that words of particular grammatical categories tend to be associated with certain tones - content words with high tones and structural words with low tones was not corroborated by our data because although some structural words were given prominence, in the productions of our subjects, they were not produced with a high tone. The right-spreading tone rule on multi-syllabic words noted by Gut and Milde (2002) was also confirmed and put down to juncture raising but it was noted that this situation occurs when the multi-syllabic words are in company not when they are produced in isolation. This phenomenon is observable in the following phrases: returning from (LHHL), forcibly taken (HHHHL), friendly neighbours (HHHL), and children left (HHL).

 (Gut and Milde 2002) actually suggested that the prosody of Standard Nigerian English is close to the one of tone languages that have tones associated with grammatical rather than lexically contrastive function but our investigation seems to suggest that there are exceptions since some structural words were stressed. In the example below, for instance, lexical words have high tones while structural ones have low tones in spite of the tendency to stress some of the structural words. For instance, the preposition **from** and the auxilliary **was** were stressed in the utterances

of some of the subjects but these words are not spoken with high tones.

Ma/ry was/ re/turn/ing /from /the/ bank.

H   L   L   L H   H   L   L   H*L   (Udofot 2009)

3.   A Reclassification of Varieties

The recognition of differences in phonological proficiency inspired efforts to distinguish varieties of Nigerian English usage, as outlined in Section 1. The (1958) and Banjo (1971) models are each primarily based on phonological data, as is that of Jibril (1979, 1982, 1986). Given the findings of Udofot (1997), Udofot (2004) studies and the realities of the Nigerian society where spoken English at times is not a correlate of educational status (cf Jibril 1982, Udofot 1997, Udofot 2004) I present below an alternative classification of the varieties of Spoken Nigerian English and the exponents of the varieties together with characteristics of each variety:

Table 2:   Spoken Nigerian English: A Reclassification of Varieties

Varieties	Exponents	Features
Variety One (Non Standard)	- Primary and some secondary school graduates. - University freshmen. - Some second year university undergraduates. - Holders of OND and NCE certificates. - Primary school teachers. - Third and final year undergraduates.	- Inability to make vital phonemic distinctions - High incidence of irrelevant pausing - Tendency to accent nearly every syllable - Preference for the falling tone - Ability to make some vital phonemic distinction s andMany prominent syllables.
Variety Two (Standard)	- University graduates, university and college lecturers. - Other professionals. - Secondary school teachers of English.	
	- Holders of Higher National Diplomas.	- Preference for unidirectional tones (the fall and the rise)
Variety Three (Sophisti cated)	- University lecturers in English and Linguistics. - Graduates of English and the Humanities. - Those who have lived in mother tongue areas.	- Ability to make all phonemic distinctions - Fluent speech - Only a few extra prominent syllables - Flexible use of intonation

The above classification differs from (Brosnahan's1958) and (Banjo's 1971) classifications. It has much in common with (Banjo's 1996) classification other than that (Banjo 1996) does not include university men and women at the early stages in Variety One. My studies actually showed that some holders of Master's degrees in English fell into Variety One. The findings of this study also revealed that the factor that appears most influential in determining Spoken Nigerian English and membership of the Varieties is stress and intonation.

1.   Summary and Conclusion

The features of the pronunciation of English in Nigeria as observed in the productions of selected Nigerians have been isolated. This goes to confirm that Nigerian English has features that can identify it from other varieties of world Englishes. With the Supra segmental phenomena, a tendency to have a proliferation of stressed syllables resulting from non-reduction of vowels was identified. This feature of Nigerian performance is shown to cut across varieties and linguistic groups and to be significantly different from the performance of a native speaker. With regard to intonation, the characteristic feature of Nigerian pronunciation identified includes a preference for unidirectional intonation tones rather than bidirectional ones. In each case, the feature identified tends to reduce with greater proficiency in Spoken English and closeness to the native speakers speech.

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