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## NIGERIAN ENGLISH: LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION PROCESS

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ulitsa Pobedy 85, Belgorod 308015, Russian Federation***Abstract**

**Aim.** Identification of the linguistic and cultural specific features of the English language functioning on the territory of Nigeria.

**Methodology.** The research is based on the application of general scientific methods (analysis, generalization) and special methods (descriptive method, component analysis method, quantitative method).

**Results.** The most productive transformation processes of the English language of Nigeria due to the influence of creolization are revealed: monophthongization of diphthongs for the phonetic system; simplification of specific verb forms for the morphological system; use of high-frequency cultural borrowings from autochthonous languages for the lexical system.

**Research implications** is in the analysis of Nigerian English transformational processes potential due to complex language and culture symbiosis. The structure of Nigerian English is influenced by two key processes: indigenization and globalization which contributes to the preservation of its unique features, reflecting the specifics of the Nigerian linguistic culture.

**Keywords:** globalization, indigenization, creolisation, language and culture symbiosis, Nigerian English

## НИГЕРИЙСКИЙ ВАРИАНТ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА: ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ АДАПТАЦИЯ

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**Цель.** Выявление лингвокультурной специфики английского языка, функционирующего на территории Нигерии.

**Процедура и методы.** Исследование основывается на применении общенаучных (анализ, обобщение) и специальных методов (описательный, количественный, метод компонентного анализа).

**Результаты.** Выявлены продуктивные трансформационные процессы английского языка Нигерии, вследствие влияния креолизации: монофтонгизация дифтонгов для фонетического строя; симплификация видовременных форм глагола для морфологического строя; использование высокочастотных лингвокультурем лексического строя.

**Теоретическая и/или практическая значимость** заключается в раскрытии потенциала трансформационных процессов английского языка Нигерии. Строй территориального варианта английского языка Нигерии подвержен влиянию двух процессов: индигенизации и глобали-

зации, что способствует сохранению его уникальных свойств, отражающих специфику нигерийской лингвокультуры.

**Ключевые слова:** глобализация, индигенизация, креолизация, лингвокультурология, территориальный вариант английского языка Нигерии

### Introduction

As a result of the English language interaction with other languages and cultures a large number of the English language variants have appeared in the modern world, such as the Irish English variant, the Scottish English variant, the Australian English variant and others. In our research work we have analyzed such English variant as the Nigerian English variant.

The purpose of the research work is in the analysis of language and cultural indigenization process theory of Nigerian English which was formulated due to two main factors: indigenization and globalization co-operation.

According to the research work a number of new definitions were introduced representing the specific approach to the analyzed object of linguistic reality in the context of the developed theory, these are phonetic creolisation process, morphological creolisation process, lexical creolisation process, syntactic creolisation process [2]. The developed theory of language and cultural creolisation of the English language in Nigeria is based on an integrative approach that allows to identify the unique features typical for Nigerian English variant through the prism of Nigerian culture. Creolisation process of the English language functioning in Nigeria is closely related to sociolinguistic differentiation. It should be stressed, the key parameter for Nigerian society is the complex varieties of the language usage which are basilect, mesolect, acrolect. Creolisation of the English language of Nigeria is inherent in all three language variants (basilect, mesolect, acrolect), therefore interference processes are typical to all linguistic levels of the Nigerian English: phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic [1, p. 140].

### The status of English in Nigeria

The English language, functioning on the territory of Africa as a foreign language, was creolized and adapted to the linguistic and cultural specifics of the autochthonous languages. Nigerian English, having an official status, acts as the main means of communication in all spheres of Nigerian society, it is the language of politics, economics, trade, media and education.

Nevertheless, the introduction and cultivation of English language norms led to the overwhelming influence of the English language and decreasing usage of the autochthonous Nigerian languages. As the result of such a dominant influence of the English language in all spheres of modern Nigerian's lives, there is a tendency of some autochthonous languages extinction processes [14].

The research work deals with the identification of linguistic and cultural features of Nigerian English. As a result of interaction with autochthonous languages, English, functioning on the territory of Nigeria, turned out to be a mixed-type language with the hybridization processes typical for all language levels. Nigerian English is a territorial variant that continues to develop under the influence of interference processes on the part of local languages. Nigerian English combines features of such European languages as Portuguese and French, American English, Arabic, as well as features of autochthonous languages. The dominant autochthonous languages in Nigeria are the interethnic languages Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo.

Thus, Nigerian English as a territorial variant of the language, endowed with a special status predetermined by historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, it requires the special attention to be analysed. The need for scientific understanding of the observed trends in the field of language interaction, the study of the development of

the English language in Africa determines the relevance of the research work. The proposed critical approach to this range of issues makes it possible to identify the main features of the Nigerian English, to open up new perspectives in the analysis of language and culture science, taking into account the variety of accompanying factors and scientific understanding of the observed trends in the conditions of linguistic and cultural adaptation [13, p. 27].

Language and culture interaction analysis has been a traditional object of research works of many linguists' works. Russian and foreign scientists (V. V. Vorobyev, V. T. Klovok, S. A. Kosharnaya, Z. G. Proshina; B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, C. Nelson) have developed and are still developing both general and particular issues of interaction between language and culture. V. V. Vorobyev stresses the need to analyse language and culture as one unit [3]. V. T. Klovok pays special attention to language adaptation in the process of cross cultural communication and reveals peculiar features of English and French functioning in African countries [4]. S. A. Kosharnaia analyses the adaptation process of local words as part of cultural and historical developments on the example of Russian language and culture [5]. Z. G. Proshina investigates the influence of English on the languages and cultures of East Asian countries [6]. The questions of the English language influence on the state of other linguistic cultures community have been discussed in works by B. Kachru, Y. Kachru and C. Nelson. The linguists stress that every language variant has its unique features due to local cultures dominant influence [15]. A number of fundamental works done by authors of the book "The Handbook of World Englishes" have analysed English as the language of global communication and its influence on other languages. Afro-European linguistic and cultural interaction processes have been investigated in works by J. Baghana [1].

The research work analyzes the multi ethnic nature of Nigerian society which de-

termines the complex of multi component structure of the Nigerians cultural identity which is also reflected in the language. Three key components of the language situation are social, cultural and linguistic situations, they make the linguistic and cultural state of the communicative environment. For Nigeria which is a country with numerous ethnic groups whose representatives are characterized by social heterogeneity, each component of the language situation has a multistage structure. Thus, the complex nature of social, cultural and linguistic situations leads to the formation of a multilevel structure of a language situation which is worth analysing.

It is necessary to take into account the factor of the relationship between language and culture. The dominant factor is not only in the study of the relationship between linguistic and cultural mutually conditioning features, it is also necessary to study the issue of ethnic and cultural factors affecting the state of Nigerian language and culture. The local formation of Nigerian ethnic groups is not permanent, therefore, during the analysis of the linguistic interaction characteristics of ethnic groups in Nigeria, it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of the communicative environment and its sociolinguistic state, and it is important to see active communication links which are carried out in several languages or their variants.

As a result of communication in English which is a foreign language for all ethnic groups of Nigeria, the language continuum is formed in the key of creolisation process of the English language. Such hybrid process leads to the interference processes.

In the process of analysing linguistic and cultural processes in the context of Afro-European interaction, we came to the conclusion that, while being in Nigeria, Europeans are actively mastering African culture, as well as Africans are trying to study the specifics of the European behavioral, conceptual and evaluative view of the world. As a result of language contacts, interference processes take place through the infiltration of one cultural system elements into another re-

ardless of whether the transmitting culture is native or foreign. Within the framework of interference, there is an unconscious or conscious transfer of a cultural system knowledge based on the early experience basis to the currently used cultural system of experience [8].

The research of intercultural interference cannot be carried out without a linguistic context since the language of national speech is the most important means of transmitting cultural information. In our research work we deal with the analysis of cultural, linguistic, language and cultural interferences.

The processes of linguistic and cultural understanding observed in Nigeria lead, on the one hand, to the adaptation of certain elements of European culture, cognized by local Anglophones, and, on the other hand, contribute to changes in the English language which acts as an instrument of cultural development. As a result of these two processes, a special territorial variant of the English language is being formed in Nigeria, reflecting the specifics of the African understanding of both its own and European cultures [9, p. 128].

### **Nigerian English adaptation process**

The language factor is extremely important in modern life of Nigeria and education especially. Education in a comprehensive school in Nigeria starts at the initial stage (students 6 - 11), and it is based on the study of the autochthonous languages. The study of English by Nigerian students starts with the third year of education. One of the three languages of interethnic communication is also used in the learning process: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo. Higher education in Nigeria is based solely on the English language basis.

In the course of the analysis special attention is paid to such a type of differentiation as sociolinguistic one. Taking into account the heterogeneous structure of Nigerian society, the different level of education of Nigerians affects the level of English proficiency. We take into consideration the factor of linguistic variety based on such variants as basilect,

mesolect and acrolect. On the territory of Nigeria the basilect language variant is used by poorly educated people, sometimes this type is interpreted as a popular, mass language of poorly educated or uneducated Nigerians living in urban areas, or the rural proletariat. The mesolect language variant is typical for Nigerians who have secondary education basis, and this group includes the small urban and rural bourgeoisie, some representatives of the political and economic elite. The language variant acrolect is common among the educated elite of the Nigerian society and the educated bourgeoisie [12, p. 89].

The phonetic specificity of Nigerian English pronunciation is manifested in the vowel system (vocalism) and the consonant system (consonantism). To describe the unique phonetic structure of Nigerian English we present an analysis of the pronunciation norm of British English and Nigerian English. In the course of the research work it was found that Nigerian English has a number of unique phonetic features including: the reduction of the monophthongs and diphthongs number, change of diphthongs in the form, diphthongs' monophthongization:

The phonetic system of British English includes 12 monophthongs, the phonetic system of Nigerian English has 11 monophthongs: the monophthong of British English /æ/ is not presented in Nigerian English, and it is replaced by the sound /ʌ/ as the closest to natural phonetic base of local languages – Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, for example: /kæt/ – /Kʌt/, /fæt/ – /FT/, /mæn/ – /Mʌn/ [1, p. 138].

Lack of monophthong /æ/ in indigenous languages leads to the disappearance of the diphthong /ɛə/ which goes into Nigerian English in monophthong /ʌ/, for example: /sʌmwɛə/ – /sʌmwʌ/; diphthongs /au/, /aʊ/ turn in Nigerian English into /ʌ/ (/əraʊnd/ – /ərʌnd/) [1, p. 139].

Changing vowels and consonants in shape is typical for Nigerian English. To the rank of unique features of Nigerian English phonetic system one should rank such truncations as syncope, for example, the

loss of the consonant sounds /t/, /d/, /k/ in the position of the penultimate syllable, the preceding vowel sound and following the morpheme -s, for example: /gudz/ – /gus/, /kæræktərɪstks/ – /kæræktərɪstɪs/; loss of the consonant sound /k/ sound combinations to /kʃ/, /kt/: /ilekʃn/ – /ileʃn/, /dɪtekt/ – /dɪtet/ [2, p. 118].

The most productive type of phonetic transformations accretion is adding the phonetic segments, for example, /t/, /ə/ in the position after a consonant sound, for example: /brɪtɪʃ/ – /bɪrɪtɪʃ/, /krɪ:m/ – /krɪm/ [2, p. 119].

The rank of the unique phonetic structure of Nigerian English includes such feature as an anagram, the most frequent is the transformational opposition /sk/ – /ks/, for example, /ma:sk/ – /ma:ks/, /a:sk/ – /a:ks/ [1, p. 140].

All identified phonetic transformations of Nigerian English are dictated by the phonetic base of Nigerians and forced indigenization to the phonetic structure of autochthonous languages. The transformational processes of the phonetic structure of the Nigerian English are explained by the influence of interference which manifests itself to a greater extent in such language variants as basilect and mesolect. In exceptional cases, the acrolect language variant undergoes phonetic creolization process as well, and it occurs in the process of forced adaptation and reduction to the basilect variant to be better understood by communicants.

Morphological creolisation of English language in Nigeria due to the influence of indigenous languages on the morphological structure of the language, results in a number of morphological transformations. The key of them are: the use of an abstract noun with a marker of the plurality which took place is in basilectal and mesolect variants and can be explained by the insufficient level of education, for example:

Luggages are at the owners' risk [10].

In British English, the lexeme Luggage is used only in the singular form and without the article. As it can be seen from the analyzed example, the Luggage unit in Nigerian

English has a marked sign of multiplicity -es. Moreover, the considered lexeme can be used with an indefinite article, for example:

I have only a luggage [7, p. 228]

The shift of the specific verb form in favour of simple forms and the choice of the infinitive instead of the gerund construction when using non-personal forms of the verb is also a unique feature, for example:

He was loving her so much, he would buy her everything she wants [14].

It should be noted that the grammatical structure of the Nigerian local languages which are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa does have the specific forms of the verb of the active and passive voice to the Perfect and Perfect Continuous groups. Also, there is no such non-personal verb form as the gerund in the Nigerian autochthonous languages which dictates the morphological creolization process of the English language of Nigeria.

Using a reflexive pronoun in Nigerian English instead of a personal pronoun is another typical feature, for example:

My mother and myself went for my sister's graduation [11].

The type of morphological creolisation is typical for the linguistic variants of the basilect and mesolect.

The lexical creolisation process of the English language of Nigeria leads to significant semantic changes in the native English vocabulary. The result of this transformation is changing of the meaning to many lexical units of Nigerian English in the form of expansion and narrowing of the meaning. This type of lexical transformation as the expansion of meaning is the most productive, for example:

English – European:

English medicine is no longer effective for the treatment of malaria – European medicine is no longer effective for the treatment of malaria.

The adjective English in British English expresses its origin – made in England or typical to English. In Nigerian English the analyzed adjective acquires to the meaning as foreign or European [7, p. 240].

The use of the adjective English in the meaning of foreign is explained by the influence of historical and cultural features: in Nigeria during the colonial period it was customary to call all foreigners as English. Further, the adjective English characterized such a property as high quality. This meaning of the adjective is still used in the modern language, and it is typical for the language variant mesolect and is explained by the peculiarity of the local culture.

The kind of lexical transformation as narrowing of the meaning is a less productive phenomenon for Nigerian English, for example:

Academics – teachers, especially in higher education institutions.

These Academics are always going on strike! [15, p. 25].

It should be noted in British English the definition academicians is used exclusively to describe a member of the Academy. However, in Nigerian English the noun academicians or the phrase academic people has the following meaning: “educated people, especially university lecturers or teachers of colleges” [13, p. 26]. The reason for the change in the meaning of the analysed unit is the different situation in the education sphere in England and Nigeria: the level of education of the British often exceeds the degree of education of Nigerians. If for England members of the Academy are often representatives of national humanitarian, scientific, technical, educational and other public organizations and necessarily have the Doctorate degree, then for Nigeria, only in exceptional cases university teachers have a doctorate degree. Educated Nigerians represent a low percentage of the population (18% of all Nigerians). Moreover, only 20% of them have a scientific degree. The vast majority of Nigerians with a high level of education are university professors, diplomats and journalists who have high education, and it means that for Nigeria these are university teachers who are included in the rank of academicians.

The displacement of meaning is one of the many ways for enriching the lexical

composition which is included in the list of productive characteristic features typical for Nigerian English. This method of lexical transformation leads to a significant shift and change in the meaning of a particular unit, as a result of which the Nigerian English acquires lexical units typical exclusively for this variant.

For example, in British English, the token stranger has the meaning of a person and is used relative to a complete stranger. The meaning of the lexeme in Nigerian English undergoes a value shift, denoting guest or visitor [9, p. 128].

The shift in the meaning of the analysed noun stranger is associated with the peculiarities of Nigerian culture, namely, family ties in the family. In a Nigerian family even close acquaintances, family friends and relatives are not considered family members if they do not live in the same house under one roof, so people living outside the same house are called strangers or guests, for example:

Please, my wife does not allow strangers into her kitchen.

Look, John, as your younger brother, I don't consider myself as a stranger in your house [11].

The change in the lexical meaning of the lexical units of Nigerian English is carried out using metonymic and metaphorical transformations, for example, the noun food. In British English the analysed lexeme denotes any kind of food and drink. In Nigerian English the meaning of the lexeme undergoes metonymic transformation. It includes only the spectrum of the main food products of Nigerians which include rice, yams, beans, gari. This list does not include varieties of drinks, for example:

Which food would you like today?

Beans for today would be nice [15, p. 207].

The lexical meaning of the linguistic units of the Nigerian English is largely determined by the specific features of the local culture peculiarities. British English, functioning on the territory of Nigeria, is the subject to the phenomenon of creolisation, and the result



of it acquires a number of unique features typical exclusively for this territorial variant. The specificity of the change in the meaning of the lexical unit food in the meaning of key Nigerian food dishes is typical for the linguistic variants of the basilect and mesolect. The reason for this is the necessary adaptation process to the local languages and cultures, namely, to the specifics of the local gastronomic culture.

According to the research work, the lexical structure of Nigerian English is mostly susceptible to the creolisation process, resulted in the meaning change of the Nigerian English lexical units in comparison with British English. Undergoing language and cultural creolisation processes, Nigerian English acquires a number of unique features typical for the territorial variant, reflecting the specifics of the multidimensional nature of Nigerian cultures.

The syntactic structure of Nigerian English is least affected by interference processes. The rank of syntactic uniqueness of Nigerian English includes inversion process of the subject and predicate in a sentence, for example:

Helped him lucky chance [13, p. 13].

The analysed example illustrates the inversion of the subject chance which occupies the final position in the sentence. The sentence is of a narrative construction, and according to the rules of British English the initial position should be taken by the subject. In Nigerian English the analysed subject undergoes inversion process and occupies a finite position.

The reason for the inversion of the subject and predicate in Nigerian English is the lack of a fixed word order within the narrative and negative sentences of autochthonous languages (Igbo, Kanuri, Ibibio and others). Autochthonous languages are characterized by free or reverse type word order. The reverse order of words in Nigerian English is caused by the desire of Nigerians for compactness of information transmission and the need to emphasize the necessary information in the initial or final position of the

sentence. The inversion of the Nigerian English sentence is a characteristic feature in the basilect and mesolect variants.

Inappropriate response of the interlocutor to a general question containing a denial is typical for Nigerian English, for example:

Isn't he understanding she is lying!

No, he is [13, p. 12].

In the dialogue the initiating communicant expresses his opinion in a very emotional form (Isn't he understanding she is lying!), saying that it is impossible not to understand the fact that she (the heroine) is lying to him (her friend). The reacting communicant agrees with the friend's statement and responds using the negative marker No, followed by the form he is. This way in Nigerian English it means agreement with denial – he does not understand. In British English such reaction has the opposite meaning: no, he understands everything or he understands that she is lying to him. That is the reacting communicant does not share the opinion of the interlocutor initiating the conversation and expresses his disagreement on the issue under discussion.

Syntactic creolisation process of the English language in Nigeria is least affected by autochthonous languages compared to phonetic, morphological and lexical creolisation processes. As a result of interferences (which are more typical in the language variants basilect and mesolect) Nigerian English acquires a number of unique features.

## Conclusions

The research work has shown that Nigerian English is a territorial variant that continues to be developed under the influence of interference processes from the local languages and cultures. Functioning on the territory of Nigeria, the English language undergoes creolization process and acquires a number of unique features that manifest at all language levels: phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic.

The highest degree of creolization is characteristic of the phonetic and lexical structure of the Nigerian English. Undergoing

creolization process the phonetic structure of the English language of Nigeria is forced to adapt to the already formed phonetic base, as a result of which a sound analogue is chosen in the Nigerian English as close as possible to the phonetic structure of autochthonous languages. Phonetic transformations of Nigerian English are characteristic of the basilect and mesolect language variants.

The lexical structure of Nigerian English combines features of European languages, the American variant of English, as well as features of autochthonous languages, including the interethnic languages Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo. The reasons for lexical creolization are related to the influence of autochthonous

languages and the peculiarities of local cultures. Lexical creolization occurs in basilect, mesolect and acrolect language variants, which is dictated by the desire of Nigerians to follow the norms of the local cultures.

The proposed critical approach to this range of issues makes it possible to identify the main features of Nigerian English, to open up new perspectives in the analysis of linguistic cultures, taking into account the variety of accompanying factors and scientific understanding of the observed trends in the conditions of linguistic and cultural adaptation.

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