

## New Englishes in Diachronic Light: Evidence from Nigerian English Phonology

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### Abstract

*This paper is a contribution to the debate on Historical Answers to Synchronic Questions that proposes that “nothing in linguistics makes full sense except in a diachronic light”, which was held at a special session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Poznan Linguistic Meeting, 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2008 in Gniezno Poland. The impetus for this study is the truism that there is a permanent relationship between the synchronic and the diachronic in human experience: that relationship in general terms is simply that one explains the other, such that no conclusions may be entirely satisfactory which tries to exclude one from the other; but they constitute a cline in human language within which the diachronic has logical priority. Debates on this dichotomy could be as old as linguistics, dating back to de Saussure; but arguments do not concentrate on New Englishes typology and research. This paper therefore tries to fill this gap as well. The study pursues the proposal that history is a major reason for the existence of New Englishes and the essential ground for their justification as sociolinguistic realism. It investigates this paradigm using the case of Nigerian English. It examines this national variety in terms of synchronic phenomenon whose basis is consecutive diachronic processes which date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This includes historical conditions and contact situations by which this English appears irreversibly rooted; the sub-varieties which are definable in terms of educational attainments understood as progress made over time; the phonological changes occasioned by indigenization, acquisition process and internal structural changes associated with phonological processes, which together account for the uniqueness of Nigerian English and its varieties. We therefore provide a review of historical developments with respect to Nigerian English and position the resultant facts with conventional history, in the first part. The next part discusses structural changes at the phonological level involving sounds and prosodies. The last part provides concluding notes and information which confirm that “nothing in linguistics makes full sense except in a diachronic light” with respect to Nigerian English in particular and New Englishes in general.*

**Keywords:** New Englishes; Nigerian English; synchronic linguistics; diachronic linguistics; phonology

## Introduction

Interest in New Englishes has grown so rapidly in recent times that one can safely say that it has become a sub-discipline of linguistics and language studies, probably on a par with, say, Old English studies. Wide research paradigms are constructed; especially sociolinguistic, pragmatic, stylistic, structural, and pedagogic, to mention just some; extensive field work, large and growing corpora, far-reaching analysis and core grammar, journals and books, linguistic departments and units specialising on new Englishes teaching and research, etc. contribute to this position.

It is partly on this basis that we believe that New Englishes have much insight to offer to this debate and contribute to our viewpoint. In particular, New Englishes constitute phenomena in the material world and in linguistic experience; and as entities, they are part of everyday observations; as human behaviour, they are associated with human cognitive systems especially with respect to the intuition of their native speakers; and as cultural entities, they are acquired in a socialisation process or learned and transmitted from generation to generation; and as instruments, they address communication exigencies; and are vehicles of cultures, cross-cultures and socio-cultural ideologies. They are therefore adequate as materials for all areas of linguistic analysis and appropriate to this present purpose, the debate. Why the debate? This was my first reaction as I read the sessions announced on the confe-

rence flyer. One did take it for granted that no issues may still be made on any dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony in linguistics; but participating eventually in the debate in this international conference in reference, proved one wrong: that the issue is far from resolved turned out to be the inevitable conclusion of this debate session. This age-long debate is therefore being revisited. The recourse to New Englishes is envisaged to adduce stronger evidence for our viewpoint. The other reason for using the evidence of New Englishes is that earlier debates have not concentrated on this linguistic typology. This might then be the final evidence; we hope.

Our main data are drawn from randomly sampled Nigerian video films and pan-Nigeria discussions sourced from television stations, and anonymised. This seems a better source for spoken corpora, since Nigerian English is yet to benefit from the International Corpus of English (ICE) projects. But part of our procedure involves having to listen through and pick and choose sections which are relatively free from background noise for our illustrations, a procedure further aided by the filtering facilities of Speech Filing System (SFS) that was also available to us. Relevant sections are transcribed and saved as plain texts or .doc files. Where double checking is necessary, the video files are converted into audio files, such as .wav, and analysed using PRAAT programme. The data files are fed into PRAAT and segmented into phrasal chunks, corresponding to intonation groups, to make processing them easier. This is particularly useful for reading pitch extrusions which account for prosody, and formant patterns. In this way, we are able to segment and extract acoustic elements which provide additional support to our interpretations, at relevant points.

Investigating New Englishes, the proposition that “Nothing in linguistics makes full sense except in a diachronic light” is supported by facts sketched in four parts which suggest that human language is more comprehensible when viewed as an inherently diachronic phenomenon. The parts include two levels of history which position New Englishes with a major world political history and in terms of the realism of historical contacts, as well as the major internal political history of the then Niger Area. The others are the Nigerian English phonological patterning, the analysis of which indicate that diachrony and synchrony are intertwined, and a synthesis of some ontological facts with respect to the concepts, indicating an overall priority of diachrony.

## History: stating the obvious

The development of New Englishes is situated in a major political history: “the spread of British imperial power, based on industrial revolution at home and manifested in settlement, conquest, and new trading relations overseas; and the westward expansion of the United States” (Jowitt 2008:2). While the imperial powers seemed conquerors, not all their weapons could return with them; their English was conquered and nativised. Professor Wole Soyinka captures the process in similar imagery in his remarks on African canons of new Englishes, thus: “black people twisted the linguistic blade in the hands of the traditional cultural castrator and carved new concepts into the flesh of white supremacy; the result is...the conversion of the enslaving medium into an insurgent weapon” (Kachru 1995: viii). By this process, Nigerian English is regarded as English that has England as its first mother and Nigeria as its second, defying nature by undergoing a gynaecological re-processing (Jowitt 1991). Thus, “to some extent, linguistic developments and orientations follow from – and mirror – social and political changes” (Schneider (2003:246); and the reality of new Englishes or world Englishes is evidence for this.

There are two dominant theoretical approaches to research which address the grounding of new Englishes. They are the ‘diffusion’ model and the ‘evolutionary’ model. The former derives from the osmosis inherent in language and dialect boundaries and factors which associate them with cultural ecologies; and the latter from “the long term changes undergone by a language (variety) over a period of time” (Mufwene 2001:145). The ‘diffusion’ model is associated with Braj Kachru, and the ‘evolutionary’ model with Edgar Schneider, among others. In Schneider (2003), an evolutionary theory of New Englishes is posited (see also Mufwene 2001), which proposes five diachronic phases in its account for the emergence of New Englishes, across the globe; and Nigerian English has achieved its third stage (nativisation) and commenced its fourth stage; namely, endonormative stabilisation. This diachronic stage has its synchronic correlate broadly in the form of the term ‘Nigerian English’ as against ‘English in Nigeria’ and associated linguistic features and socio-cultural characterisations. Kachru (1990) speaks of Circles of English in the world; and in this model, the spread of English in the world is considered in terms of ‘diffusion’, indicating changes and diachronism. Here, three circles are identified; namely Inner Circle which accounts for English in the relatively monolingual and monocultural

nations (such as America and Britain), Outer Circle which accounts for English in the multilingual and multicultural nations (such as Nigeria, India, Singapore, etc), and Expanding Circle which covers EFL varieties (such as English in China, Japan, Russia, etc).

Another model is that of Randolph Quirk (in Kachru 1990), which accounts for the spread of English with reference to three models; namely, the demographic, the econo-cultural, and the imperial. As Kachru (1990:7) notes, "the demographic model implies language spread with accompanying population spread. The econo-cultural model suggests language spread without a serious population spread, essentially for scientific, technological and cultural information. The imperial model applies to language spread as the result of political (colonial) domination". While the demographic model accounts for the diversification of varieties within the Inner Circle Englishes, the econo-cultural and the imperial account for Englishes in the Outer Circle.

It seems obvious, as all relevant intellectual concerns so far noted indicate, that the foundations of New Englishes lie deeply rooted in diachrony. It may therefore be safely stated that the term 'New Englishes' itself is a diachronic construct, no matter how it is defined; whether (following Jenkins (2006), Kachru (1990), and others) in the narrow sense of the indigenised and institutionalised varieties, the recognition thereof by the inner circle, the theoretical approaches to the phenomenon; or in the wide sense to include all varieties of English worldwide. For further discussions on the term and related concepts, see Jenkins 2006, cf. Mesthrie 2000, Mufwene 2001, etc.

## Historical contacts: stating the realism

In considering Nigerian English, two main factors, among others, appear basic. They are the linguistic ecology of the contact situation (in two parts, 3.1 and 3.2) and the internal political history of the then Niger Area; and both indicate diachrony.

### Early contact situation

Contacts with Englishmen traders commenced with coastal Nigerians about late 15th century and early 16th century; evangelisation, education, and so on, were also part of this early concern. Speakers of different accents were part of the contact; and include Cockney, Yorkshire, Birmingham, etc. in addition to speakers from southern England and the educated variety believed to be the precursor of RP (cf. Mugglestone 2007, Mufwene 2001). Others were non-native speakers from different parts of Europe, such as Germans, Dutch, French, Danish, Greeks, etc who were missionaries, technicians, doctors, sailors, traders, etc.(cf. Gut 2004, Jowitt 1991). It may be noted that, while Nigerian Pidgin evolved from trade contacts, evangelism and its associated didactics and formal education gave rise to the development of Nigerian English; but the development of Pidgin predates English.

Before the effective take over by Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionary schools were already in place which taught English, among other subjects. In the southwest, educated or RP speakers taught; in the eastern and south eastern regions, Scots and Irishmen taught. The north was penetrated later in the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the teachers were RP speaking natives. Communication was oral up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Gorlach 1998). Notably, while a combination of informal and formal learning was taking place in the south, the north had only formal contact with RP speaker teachers. Nigerians later took over the teaching of English; and relying largely on textbooks, they taught pronunciation.

The early contact situation thus gave rise to some complications at the linguistic level for Nigerian English; specifically, the (educated) standard, the non-standard or even substandard (of little educated Nigerian teachers and expatriate 'others'), and the non-native conflate, and were transmitted as such to Nigerians, who at the time were ill-equipped to discriminate norms.

### Contacts with Indigenous languages and cultures

The linguistic ecology appears to be more intricately complicated by the existence of over 400 languages in Nigeria with their associated cultures, and each contributing to the evolution of English in Nigeria and to the diversification of its varieties. In particular, this complex multilingual and multicultural environment point to the fact that the substrate languages and cultures are different; therefore their contributing to the indigenisation process seems to lead the development of this English in relatively

non-uniform directions (cf. Ugorji, in preparation); hence the diversity of accents, three of which we have reasons to mention at relevant points in this study.

### Internal political history

Soon after the penetration of the northern region, in 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated: numerous independent nationalities and people groups occupying the then Niger Area were amalgamated by the British colonial masters into what is now Nigeria. Thus, the different Englishes that were evolving in different places, at different times, in different dimensions and at different rates were 'amalgamated' into what became Nigerian English. Thereafter, English assumed the status of an official language. It developed into a lingua franca among the educated class across the country, and also into an undeclared national language (Banjo 1995, etc. cf. Ugorji, in preparation). As an indigenised variety, Nigerian English consists of the English of colonial and decolonised times as its base enriched by the socio-cultural materials which may be uniquely Nigerian. It represents the perfected compromise made of African thoughts of Nigerian instantiations and the more traditional English language expressed in English. In other words, Nigerian English can be described as that English that was extracted from England by the English, processed in Nigeria by Nigerians and used for her intra-national, national and international communication needs (Ugorji and Osiruemu 2007).

Following these points, Nigerian English (among world Englishes) is readily perceived as a phenomenon whose basis is consecutive diachronic processes. Thus, Diachrony is the basis of new Englishes, here represented by Nigerian English. This standpoint may be shown to be co-extensive with world Englishes and other language typologies in general. Thus, contact of dialects and of languages is as much a factor in the development of White American English Vernaculars and African-American English. Mufwene (2001:113) is unequivocal about this fact, and stresses, "Regarding the spread of English around the world, I maintain that native Englishes, indigenised Englishes, and English Pidgins and Creoles have all developed by the same kinds of natural restructuring processes. Structural differences among them are due to variation in the ecological conditions which assigned different values to the variables of the language-restructuring equation and thus determined varying outcomes from one case to another".

## Nigerian English phonological patterning

Here, we present data on aspects of the phonology of Nigerian English; such as the tendency to disfavour consonant clusters in coda positions, the substituting of inter-dentals, etc. as they may characterise some or all of the educated varieties, in particular and other varieties of English elsewhere. It may not be necessary to aim at providing fuller analysis of data here, the way we know it, but to provide brief comments on points that are vital to our debate as suggested by the data. In other words, an exploratory survey of Nigerian English phonology is not the main objective, but to point out certain properties of it which support our position on the priority of diachrony. We however provide information which may guide a reader with interests in details not directly discussed here.

Before then, we note, following Eka (1996:112) and others, that "varieties of Nigerian English may gainfully be limited to three", even though four or more are accounted for in the literature. For example, in Angogo and Hancock (1980), a four-level typology is suggested; Banjo (1995) proposes four varieties (see also Gut2004) and Criper-Friedman (1990) accounts for three varieties; just to mention a few. The factors which inform the accounts vary, and include socio-educational concerns (Criper-Friedman, 1990), patterns of acquisition or learning (Angogo and Hancock, 1980), and the extent of mother tongue transfers and of approximation to a world standard (Banjo 1995). The latter is the most popular in research that seek to describe and formalise the standard Nigerian English. Its core submission with respect to categories may be shown as follows:

1. mother-tongue based (associated with heavy mother tongue transfers characteristic of the semi- educated, generally below post primary education)
2. influenced by mother-tongue (shows mother tongue transfers and lack of vital phonological distinctions, associated with speakers who may have at least primary education)
3. close to RP (characteristic of some speakers with university education)



4. indistinguishable from RP (associated with speakers who may be more highly educated and some who have some training in the Humanities and phonetics)

Notwithstanding, it is convenient for the present purpose to recognise three core centres for educated Nigerian English and treat them essentially as lects relative to the aggregate of general educated speakers (cf. Eka, 1996). These lects might then be referred to as basilect, mesolect and acrolect, three core centres in a continuum; but with adjustments made to their more familiar meaning: while basilect may approximate the speech associated with speakers who have a minimum of primary education and correspond roughly to an average of Banjo's 2 and 1, mesolect approximates the speech of people who may have at least secondary education, and acrolect may be associated with the speech of the (more highly) educated and those who may be specially trained, corresponding roughly to 4. Some features of 2 and 3 may be associated with mesolect. This adaptation may represent a simplification, without prejudice to the complex of factors already outlined. The educated cline in focus may however not be delineated discretely, but each core represents the average tendencies; and the peripheries are largely marked by overlaps. The basilect usage and the acrolect are at the extremes of the cline; and are more readily specifiable. Mesolect usage which is intermediate between them may share in some cases parts of the properties of either extreme. Specifically, the number and nature of elements that characterise the clines provide evidence for the varieties. What follows is a sketch of information that summarises some features of the educated varieties; further details are in Ugorji (in preparation), cf. Jowitt 1991, Eka 1996, among others; and symbols have IPA values:

#### Variations in segment inventories

| Basilect       | Mesolect   | Acrolect   |             |
|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Simple vowels  | seven      | eight      | eleven      |
| Complex vowels | four       | six        | twelve      |
| Consonants     | twenty-one | twenty-one | twenty-four |

The above summary represents the outcome of the application of phonemic principles to our data; and indicates that the clines of educated Nigerian English show different degrees of variation in sound inventory. In general, the phonological opposition between certain segments are neutralised, such that while the sounds may be attested in the clines, they enter into free variations in their distribution. For example, [i] and [ɪ], which are distinctive in acrolect usage, occur in free variation in both mesolect and basilect usage; this is also the case with [u] and [ʊ]; and [æ] and [A] merge into [a]. For more details, see Ugorji (in preparation), Jowitt (1991), Gut (2004), Simo Bobda (1995, 2007), etc. This description may well be attributed to synchronic phonology; but when focus turns to the processing of neutralisation phenomenon, cognitive activities and language faculties are involved, which may link contemporary items with previously encoded patterns (i.e. as transmitted and/or acquired); thus the account appears more to be diachronic; this is more so when the linguistic ecology of contact situation enters the account, especially with respect to the contributions of the mother tongue varieties. Furthermore, the fact can be situated with language change, which may follow from the fact that language like social phenomena is in a constant flux, and that while new linguistic species evolve, others die; that is, the dynamism of language and linguistic units in general. Thus, following Wells (1982:93-94): "the fundamental reason why accents differ is that languages change...present-day pronunciation patterns reflect the changes which have taken place, modifying earlier pronunciation patterns" cf. Colman (2007). Linguistic units may therefore always show the two perspectives.

It seems the fact here that diachrony and synchrony are intertwined, such that it is not possible to point out where one stops and the other begins. Apart from considerations with respect to differences in focus, which is possible for instance between the concerns of those who study historical items with respect to say Old English, Proto forms or Reconstruction in general, relative to say New Englishes, separating them might largely be impracticable and unproductive if it could be pursued; and such researcher's or research preferences may always lie outside the core matters of human language and linguistics.

#### Substituting for (inter-)dentals

| Gloss    | think | thin | thing | oath | with | bother | whether | this | that | the |
|----------|-------|------|-------|------|------|--------|---------|------|------|-----|
| Acrolect | θɪŋk  | θɪn  | θɪŋ   | oθ   | wɪθ  | bʌðə   | wɛðə    | ðɪs  | ðat  | ðɪ  |

Mesolect      tɪŋk      tɪn      tɪn      ɒt      wɪt      bɒdɑ      wɛdɑ      dɪs      dɑt      dɪ

While not concerned with details of how the clines of varieties in Nigerian English may vary with respect to the forms shown above, it is possible to see that the mesolect speech (and also basilect speech) substitutes inter-dental sounds with alveolar sounds. This is explicable as a contribution from L<sub>1</sub>; since the phonology of the substrate mother tongues do not attest such segments. It is viewed that basilect and mesolect speakers may cognise such forms on the basis of prior phonological information encoded in their language faculty; and since this faculty lacks information with respect to inter-dentals, they simply become incapable of discriminating them, and this could be both orally and aurally depending on the extent of learning or acquisition achieved and whether competences are already fossilised for certain speakers or speaker communities (cf. Poersch 2005). Thus, going by theories of bilingualism, materials which second language learners bring into the learning environment may predispose how they process the materials of the target language and hence how much progress may be made in learning. As shown, data may be synchronic; but analysis is diachronic, recognising not only the facts of the variations and the patterns but also accounting for the why and how of language variation and contact situation. See section 5 for further discussions.

### Disfavouring certain consonant clusters

Consider the following data involving, *nests*, *ghosts*, *boats*, *arts*, *acts*, *posts*, *costs*, etc. which suggest a disfavouring of consonant clusters in syllable coda. In the generative paradigm, the data may be analysed roughly as shown (see also Simo Bobda 2007, Gut 2007):

|                         |         |        |       |      |       |        |         |
|-------------------------|---------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|---------|
| Gloss                   | nests   | ghosts | boats | arts | acts  | posts  | costs   |
| Parsing                 | /nɛst.s | gost.s | bot.s | at.s | akt.s | post.s | kɒst.s/ |
| Boundary dropping       | nɛsts   | gosts  | bots  | ats  | akts  | posts  | kɒsts   |
| Coda simplification     | nɛss    | goss   | bos   | as   | ats   | poss   | kɒss    |
| Alveolar simplification | [nɛs    | gos    | bos   | as   | as    | pos    | kɒs]    |

(All stages may not be realised in some varieties, especially in acrolect speech, and in careful speech)

In general, speakers target the underlying form (shown in slash brackets) but may realise the phonetic forms (shown in square brackets) or some relevant form intermediate between the underlying and the surface forms. The processes which yield the phonetic realisations are captured by rules, in this case, a coda simplification rule. The processes may be thought to be informed both by preferences in neural properties and in motor capabilities in humans – all largely associated broadly with language faculty. Thus surface data which purport to be synchronic are shown to be built around the mind and how it processes speech behaviour, indicating that taking synchrony alone might at best yield some kind of ‘deficit linguistics’, at least in this case. In other words, this dominant goal of generative phonology and linguistics called Universals might turn out to be essentially a diachronic construct, whether as a mirror of the language faculty or as a reconstruction of same.

### Glide formation

Glide formation may convert high vowels to their corresponding consonants and may consequently adjust syllable count in basilect and mesolect usage especially. This is attested in lexical items such as *coward*, *crayon*, *iron*, *lawyer*, *wire*, *choir*, *hire*, *fire*, *higher*, *hour*, *flower*, *prayers*, etc.:

Gloss      crayon    iron    prayers    wire    choir    higher    power    hour    flower    coward

Acrolect    kreɪən    aɪən    preɪəs    waɪə    kwaɪə    haɪə    pəʊ    aʊə    flauə    kauəd

Mesolect    krejən    ajən    prejas    waja    kwaja    haja    pawə    awa    flawa    kawəd

The phenomenon appears explicable in terms of the substrate L<sub>1</sub> preference for non-complex syllable nuclei; and to resolve this, the language faculty processes the complex vowel sequences by breaking them up into two syllables through changing the middle quality into a glide closest to its phonetic value. The implication of this is that triphthongs are prohibited, in response to L<sub>1</sub> preferences, which here corresponds to markedness constraints where the less marked is preferred.

However, whether it is markedness, L<sub>1</sub> influence, or indeed any other that constitute plausible explanations, this synchronic data appears explicable by recourse to diachronic facts and/or principles.

## Variations in word accent placement

Nigerian English shows variations in pitch accent placement on words, as shown in the synchronic data below:

| Acrolect    | mesolect                | basilect                |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 'Madam      | 'madam/ma'dam           | ma'dam                  |
| 'Janet      | 'Janet/ja'net           | ja'net                  |
| 'David      | 'David/da'vid           | 'David/da'vid           |
| 'Harass     | 'harass/ha'rass         | ha'rass                 |
| Ne'gotiate  | ne'gotiate/nego'tiate   | nego'tiate/'negotiate   |
| 'Criticism  | 'criticism/cr'i'ticism  | cr'i'ticism             |
| Dis'tribute | dis'tribute/distri'bute | distri'bute/'distribute |

(cf. Eka 1996, p.112)

While acrolect speech appears to maintain strict accent positions in the citation forms of words, the mesolect and basilect appear to show no such sensitivity. However, a close examination of data suggests that pitch placement may not be random; instead, it appears to shop for heavy syllables; and where a word contains more than one heavy syllable, any of them could receive accent, at a time; as the same speaker who placed accent on one syllable in one instance may place it on another in another instance. This appears the usual explanation with respect to such data. In general, preference for pitch accent placement on heavy syllables appears to be the unmarked option (see Gasiorowski 1997, Kager 1999, etc); and this sort of account lies within both synchronic and diachronic linguistics.

On the basis of (a) to (e) above, it is convincing to state that, in general, the diachronic and synchronic intertwine; such that it is not practicable to have one without the other, and that any efforts to keep them apart may be unproductive.

Language development and the emergence of languages and varieties may be diachronic; and this may account for a descriptive primacy of diachrony in language emergence. However, access to empirical data arising from the outcome of developments tends to be at relative synchronic points; and investigative approaches to data and methodology may also be synchronic. Therefore, differentiating them might be plausible in broad terms on the basis of research focus. In particular, Old English, Proto forms or Reconstruction may remain traditionally diachronic in focus but in New Englishes, exploratory surveys, there may always be entwining. However, this picture suggests one fact; namely, that synchrony should be viewed as a part of diachrony, when the nature of language is the concern. The division into synchrony and diachrony are apparently analysts' design. Language units do not inherently appear to contain such dichotomy. Further discussions follow in the next section.

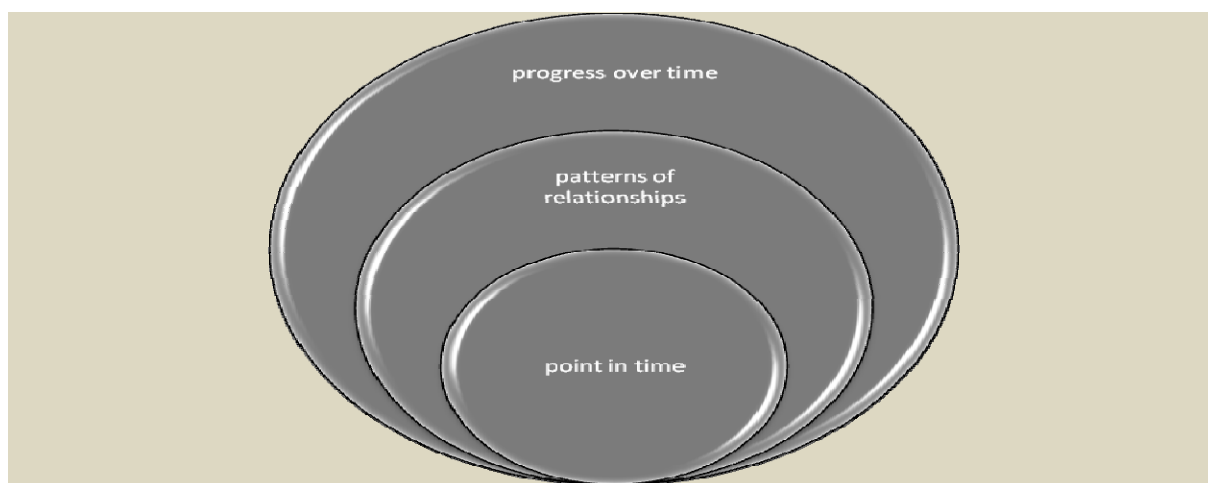
## Ontological remarks and conclusion

Linguistic research may be about systematic analysis in quest for generalisations, using certain relevant corpora. The generalisations target Universal grammar, which itself is not divorced from being diachronic, as noted. This dominant phonology may be said to be inspired by the (standard) generative paradigm pursued by Chomsky and Halle (1968) and others (see also Sommerstein 1977, Kentowicz 1994, etc.). Given this dominant position and considering the nature of language, any piece of linguistic data may be cognised holistically as entities with respect to diachrony, which represents the complex of time referents shown in three parts: point in time, progress over time, and patterns of relationships, and as a repository in human cognition. While point-in-time is explicable as that attested within (a) given moment(s) under investigation, progress over time accounts logically for the development and outcome of point-in-time acts and events, and patterns of relationships are about cause and effects, logical variations, etc. This interrelationship is schemed in fig. 1, below. On their part, New Englishes data, like all linguistic materials, are analysable in terms of these time referents and their interrelationships.

Researchers appear to share a common view that central to these terms is the notion of 'time' (Newman 2000, Colman 2007, etc); and it seems obvious that the centrality of this notion with respect to

our discourse cannot be ignored. A brief examination of this would as we hope cast further light on this discourse. In <http://www.britannica.com>, synchronic linguistics is defined as “the study of a language at a given point in time” and also “the time studied may be either the present or a particular point in the past”. On its part, diachronic linguistics is “the study of a language over a period of time.” Colman (2007:1) defines ‘diachronic linguistics’ as the “analysis of language variation over time.” Newman (2000:271) notes that “Historical/comparative linguistics is concerned with language as they have developed over time”. It treats the evolutionary creation and development as reflected in current-day phylogenetic relationships, the nature of their internal linguistic changes, and the way in which they have been influenced by other languages. The notion of time is thus of the essence in expounding the terms. This is what we try to explicate by suggesting the visual schema in fig 1.

*Figure 1: language and linguistics phenomena*



The schema in fig.1 represents an attempt to make a visual representation of the fact, as we perceive it. It indicates the interrelationships or interconnectedness of the three parts defined, and implies dynamism and growth with respect to new Englishes as a typology of human language. Notably, as point-in-time is contained within patterns of relationships and contained within progress over time so diachrony is contained in them all; but synchrony may be associated with point-in-time, which is logically connected with the other two; and thus cannot readily be definable outside this relationship.

It is notable that the scope of synchrony or diachrony could be practically intractable. The closest to some delineation is to refer to things like, ‘immediate past’, ‘remote past’, ‘past generations’ or ‘millennia’, neither of which may be inherently precise. However it is considered, time referents form continua. In trying to propose a priority of synchrony over diachrony, for instance, Dzuibalska-Kowaczyk (2008) suggests adjusting the time cline to generations or millennia in the past. By and large, no attempts at delineations might be saved the factor of arbitrariness. Furthermore, as her suggestion implies, linguistics ‘weighs’ more toward synchrony, if placed on a balance as it were; but that this is only on the premise that ‘time referents’ could be adjusted significantly backwards in history. The obvious implication of this suggested premise is that synchrony may be in want of realism if time referent is not adjusted, indicating then that diachrony is the default position in such time notions; and that if not adjusted linguistics in general might be entirely about diachrony. Our point then is that this adjustment might always be arbitrary and unnatural, and may as well be unrealistic except for individual analyst’s preferences. It does not follow from the very nature of human language.

If it is accepted that the entire human society is in constant flux and language which is part of it is also in such flux, then synchrony would refer at best to a particular phase spotted on this ‘evolving’ entity; whereas it makes sense to consider it as part of the changing/ evolving entity (see also Gasiorowski 2008, Croft 1990), the whole of the entity including the point or phase is moving. Thus, diachrony might represent the entity while synchrony is contained within it, and remains indispensable. This is the picture we see. It therefore follows as far as linguistics is the concern that synchrony participates as point in time, and may have little to do with relationships, but progress over time might be entirely diachronic. Linguistics is therefore more about language as a dynamic system.



Specifically, synchrony may concern elements of linguistics viewed as self-contained entities and with respect to present time; and this is plausible if only such elements can be shown to be divorced from cognitive processing at any point or over time, bear no relationship with native linguistic experience, linguistic planning and production and bear no relationship with material world experience and object referents and evolutionary features. Although this atomistic extraction which may characterise certain forms of synchronism may in some cases parse linguistic constructions, classify certain data, and build inventories, it should not be mistaken for doing adequate linguistic analysis, except as part of the whole which includes diachrony; as this atomistic conception lacks a clear ontological grounding.

It is therefore natural for linguistics to assume that diachrony has priority over synchrony; and any reversal would fail when confronted with variation and change in general, comparative linguistics and New Englishes in particular; especially as the concept of Universals which constitutes the target for standard generative (phonological) paradigms is itself inexplicable outside diachrony, when point in time, progress over time, and pattern relationships are taken together as properties defining diachrony in its essence. In other words, if linguistics means only one of the two ideological entities, it is diachrony; and the minimum to state with respect to this fact should be that diachrony naturally assumes logical priority over synchrony, as synchrony is only a sub-part of it. The implication of this for linguistics includes that much of what is done in all the history of linguistics may be essentially diachronic, including the dominant theories and paradigms such as Generative linguistics and Universal Grammar, even though they have been thought of as synchronic. It is not true linguistics to want to dispense with synchrony, even when it is only an association with point in time, in time referent's cline. It is also not true linguistics to want to dispense with diachrony. Any true language data is a combination of synchrony and diachrony. Thus, language by its nature makes no distinctions between synchrony and diachrony. The dichotomy is analyst's construct.

More importantly, there is a relationship between the centrality of the notion of time and the observed intertwining of synchrony and diachrony. A closer examination of the centrality of time with respect to expounding the concepts may readily constitute an explanation for their entwining in grammar and linguistics; and taken together, both points suggest their constituting a single system and a continuum. But strictly speaking, this system can neither be called synchrony nor diachrony without augmentation. An umbrella term might be 'panchronic' – having all parts in one, as Tobin (2008) suggests. Consequently, we may envisage 'Dynamic Linguistics' as the linguistics of the future. Croft (1990:258) captures this in more vivid terms: "the synchronic system is in a constant state of flux, and what the speaker knows about his or her language are the dynamic principles that govern the flux;" thus, subsuming synchrony under diachrony through the analysis of intralinguistic as well as cross-linguistic variation and the new Englishes.

In conclusion, we merely state the obvious in saying that history is the reason for the realism which the new Englishes represent. The fact that the models available for explaining these linguistic typologies are all diachronic is not incidental; it follows from the very nature of the phenomena and from the facts which form their basis. So far, synchronic approaches are yet to be available, for obvious reasons. It therefore remains the fact that the term 'New Englishes' is a diachronic construct. It evolved on historical paths, evolving innovations which may be traced to the peculiarities of their sociolinguistic ecology. They appear thus grounded on diachrony, outside which they lack ontology; yielding the conclusion that diachrony is the basis of new Englishes. However, the diachronic and the synchronic intertwine in accounting for their structures, and this relationship appears more productive; and indicates their being inherently a single system. What to say to end this discussion is simply that whereas synchrony only may not be linguistics, diachrony only may be linguistics in need of synchronic augmentation, if the two perspectives cannot be collapsed into one; namely, diachrony or dynamic linguistics. We can therefore maintain that "nothing in linguistics makes full sense except in a diachronic light", viewed from the perspective of New Englishes in general, and Nigerian English in particular, as shown.

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