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SOCIOLINGUISTIC REFLECTIONS IN THE USE OF DETERMINERS IN ESL AND EFL: THE EDUCATED NIGERIAN ENGLISH (ENE) EXAMPLES

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Abstract*:* This paper examines the use of English articles and some determiners in English as second language (ESL) with a view to establish the differences between ESL and native English use of determiners and the sociolinguistic factors that inform their use. Examples were drawn from Educated Nigerian English (ENE) and Standard British English (SBE). The paper is based on the concepts of linguistic *interference* and *intraference*. Observation and recording of spontaneous speeches, secondary sources, the Internet and questionnaire were used to gather data from 2005 to 2014 across Nigeria to establish how determiners are deployed and the currency and ubiquity of the patterns observed in ENE. The responses to the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed and presented in simple percentile, frequency tables and charts, and discussed thereafter. The study discovered that there are clear differences in the patterns of the use of articles in ESL, as the ENE examples show. As a result of interference and intraference, educated Nigerians tend to overgeneralize the use of articles and determiners with noun phrases, applying them superfluously or omitting them where necessary and even sometimes using 'the' as a possessive determiner for 'his,' 'her' and 'their.' They also often yoke similar and exclusive determiners together in nominal structures. The paper concludes that these patterns should be treated as some of the features that characterize Nigerian English syntax.
Keywords: *Sociolinguistics, articles, ENE, SBE, interference, intraference*

INTRODUCTION

Articles**,** particularly the definite 'the', are the most commonly used of all the groups of words in English. A writer/speaker may manage to construct a sentence without using an article, but he/she will find it impossible or difficult to compose a cohesive paragraph of many sentences without using an article. In ENE, the highest variety of Nigerian English also called Standard Nigerian English (SNE), the use of the ubiquitous articles *a, an* and *the* as well as the determiners *this*, *that* and *some* reflect certain sociolinguistic patterns.

Sociolinguistics is a term in linguistics which denotes the (study of the) nexus between language and society and several other issues of language and the people that use it. Crystal (2009) says that sociolinguistics and sociolinguists study such issues as "the linguistic identity of groups, social attitudes to language, standard and non-standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, social varieties and levels of language, the social basis of multilingualism, and so on" (p. 441).

Accordingly, this paper argues that the patterns of the use of some determiners which characterize ENE are reflections of the sociolinguistic

dynamics of Nigeria as a nonnative English setting and educated Nigerians as nonnative English users. The paper is a fleshed out extract from a major nation-wide survey of intraference variants in ENE (Ekundayo, 2006, 2014). The linguistic markers of a user's performance invariably reflect who he/she is, his/her level of education and his/her provenance, accent and dialect. Nigeria, with a population going 200 million people, is the leading English-as-a-second- language (ESL) community in the world at present, if India is pushed to an EFL society with Hindi as its indigenous national language and English as its foreign official language.

Nigeria is a heterogeneous and multilingual society where English "coexist with more than 400 hundred indigenous languages which serve as the mother-tongues of speakers from diverse ethnic groups, and also some foreign languages such as French, Arabic and German, which are studied in schools" (Adegbite, 2010, p. 8). The nearest native English communities to Nigeria are White South Africa and England, which are thousands of miles away from Nigeria. Consequently, Nigerians speak and write English in the way they have been taught formally in schools, the information they get from grammar textbooks, standard dictionaries and naturally in the way they use their languages. Hence, interference features abound in Nigerian English varieties. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) say that ESL variations emanate from interference and that some of the "interference varieties are so widespread in a community and of such long standing that some believe them stable and adequate enough to be institutionalized and hence to be regarded as varieties of English in their own right…" (pp. 27-28).

Several classifications of Nigerian English (NigE) have been made; the most popular one being Banjo's (1971) and (1996) typology of Nigerian English. Banjo used grammatical features and educational levels to establish Varieties I, II, III, and IV of Nigerian English. *Variety I* is associated with primary school leavers and Nigerians with half-baked education. This variety reflects vulgar errors of grammar and broken structures. *Variety II* is associated with secondary school students and school certificate holders. It has less vulgar errors and broken features of English than Variety I and more than 70% of English-speaking Nigerians use this variety. *Variety III* is spoken by highly educated people, graduates, teachers, lecturers, professors, writers, broadcasters, etc. His *Variety III* is often referred to as Standard Nigerian English (SNE) or Educated Nigerian English (ENE). Lastly, *Variety IV* of Banjo is like native English standard spoken by few Nigerians who were born in native English-speaking countries or have a parent of English origin and consequently acquired English as their first language. However, the fourth variety is seen as too foreign and affected.

Based on sociolinguistic and regional parameters, Nigerian linguists have proposed many regional varieties such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Edo, Efik, etc. and several (socio) *lects* such as *basilect*, *mesolect* and *acrolect* (Igene, 1992; Ogbulogo, 2005). The *Mesolect* is the lowest variety similar to Banjo's *Variety I*. The *Basilect* is the most popular and widely used in Nigeria by junior *civil servants,* secondary school students and not-so-educated Nigerians. The *Acrolect* is used by few very highly educated Nigerians. It has the greatest prestige and international intelligibility. Banjo's *Variety III*, which is also the *acrolect* on the sociolinguistic pyramid, is often

recommended or preferred as the Nigerian standard. The patterns of the use of determiners examined in this paper abound in all the varieties of Nigerian English (NigE). However, examples in this paper were gathered from ENE, the most standardized variety of Nigerian English. Specifically, the paper set out to answer these questions:

1) Which concrete examples of the use of determiners can be cited from ESL/ENE?
2) What patterns of the use of determiners are entrenched in Educated Nigerian English?
3) How does interference and intraference, on the other hand, account for the use of determiners in Educated Nigerian English as second language?
4) Is the use of determiners in ENE/ESL different from their use in native English, SBE for example?

The paper shows how and why interference and intraference constitute the extenuating sociolinguistic backgrounds in which educated Nigerians produce patterns of the use of articles different from SBE and native English patterns.

METHOD
The study is both qualitative and quantitative. Methods data gathering were questionnaires, the Internet, recording of spontaneous speech used from 2005 to 2014 to gather data from tertiary institution students and academic staff to establish the patterns of the use of determiners in ENE. The questionnaire used consists of many syntactic structures cast in multiple choice questions with options A and B or A to D. Option A contains the SBE or native English pattern and meaning while option B contains ENE pattern. The questions in the questionnaire and structured interview were validated by two professors of *English and Literature*

and two professors of *Measurement and Evaluation* of the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, before they were administered to fifty thousand (50,000) educated Nigerians in ten federal government universities. Although Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones, the researcher expediently divided the country into five zones: the Yoruba South-West, the multi-lingual South-South, the multi-lingual North, the Igbo South-East and the multi-lingual Middle-belt.

The universities visited are Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Bayero University, Kano (North); University of Lagos, Lagos, Federal University of Technology, Akure (South-West); University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (South-East); University of Ilorin, Ilorin, University of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (Middle-Belt); University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, and the University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt (South-South); four federal government owned polytechnic: Federal Polytechnic, Auchi (South-South), Federal Polytechnic, Ede (South-West), Federal Polytechnic Offa (Middle-Belt), Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna (North), Federal Polytechnic, Oko(East); four state government owned polytechnics: Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja (Middle-Belt), Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Lagos State Polytechnic, Isolo(West) and Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara (South-South); four government owned colleges of education: College of Education, Ekiadolor, Benin City, Adeniran Ogunsanya, Lagos, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

The selection of these higher institutions was informed by their strategic locations across Nigeria and the fact that they use a Nigerian Federal Government policy called 'Quota System' or 'Federal Character,' to admit students

from 'catchment areas' and all the regions of Nigeria. The 'Federal Character' or 'Quota System' policy stipulates that admission to and employment in federal government-owned schools and ministries be equally spread to all the federating units, not necessarily on merit or standard. This ensures that all federating units are equally represented.

Subjects aged between 19 and 70 years were tested among professors, lecturers and mainly final year students of English and Literature, Linguistics, Communication and other Departments. These groups of Nigerians are considered to be, or should be, models of English use and usage in Nigeria. Twenty thousand pieces of the questionnaire were analyzed for this paper because the researcher had financial and logistic difficulties collating all of them across Nigeria and thereafter analyzing them manually. The remainder of thirty thousand was gleaned from interviews and direct interaction by the researcher or in proxy.

Focus was on widespread usage, frequency and educational class, not on age, sex and individual ranks of the educated people surveyed. Where 30 to 44% of the respondents chose an option, it was classified as an *emerging variant*. Less than 30% is treated as *isolated* cases in ENE. Where options A and B shared 45-50%, they were categorized as free variants in ENE. 51-59% were tagged *common,* 60-79% *widespread* and 80-100% *entrenched* or *institutionalized.* The ordinal data are presented in simple percentile counts and frequency tables and charts while the linguistic texts are annotated alongside the SBE patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data are treated under three categories: omission, addition, replacement of determiners and mixed extracts from published works and spontaneous speech recordings.

Omission of determiners (Articles)

Twenty cases were tested in this category with twenty thousand informants. The table below shows the percentage of responses for each variant.

Table 1. *The omission of determiners in ENE*

S/N	ENE Variants	Percentage over 20,000 informants	SBE Variants	Percentage of SBE	Comment
1	"Group raises ^ alarm…" (Ebere, 2014, p. 68)	15,000/75%	"Group raises *an* alarm…" (Ebere, 2014, p. 68).	5,000/25%	widespread
2	on^empty stomach	17,000/85%	on *an* empty stomach.	3,000/15%	entrenched
3	on ^one hand and on *the* other hand	16,000/80%	on *the* one hand and on *the* other hand.	4,000/20%	entrenched
4	all is in ^shambles	18,000/90%	All is in *a* shambles.	2,000/10%	widespread
5	I am in^ hurry	16,000/80%	I am in *a* hurry.	4,000/20%	entrenched
6	It is a fight to ^finish	18,000/90%	It is a fight to *the* finish.	2,000/10%	entrenched
7	He had ^accident	12,000/60%	He had *an* accident.	8,000/40%	widespread
8	…in ^sahara desert	15,000/75%	…in *the* sahara desert.	5,000/25%	entrenched
9	He tendered ^ apology to him.	17,000/85%	He tendered *an* apology to him.	3,000/15%	entrenched
10	"I had stroke" (olabayo, 2013, p.58).	16,000/80%	"I had *a* stroke" (olabayo, 2013, p.58).	4,000/20%	entrenched

11	...^benefit of ^doubt	19,000/95%	...*the* benefit of *the* doubt.	1,000/5%	entrenched
12	^emergency has arisen.	17,000/85%	*An* emergency has arisen.	3,000/15%	entrenched
13	I can't take such ^injustice	18,000/90%	I can't take such *an* injustice.	2,000/10%	entrenched
14	He is having ^ temperature.	19,000/95%	He is having *a* temperature.	1,000/5%	entrenched
15	I made ^ effort to see him.	18,000/90%	I made *an* effort to see him.	2,000/10%	entrenched
16	What is on ^ ground...	19,000/95%	What is on *the* ground...	1,000/5%	entrenched
17	Without a shadow of ^doubt.	19,000/95%	Without a shadow of *the* doubt	1,000/5%	entrenched
18	Indeed, they are ^nuisance on this street.	19,000/95%	Indeed, they are *a* nuisance.	1,000/5%	entrenched
19	I am at ^crossroads	18,000/90%	I am at *the* crossroad.	2,000/10%	entrenched
20	^Majority of them are here.	19,000/95%	*A* majority of them are here.	1,000/5%	entrenched

Addition of Unnecessary articles

In this category, determiners are redeployed in contexts where they are not used in SBE, as a result of the intraference of articles and other determiners, which then leads to what may be termed 'the singularisation of mass and abstract nouns,' as in the table below.

Table 2. *The addition of determiners in ENE*

S/N	ENE Variant	Percentage over 20,000	SBE Variants	Percentage	Comment
21	I have *an* information for you.	13,000/65%	I have information for you.	7,000/35%	widespread
22	This is *a* good advice...	13,000/65%	This is good advice...	7,000/35%	widespread
23	This is *a* good furniture.	12,000/60%	This is good furniture.	8,000/40%	widespread
24	I am *a* staff.	19,000/95%	I am a staff member/a member of staff.	1,000/5%	entrenched
25	He is *a* military personnel.	17,000/85%	He is one of the military personnel.	3,000/15%	entrenched
26	Start from *the* scratch.	19,000/95%	Start from scratch.	1,000/5%	entrenched
27	I am around for *the* now.	8,000/40%	I am around for now.	12,000/60%	entrenched
28	How is *that your* friend?	16,000/80%	How is *that* friend of *yours*? / How is your friend?	4,000/20%	entrenched
29	*This our* issue is somehow.	15,000/75%	This issue of ours is somehow/This issue is somehow..	5,000/25%	entrenched
30	*That my* boyfriend is here.	16,000/80%	*That* boyfriend of mine is here/*My* boyfriend is here.	4,000/20%	entrenched

Replacement/substitution of determiners

Educated Nigerians also substitute one preposition with another. Few examples of replacement, a context where a similar determiner is used instead of another, are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. *Examples of replacement category*

S/N	ENE Variant	Comment	SBE Variants
31	*...all* things being equal.	entrenched	*...other* things being equal.
32	one thing led to *the other.*	entrenched	one thing led to *another*.
33	"We met *the* wife and the family. *The* son spoke to us ...and one of *the* daughters. *The* son also shared in our view that *the* death be investigated...."	entrenched	"We met his wife and family. *His* son spoke to us ...and one of *his* daughters. *His* son also shared in our view that *his* death be investigated...."
34	They have turned themselves to *some* nuisance here.	widespread	They have turned themselves to *a* nuisance here.
35	*One* man came to look for you.	entrenched	*A* man came to look for you.
36	*One man came to look for you.*	entrenched	*A man came to look for you.*

Sundry examples from published works and spontaneous speech recordings

The ones below are gathered from published works and spontaneous speeches. Although they were not tested as the ones in Tables 1 and 2, the researcher, being an ESL user and teacher, and based on his keen observation of the patterns of English use in Nigeria for several decades, has tagged them accordingly as *common*, *widespread* and *institutionalised/entrenched*. The caret shows the position of the omitted determiner, which is indicated above it.

37. A lesson to Nigerians on ^ duty of care (Guardian Editorial, 2013, p.12), *common*.
   the

38. "...most graduates from our higher institutions are being rejected by companies on ^ grounds of inadequate knowledge of their subject areas..." (Owoyemi, 2013, p.22), *entrenched*.
   the

39. "After 14 years in prison, tearful Hamza Al-Mustapha declares: 'I met ^ empty home' (Al-Mustapha, 2013, p.37), *common*.
   an

40. "I am not in ^ hurry to get married." (Uranta, 2013, p.52), entrenched.
   a

41. "I was born on ^ 1st of October, 1990" *entrenched*.
   the

Table 4. *The variant examined*

S/N	Range	Degree of Spread	Frequency	Percentage
1	80-100%	entrenched	30	75%
2	60-79%	widespread	07	17.5 %
3	50-59%	common	02	5%
4	40-49%	eariant	01	2.5%
5	30-39%	Emerging	0	0%
	Total		40	100%

As shown in the table, the cases examined are entrenched and widespread in ENE. The entrenched or institutionalized cases are by far the largest. The chart below clearly shows this.

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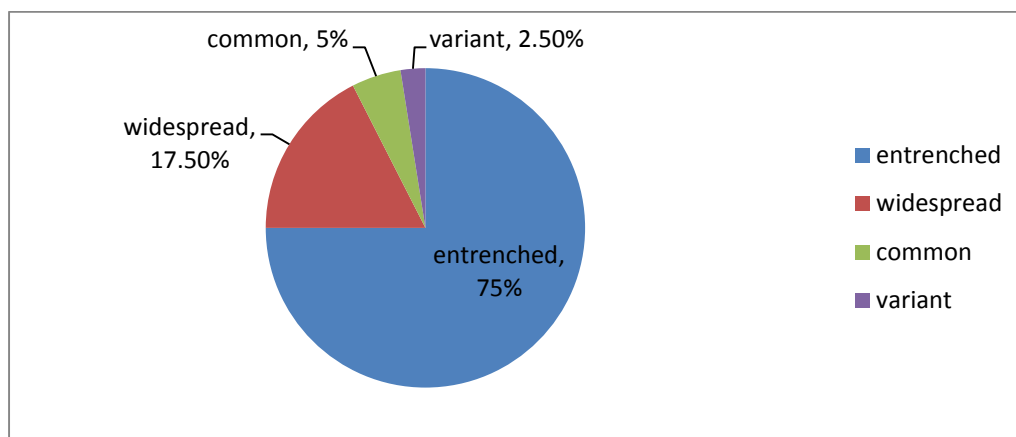Scholars of English Education

Figure 1. *Frequency and percentile pie chart*

The results, as presented in the tables and chart, clearly show that the habit of redeploying determiners in patterns different from native English users' patterns is institutionalized in ENE. The use of an extra determiner as in 28 to 30 is an anaphoric reference to shared knowledge and understanding between the speaker and hearer in ENE. It is also used for emphasis. 'That my boyfriend' is different from 'my boyfriend' in ENE. The former is often used in a context where something is already known or has been said about the boyfriend earlier. Hence the reference 'that my boyfriend', meaning 'my boyfriend in question', 'my boyfriend that you know', 'my boyfriend we've been talking about,' etc. It is a case of interference because similar and identical expressions abound in Nigerian languages. Example 33 asterisked has become institutionalized. 'The' is used in this sense to denote possession. This example was taken from a spontaneous report by a university lecturer on the 14th of November, 2013, two days after Professor Festus Iyayi, the famous Nigerian novelist and lecturers' union leader, was killed in a road accident. Number 27 is an emerging pattern popular with youths. One often hears expressions like 'I am going solo for the now,' meaning 'I want to efface myself or be on my own for now.'

On the whole, linguistic interference and intraference form the extenuating sociolinguistic background in which educated ESL users redeploy determiners in the ways that they do. Many of the examples of omission may be traced to interference because most Nigerian languages, unlike English, lack several articles and many determiners. So, educated Nigeria users of English impose the zero-article patterns of their languages on English structures. However, some cases of omission may be traced to intraference, not interference. In a structure like 'in a shambles', nonnative speakers view 'shambles' as a plural formation which ought not to be modified with *a.* Hence they will rather say 'in shambles' or 'in a shamble' which sounds better in accordance with the English rules that they know, as against 'in a shambles,' which is a fixed idiomatic expression in native English.

Examples of addition and replacement come mainly from intraference, i.e. the redeployment of language items, and the conscious efforts to apply the rules of the language appropriately. 'I have an advice for you' is an attempt to differentiate between the plural 'advice' and singular 'advice'. The same thing applies to 'a staff', 'an

information', etc. The use of 'the' for the possessive determiners *his, her, your, their* etc. is an overgeneralization of 'how is the wife?', the masculine style of speech in SBE. By extension, educated Nigerians will say 'how are *the* children?' 'How is *the* family?' 'How is *the* husband doing?' 'We spoke to *the* grandfather at home.' The interesting fact is that no matter how well entrenched a pattern may be in ENE, there are yet educated Nigerians who use the SBE variants.

The big question, therefore, is how do we (as linguists, ESL teachers and grammarians) view them? Should they be treated or taught as errors or variations? Some grammar purists and fanatical lovers of absolute SBE in nonnative settings (who, ironically, do not, or cannot, use SBE/RP precisely) may insist that they are errors because they deviate from SBE patterns. However, it should be acknowledged that heterogeneity is the spice of language (O'Donell & Todd, 1991). Once some variants and patterns by whatever name (errors, deviations, coinage, variation, etc.) are widespread and institutionalized in a variety, the best and expedient position to take is to treat the entrenched features as the characteristic determinants of the variety. In the process of dialectalization, features that may be strange to variety A, may be entrenched variants in variety B of the same language. Features of interference and intraference are inevitable in a second language situation. When such features become generally accepted and institutionalized in ESL, then they become its defining features.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the way educated Nigerian users of English as a second language redeploy some determiners, particularly articles. It demonstrated that certain extenuating sociolinguistic

factors like interference, intraference, the reality and the dynamics of a second language setting constrain educated ESL users to use determiners in the ways presented in this paper. These patterns distinguish the syntax of ENE from that of SBE, particularly in the use of articles. Although there are few highly educated Nigerians who use the SBE variants, the examples here are so widespread and entrenched that one can aver that they are the characteristic features of ENE and other lower varieties of Nigerian English.

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