

**ASPECTS OF SEMANTIC VARIATION IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH:
A STUDY OF YEAR TWO STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO**

By

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Abstract

English language today is a global language with many varieties occasioned by domestication and nativization. This paper takes samples from year two under graduate students in the Department of English, Obio Akpa Campus, addressing some aspects of semantic variations which have taken place in the Nigerian variety of English. The data for this study were collected from thirty year-two Nigeria students from the Department of English and Literary Studies, Akwa Ibom State University. We administered questionnaire to them to investigate the differences in usage in the two varieties of English (Nigerian and British) and the

responses from the subject revealed the usages they prefer. Simple percentages were used in analyzing the data. Using the pragmatic theory of language as its theoretical framework. The findings reveal that the meaning of semantic items in Nigerian English may be achieved through creativity and may be independent of the original meaning in the language. Many of these semantic variations are influenced by the new environment within which the language now finds itself. The paper concludes and recommends that the issue of variation characterizing the Nigerian variety of English should not be seen as errors, rather it should be adopted into the Nigerian variety of English since these different shades of meaning to English words and expressions have been created by Nigerians to suit their convenience and to conform to their socio-cultural environment. This paper joins in the agitation for the standardization of Nigerian English as a distinct variety of the new Englishes to enhance its propagation of the knowledge and maximize its communicative potentials as a language of official communication in Nigeria.

Introduction:

The spread of English language into other regions or areas occupied by non-native speakers has been on the increase. According to Udofot (2010), Europeans are adopting it as their internal lingua-franca, English is spreading from northern Europe to the south and is now firmly entrenched as a second language in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Denmark. Although not an official language in any of these countries, if one visits any of them, it would seem that almost everyone there can communicate with ease in English (P. 30)

English dominates the world as no language ever has, and some linguists and scholars now say that it may never be dethroned as the king of Indian parents, Black parents in South Africa and others overwhelmingly wish their children to be educated in (Udofot, 2010). This is the first time we actually have a language spoken genuinely globally by every country in the world. The globalization of English is now an undisputed fact. One of the major effects of this is that English has taken on the role of lingua-franca in many contexts.

The spread and growth of English across the world has given way to birth of different varieties of English around the world. In Nigeria, English remains the most acceptable and available language for inter-ethnic communication because of the multilingual nature of the country. The importance of English language has led to the increase in the use of English in spoken for by Nigerians for both domestic and external purposes. Udofot (2010) posits that:

dialects of English have also developed in many of the former colonies of the British Empire. There is distinct English language spoken in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and many other parts of the world. These varieties are known as New English (P. 29).

Thus, Nigerian English is a variety of English used in Nigeria which is different from British English and other varieties of English all over the world.

Edem, (2016) quotes Barber (1993), as saying that “in countries where English is spoken as a second language, new words are often introduced from local languages, and existing English words and phrases given new meaning” (P. 256). This observation clearly demonstrates the Nigerian dilemma in the use of English. From the view point of semantics, it has been observed that several aspects of sense and reference in English are given different meanings in the Nigerian variety of English. Thus, this study investigates Aspect of Semantic Variations in Nigerian English.

Semantic variation in this work refers to the differences in meaning of words and expressions which are selected as data for this study which are used in Nigerian English today. This work is concerned with the aspects of variation in semantics which are shifts in meaning, extensions in meaning and ambiguity in the

meaning of words and expressions selected as data for this research. This is because of the limited time and space which this work is expected to cover.

Theoretical framework:

The Pragmatic Theory of Language

The pragmatic approach to language study is crucial in the study of language as social interaction (the interpersonal function of language).

Pragmatics is one of the theories of language study, which has rejected Chomsky's abstraction of the competence of the ideal native speaker/hearer to the study of performance. This pragmatic theory of language was developed by J. Searle and H. P. Grice, and it proposes that the meaning of an utterance is context-dependent. In fact, pragmatics is about language in use.

Udofot (1998:127), says that:

Knowledge of pragmatics, for instance, enable one to interpret not only the literal meaning of an utterance but also the meanings that derive from the norms of formality and politeness that exist in the society where the language is used as well as the unstated meaning that derive from the shared previous knowledge of the speaker and hearer and the situation in which the utterances are used.

Ndimele (1997:117) also sees pragmatics as the analysis of meaning that takes into account not only the observable aspects of language event but also the unobservable: "the choices they (users) make, the constraints they encounter in using their language for social interaction and the effect their use of language has on other participants". This sentiment is shared also by Edem (2020, 2022, 2023b).

Therefore, pragmatics encompasses all that can be discussed under context, culture, style, society and their influence in meaning interpretation. In fact, pragmatics studies the context-dependent aspects of meaning (cfUdofot, 1998, Edem, 2022, 2023c). According to Wales (1989:368),

Pragmatics at its simplest, therefore, can be defined as the study of language use...basically pragmatics is concerned with the meaning of utterances rather than of sentences or propositions, and meaning that comes from the contextual and interpersonal situation involving speaker and listener.

For instance, an utterance such as:

Can you train a child? Will have a different meaning if the context and participants vary: spoken by a mother to another lady without a child, for instance, by a husband to wife for negligence of her duty as a mother. So, pragmatics attempts to relate meaning to context of utterance; it reviews language as action which is performed by speaker. This concept of utterance in pragmatics makes speech act theory (on conversational implicatures and presupposition) to be relevant in pragmatics.

Indeed, pragmatics as a linguistic theory proposes that the content of concept consist only in its practical applicability. Unlike the structuralists, transformationalist, or systemic linguists, the pragmatic linguist is not interested in formal properties of words and constructions, rather, to show its concern for contextual determinations of the meaning of utterances. Pragmatics grammar focuses on a speech acts (cfUdofot, 2009:21). However, the pragmatics theory of language is adopted as a framework for this research work, since we are more concerned with semantic variations (differences in meaning) of words and expressions in Nigerian English. This is because the meaning of these words has been shifted and extended to cover or include wider ranges of meaning, as realized and well understood depending on the context and situation of usage.

English as a Global Language

The role of English in the current wave of globalization cannot be overemphasized. As Udofot (2007:5), observes as far back as the 5th century 'Britain's colonial expansion took the English language from its birth place to many countries around the world...' Before the spread of the English language, the term (English)

was often used to refer to the language of England and Southern parts of Scotland (Eka, 2000, Edem, 2016a, 2020 and 2023; Enang and Utin, 2021, Utin 2024) Today, English has grown in leaps and bounds, serving functions that are very crucial to humanity. Udofot (2007:5) posits that “the foundation of the American colonies in the 17th century can be taken as the beginning of the history of English as a world language”. This was considered in the 19th century when the British Empire with its destructive mix of trade and cultural politics spread their tentacles around the world (Graddol, 2000, Edem, 2005, 2019, Enang and Edem, 2022, Utin, 2023, Utin, 2024).

Today, the English language has acquired a global status in that it has developed spread role and significance which recognized in almost every continent, sub-regions and countries of the world.

Researches by scholars have revealed that non-native English speakers out-number native speakers of English. Speakers of English, according to Arsoba (2000), are divided into three groups; the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle.

Speakers in inner circle are those that English is their mother tongue (the native speakers of English). They are found in the USA, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, among others.

Outer circle speakers of English use English as a second language. They are found in the former British colonies, such as Nigeria, Ghana, India, Singapore among others.

Finally, speakers in the expanding circle use English as a foreign language. Such as China, Japan, Greece and Israel. It is estimated, according to Kachru as quoted by Udofot (2007), that the inner circle has 320-380 million speakers, the outer circle is estimated to have 150-300 million speakers. While 100 – 1000 million speakers are in the expanding circle. These figures inevitably put up English as a world language which should not be ignored.

English is dominant in a way that no language has been before. One fourth of the world’s population can communicate in one degree of English (Arsoba, 2000, Edem, 2015b). English is the common language in almost every endeavor from science to air traffic control to the global jihad, where it is apparently the means of communication between speakers in Arabic and other languages.

English has consolidated its dominance as the language of the internet, where 80 percent of world’s electronically stored information is in English. A brief analysis of English usage all over the world shows the following statistics: three quarters of the world’s mails are written in English; over two-third of the world’s scientist read in English; of the estimated 40 million users of the internet, the majority communicate in English, over 70 countries use English as an official or semi-official language and English has important status in over 20 countries; and this English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports, air traffic control, international business, academic conferences, science, technology, sports, international competitions, pop music and advertising (cfArsoba, 2000 In Udofot, 2007, Edem, 2005, 2015b and 2019).

There may be more native speakers of Chinese, Spanish or Hindi, but it is English they speak when the talk across culture, and English they teach their children to help them become citizens of an increasingly intertwined world. At telephone call centres around the world, the emblem of a globalized work place (company), the language spoken is, naturally English. On the radio, pop music carries the sounds of English to almost every corner of the earth.

English has become the second language of everybody. In fact, in some places and to some people in the world to be educated means to know English. English has invaded the work place along with the global economy. Some Swedish companies for example use English within the workplace, even though they are in Sweden, because so much of their business is done through the internet and other communications, with the outside world. As English continues to spread, it has grown into full-fledged languages known as Englishes.

English and the Nigerian Situation

English came into Nigeria and other West African countries due to the activities of the British traders and later Christian missionaries among them the colonialists from the 16th centuries. The early contact of the Europeans and the Portuguese on the coastal shores of West Africa produced the variety generally known as pidgin and creole (Eka, 2000, Udofot, 2007, Edem, 2017).

The spread and growth of English as a result of colonialization of Asia and Africa led to the development of “New Englishes”. Several new varieties of English including Australian English, Canadian English, South African English, Malaysian English, Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, other than the two leading standard varieties: British English and American English have emerged.

These New English are constantly under growing linguistic changes; changes which reflects the socio-linguistic and cultural divergences of their respective geographical domains. Eka (2005), observes that “...two factors have generally been identified as being explications for the divergence of English. These are spread and nativization. “Kachru (1982), established that in the context of the New English “the localized norm has a well-established linguistic, literary, and cultural identity.

English variety spoken in Nigeria, being part of the West Africa English share many similarities with other varieties spoken in the same region (e.g. Ghana, Cameroon). It is embedded in a linguistically complex environment in which over 400 languages spoken. English became the official language which means that it is used for all official purpose in Nigeria. It also dominates the educational system in which it is the language all subjects are taught in schools. While many commercials on radio stations are broadcast in a variety of other Nigerian languages, most entertainment shows, news on Television and movies are in English. Edem (2018), sees Nigerian English as that variety of world English learnt, spoken and written by Nigerians who are born and/or brought up within the Nigerian environment.

It has retained its pre-eminent position as the language anybody must know if he/she is seeking employment into the civil and public sectors of the economy, or to gain admission into universities in Nigeria. Some of the scholars in the field of English studies in Nigeria other West African countries such as, Arsoba (2000), Asante (2012), Eka (2000, 2005); Hubar (2008), Kachru (1982); Ngula (2011); Schneider (2007), Udofot (2000, 2007, 2010, Edem, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2018) among others also agree that due to the geographical spread of English varieties known as “New English” have emerged. However, Nigeria English has developed features which distinguish it as an identifiable and legitimate subject of world Englishes.

English and globalization have spread hand in hand through the world. Having a global language has assisted globalization has consolidated the global language. That process started with the dominance of two successive English speaking Empires. British and American and continues today with the new virtual empire of the internet. Thus, the English language no longer “belongs” to its native speakers but to the world. English has now unarguably achieved global status through its spread and wide use all over the world (Udofot, 2010, Edem, 2019 and 2020).

Semantic variations in Nigerian English

Semantic variations in Nigerian English may have arisen from the peculiar linguistic situation in the country where English has to interplay with many local languages, and has to be learnt and used as a second language within a setting where it has been adopted as the official language. From the view point of semantics, that is meaning, it has been observed that Nigerians have coined words and expressions which may not convey the same meaning in the British English.

Different shades of meaning to English words and expressions have been created by Nigerians to suit their convenience and environment.

According to Udofot (2007:5):

In the new colonies and settlements national standards have developed as English tries to adopt to the new environments so as to meet new cultural and communicative needs, such as the case in Nigeria.

In Nigeria and almost all the West African countries, English is adopted as their official languages, and it has also acquired the local colour of these new environments. The process of English acquiring the local colour of its new environment has been variously described as domestication (Adegbija, 2014) pidginization, nativization and acculturation (Bamgbose, 1995); nativization (Udofot, 2007, Edem, 2017, 2018) among others. Edem again posits that:

English has co-existed in Nigeria with her many indigenous languages since the nineteenth century. The many years of co-existence of English with Nigerian languages and its use for expressing Nigerian experiences and situations has resulted in English developing linguistic patterns that have identified it as a distinct variety of world Englishes. (Edem, 2018, p.23).

Indeed, English has grown and developed its own linguistic features in the Nigerian environment today.

Research Procedure, Data Presentation/Analysis

The research sample consists of thirty Nigerian students from the Akwa Ibom State University who speak English as a second language. Questionnaires were given to thirty year two students of the department of English and Literary Studies, ObioAkpa Campus. The questionnaire was made up of twenty items comprising words and expressions, which were administered to inquire which form of the usage is preferred by the subjects. Some deviant usages were respected in the items which were presented to the subjects and the subjects were presented to read and chose either YES or NO as the case may be. The two options consisted of the standard Nigerian usage and the British English reference to them. They were used to investigate the differences in usage in the two varieties of English and the responses from the subjects indicated which form of usage they preferred. Such preferences enabled us to make predictions about semantic variation among Nigerian English speakers. A summary of the result of the findings in aspects of semantic variation among Nigerian English speakers is presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of findings – Semantic Variations in Nigerian English

S/N	Test Items (BE)	Test Items (NE)	NES Production (Number)	Percentage of NES	NESSBE Percentages (Number)	Percentage of NESSBE
1.	Hear	Understand, perceive, feel	21	70%	9	30%
2.	See	Bribe, dating	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
3.	Perceive	Notice/ understand	25	83.3%	15	16.7%
4.	Ate	Spent	17	56.7%	13	43.3%
5.	Celebrant	Host	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
6.	Particulars	Money, license, credentials	20	66.7%	10	33.3%
7.	Browse	Flirt	18	60%	12	40%
8.	To take in	To become pregnant	22	73.3%	8	26.7%
9.	Long legs	Well connected	22	73.3%	8	26.7%

10.	Labour	Workmanship	10	33.3%	20	66.7%
11.	Operation	Robbery/ surgery	23	76.7%	7	23.3%
12.	Tight	Close	19	63.3%	11	36.7%
13.	Intended	Fiancée	10	33.3%	20	66.7%
14.	To branch	To stop over	24	80%	6	20%
15.	Settle	Bribe/ appreciate	25	83.3%	5	16.7%
16.	To move with	To associate with	18	60%	12	40%
17.	Smell	Fragrance	18	60%	12	40%
18.	I am coming	I will be back later		83.3%	5	16.7%
19.	Put to bed	To deliver of a baby		70%	9	30%
20.	Dropped from the car	Alight from the car	28	93.3%	2	6.7%

Key:

NE:

Nigerian English

BE:

British English

NES:

Nigerian English Speakers

NESS BE:

Nigerian English Speakers with standard British English

S/No.

Serial Number

Data Analysis/Result

The findings above show that the percentage of subjects which preferred these items with meanings peculiar to Nigeria English was higher in most cases than there which preferred British English. Findings also reveal that the majority of the subjects preferred British English. Findings also reveal that the majority of the subjects preferred the Nigerian English usage that varies in meaning from the British English, although the two usages have the same reference.

It was found out that Nigerians use the verb to hear as against to understand, to perceive and to feel to complete the sense of some sentences. The result of the study reveals that 70% of the subjects chose hear while 30% preferred perceive to complete the sense of the sentence. I can hear a smell (perceive). In several Nigerian languages the verb to hear, has several meanings depending on the context and situation of usage. For instance, in Ibibio language, someone can say: mine, kop uyom, meaning I can hear some noise, the same person can also say: mme 'kop ufik; meaning that person can perceive a smell.

Thus, the verb 'kop in Ibibio language stands for to hear, to perceive a smell. Thus, the verb 'kop in Ibibio language stands for to hear, to perceive, and to understand (as in: mme 'kop ikombakara meaning I understand English). Direct translation of the meaning of words and expression from their mother tongues into English is a feature that Nigerian's adopt to suit their convenience and to conform to their socio cultural environment. Hence an ideal Nigerian English speaker would say: I can hear a smell instead of I can perceive a smell. Therefore, this variation is as a result of the mother tongue influence (L1) on the speaker.

The next item: to see also indicates semantic variation. This uses was expressed in the use of the verb see as against bribe and dating to complete the sense of these two sentences; go and see the police so we can pass (bribe); and Blessing is seeing Jackson (dating). The result showed that 73.3% of the subjects preferred to use see while 26.7% preferred to use sense of those sentences above. This variation as said earlier, results from the influence of the mother tongue.

In fact, it (the mother tongue influence) is the basis for their variations in meaning which their results as revealed from the study will be summarized and discussed below. From the results, 83.3% of the subjects made use of perceive, while 16.7% preferred notice/understand to complete the sentence: I perceive you are from Akwa Ibom (Understand). The result of the next item proves thus: 56.7% of the subjects chose ate while 43.3% made use of the word spent to complete the sentence: the man ate our money (spent). The result of the study recorded for item 5 the creative usage in Nigerian English, in which 83.3% of the subjects associated celebrant with a host, that is, a person hosting any social function like parties, weddings and other ceremonies. Nigerians have adopted this meaning of celebrant (as host) from the American English which has been coined (created) from the word celebration to refer to the host of an occasion that calls for rejoicing/celebration.

In the same vein, 66.7% of the subjects choose particulars while 33.3% made use of money and credentials to complete requested for particulars (some money) and credentials to complete these sentences. The Police Officer requested for particulars (some money), and where are your schoolparticulars(credentials)? In item 7, the result reveals that Nigerians have created new meaning for the word browse to mean flirt thus, the meaning of the word browse have been extended by Nigerians to suit their convenience. However, 60% of the subjects made use of browsing while 40% chose flirting with to complete the sense of the sentence: Friday likes browsing young girls (flirting with).

The result of items 8 proves that Nigerians have introduced the use of non-native idioms into English. These idioms are directly translated into English to reflect/conform with their socio-cultural identity. Some pregnancy normally takes place inside a woman, hence, to become pregnant is described by Nigerians as to take in 73.3% of the subjects preferred the use of to take in while 26.7% chose to become pregnant to complete the sense of the sentence: She has to take in before her wedding (to become pregnant).

Semantic shift in words and expressions is now a current trend among Nigerians Udofot (2007) has identified this as a current trend characterizing Nigerian English today. The result reveals semantic shifts in words and expressions such as long legs(well connected), tight (close), intended(fiancée), to branch (to stop over), to settle someone (to bribe/ appreciate someone), to move with (to associate with), dropped from the car/alighted from the car) among others, not used in this research.

In summary, the results of items 9 – 20 prove thus, 73.3% of the subjects choose long legs while 26.7% preferred well connected; 33.3% of the subjects preferred labour while 66.7% chose workmanship, 76.7% made use of operation while 23.3% made use of robbery/surgery in different sentences depending on the idea they want to portray (i.e context and situation comes to play here). The word tight was chosen by the majority (63.3%) of the subjects as against close chosen by 36.7% of the subject. Intended was used by 33.3% to replace fiancée chosen by 66.7% of the subjects.

The majority of the subjects also made use of to branch (by 80%) as against to stop over by 20% of the subjects. To settle was preferred by 88.3% of the subjects as against to bribe/appreciate chosen by the other 16.7% of the subjects, 60% of the subjects went with to move with us as against to associate with chosen by 40% of the subjects. Smell and fragrance shared 60%, 40% of the subjects respectively. In item 18; I am coming as against I will be back later was chosen by 83.3% while 16.7% of the subjects chose to put to bed while 30% made use of to be delivered of a baby, and finally dropped from the car was preferred by 93.3% while 6.7% make use of alighted from the car.

Indeed, Nigerians have new meanings to British English words and have also given different shades of meaning to British English words. There are some lexical items in Nigerian English which express entirely different meanings or concepts depending on the situation and context they are used. Table 2 below show Nigerian English usage varies from the British English words. There are some lexical items in Nigerian English which express entirely different meanings or concepts depending on the situation and context they are used. Table 2 below shows how Nigerian English usage varies from the British reference to the following words and expressions.

Table 2: Semantic variation between Nigerian English and British English

S/N	ITEMS	NIGERIAN ENGLISH MEANING	BRITISH ENGLISH MEANING
1.	Long leg	Well connected with rich people	A long leg
2.	To branch	To stop over for a visit or something	To stop and enter a corner or a bending road.
3.	Dropped from the car	Someone alighted from the car	Something fall from the car
4	Settle	To bribe or appreciate someone	To make peace with someone
5	To move with bad people	To associate with criminals	To take a walk or journey with bad people
6	To browse	To flirt with a girl	To go on interior or use the internet
7	Ate	To spend or refused to give something (eg money)	To chew or swallow something

8	To see/seeing	To bribe, discuss with or dating someone	To sight something
9	To hear	To perceive, feel or understand something	The sense of hearing a sound or something
10	Labour	Workmanship/and it also means clean-up exercise	To struggle or to be delivered of a baby
11	Celebrant	A lost of game occasion that cells for celebration	A catholic priest officiating in a rite or any religious
12	I am coming	I will be back later/ I am on my way	I am on my way or I will be there soon
13	To take in	To pregnant	Too put or take something into something
14	To put to bed	To be delivered of a baby	To put something on the bed
15	Tight	Close, cordial (as in friendship)	Very firm (as in something not giving allowance)

Semantic variation is one of the innovative divergent features which is giving Nigerian English its own character in expressing meaning of words and expressions in the speech of the educated Nigerians. Effiong (2011) established that;

Nigerian English has developed its own distinct and unique features due to the mode of the acquisition of the language and the Nigerian socio-cultural setting some of the speech acts obtained in Nigeria differ in meaning from these of the native speakers of English. That is why it is possible to have words with the same morphological shapes expressing different meaning in educated Nigerian English and British English (Efiong, 2011p.296, Enang and Edem, 2022, Edem, 2017), .

The pragmatic theory of language proposes that meaning of an expression (utterance) is context dependent. This means that words and expressions are meaningful depending on the situation and context in which they are used. That is to say, the content of a concept consists only in its practical applicability.

The study has confirmed this pragmatic assertion; in that, these new meaning to British English words created by Nigerians to suit their convenience are context dependent. It is the situation and context of usage which enables the hearer to understand what the speaker is talking about.

Semantic Shifts in some Words and Expressions in Nigerian English.

There are some usages in Nigerian English which are not used in the same sense in which these words are used in British English, some English words have had their meanings changed and extended to cover wider semantic ranges not conceived/expressed in British English. Such variations in meaning were expressed by the majority of the subjects. The result reveals semantic shifts in words and expressions such as: to branch (to stop over); she dropped from the car (alighted from the car); Okon has long legs (Okon is well connected); to settle the police or someone (to bribe or to show appreciation); to move with bad people (to associate with criminals); to browse a girl (to flirt with a girl or have canal knowledge of a girl); the man ate our money (spent our money/refuse to pay our money or misappropriated our money).

Extensions in Meaning of some Words and Expressions in Nigerian English

Extensions in meaning of words such as the meaning of the verb see to include the meanings of bribe, dating and even discuss as in;

- Go and see the police so we can go (bribe);
- Collins is seeing Blessing (dating);
- I want to see the Pastor about my problems (discuss with);
- I perceive you are from Akwa Ibom (notice/understand);
- I can hear a smell (perceive);
- I can hear water on my back (feel);
- I hear English (understand);
- Ekaette is my tight friend (close friend);
- He is my intended (fiancée);
- The doctor has suggested she undergoes an operation (a surgery);
- The leader of the gang denied being part of the operation last night (robbery/Crime)
- The perfume has a sweet smell (fragrance);
- After completing the job, he refused to pay him his labour (workmanship);
- We have labour in our school today (Sanitation/clean-up exercise);
- The police office requested for particulars (some money);
- Where are your school particulars? (Credentials);
- She is the celebrant (host);

Again Jowitt (2013) observes that the word disciplinarian is used by Africans to refer to a person that is preoccupied with/shows much concern about the act of discipline, while in America, the word disciplinarian refers to a professional who specializes in this discipline. This is also a good example of the variation we are discussing.

Udofot (2007) agrees that “such extensions have equivalent translations in the local languages “(p.44). Thus, these shifts and extensions in the meaning of words and expression help in adding colour to the variety of English spoken by Nigerians and also unite the Nigerian environment. With regards to pragmatics, there are certain peculiar usages which characterized Nigerian English. Prominent among these is the expression:

I am coming used by a person that is actually going away instead of I will be back soon or later.

There is also the non-native use of idioms such as to put to bed (to be delivered of a baby), to take in (to become pregnant), Eka (2000) sees these as creative usages which are also a testimony of one dimension of enrichment of the English language.

Ambiguity in Meaning in Nigerian English

The result of the data also revealed that some words and expressions are used in an ambiguous form. For instance, the expression; I am coming is used to express/mean, I will be back later and also show that the person is actually coming but this ambiguity is sometimes, disambiguated in the speech of Nigerians through or depending on the situation and context of usage.

From the data examples presented certain meaning of words stand out which are peculiar to the Nigeria environment. These, experiences of English in the Nigeria situation tend to bring out the dynamic nature of English.

Adegbija (2004: 29) observes that several aspects of sense and reference English have also been domesticated to infuse a Nigerian atmosphere or area into them. This means that the meaning of some English words within the Nigeria socio-linguistic environment vary, hence they are given different shades of meaning from what they refer to in British English. All these differences and cultures which a language adopts itself to meet new situations (Effiong, 2011, Edem, 2018).

Ajani (2007); Attah (2000); Taofiq (2012); Wale (2012); and Jusuf (2012, Edem, 2016a, 2018, 2020) among others have shown that English in Nigeria has remarkable features which mark it out as a legitimate variety from other world Englishes. However, this study is a contribution to linguistic studies on Aspects of Semantic Variation in Nigerian English. It also joins the agitation for the standardization of Nigerian English to enhance its propagation of knowledge and maximized its communicative potential in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The English language that came into Nigeria as a foreign language two centuries ago has undergone some changes and it has also been nativized. This work, *Aspects of Semantic Variations in Nigerian English*, discusses some issues which have resulted in the nativization of English in Nigeria. Semantic shifts and extension in meanings of some words and expressions are current trends characterizing Nigerian English today. In fact, semantic variation is one of the innovative and divergent features which have given Nigerian English its distinct characteristic features which had been put to use in the speeches of most educated Nigerians today.

It is against this backdrop that we recommend that these variations in meaning should not be seen as errors rather, should be adopted into the Nigerian variety of English until these different shades of meaning to English words and expressions which were created by Nigerians to suit their convenience and to conform to their socio-cultural environment.

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