

Nigerian English: From Acceptability to Formality

by

Oghenetega Ferife Nwokoro

Department of English and Literary Studies Dennis Osadebay University
Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

and

Prof Adeyemi Daramola PhD.

Department of English and Literary Studies, Dennis Osadebay University
Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract

The age-old controversy surrounding the classification of Nigerian English (NE) as a standard variety of English in the world, in language research, has been on the wane in recent years. That is, the argument concerning its being a “fiction or non-fiction” (Adetugbo 1977) is no longer tenable. Rather, its acceptability all over the world has become a reality (Adeniran 2005, Berger and Luckmann 1966). This chapter contains, therefore, a discourse of its state from non-viability to viability as a distinct variety of English; that is, the currency of its acceptability as a variety of English among the New Englishes is no longer in doubt. Also, by using the theoretical/ conceptual construct of the Construction Grammar, a succinct analysis of its current state of usage as formal and informal expressions are provided. Theories are scientific tools of knowledge in all disciplines, including English. These scientific tools, especially the English language, are means by which science and technology provide developments for the advancement of humanity. This analysis is done, therefore, in order to consolidate its on-going standardization process as a distinct variety of English in the world of New Englishes. Standardisation in language planning is a continuous process in language acquisition and especially learning for national, international and technological developments and co-operation, worldwide.

Keywords: Nigerian English (NE), New Englishes, Construction Grammar, Acceptability, Formality.

Introduction

A history of the English Language in Nigeria cannot be written fully without some notable scholars' perceptions of the subject, British and Nigerian scholars, in particular. This is owing to the fact that the two dialects, British English (BE) and Nigerian English (NE) share, obviously, some basic or cognate linguistic characteristics and differences. As examples, Nigerians who use the language as a Second Language (SL) speak it differently from one another and write it differently, at least, and clearly from those who use it as a First Language (FL). Technically, no one would expect the British and the Nigerian speakers of the language to speak or write it the same way by considering the socio-cultural and geographical differences that influence their use. In other words, there are different linguistic and contextual variability in their uses. Every user of the language as SL has already internalized, obviously, the features of his or her FL, physiologically, before the learning of English. These intrude into their pronunciation structures concerning word stress, pitch contours and intonational applications of meanings.

As a result of the differences in the use of English by FL and SL users in the world, the age-long controversy surrounding the classification of NE as a standard variety of English in the world, in language research, has been on the wane in recent years, about three decades now. That is, the argument concerning its being a "fiction or non-fiction" (Adetugbo 1977) is no longer tenable. Its acceptability or non-acceptability has become a non-issue. Rather, its acceptability all over the world, at least by scholars who have the wherewithal of linguistic analytical tools to make pronouncements on it, has become a reality (Adeniran 2005; Berger and Luckmann 1966).

This chapter contains, therefore, a discourse of its state from non-viability to viability as a distinct variety of English; that is, the currency of its acceptability as a variety of English among the New Englishes is no longer in doubt. In order to strengthen this resolve, we have used the theoretical/conceptual construct of the Construction Grammar (CG) to analyse its current state of usage of formal and informal expressions. Indeed, we have expanded the frontiers of the theory by introducing, exploratorily, a statistical analysis of measurement (see Daramola 2018). Specifically, we have worked on the theory's structure beginning from the introduction of, and an intuitive award of numbers to the pronunciation of words, phrases and sentences to establish their meaning potential. These numbers are our perceptions of the rate of use and meaning for each word or phrase in our data. We are able to do this because we are very good users of the language, and we also teach it to our undergraduate students year after year. In addition, we introduced the concepts of Visibility of Usage (VoU) and Variability of Content (VoC) to calculate their visibility and variability respectively. Finally, we illustrate the Variance formula to draw attention to the significance of the variability. Building on the state of the theory, exploratorily, for our analysis, no doubt, consolidates our position to contribute to the on-going standardisation process of the

language as a distinct variety in the world of New Englishes. More importantly, the theory's analytical tool has been extended to handle linguistic structures of English; nay, Nigerian English. Basically, theories are scientific tools used in all disciplines for the explication of the development of, and the utilization of, material resources for humanity.

Theoretical/Conceptual Construct

A recent but relevant linguistic/grammatical tool of analysis is the Construction Grammar. As a theoretical concept, its central notion provides that all languages are constructions consisting of patterns. These patterns are basic to the analysis of all languages, although our focus is on the English language. Practitioners believe that all utterances are understood to combine multiple different constructions, all of them contributing to the meanings that they entail. Moreover, the analyses of these patterns and their internal properties produce larger patterns. The theory belongs to the field of cognitive concept in linguistics. Theorists in the field believe that constructions consist of pairing linguistic patterns that have meanings, and that these meanings are very basic to all human languages. The pairing of grammatical constructions, as in semiotics, relates form to content.

Construction Grammar (henceforth C x G) was developed in the 1980s by linguists such as Charles Fillmore, Paul Kay and George Lakoff (Goldberg 2006; Croft 2001). Their aim, then, derived from their desire to analyse idioms and fixed expressions. Whereas, the clearly distinct features of the theory are the use of compound and complex word structures or expressions as the building structures of syntactic analysis. Importantly, unlike other theorists who emphasise the innate essence of universal grammar in all languages, C x G analysts emphasise the fact that speakers and users of languages learn constructions inductively as they are exposed to using the languages' cognitive processes. This understanding, among its practitioners, is to develop the frontiers of the theory very fast. This understanding has assisted us in extending its boundaries in this work, exploratorily.

The following four models are used in relation to how information or texts are stored and reviewed in the theory:

Usage-based model – redundancy is the key used to store information; hence, minimal generalisations are applicable. This model is based on inductive meaning. That is, meaning is acquired linguistically in a bottom-up manner through use.

Default model – this consists of networks as form and meaning pairing, in which all features are derived. Unlike Usage-based model, it is derived at a fairly high level of generalization.

Inheritance-model – information is derived only once at the level superordination. The model does not give room for redundancy in the networks.

Full-Entry model – information or messages are derived redundantly at all levels in the taxonomy. Generalisations operate at minimal levels.

Of the four models, we have adopted the usage-based one because English is meaning-based and its realization is through its use. Our capability to assign numbers to words and phrases of our data is based on inductive reasoning and CXG pairing of structures for meaning realisations. More importantly, language usage is important, particularly in the onerous task of the acquisition and learning process. As in this work, our data belong to the usage process. So, we have analysed naturally occurring clauses and sentences.

Acceptability

Prior to a description of the concept of acceptability, a succinct historical and sociolinguistic concepts of language contact and standardization become necessary. Before the Portuguese came to the West African coast in about 1445, the Arab traders came to Nigeria earlier through the Trans-Saharan trade routes about the 11th Century. It is generally agreed by many scholars of English that the British arrived the Nigeria in 1842 (Spencer 1971; Daramola 2019). As communication between the foreigners and the indigenous people must be difficult – it is assumed that the first means of communication must have been sign communication. There developed, therefore, what many people have referred to as “coast”, “working” or “broken English”, which later became Pidgin; today as Nigerian Pidgin (NP). Hence, the origin of the English language began in Nigeria.

In his book, *A Short Guide to English Style* (1961, see reference below) A, Warner wrote, *inter alia*:

“All writers of English, even those without trace of literary ambition, should try to keep their English as clean as they can. Words are the tools of thought. If they become rusty and dirty, and lose their sharp points and cutting edges, thinking itself becomes less keen and efficient. Man needs language for the control of his environment and the cleaner his language, the better his control”.

The above reference to the state of English in the early years of its introduction to Nigeria by Warner is evidence of the need to develop the language to a standard form. All of these developments were undertaken by the missionaries and British administration for the one hundred years of colonization. They had to develop clerical officers and interpreters to liaise between them and the people. As it was reported, many of the freed slaves from Sierra Leone were available to assist in the development of the language. Indeed, some of them still commanded their parent language (s); hence, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was able to translate the English Bible into Yoruba.

A Nigerian scholar, Omolewa (1979), also observed the state of the language and wrote as quoted below:

“During some examination of the papers, documents, letters and newspapers publications of Nigerians, the present writer was struck by the existence of a variety of English among Nigerians. This brand of English was ‘ungrammatical’, different from the ‘Queen’s English’ and indifferent to the rules of grammar, syntax, word formation or lexis. This variety of English was particularly noticeable because the country during the same period had a group of educated Nigerians who wrote in ‘standard’ English with ‘piquant’ style and ‘pugnacious’ diction.

The above statement by Omolewa (op cit.1979), contains a description of the language at the substandard but standardization level. Significant number of Nigerians used the language sufficiently as very good, good, fair and at illiterate levels.

As Jowitt (1955) concluded his very long analysis of the concept of “Nigeria’s National Language Question: Choices and Constraints” – examining many major Nigerian languages, his reference to English is obviously a tacit acceptability of the language being superordinately positioned above all languages in Nigeria. We quote it here, *inter alia*:

“Whichever scenario proves to be correct, it is likely – as many Nigerian commentators have pointed out – that English will also remain an official language in Nigeria for a long time to come. It will probably continue to have much the same functions as at present: the principal lingua franca of educated Nigerians, the principal medium of literary expression. The major change that it will undergo will concern not his status but its form, since the process of indigenization which already makes Nigerian English a recognizable and highly distinctive variety (or cluster of varieties) will continue.” (Jowitt 1995:53).

The above observation and assertive comments of Jowitt is an affirmation of the confirmation of the status of English in Nigeria. This research work consolidates, therefore, its distinctive variety as a tool of communication in the twenty-first century and beyond. It will continue to serve as the country’s official language for political, religious and the language of science and technology in a similar way that it has served British, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, nay, all developed countries of the world where English is used natively.

Formality

Formality, as a concept in this work, engenders the concept of informality, automatically. In other words, an examination of formality must, of necessity, attract informality. A formal expression in English, either spoken or written attracts, therefore, grammatical rules of good punctuation, the maintenance of singularity or plurality of nominal words, orthographical representation of the upper case (capital) and lower case (small) letters, paragraphing, the mixture of long and short sentences although in many professions, short sentences are often preferred to long ones etc. It is very important in business settings to write short sentences. Long sentences are frowned at in business reports.

In its spoken form, good pronunciation of words, the maintenance of pauses commensurate with commas, semicolons, colons, dashes and the applications of stress and intonation patterns are required. More importantly, messages must be organized for presentations in board and committee meetings. Nowadays, messages may be couched in graphs, charts and pictures of various colours. No colloquialisms, jokes, are included in formal professional writings such as reports because time and space are economized maximally. For the academic formal presentations, similar rules are followed. The differences in various formal writings are the registers or registerial languages of the professions. That is, the technical terms associated with various professions differ from one to another. In other words, each profession must have its register or jargon that is used day-by-day to carry out its functions and duties.

Informal expressions are used in informal contexts. Unlike the formal expressions, their spoken forms are spontaneous, in most cases, without much care for the finesse of standard usage. Conversations among friends and relations exemplify informal speeches. No rules of turn-taking are formally adhered to, and voices are not modulated to show respect especially in moments of anger, anxiety and mood swings. These characteristics of informality are exhibited in second language situations, in particular. As a result of its spontaneity, even experts of English are faulted for committing grammatical errors at times. It occurs among native speakers of English and much more among second language users. In Nigeria, where multilingualism is dominant, the linguistic concepts of code-mixing and code-switching are frequently used in informal contexts. Informal expressions are introduced, nowadays, into some professions such as broadcasting – radio and television programmes, especially when indigenous languages are used. Nigerian Pidgin (NP) has gained prominence as a viable language in recent years. So, it is commonly used in theatrical or dramatic presentations, comedy and jokes. Ever since the inception of literary works in Nigeria, NP has taken root among several writers because messages are brought closer to the people in the grassroots by its use. Most importantly, Nigerian Pidgin, like Nigerian English, has been accepted and validated as a variety of pidgin in the world of its usage.

Data for this Study

These texts were collected at random in the months of December 2024 and January 2025. Both authors used an observation method such that the producers were not aware that they were being observed. They were collected from members of the University community - academic and administrative, broadcasters on radio and television, contributors to programmes on radio and television, students' answer scripts etc. conference brochures and online writings. The data were collected, therefore, from educated speakers of English in Nigeria. What was common to all of them was their situational and contextual products. More importantly, they were produced as texts in sentences. Modern textual analysis is concerned with the explication of meaning in contexts. The choice of five examples in each group among scores of examples is for a wider coverage of examples and the management of space. The sentences were not edited at all, although we pointed

out the infelicities in the discussions that follow each presentation. Each datum is, therefore, a natural occurrence rather than being artificially constructed.

Analysis

The exploratory concepts of Visibility of Usage (VoU) and Variability of Content (VoC) are basic to an understanding of the statistics in this section. The words form the basis of VoU because the authors used them in terms of the numbers or figures attributed to them concerning their perception of function in NE. The Total addition at the end of each word and the total number of words have been calculated to determine the VoC. We have applied the use of bar charts to further consolidate the varied texts. Also, an illustration of the Variance of both VoU and VoC is provided in the Discussion section of the work.

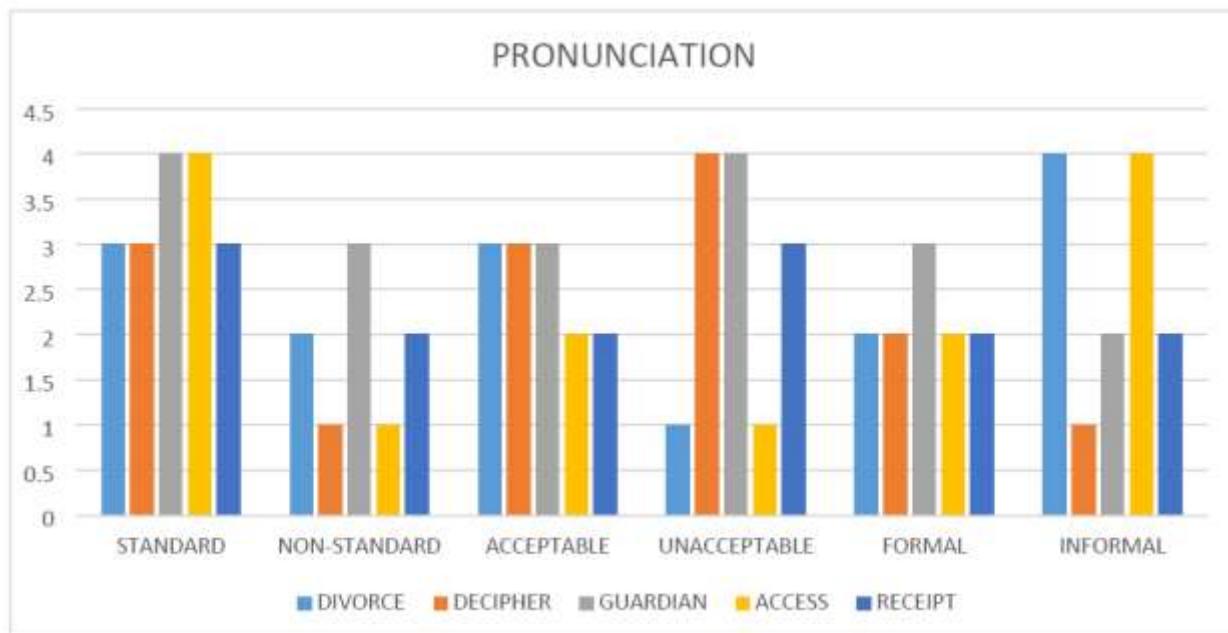
Text 1: Pronunciation

- a. Both the man and the woman has *divorced* each other a long time ago.
- b. Members of the audience cannot *decipher* their right from their left.
- c. I know the current *Guardian* Newspaper Editor-in-Chief.
- d. Shall we drive slowly to *Access* Bank because we have plenty of time at our disposal?
- e. Where is the *receipt* of the car just purchased from Lagos?

Many Nigerians pronounce divorce as /daivos/ instead of /dIvɔ:s/. It has to do with First Language interference. In a similar way, decipher is pronounced /desifa/ instead of /dIsaIf(r)/. Guardian is pronounce /gaidian/ instead of /gɑ:di:n/. Many Nigerians pronounce Access as if it is the word “assess” instead of /ækses/. So, it is pronounced without the sound /k/. Again, many Nigerians pronounce the /p/ of receipt /rIṣi:t/whereas it is silent in good or standard pronunciation.

Table 1, Text 1: Pronunciation

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	divorce	3	2	3	1	2	4	15
B	Decipher	3	1	3	4	2	1	14
C	Guardian	4	3	3	4	3	2	19
D	Access	4	1	2	1	2	4	14
E	Receipt	3	2	2	3	2	2	14
		17	09	13	13	11	13	76



Text 2: Orthographical Infelicities

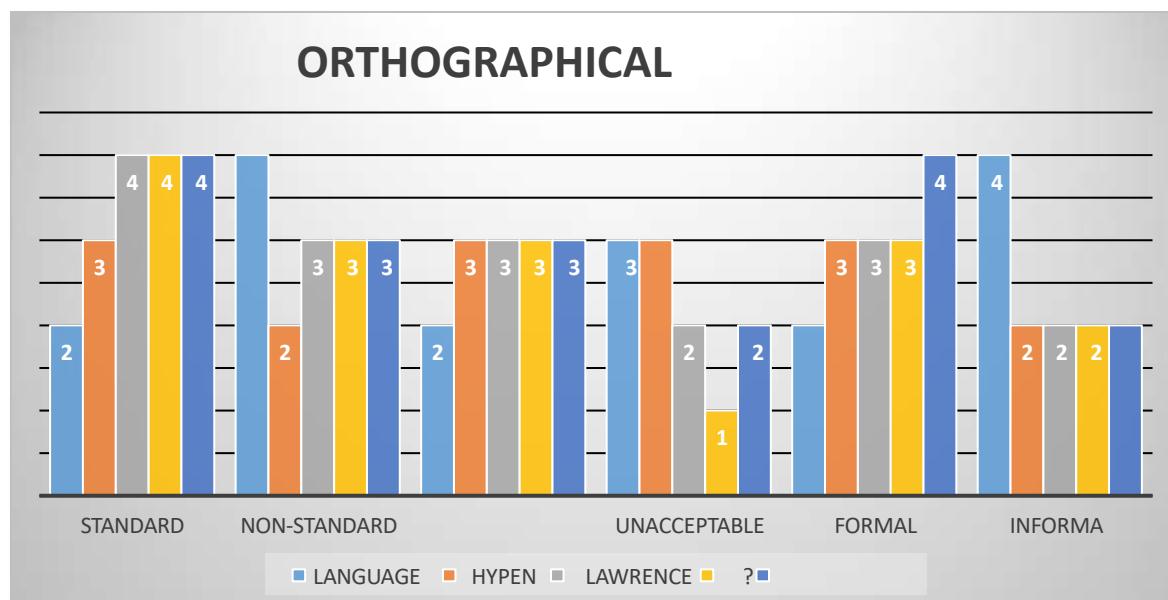
- (Marking instructions) Wrong division of *lang* (language) here!
- Use *hyphen* rather than the *dash*!
- lawrence* is very good in athletics but not in *english*.
- How, on earth do you compose a sentence in English without the *question mark* (?).
- You cannot write good essays without paragraph *indentation*.

Other than pronunciation as in Text 1 above, Text 2 is concerned with the writing system in English. It has a pedagogical essence in both its computer and handwritten applications. In other words, in spite of the pervasive influence of the computer in the writing system, users of English are made to write in special situations. Candidates attending standard interviews for jobs or admissions are tested as they write one-or-two-page essays. Text 2a. is concerned with the right-margin management. The word language can be written as follows depending on the space available – lan/gua/ langua/ge. Some learners of the language cannot differentiate the *hyphen* from *dash*. Whereas the hyphen is for word division such as compound and complex words. Examples are: co-operation or word-for-word etc. The dash is used to extend the meaning of a construction – that is, what a particular statement means. To begin a word with the lower case (small) letter instead of the upper case (capital) letter as in Text 2c. *lawrence/english* is very poor.

Writers who forget to add a question mark after a question construction is careless. Some writers forget to use paragraphing to construct their writings. There are the indented and double spacing paragraphs.

Table 2:Text 2

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Language	2	4	2	3	2	4	17
B	Hypen	3	2	3	3	3	2	16
C	Lawrence	4	3	3	2	3	2	17
D	?	4	3	3	1	3	2	16
E	Indentation	4	3	3	2	4	2	18
		17	15	14	11	15	12	84



Text 3: Titles

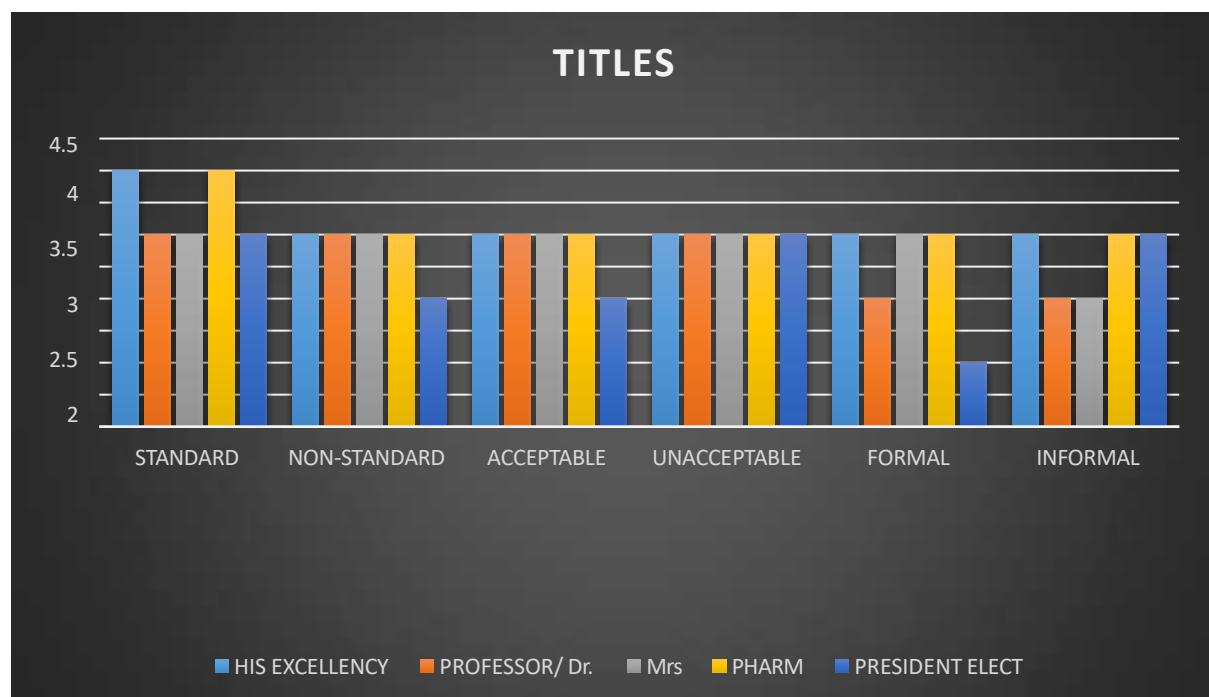
- His Excellency R.T. Honourable (Elder) Sheriff F.O. Oborevwori CON, JP
- Professor Dr. High Chief Hon. Oghenetega Joshua called the Bishop on phone yesterday.
- Dr. (Mrs) Deborah Moses taught me in the third year in the University.
- Sir. (Pharm) Patrick Ferife was the best pharmacist of the year in 2024.
- President Elect, Engineer Korede, FAS, GCFR, Pharm was a brilliant person.

Much premium is placed on titles in NE. His Excellency R.T. Honourable (Elder) Sheriff F.O. Oborevwori is the Governor of Delta State, Nigeria. So, his name has to be accompanied by these titles especially in formal situations. The reason for putting Elder in bracket is not known to sociolinguistics descriptions of titles. It ought to be written without the title if desirable to be written. Even the academics and academicians are not spared from the use of multiple titles. In some cases, some professors include Dr. or PhD to demonstrate the fact that they are professors

who had obtained the PhD earlier on because some become professors without having obtained the PhD degree. In Text 3.3, the Mrs ought not to be in brackets at all. It is a thing of pride for a lady to be married in Nigeria, hence its use. It is also used when there is no indication that the person is female. Text 3.d demonstrates that every profession has professional titles, such as Pharm, which stands for pharmacists. In Text 3.e, rather than being an ordinary description, President-elect is used as a title in Nigeria.

Table 3: Text 3

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	His Excellency	4	3	3	3	3	3	19
B	Professor Dr.	3	3	3	3	2	2	16
C	(Mrs)	3	3	3	3	3	2	17
D	Pharm	4	3	3	3	3	3	19
E	President elect	3	2	2	3	1	3	14
		17	14	14	15	12	13	85



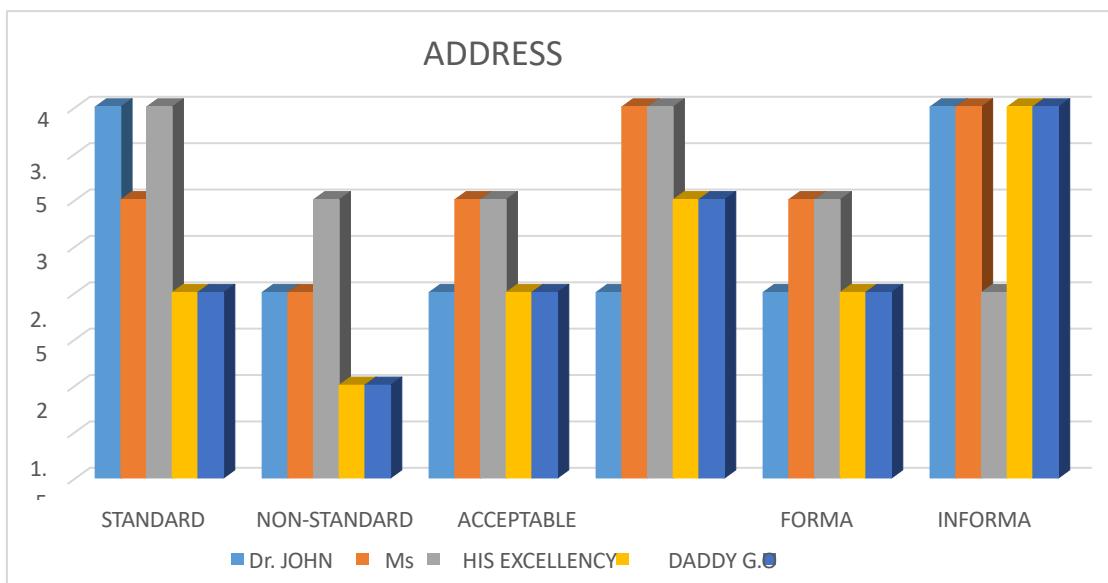
Text 4: Address Patterns

- a. Dr. John must be informed of the change in the examination time-table.
- b. Ms Mary Njokwu will be attending the meeting.
- c. His Excellency is supposed to speak first at the ceremony.
- d. Daddy G.O. cannot attend the meeting of the junior pastors.
- e. Mummy G.O. does not allow just anybody to see Our Daddy in the Lord.

Sociolinguistically, titles and address systems go hand-in-hand. That is, they are used sequentially. In Text 4. a., however, the use of the title Dr., as an example, with the First Name is informal if not wrong outright. Its formal form is Title+Surname. Ms as an address pattern is not as old in use as Mr. and Mrs. It is used for a lady who is old enough to marry, but she is not married. Or, it is used for a lady who was married before but has become single again. In Text 4.c., His Excellency as an address pattern, must include the name. Both Texts d. and e. are discussed together here because of their register – Christian address patterns. Their origin belonged to the Church, whereby the General Overseer is addressed as “Daddy” (a Father in the Lord rather than a biological father). Similarly, his wife automatically becomes Mummy G.O.

Table 4: Text 4.

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Dr. John	4	2	2	2	2	4	16
B	Ms	3	2	3	4	3	4	19
C	His Excellency	4	3	3	4	3	2	19
D	Daddy G.O	2	1	2	3	2	4	14
E	Mummy G.O	2	1	2	3	2	4	14
		15	09	12	16	12	18	82



Text 5: Modal Auxiliaries

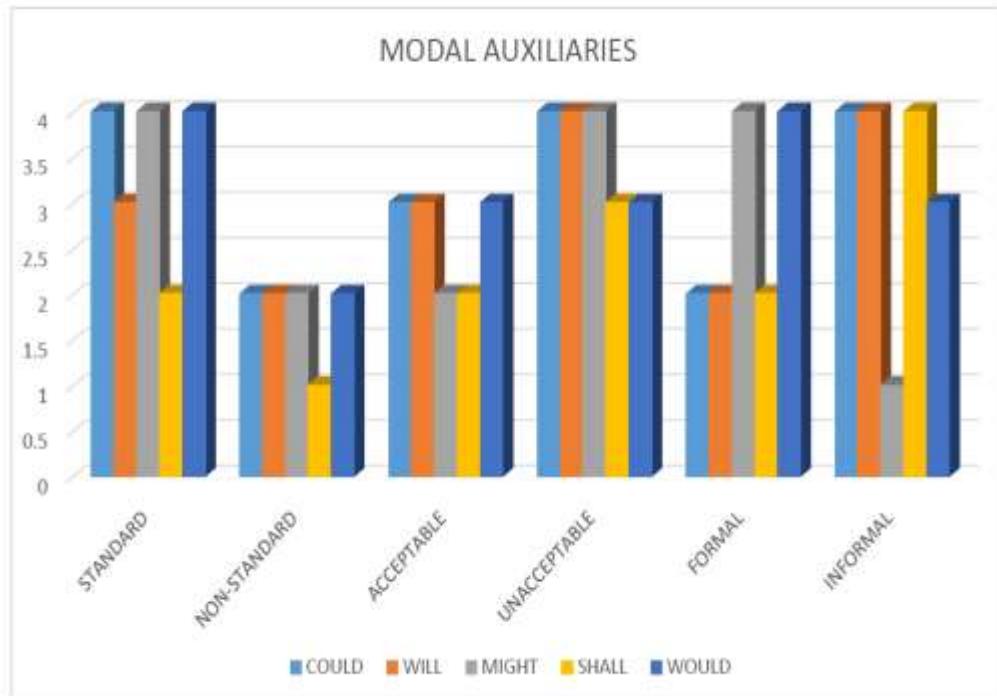
- Could you pass the salt (to me).
- I will attend the party
- Might we go home now?
- Shall we talk to both daddy and mummy tonight?
- Would you love me like no other person?

The Modal Auxiliaries are beautiful agents of formal and informal interpersonal relations. This is owing to the fact that they are used as, possibilities, polite, optional and obligatory expressions. In Text 5.a. “could” is used for a senior or an elderly person. For a younger colleague, “can” is used. It is often observed that many Nigerians add “please” before or after the sentence. This addition is unnecessary because “could” is the highest form of politeness in English. TEXT 5.b contains “will” which has obligatory meaning unlike “would”. “Might” in Text 5.c. is used to show both politeness and the possibility of an event which is yet to take place. While the word “may” is also polite here, “might” is more formal. Text 5.d. is in a question form. In practice, the modal auxiliary is not much in use nowadays among native speakers; some speakers use it for stylistic purposes. “Would” is very polite especially as a request form in Text 5.e.

Table 5: Text 5

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Could	4	2	3	4	2	4	19
B	Will	3	2	3	4	2	4	18

C	Might	4	2	2	4	4	1	17
D	Shall	4	1	2	4	4	2	17
E	Would	4	2	3	3	4	3	19
		19	09	13	19	16	14	90



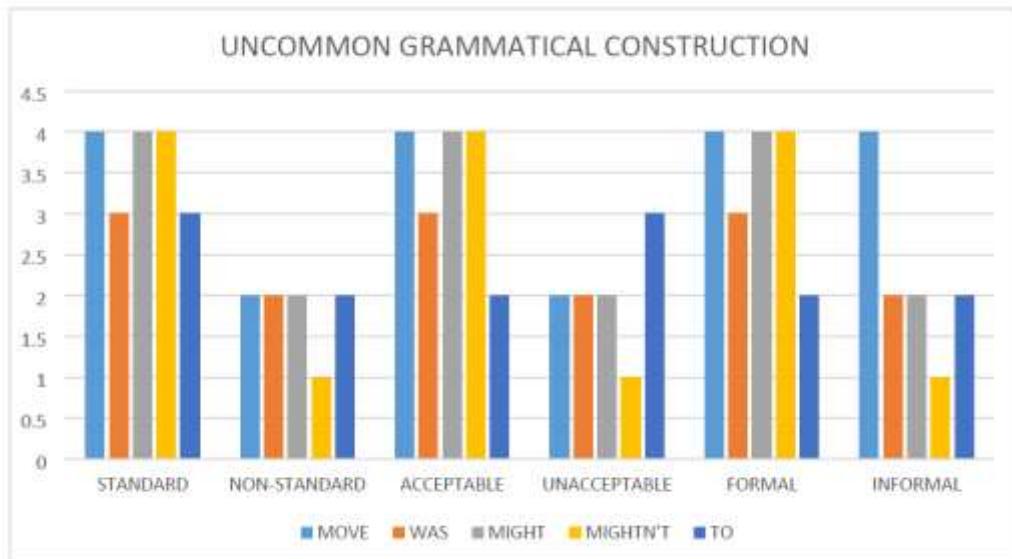
Text 6: Uncommon grammatical constructions

- a. It is high time we moved out of this bloody place.
- b. If I was him, I would climb to the to the highest point of Mount Sinai.
- c. Might we not have spoken to the General Manager of the company?
- d. Mightn't we close the case before the Tribunal of Justice Kehinde Durodola?
- e. Come to the table to dine with us.

Many Nigerians find the contents of Text 6. difficult to comprehend because they are not in common usage. Text a. should be “It is high time we *moved* out of this bloody place” in conventional grammatical usage. Its formality is fully meaningful in the sense that the movement has not taken place. Also in b., *was* is often replaced with *were* in order to take its meaning potential further from the immediate past. A reference of the event in the sentence is in the past and so could not be acted in the moment of speech. We testify that very few Nigerians would use “might” as it is used above. It would appear a quaint usage and uncommon. Whereas, we classify it as highly formal because native speakers use it quite often and formally. Text d. is like TEXT c. The only difference is that it is the negative form of the positive form in Text c. Text e is an uncommon use in Nigeria. What we have is “Come to the table and dine with us”. It is distinctly a Nigerian usage because *and* is less formal than *to* in the context.

Table 6: Text 6

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Move	4	2	4	2	4	4	20
B	Was	3	2	3	2	3	2	15
C	Might	4	2	4	2	4	2	18
D	Mightn't	4	1	4	1	4	1	15
E	To	3	2	2	3	2	2	14
		18	09	17	10	17	11	82



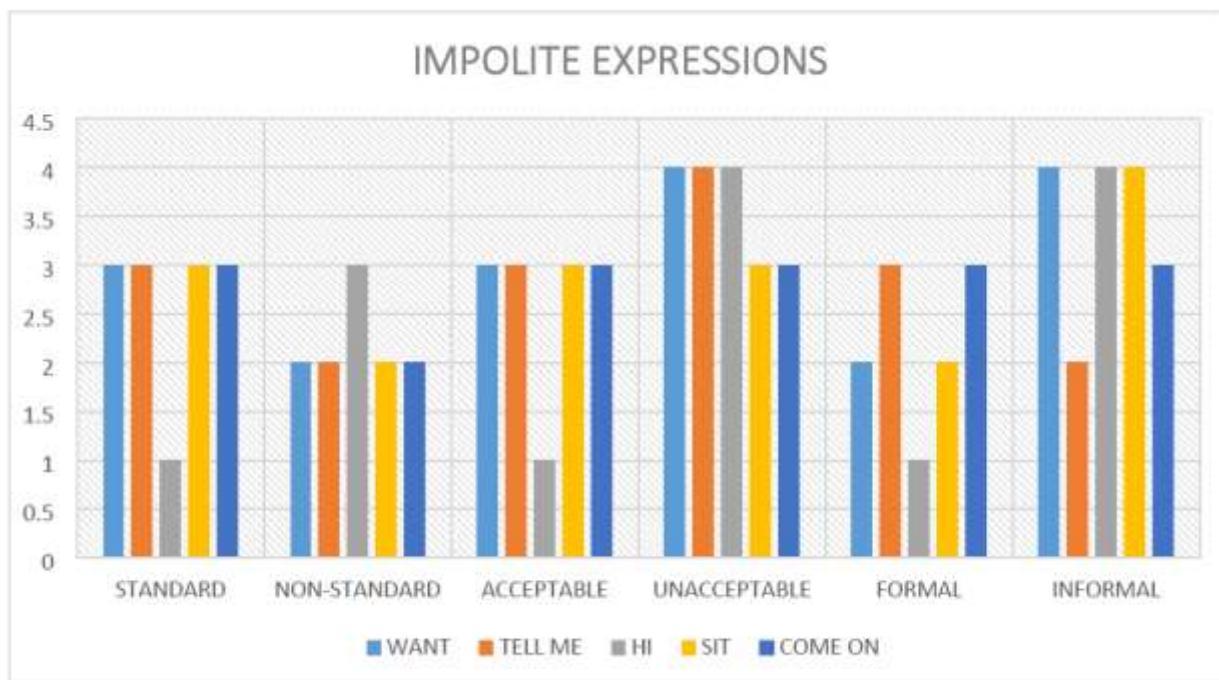
Text 7. Impolite Expressions

- (in a formal meeting) I want to know, Sir, if African herbs and its nuances can cure all diseases.
- (From a journalist on radio or television to a guest) Tell me what you know for the benefit of our viewers.
- Hi (in a writing request note to a Professor) Sir!
- Sit down now! (a junior officer/staff in an office)
- Come on, Sir! (to a senior or an elderly person)

In Text 7a., the expression “I want to know” is impolite in a formal context. As in the study of economics, people’s wants are insatiable, but needs are satiable. In English, polite forms such as “Could I know... May I know, Do you mind responding to this question...etc.? are desirable in formal contexts. Similarly, for a journalist to ask a governor of a State or even a Minister: “Tell me” as in Text 7b above is very much impolite. Could, May, Might as in “Could you tell me” or “May I ask you, Sir...” would be very polite. Some Nigerians who use “could” often add “please”. For “could”, because it is the highest word for politeness in its category of the modal auxiliaries, it is unnecessary to do so. It is also unnecessary to add “Sir” to it but one may add “Sir” to “May” or “Can” should he or she mistakenly use these ones. To use “Hi” in the context of 7c. as recorded above is very impolite and rude. The word “Sir” may be used. Indeed, someone admitted to an office may be asked to sit down. Even for a colleague, how much more a senior person, it is very polite to say: “Do you mind to sit, Sir?” or “May you sit, please!” The word “down” is often not necessary because no one sits “up” anyway. In conversations in a formal setting, an expression such as “Come on, Sir” would be regarded as rude to a senior person. Instead, expressions such as “Would you look into the matter properly or, Not at all, Sir”.

Table 7. Text 7.

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Want	3	2	3	4	2	4	18
b	Tell me	3	2	3	4	3	2	17
c	Hi	1	3	1	4	1	4	14
D	Sit	3	2	2	3	2	4	16
E	Come on	3	2	3	3	3	3	17
		13	11	12	18	11	17	82



Text 8: Comparative Use *Like*

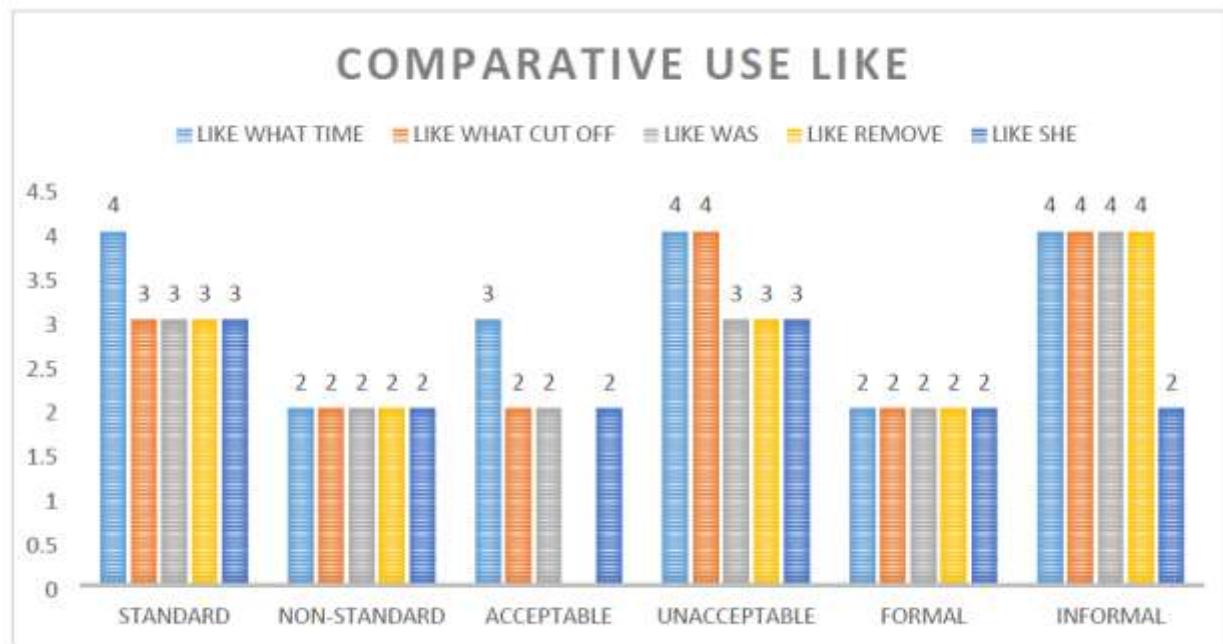
- It is like I want to visit the convenience.
- Like what cut off mark will give me admission into the University of my Choice?
- Like I was there for like three months before he joined the company.
- He wanted to like remove the money from my purse.
- Somebody was like she should come to work in the bank.

The common word “like” in English is a comparative one. We may give it the grammatical formular that $X = Y$ or $Y = X$; that is, x looks like Y or Y looks like X . In Text a, all the uses of “like” are very informal although they are used to express the meanings that users have tacitly agreed that they have. In Text 8a. “like” can be replaced, formally, with “as if”. In b., “like” can be replaced with “what”. In c., there are two ‘likes’. The first one, has a zero marker; that is, its use

is unnecessary whereas the second one can be replaced with “about”. In Text d, the like also has a zero marker – its use is unnecessary. In e. the use of like is meaningless; a situation that is different from containing a zero marker.

Table 8: Text 8

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Like what time	4	2	3	4	2	4	19
B	Like what cut off....	3	2	2	4	2	4	17
C	Like I was....	3	2	2	3	2	4	16
D	Like remove...	3	2		3	2	4	16
E	Like she...	3	2	2	3	2	2	14
		16	10	11	17	10	18	82



Text 9: Academic Papers

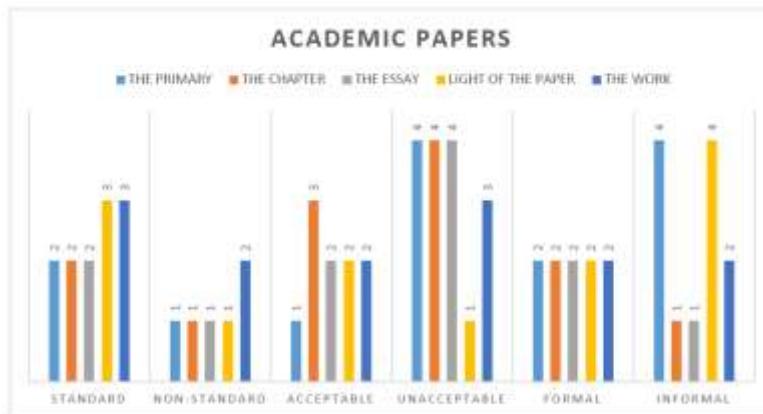
a. The primary aim of the paper is to explore the possibility of the reduction of the country's population.

- b. This chapter contends that the rural farmers make more profit than the urban farmers.
- c. The essay's dialogue argues that Aristotle and Plato had the same aspirations towards building The Republic.
- d. It is in the light of the paper that the Federal Government stopped the double taxation plan.
- e. The work concludes, therefore, that the wisdom of God supersedes that of man

We consider the usage in Text 9, a universal practice in the composition of academic papers. As budding purists versus discourse analysts, we put meaning on top of the gradable characteristics of language. Also, we do not know what figures of speech or the mode of metaphor that can be chosen to explain the usage in the academic discourse. One is tempted to attribute the figure of speech of personification to many of the items. Yet, that figure of speech does not actually fit into the linguistic template of metaphor which in recent years is encapsulated in some linguistic theories – Hallidayan Systemic Functional Theory (SFT). (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:586-636). In 9a., it is the paper that is attributed with the aim of the composition of the paper and not the author or the writer. Instead, we may have: “The aim of the writer of the paper is...”. In 9b., we have “The Chapter contends...”. How can the chapter do so – no spirit and no soul to evaluate the situation of contention? In the chapter, we/I contend that... may be a better option. In 9c. We don't know from the source whereby an essay has the resource to engage in any dialogic discourse. Rather, we suggest: “The essay is a dialogue...”. In 9d., we have “It is in the light of the paper that...”. This usage appear to be meaningless in its entirety. What nature of illumination does the paper have? Instead, we may have “The direction of our argument or our analysis of the paper is towards...”. Finally, for Text 9., “The work contains a conclusion, or we conclude in the paper that...”.

Table 9: Text 9.

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	The primary	2	1	1	4	2	4	14
B	The chapter	2	1	3	4	2	1	13
C	The essay	2	1	2	4	2	2	13
D	Light of the paper	3	1	2	1	2	4	13
E	The work	3	2	2	3	2	2	14
		16	06	10	16	10	13	67



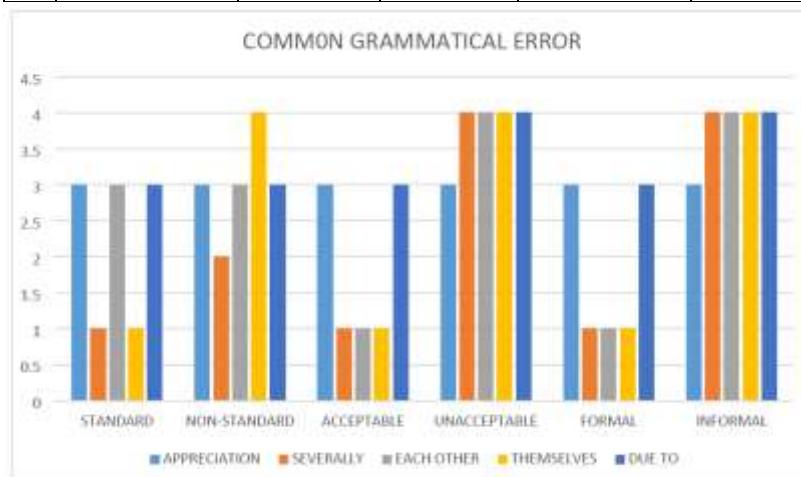
Text 10: Common Grammatical Errors

- a. I *appreciate*.
- b. I looked you up in the office *severally*.
- c. All the members of the class, say about two hundred respect *each other*.
- d. Both the husband and wife began to beat *themselves* after a long argument.
- e. I couldn't come to school yesterday *due to* illness.

The common errors in Text 10 may be analysed as follows. The verb *appreciate* as used in the text must attract an object because it is used transitively. Examples are: “I appreciate your advice or I appreciate your intervention in the discourse”. *Severally* in 10b. means separately (see *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* 10th Edition. So, it does not mean “several times” as it is used in NE. Text 10c. is an old-use error; that is, foundational to the beginning of the creation of NE. “Each other” has the meaning of two people. Over two hundred people in the sentence will attract “one another”. In Text d., the meaning of *themselves* ought to be each other because it is madness if each one begins to beat himself or herself. Finally, in 10e., although Nigerians use ‘due to’ in many instances instead of ‘owing to’ we recommend the use of the latter phrasal one. In the text above, “due to” is inappropriate. The meaning of “due to” is an entitlement or what one is entitled to. We assert that no one would be willing to be entitled to illness as used in Text e. One may be “due to” to go on leave, nevertheless. So, it is good to have the expression – “I couldn’t come to school yesterday owing to illness.

Table 10: Text 10

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Appreciate	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
B	Severally	1	2	1	4	1	4	13
C	Each other	3	3	1	4	2	4	17
D	Themselves	1	4	1	4	1	4	15
E	Due to	3	3	3	4	3	4	20
		11	15	09	19	10	19	83



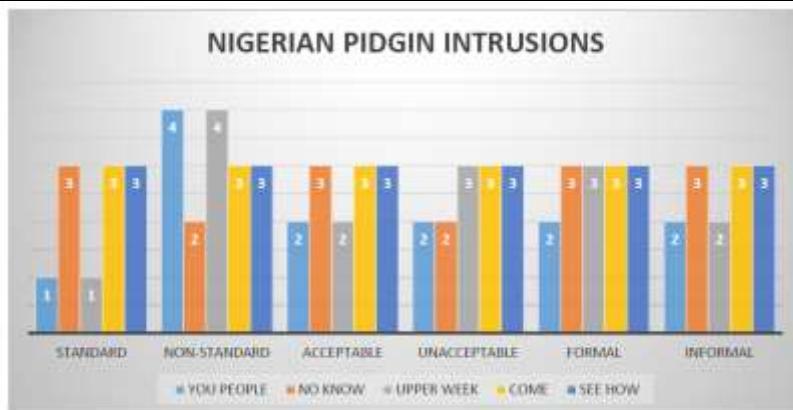
Text 11: Nigerian Pidgin Intrusions

- You people* cannot do that!
- Dem no know sey people *come/kom* dey wise nowadays.
- Seeing you during the *upper week*.
- Now, come make we go now!
- In the interim, se you see how they com end the show.

In Text 11a above, the phrasal expression, "You people", as used in NE may be regarded as rude and impolite but seeing in the context of Nigerian Pidgin (NP), it is good. However, such a mixed usage can only be seen as the sociolinguistic concepts of code-mixing code-switching. Text 11b. has all the attributes of NP as many words have the orthography of NP. Again, the text could be used in the contexts of code-switching and code-mixing, sociolinguistically. Text 11c. has the phrasal expression *upper week* which was coined a few years ago, most probably a decade ago. Text 11d. has the unnecessary word *now* repeated at the beginning of and the end of the sentence. It might be a feature of the spoken discourse or outright NP. Text 11e. is NP with the use of the word *se* which is regarded as an interrogative marker.

Table 11: Text 11

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	You people	1	4	2	2	2	2	13
B	No know	3	2	3	2	3	3	16
C	Upper week	1	4	2	3	3	2	15
D	Come	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
E	See how	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
		11	16	13	13	14	13	80



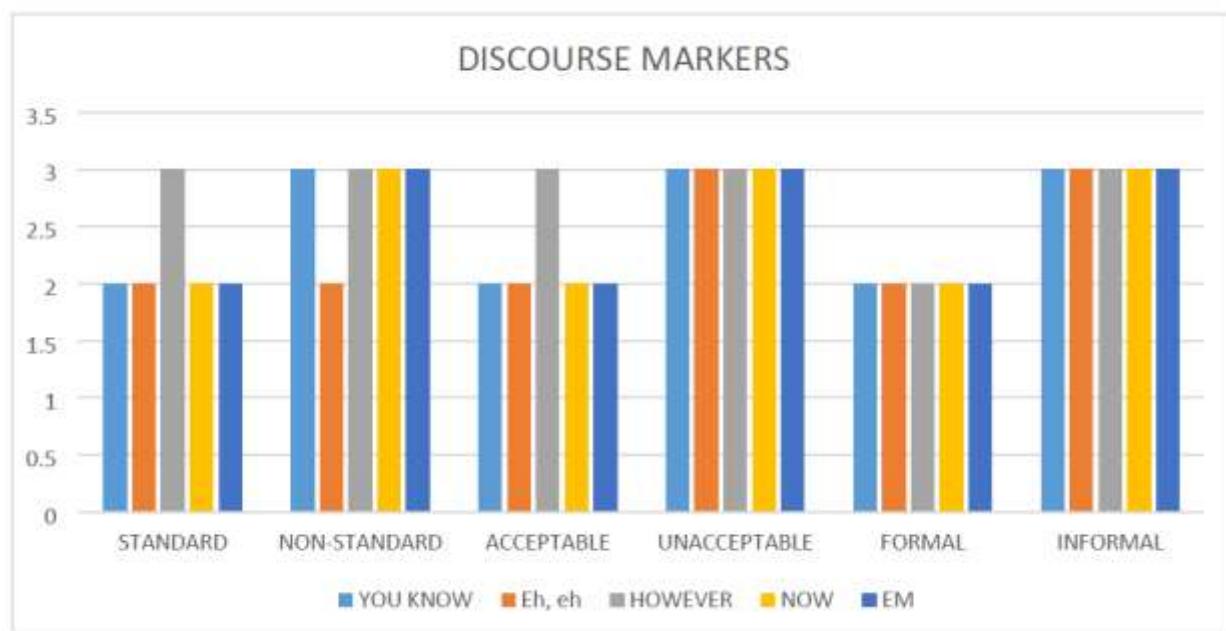
Text 12: Discourse Markers

- You know* that I hate such acts of rudeness to elders *you know*.
- Come off it eh! eh! It's not good to do that eh!
- However you tried, you, you cannot climb the mountain!
- ow, go straight to the left; then to the right, now to the right again. Then you're there now!
- Em, em, em, you see, you see how they come kill the man.

Texts 12a, b, c and e portray different spoken discourse markers. They are repetitions of “*you know*”, “*eh, you* and *em*. It is only Text 12 d. that is different. There are multiple repetitions of *now* (3), and *right* (2).

Table 12: Text 12

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	You know	2	3	2	3	2	3	15
B	Eh, eh	2	2	2	3	2	3	14
C	However	3	3	3	3	2	3	17
d	Now	2	3	2	3	2	3	15
e	Em	2	3	2	3	2	3	15
		11	14	11	15	10	15	76



Text 13: New Coinages

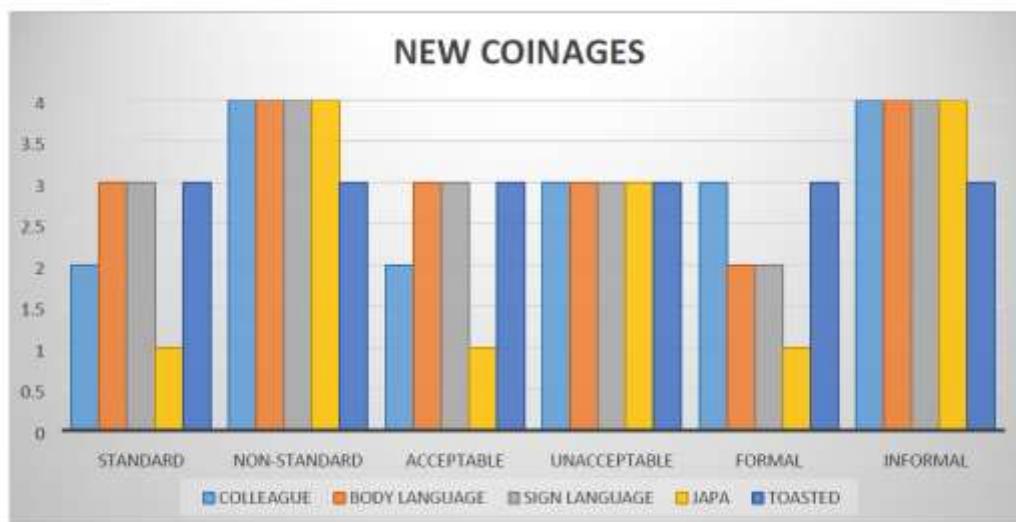
- The lady is my new colleague in the office, although she is a professor and I am a senior lecturer.
- Their body language says it all – she stole the money.
- You cannot understand the sign language except you learn it.
- We need to japa to London soon.
- Have you toasted her before she arrived from London?

Text 13a. consists of the use of the word *colleague* in an illogical context. The speaker is a senior lecturer, and the colleague is a professor. The inherent meaning of the word colleague is indicative of two people of the same rank. In NE, a colleague is someone with whom you work in the same office. We have introduced a new concept to use *person* instead of colleague whenever there are

differences in rank or position in a context. In a similar usage as in use in academic work, universally, the phrasal expression, *body language* is widely used in English. We object to its use especially in formal contexts. Body language is non-existent for this analysis. Scholars of English language and linguists all over the world agree that the two basic forms of language are the spoken and written genres. The “body” has no language. What its users mean is that the body is often used to signal some meaning that we do not and cannot refer to as body language but body communication. Similarly in 13c., we regard *sign language* as sign communication as body communication.

Table 13: text 13

	Word	Standard	Non-standard	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Formal	Informal	Total
a	Colleague	2	4	2	3	3	4	18
B	Body language	3	4	3	3	2	4	19
C	Sign language	3	4	3	3	2	4	19
D	Japa	1	4	1	3	1	4	14
E	Toasted	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
		12	19	12	15	11	19	88



Discussion

The work on Nigerian English contains succinct discussions of the history of the language from its inception in Nigeria. That is, it is a contact/working language. It has developed tremendously since then to serve as the country's official language. With the introduction of Western education by the British, Nigerians have learnt to use the language very well, such that it is now regarded as a variety of English compared to other Englishes in any parts of the world.

Furthermore, in this work, discussions of its being formal and informal, acceptable or unacceptable have been provided. As already discussed and analysed, the data are naturally occurring texts. Most importantly, the use of tables and bar charts has been provided as graphical representations of the data. The theoretical model of Construction Grammar has been used. It is very relevant to the analysis because of its practical nature of the use of English in both the spoken and written forms.

The major highlight of the work is the extension of the boundary of the work, exploratorily, as a result of our introduction of the concepts of Visibility of Usage (VoU) and the Variability of Content (VoC). Both the tables and the bar charts perform the same function. The only difference is that while the figures show the variables' visibility of the figures, the bar charts show the variance of the variability. The easiest grammatical variance is that the range of figures is used to explain the figures from the lowest to the highest value or vice versa in the distribution. To find the range, one is expected to subtract the lowest value from the highest value or vice versa in the data set.

As an illustration, Grammatical Variance = X Maximum (Max.) – Y Minimum (Min) or Vice Versa.

In Text 1, 4a above, we calculate Dr. John as follows:

Standardisation Variance $4 - 2 = 2$

Acceptability " $2 - 2 = 0$

Formality " $2 - 4 = -2$

In Text 13 above, we calculate colleague as follows:

Standardisation Variance $2 - 4 = -2$

Acceptability " $2 - 3 = -1$

Formality " $3 - 4 = -1$

Across Texts 1 and 13, their Variance is $76 - 78 = -12$.

These variances are significant grammatically, both interpretatively and explanatorily.

Conclusion

It is our submission that the work contains a demonstration of the concept of Nigerian English from its inception in the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. Our conception concerns its use as either formal and informal contexts or situations. Its formal use is official, while its informal use is non-official. We advocate the separation of its formal use from informal use. We identified various texts that form its pronunciation to new or emerging coinages because all languages must grow. Most importantly and in conclusion, Nigerian English has come to stay as a distinct variety of World Englishes.

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