

**NIGERIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE
IMITATION OF RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION
ACCENT IN NIGERIANS' NEWS READING**

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ACCENT IN NIGERIANS' NEWS READING**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
ABSTRAK	xiii
ABSTRACT	xv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	6
1.4 Research Objectives	12
1.5 Research Questions	12
1.6 Significance of the Research	13
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Research	14
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	16
1.9 Organisation of the Thesis	20
1.10 Chapter Summary	20
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	21
2.1 Chapter Introduction	21
2.2 Language, Dialect and Accent	21
2.3 Variation, Variability, Variable and Variant	23
2.4 Formation of RP and the Attitudes towards It	27
2.5 The Long-standing Debate on RP	33

2.5.1	Intrinsic and Extrinsic Debate.....	35
2.5.2	Prototype and Stereotype Debate.....	36
2.6	The English in Nigeria	38
2.6.1	Advent and Spread of English in Nigeria	39
2.6.2	Status and Model of English in Nigeria.....	47
2.7	Categorisation of the Nigerian English.....	49
2.8	RP in Nigerian English Context.....	56
2.8.1	The Imitation of RP in Nigerian Education System	58
2.8.2	The Imitation of RP by Nigerians in News Reading	58
2.9	Previous Studies on Attitudes Towards the Imitation of RP	62
2.10	Methodological Developments in Language Attitude Studies	68
2.11	Theoretical Framework.....	71
2.12	Conceptual Framework.....	89
2.13	Chapter Summary	94
	CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	95
3.1	Chapter Introduction	95
3.2	Research Design.....	95
3.2.1	Strengths of Mixed Methods.....	104
3.3	Context of the Study and Population	106
3.4	Sample and Sampling	108
3.4.1	Sampling in the Quantitative Phase	111
3.4.2	Sampling in the Qualitative Phase	111
3.5	Methods of Data Collection	113
3.5.1	Questionnaire	115
3.5.1(a)	Description of the Questionnaire	117
3.5.1(b)	Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire	120
3.5.1(c)	Pilot Study.....	124

3.5.2	Semi-structured Interview	124
3.5.2(a)	Content, Structure and Items of the Interview	125
3.5.2(b)	Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Data	127
3.6	Procedures of Data Collection	129
3.7	Data Analysis	131
3.7.1	Analysis of the Questionnaire	131
3.7.2	Analysis of the Interviews	132
3.8	Answering Research Questions	137
3.9	Ethical Considerations	139
3.10	Chapter Summary	142
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....		143
4.1	Chapter Introduction	143
4.2	Profile of Sample of the Study.....	144
4.2.1	Profile of Questionnaire Respondents.....	144
4.2.2	Profile of Interview Respondents.....	147
4.3	Answer to Research Question One	149
4.4	Answer to Research Question Two.....	154
4.4.1	Power Attitudes.....	155
4.4.2	Competence Attitudes	158
4.4.3	Social Attractiveness Attitudes	162
4.5	Answer to Research Question Three.....	165
4.6	Answer to Research Question Four	176
4.7	Answer to Research Question Five.....	180
4.8	Chapter Summary	184
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....		186
5.1	Chapter Introduction	186
5.2	Summary of the Major Findings	186

5.3	Discussion of Research Question One	190
5.4	Discussion of Research Question Two	191
5.5	Discussion of Research Question Three	192
5.6	Discussion of Research Question Four	195
5.7	Discussion of Research Question Five	195
5.8	Conclusion of the Study	197
5.9	Suggestions for Future Studies	201
5.10	Contributions of the Study	202
5.11	Chapter Summary	207
	REFERENCES.....	208
	APPENDICES	
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	Population and Distribution of Lecturers in the Nigerian Public Universities.....	107
Table 3.2	Distribution of the Lecturers for Questionnaire	109
Table 3.3	Distribution of the Lecturers for Interview.....	110
Table 3.4	Distribution of the Newsreaders for Interview	110
Table 3.5	The 5-point Scale Cakir and Baytar and the Adapted Model.....	117
Table 3.6	The 4-point Scale Model of Adank et al. and the Adapted Model.....	119
Table 3.7	Output of the Reliability Test	121
Table 3.8	Research Questions, Themes and Codes	135
Table 3.9	Coded Names for Interviewees.....	137
Table 3.10	Answering Research Questions and Instruments of Data Collection.....	137
Table 4.1	Gender of the Participants	144
Table 4.2	Age of the Participants	145
Table 4.3	Highest Qualifications of Participants	145
Table 4.4	Distribution of Respondents to Institutions.....	146
Table 4.5	Distribution of Respondents to Political Zones.....	147
Table 4.6	Gender of the Respondents.....	148
Table 4.7	Categories of the Respondents	148
Table 4.8	Highest Qualification of Respondents.....	148
Table 4.9	Results for Research Question One	149
Table 4.10	Means and Standard Deviations of Result for Research Question One	152
Table 4.11	Result to Research Question Two on Power Attitudes.....	155

Table 4.12	Means and Standard Deviations of the Power Attitudes	156
Table 4.13	Result of Research Question Two on Competence Attitudes.....	159
Table 4.14	Means and Standard Deviations of the Competence Attitudes.....	160
Table 4.15	Result of Research Question Two on Social Attractiveness Attitudes.....	163
Table 4.16	Means and Standard Deviations of the Social Attractiveness Attitudes.....	164
Table 5.1	The Research Questions, Concept, Theory and Findings.....	204

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1	Kachru's Concentric Circles of English (Kachru, 1992)..... 3
Figure 2.1	Two Categorisations of Variation in RP..... 37
Figure 2.2	Map of Nigeria Comprising Its 36 States and Capital (Abuja)..... 42
Figure 2.3	Map Showing Locations of Major Linguistic Groups in Nigeria 45
Figure 2.4	The Class Variation Pyramid (Halfarová, 2014)..... 53
Figure 2.5	Okoro's Pyramid of Nigerian English Continuum (Okoro, 2017) 54
Figure 2.6	Oladimeji's pyramid of the three Nigerian varieties of English Oladimeji (2014) 55
Figure 2.7	Components of Sociophonetics, Features and Instruments for Evaluation..... 77
Figure 2.8	Aspects of Language Attitude Evaluation..... 84
Figure 2.9	Divisions of Linguistic Science Showing Sociophonetics 86
Figure 2.10	Components of Language Attitude: Features and Elicitation Instruments (Ladegaard, 2000) 90
Figure 2.11	Conceptual Framework; Adapted from Ladegaard (2000)..... 93
Figure 3.1	Steps in Mixed-methods Research 99

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CGB	Conspicuous General British
CRP	Contemporary Received Pronunciation
GB	General British
GRP	General Received Pronunciation
MGT	Matched Guise Technique
MRP	Mainstream Received Pronunciation
PNE	Popular Nigerian English
RGB	Regional General British
RP	Received Pronunciation
RRP	Regional Received Pronunciation
VGT	Verbal Guise Technique

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Letter of Introduction for Research
Appendix B	Questionnaire
Appendix C	Interview Questions
Appendix D	Transcription of Interviews

**SIKAP ORANG NIGERIA TERHADAP IMITASI AKSEN *RECEIVED*
PRONUNCIATION DALAM BACAAN BERITA NIGERIA**

ABSTRAK

Menggunakan reka bentuk kaedah campuran berjujukan penjelasan, penyelidikan ini menyelidik sikap warga Nigeria terhadap imitasi *Received Pronunciation* (RP) oleh warga Nigeria dalam pembacaan berita. Terdapat kajian berasaskan lapangan yang jarang dijalankan tentang sikap warga Nigeria terhadap bahasa Inggeris di Nigeria. Beberapa kajian dijalankan di lapangan hanya melihat sikap warga Nigeria terhadap RP tanpa memberi tumpuan kepada sikap warga Nigeria terhadap peniruan loghat RP dalam pembacaan berita warga Nigeria. Jadi, sikap orang Nigeria terhadap imitasi RP oleh pembaca berita Nigeria dalam pembacaan berita tidak dikaji secara khusus walaupun ia mempengaruhi cara orang Nigeria memahami dan menyebut perkataan bahasa Inggeris. Oleh itu, sikap orang Nigeria terhadap imitasi RP oleh pembaca berita Nigeria dalam pembacaan berita membentuk objek kepada kajian ini dengan objektif untuk menilai kedua-dua sikap penutur-inter dan penutur-intra Nigeria terhadapnya. Peserta soal selidik adalah seramai 236 orang, dipilih daripada kelas pensyarah universiti awam Nigeria. Manakala peserta temu bual adalah 24, 14 diambil daripada peserta soal selidik dan 10 merupakan pembaca berita Nigeria di televisyen. Kajian ini dijalankan dalam kerangka teori dan konseptual sosiolinguistik dan sikap bahasa masing-masing. Melalui data kuantitatif, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa peserta suka dan lebih suka mendengar tiruan RP oleh warga Nigeria dalam pembacaan berita berbanding loghat Inggeris lain yang digunakan dalam pembacaan berita. Namun, demi identiti mereka, para peserta tidak bersetuju bahawa mereka meniru loghat pembaca berita Nigeria. Kekuatan, kecekapan dan sikap

daya tarikan sosial peserta terhadap pembaca berita Nigeria adalah baik berdasarkan cara pembaca berita menyebut perkataan semasa membaca berita di televisyen. Daripada data kualitatif, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa, sementara pembaca berita Nigeria memberi perhatian kepada cara perkataan harus disebut semasa membaca berita, pnsyarah Nigeria lebih memberi perhatian kepada mesej apabila mendengar bacaan berita warga Nigeria di televisyen. Oleh kerana pembaca berita Nigeria bersama-sama pnsyarah Nigeria menunjukkan imej diri yang positif berdasarkan sebutan bahasa Inggeris mereka dalam membaca berita, mereka menyokong penggunaan tiruan RP oleh pembaca berita Nigeria sebagai model untuk sebutan Bahasa Inggeris Nigeria dengan syarat variasinya perlu disatukan. Memandangkan peniruan loghat RP dalam pembacaan berita Nigeria adalah yang paling disukai oleh warga Nigeria untuk pandangan nasionalnya dalam cara peserta melihatnya sebagai bukan asing atau terlalu setempat, ia mewakili sebutan bahasa Inggeris Nigeria yang berpendidikan sebenar. Walaupun penyelidik akan mendapati penemuan penyelidikan ini sebagai asas untuk penyelidikan lanjut tentang sikap warga Nigeria terhadap bahasa Inggeris, penemuan ini mampu membentuk sebutan warga Nigeria dalam membaca berita, pengajaran-pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris dan dasar bahasa di Nigeria.

**NIGERIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMITATION OF RECEIVED
PRONUNCIATION ACCENT IN NIGERIANS' NEWS READING**

ABSTRACT

Using explanatory sequential design of mixed-methods, this research investigated Nigerians' attitudes towards the imitation of Received Pronunciation accent in Nigerians' news reading. There have been scarce field-based studies conducted on Nigerians' attitudes towards English in Nigeria. The few studies conducted on the field only looked at Nigerians' attitudes towards Received Pronunciation without focusing on the Nigerians' attitudes towards the imitation of Received Pronunciation accent in Nigerians' news reading. Therefore, the Nigerians' attitudes towards the imitation of Received Pronunciation accent in Nigerians' news reading formed the object of this study, with the objective of evaluating both the inter-speaker and intra-speaker attitudes of Nigerians towards it. The questionnaire participants were 236, selected from the class of Nigerian public university lecturers. While the interview participants were 24, 14 drawn from the questionnaire participants and 10 from the Nigerian newsreaders on television. The study was conducted within the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of sociolinguistics and language attitude respectively. From the quantitative data, results showed that participants liked and preferred listening to the imitation of Received Pronunciation by Nigerians in news reading over other English accents used in news reading. Yet, for the sake of their identities, the participants disagreed that they imitate the Nigerian newsreaders' accent. The participants' power, competence and social attractiveness attitudes towards the Nigerian newsreaders were favourable based on how the newsreaders

pronounce words when reading news on television. From the qualitative data, results revealed that, while the Nigerian newsreaders pay attention to how words should be pronounced when reading news, the Nigerian lecturers pay attention rather to the message when listening to Nigerians' news reading on television. As the Nigerian newsreaders together with the Nigerian lecturers expressed positive self-image based on their English pronunciation in reading news, they supported the adoption of the imitation of Received Pronunciation by the Nigerian newsreaders as the model for Nigeria's English pronunciation on the condition that its variation needs to be unified. Since the imitation of RP accent in Nigerians' news reading is the most preferred by Nigerians for its national outlook in the way the participants viewed it as neither foreign nor too localised, it represents the real educated Nigerian English pronunciation. While researchers will find this research findings as a basis for further research on Nigerians' attitudes to English, these findings are capable of shaping Nigerians' pronunciation in news reading, teaching-learning of English and language policy in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Introduction

The background to the study followed by statement of the problem is first presented in this chapter. These are followed by the research objectives leading to the research questions. Significance, scope, and limitations of the research are then described. The concluding part of the chapter defines the key terms and presents how this thesis is organised.

1.2 Background to the Study

There is a shared understanding among members of a linguistic group that their language binds them together resulting from mutual intelligibility (Lanehart, 1996; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). However, from the way one speaks, listeners unavoidably judge for or against a speaker in terms of his region, group, education, gender, religion, character and so on (Trudgill, 2000). Two languages vary, but the nature of their variation varies from the nature of the variation between two dialects of the same language; but in both variations, the basic parameter used to differentiate language from dialect is ‘intelligibility’ (Sandhu & Holloway, 2015). In effect, if two language variants are not mutually intelligible, they are two separate languages, but when they are mutually intelligible, they are dialects of the same language.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of English speech is how it varies and changes with people, place and time (Wolfram, 2006; Hilton & Lenz, 2012 and Chambers, 2013). In the process, the English variation brings about intelligibility and otherwise among its speakers at the same time (Heidary & Barzan, 2019). This

situation is also explained by Milroy (2004), with the conclusion that Britain and America are divided by the same language, English. English variation is phenomenal to the extent that the criteria for identifying a native speaker of the English today remains elusive. Questions such as these are raised by Crystal (2003) in his treatment of English around the world. He observes that deep feelings of ownership of English is questionable if the English must pride itself as a global language, explaining that either no one owns the English or rather everyone owns it and owns the right to use it the way it serves them.

However, earlier in his dictionary, Crystal (1992, p. 138) defines a native speaker as ‘someone for whom a particular language is a first language’ and refers to a first language (mother tongue or native language) as ‘The first language acquired by a child’. If learning English as the first language (and not being raised in a native English-speaking community) is the criteria for being a native speaker of English, many people in non-native English-speaking nations today deserve to be considered as native speakers of English. This is because there are a lot of people who have been raised especially in urban areas of the non-native English nations and have acquired English language first before any other. Yet, for some covert, doubtful reasons, they are not considered as native English speakers.

Unlike Crystal (1992), supported by many others such as Rindal (2010) who is careful to say that English is only one of the global languages, Carrie (2016) asserts that English is doubtlessly the global language today. It is not necessarily because the English commands the highest number of speakers, but because of the advanced state in the development and influence of the nations which predominantly use it as their native language (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvic, 1972). This ongoing controversy in defining who are considered as native speakers of English is manifested

in categorising the English-speaking nations around the world into three circles: inner, outer and expanding (Thumvichit, 2018):

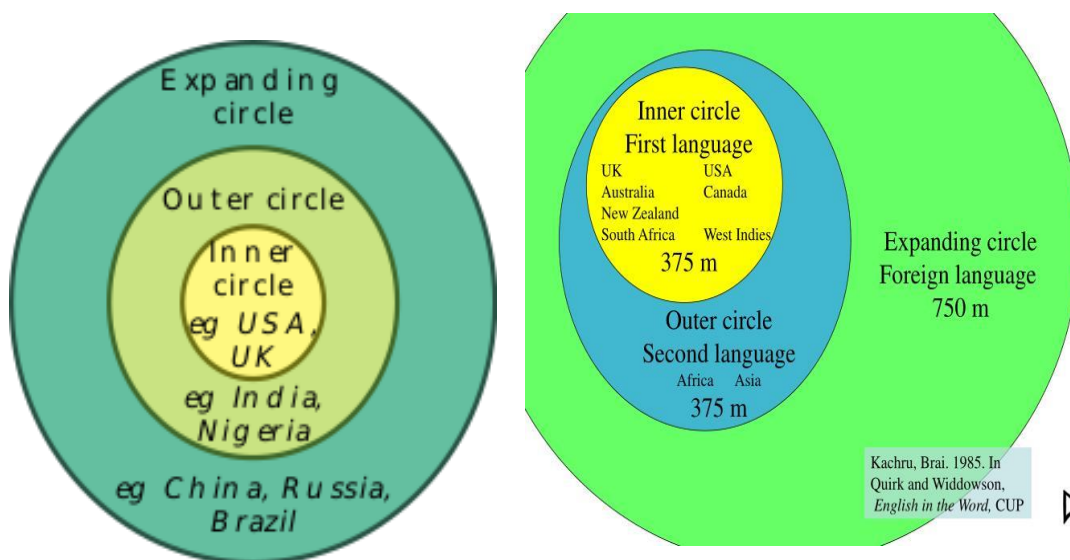


Figure 1.1 Kachru's Concentric Circles of English (Kachru, 1992)

A fuller list of the three circles as reported by Thumvichit (2018) are: inner – America, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; outer – Ghana, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, etc.; and expanding – China, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, etc. Members of the inner circle are five, treated as the native English speakers. Their English variants are in turn treated as models for members of the non-inner circles, who are treated as the non-native English speakers. Members of the non-inner circle are more than the ones given here. While the role of English is integrative among members of the inner circle because they feel it belongs to them, it is instrumental in the non-inner circles because they feel it merely serves them (Baker, 2001). Among the outer circle members, English is rather a second language, with critical domestic roles officially assigned to it (Adegbite, 2010). English among the expanding circle members is rather a foreign language, essentially used for interaction with people outside the nation's domestic affairs (Cakir & Baytar, 2014). Therefore, the tendency for the outer circle to be more proficient in the English

for regularly using it is higher than that of expanding circle which only occasionally uses the English (Mcgee, 2009).

Mass communication is a critical sector of every society. Decisions on the language used for its delivery is considered even more critical especially when the language is non-native to the people (Becker, 1961; Katermina, 2017). The decisions usually faced arise on the model to be imitated. Being a member of the outer circle, Nigeria has been witnessing a competitive imitation of Received Pronunciation (RP, henceforth) by Nigerians in news reading. This view is supported by Adegbite (2010) that English is pre-eminently the language of media (among others) in Nigeria, as its status, forms, functions affect and are being affected by Nigeria's national interest and the globalised community. He further says among the 63 countries of second English speakers, Nigeria, with over 500 languages, leads with roughly 43 million speakers and therefore deserves a prior consideration in the study of world Englishes.

On the same point of modelling, Omoera (2008) considers news reading to be formal by nature, a standard programme type on radio or television which compels broadcast stations to adopt standard English in its presentations around the world where English is the language of official businesses. Omoera (2008) further argues that broadcast stations, both foreign and local, such as Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), African Independent Television (AIT) and so on use current and generally acceptable standard of English in their news presentations.

It is clear from Omoera (2008) above that the context of news reading by Nigerians in English is characterised by the imitation of standard English. In terms of pronunciation, RP is the standard imitated because it is the accent taught at all levels of Nigerian education, and therefore prescribed to be used in official communications especially in news reading. Since the use of RP is perceived to signal a higher educational attainment, some Nigerians are in a habit of imitating the RP standard even in unofficial context.

However, Stuart-Smith, Timmins, Pryce and Gunter (2013) reason that the assumption that exposure to (standard) language varieties on radio and television broadcasting would lead to changes in people's spoken language does not hold. They discover that encountering language via broadcast media has not in any way displaced the primacy of everyday social interaction which causes English to vary and change. Such differences in opinion on the model of English to be imitated in news reading and its effect only represent the debate on the RP accent, and raise certain key sociolinguistic questions (Eschner, 2017). Whether the decision to imitate RP in news reading reflects the attitude of Nigerians towards the RP is one matter (Oyebola F., 2020). Another matter is matching the Nigerians' attitudes towards the imitation of RP in news reading with their attitudes towards other English accents used also in news reading (Olatoye, 2018). The motivation for imitating the RP by Nigerians in news reading is a separate question that needs to be understood. There is also the question of whether imitating the RP by Nigerians in news reading positively influences the Nigerian listeners. These and other relevant questions came to focus in the course of the research.

From Groves (2008) and Palander, Riionheimo and Koivisto (2018), the language attitude which creates the controversy that makes the dichotomy between language and dialect not clear is the issue that today deserves a careful description. For Milroy and Milroy (1999), prescribing how language should be used is the attitude that non-scholars hold, contrary to sociolinguistic perspective which describes a language without regard to mere social or value judgement. Like ‘norms’ and ‘values’, ‘attitudes’ are arbitrary. As such, language essentially derives its arbitrary feature from the people’s arbitrary attitudes, which possesses the power to structure their language in a way that is generally acceptable only by them, and places all languages and variants of a language on equal basis (Palander, Riionheimo & Koivisto, 2018). Perhaps the most important conclusion derivable from Garrett, Coupland, and Williams (2003) is that, in sociolinguistic terms (and not ‘purely linguistic’), the unavailability of the influence of attitude on language is the fundamental force that drives language variation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This research investigated Nigerians’ attitude towards the imitation of RP accent by Nigerians in news reading. To date attitude towards language is treated as an aspect of sociolinguistics. The reason is that sociolinguistics is about language and society (Trudgill, 2004), where attitude as a social variable plays an essential role in shaping the language. Sociolinguistics studies the social meaning of a language created by people’s attitudes (Feagin, 2007). The language-attitude study investigates what the people feel about a variant of language in relation to other variants of the same language (Preston, 2007). This study is therefore rooted in language attitude within the theory of sociophonetics, a sub-field of sociolinguistics. Language attitude researchers

must inquire from speakers to understand what they feel about variants of the same language – comprising the one they themselves use and the other variants used by others (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė, 2013). Policies on what models of language and how they should be learnt and used in a society are shaped by the people's attitudes towards the language in question (McKenzi, 2010).

From the perspective of variation, Odumuh (1987) holds that English is owned and used by both non-native and native speakers. He explained that the British English has already developed features which are uniquely Nigerian having been with Nigerians for a while. In view of Odumuh's timing, this year – 2022 from the year – 1553 when English is said to have been introduced in Nigeria with the coming of the British, English has been in used in Nigeria for 470 years. On this basis, from its formation in 1000 (Cassidy, 1954), the English was only 553 years old when it got to Nigeria in 1553. It is partly in view of this that early studies on the English in Nigeria, especially before and after 1960 when independence was gained, were rather viewed as a struggle for linguistic identity. Several arguments have been advanced to dispel the notion that English is alien to Nigerians by attempting to categorise the varieties of English in Nigeria with the view to standardising the Nigerian English.

For example, Brosnahan (1958), Banjo (1971), Odumuh (1987c), Jowitt (1991c), Okoro (2017) and Oladimeji (2014) categorised English on the bases of education, linguistics, intelligibility, ethnicity and region. Based on their respective pattern of six categorisations, whose elaborate discussion is found in section 7.2, it does no longer make sense to any average Nigerian university students that English is foreign to Nigeria. This is a major conviction illustrated in, for example, Ubahakwe, (1979), Odumuh (1987), Kujore (1985), Jowitt (1991, 2000, 2001 and 2015) Adetugbo (1997), Adegija (2004) and Adegbite (2010). Particularly in Odumuh (1987),

‘English language in Nigeria’ – which suggests that English is a foreign language in Nigeria, has been christened as ‘Nigerian English’ to support Nigerian linguistic autonomy just as in, for example, Scottish English, Irish English or English English.

For Jowitt (1991), a major requirement for having Nigerian English is that it should be able to express the rich sociolinguistic and cultural heritage of the Nigerian people. In a separate submission, Jowitt (2015) stated that the Nigerian English should, as a matter of requirement, be endonormatively, instead of exonormatively, generated to avoid adopting a foreign variant accent of English. Clearly the collective attitudes of the early Nigerian scholars towards the English in Nigeria as shown in their studies above is ideological, presenting their desire to linguistically liberate Nigerians even without empirical evidence to support their claims.

Apart from Ioratin-Uba who in 1995 studied Nigerian undergraduates’ attitudes towards RP using the matched-guise technique, subsequent studies have generally focused on describing the pattern of the Nigerian English pronunciation. For example, Adegbija (2004), Josiah and Essien (2015) and Jowitt (1915) are samples of the few studies carried out on the description of English pronunciation in Nigeria. However, it should be noted that all these studies are non-empirical and without focusing on attitudes towards the Nigerian English pronunciation. Although a few empirical studies have been carried out on English pronunciation in Nigeria, they consider not the attitudes that generate the Nigerian English accents, for example, Oladipupo (2014), Oladipupo and Akinjobi (2015) and Okoro (2017).

Therefore, studies conducted so far on the English in Nigeria have not focused on finding out about the Nigerians’ attitudes towards English, especially on attitudes towards the imitation of RP in all sectors where English is assigned to be used. One of

these sectors is news reading on television, perhaps the most conspicuous activity in which the RP is habitually imitated by Nigerian newsreaders (Omoera, 2008). This dearth of non-empirical investigation of Nigerians' attitude towards the RP motivated Olatoye (2018) to only quantitatively study attitudes of educated Nigerians towards varieties of English around the world, including the one in Nigeria, using matched-guise technique. Although Olatoye's study was language attitude-based, it has not focused on the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading.

Coincidentally, Oyebola (2020) appeared in the course of this research (which began in 2018) and determined how acceptable the Nigerian newscasters' English accent is as a model of Nigerian English. His quantitative result showed that the Nigerian newscasters' accent is less preferred to British and American accents and that the Nigerian newscasters' accent contained more features of the British than American accent. The qualitative result, however, indicated that participants' attitudes were very positive towards the newscasters' accent. Although Oyebola's study was a mixed-methods, the quantitative part of the study was done only on the basis of yes-no answer and the objective was only one of the five objectives of this research. These constitute additional reasons for undertaking this current study, which examined Nigerians' attitudes towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading using the Likert's scale with emphasis on the qualitative investigation. The research demonstrated a departure from the normal matched-guise technique of evaluating the English speakers' attitude towards RP, using recorded different accents produced by one speaker. It considered attitudes towards imitation of the RP by Nigerians in news reading. Beyond the normal inter-speaker evaluation using the matched-guise technique, this research delved into intra-speaker evaluation using direct approach to

examine the Nigerian newsreaders' attitudes towards their imitation of the RP on the one hand and towards themselves based on their imitation of the RP on the other hand.

The study on acceptability of the three major Nigerian English accents of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba native speakers conducted by Foluke (2019) indicates that the Nigerian English accents have been influenced essentially along the line of ethnicity, marked by errors and variants, resulting in acceptable Nigerian English accents. In this research, however, the variation in the accents is predictably getting neutralised by imitation of RP accent driving at obtaining a unified Nigerian accent. While Nigerians look up to newsreaders and teachers for the creation of a standard accent English, an examination of the performance of Nigerian newsreaders on stress placement using the combined methods of acoustic and perceptual phonetics demonstrate that Nigerian English pronunciation in news reading can serve as model for Nigerian English (Akindele, 2020). As this study was rounding up, Usman (2022) produced a phonological consonant process of the Hausa speakers of English, supporting the recognition of the Nigerian newsreaders' English accent as a model of standard pronunciation. The conclusions of Akindele (2020) and Usman (2021) represent yet a further justification for this research and other previous ones regarding the English pronunciation of Nigerians in news reading regarded as a model by Nigerians.

Two essential, related purposes motivated this research to be conducted. First, the research was conducted to deeply understand the network of factors that motivate the Nigerian newsreaders to imitate the RP accent when reading news. The second reason was to deeply evaluate Nigerians' attitudes to the Nigerians' newsreaders imitation of RP accent in news reading. Understanding deeply why the Nigerian newsreaders imitate the RP when reading news complemented by deep evaluation of other Nigerians' attitudes to their imitation of the RP was understood to offer a more

objective investigation of the Nigerians' attitudes to the Nigerian newsreaders' imitation of the RP in news reading. This was done with the view to providing the findings as basis for further research on Nigerians' attitudes to English, to help shape positively Nigerians' pronunciation in news reading, teaching-learning of English pronunciation and language policy in Nigeria.

Therefore, this research has brought to the fore the attitudes of Nigerians towards imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading especially within the context of English studies in Nigeria. As suggested by Omoera (2008), because of media effect, the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading has the potential of shaping the English pronunciation of Nigerians as they continue to listen to news on television. In this process, attitudes towards the imitation of English will no doubt continue to change, requiring continuous studies to be conducted on it. Understanding the nature of this attitude will help to guide the standardisation processes of the Nigerian English pronunciation for general acceptance. In addition, the direct speaker evaluation technique used has proven to be an alternative technique to the normal recorded speech played for participants to evaluate the accent immediately after listening. Because the participants' attitudes towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading has been formed for long, the participants were in a readier position to express their attitudes in a firmer and clearer manner than such obtained when the normal matched-guise technique is used. This way, it has added to the general knowledge of attitude towards language as generated by English pronunciation in news reading, especially in Nigeria. For revealing that the imitation of RP on the television by Nigerians is preferred by Nigerians over other accents used in news reading, the research has become a resource for language policy in both Nigerian media and education system.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of the research is to investigate the attitudes of Nigerians towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading. This is specified in the following aspects of language attitude as:

1. to determine the extent to which Nigerians prefer the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading to other English accents used in news reading.
2. to reveal Nigerians' attitudes towards Nigerian newsreaders based on their imitation of RP in news reading.
3. to compare the attitudes of Nigerian newsreaders and those of other Nigerians towards imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading.
4. to investigate Nigerian newsreaders' attitudes towards themselves based on their imitation of RP in news reading.
5. to find out how acceptable the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading is as Nigeria's model of English pronunciation.

1.5 Research Questions

The research asks to generally understand much more about the attitudes of Nigerians towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading, as it seeks to provide answers to the following specific questions:

1. To what extent do Nigerians prefer the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading to other accents used in news reading?
2. What are Nigerians' attitudes towards Nigerian newsreaders based on their imitation of RP in news reading?

3. What are the differences and similarities in attitudes of Nigerian newsreaders and those of other Nigerians towards imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading?
4. What are the Nigerian newsreaders' attitudes towards themselves based on their imitation of RP in news reading?
5. To what extent is the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading acceptable by Nigerians as Nigeria's model of English pronunciation?

1.6 Significance of the Research

With the dearth of research on attitudes towards the variation of English in Nigerian context, this research has made some substantial contributions to language attitude study in Nigerian. First, the findings of the study have contributed to the knowledge on language attitude as an aspect of sociolinguistics, by presenting the attitude of educated Nigerians to the contemporary trend of imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading. This will be a source for further research generally on language attitude, model English pronunciation (with focus on RP), imitation of English pronunciation and news reading. This has therefore challenged the existing nationalistic attitude formulated by early Nigerian scholars on behalf of Nigerians. By implication, this challenge has demonstrated the imperative of conducting language attitude study especially in societies like Nigeria where English is the second language.

Second, a technique of eliciting language attitude without playing a recorded speech for participants to immediately evaluate the perceived different accents was used instead of using the traditional technique of matched-guise. This was because attitudes towards the imitation of RP in news reading by Nigerians and towards the Nigerian newsreaders themselves have already been formed by the by the participants

who easily expressed it when elicited. Apart from the inter-speaker evaluation normally obtained using the matched-guise technique, the research hopes to also introduce intra-speaker evaluation (self-evaluation) in Nigerian English studies. Since the accent with which students are taught matters, teachers at all levels of Nigerian education may find the research findings informative. The teachers are likely to be encouraged by the research findings to acquire and use the pronunciation skills required to reflect the students' attitudes towards English pronunciation.

Third, understandably non-native English speakers around the world hold different attitudes towards the RP and of course its imitation in news reading by their newsreaders in their respective context. For interest in comparative analysis, it is intended that the research findings will be a model to be compared to other established social characteristics of RP in terms of the three categories of power, competence and social attractiveness attitudes. This way, the interest in English language attitude study in specific English-speaking communities can be raised for further comparative studies.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Research

This is a language attitude-based research conducted within the broad field of sociolinguistics, and narrowed down to the sub-field of sociophonetics, where the language attitude is considered as subjective evaluation of accent (Foulkes, Scobbie & Watt, 2010). The imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading is the attitude object. Nigeria is the context within which the research fieldwork was conducted. Participants were selected from the lecturers in the 13 Nigerian public universities located in the north-central geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Both the questionnaire and interview were used for data collection, comprising inter-speaker and intra-speaker evaluations of the

participants' attitudes towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading. The explanatory sequential design of mixed methods was used for the sequential analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

This study has some limitations, which can be considered in future studies. One of these limitations is about the data collection methods. Not completely enabling the interview participants to sincerely express their attitudes towards imitation of the RP by Nigerians in news reading remains the primary research limitation. This occurred despite the strategies put in place for participants to freely express their attitudes. In addition, the assumption made in this study that the Nigerian public university lecturers used as participants are in the habit of listening to Nigerian news reading on television was likely to be false.

Another limitation is the use of purposive sampling in the qualitative phase of the study. As the purposive sampling technique used for selecting the participants for the interviews has been criticised for being biased, the findings should be generalized with cautions. However, the choice to use this purposive sampling was necessitated by the need to collect a set of competent responses from qualified participants for the interview who may not have been selected when a random sampling technique, for example, was used. Out of the 15, 302 Nigerian public university lecturers, only 236 participants were conveniently selected for the questionnaire and only 26 were purposively selected for the interview, 14 from the questionnaire participants and 10 from the Nigerian newsreaders on television. Both criteria of effective representativeness and control were respected in the sample selection, with more emphasis on keeping the participants' number within the effective control of the researcher (Brown, 1988).

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Language Attitude is the feelings people hold about their own language and or the language(s) of others [including the social characteristics of the people linked to their language] (Crystal, 1992). Such people's feelings towards language is only one of the three components of language attitude, which Ladegaard (2000) describes as 'emotion' (or affective) to language. Ladegaard says the emotional language attitude is the most crucial of the three components of language attitude. It is essentially for this reason that the instruments of questionnaire and interview are combined for the data collection. This helps to more deeply understand the stereotypical view of speakers in terms of personality traits, which Garrett (2010) considers a key feature in language attitudes study.

This component of the emotional language attitude of Nigerians is the one investigated in this research as it concerns the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading. As such, language attitude in this research will be treated as a bias (positive or negative) formed by a group about a variant of English language and its speakers and which determines the way the group form their own variant of the English.

Language Imitation, from the perspective of behavioural (as opposed to cognitive) science, is a means by which a learner comes to socially acquire a language through consistent teaching and practice. This is the view established by Skinner since 1959 and still being proven by many contemporary authors. For example, Okoro, (2017) treats imitation within the behavioural theory as an effective means for teaching-learning pronunciation in Nigerian context considering the high degree of inconsistency between English speech and writing. Therefore, language imitation will

be treated as the conscious and repeated attempt in realising RP as it is conceived by the imitators.

Received Pronunciation, RP as generally called, is a standard of English pronunciation (and not the standard pronunciation). This was the observation of Dupleau (1818) as a reaction to the modern British phonologists whose global English standard ideology eventually gave rise to the RP. (Norman, 2015) says Ellis (1869) coined ‘received standard’ and ‘received pronunciation’ (with the first letter of each word in small) and used the two interchangeably. Robinson (2019) reports that in 1917 Jones in the first edition of English pronouncing dictionary referred to the RP as ‘Public School Pronunciation’, named after the ‘Public School’ in Britain and whose students were regarded as the few privileged. According to Robinson (2019) it was in 1924, the second edition of Jones’ English pronouncing dictionary that the concept of RP was considerably established as ‘Received Pronunciation’ (with the first letter of each word in capital), with ‘received’ conceived as ‘accepted’ or ‘approved’. However, because RP will be considered as a variable in this work, the imitation of RP by Nigerians (in news reading) will be viewed as only one of the standard realisations of RP.

Standard is closely related to the concept of RP as shown above in the concluding description of the RP. Any distinct English pronunciation according to a group is a standard (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). It is however a matter of argument which suggests that since a standard accent exists, there must be at least an accent considered as non-standard, otherwise there will be no basis for identifying an accent as standard. This English standard ideology is a popular view among theoretical linguists such as Cruttenden (2014) and Roach (2009). But in line with Milroy & Milroy’s sociolinguistic view this research will consider the imitation of RP by Nigerians (in

news reading) as one of the standards of English pronunciation in its own right with power, competent and social attractiveness attitudes of educated Nigerians attracted to it.

Variation is essentially the concept that gives rise to the concept of standard and non-standard English. As shown above, English differs. The differences or differentiation in English pronunciation is termed variation (Wolfram, 2006). Once a variation is established, language attitude emerges to label one variant as standard and other variants as non-standards (Honeybone, 2011). In investigating English variation as a problem to theoretical linguistics, Honeybone puts the variation into two basic classes – inter-speaker (variation between speakers) and intra-speaker (variation within a speaker).

From the views of Wolfram (2006) and Honeybone (2011) given above, variation could be the difference in the use of language. It could also refer to each of the different forms of a language. In this research, however, variation is considered as a variant or variety of a language. As such imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading is the variation investigated. It is rather a social variation because it is a group-based variant of Nigerian English pronunciation.

Accent, by implication, is a discriminatory English speech that disables two English speakers from understanding each other (Walker, 2015). Although Walker refers to the discriminatory speech between two native English speakers, Ingram (2009) classifies the English accent into two: native and non-native. However, Adank, Stewart, Connell and Wood (2013) reports that in English conversation, speakers get to converge their [discriminatory] accents to accommodate while imitating each other, with the result that it drives positive language attitudes. As stated in Milroy and Milroy

(1999), that English standard is only exists in the English speakers' mind, which is manifested differently by speakers in real speech, in this research, accent was conceived as an imitation of an ideal RP accent.

Sociophonetics is an emerging sub-theory of sociolinguistic theory. As a recognition for the sociophonetic theory, Wardhaugh (2006) and (Chambers, 2007) are in agreement in confining sociolinguistics to only cover the social meanings of words and structures of a language. This leaves sociophonetics with the social meaning of an accent to handle (Celata & Calamai, 2014). The research was therefore conducted within the narrow theory of sociophonetics as an aspect of sociolinguistics – the study of language in society (Trudgill, 2004). Sociophonetics in this research will therefore be used as a theory partly concerned with the subjective evaluation of a variant accent of English (Foulkes et al., 2010).

Educated Nigerians are the class of Nigerians whose attitudes towards the imitation of RP by Nigerians was investigated in this research. They are considered educated Nigerians in Nigerian sociolinguistic studies because they possess a level of formal education above that of secondary education through the medium of English. It is therefore assumed that this category of Nigerians has acquired the educated Nigerian English enough to make them suitable as participants in this study. Although such categorisation based only on formal education is inadequate, education remains the main factor used for determining English efficiency in countries such as Nigeria where English is the language of education. Elaborate explanation on this relationship between education and English proficiency is shown in section 2.7 where categorisation of Nigerian English is discussed.

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised in five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. It comprises background to the research, problem, questions and objectives of the research. Others are research significance, scope, limitation and definition of key terms. Chapter two is literature review. It consists of the formation and spread of English, marked by movement for its standardisation in Britain. It includes the controversial rise of RP and the attitudes towards it both in Britain and Nigeria, leading to its imitation by Nigerians in news reading as necessitated by certain historical and contemporary sociolinguistic issues interacting at both national and international scenes. The chapter concludes with a brief account of how language attitude studies developed. Chapter three is methodology. It is made of the design, study population and sample, including the sampling technique. These are followed by a set of tentative questions for qualitative data, questionnaire and interview instrumentations, validation and reliability of the quantitative instrument. Chapter four is data presentation and analysis. It is made of presentation of the quantitative on tables accompanied by its descriptive analysis, and presentation of the qualitative data in patterns, accompanied by its analysis using discourse approach. Chapter five is summary and conclusion.

1.10 Chapter Summary

After introducing the chapter, the background to the study followed by statement of the problem were given. The research objectives, questions, significance, scope and limitations and definition of key terms followed accordingly, after which the organisation the research is presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review. It first considers the inseparable relationship among language, dialect and accent followed by the concepts of variable, variation, variability, variable and variant. The rise of English standardisation and standard, leading to the formation of RP and the attitudes towards it in British as well as in Nigerian sociophonetic contexts. This is followed by the review of previous studies on attitudes towards language. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks supported by related concepts are then presented. It ends in the summary of the chapter.

2.2 Language, Dialect and Accent

There is a shared understanding among members of a linguistic group that their language binds them together resulting from mutual intelligibility (Lanehart, 1996; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). However, from the way one speaks, listeners unavoidably judge for or against a speaker in terms of his region, group, education, gender, religion, character and so on (Trudgill, 2000). Two languages vary, but the nature of their variation varies from the nature of the variation between two dialects of the same language; but in both variations, the basic parameter used to differentiate language from dialect is ‘intelligibility’ (Sandhu & Holloway, 2015). On the one hand, when two linguistic media are not mutually intelligible the media become two separate languages; on the other hand, when the media are mutually intelligible, they become two dialects of the same language.

As shown above, language is divisive. Shaw (1942), supported by Milroy and Milroy (1999) and Milroy (2004) reasons that British and Americans are joined as well as separated by English essentially along the line of pronunciation. From the definition of Crystal (1992), dialect is a component or an alternative version of a language. Smith (2012) points out that, contrary to the ‘centripetal’ approach of theoretical linguists who view language as homogeneous, the ‘centrifugal’ nature of language which refers to its diversity will remain a dominant force to deal with in linguistics.

People do not only use different languages, but also use the same language with differences in pronunciation, lexis and syntax, and despite the phonological, lexical and syntactic variations, users of the language understand one another (Watt 2007). In Nigeria and many other places as reported in many sociolinguistics studies, for example, Milroy (2007) says sometimes for political, historical, social, ethnic, regional, economic and educational interest, a speech community will regard its dialect as a separate language. There is also a situation where speakers of a language can speak and understand a different language whose speakers do not understand the other language in return (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2015). These language questions and some others around the world partly explain why identifying dialect differently from language remains a controversial matter among linguists today (Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003; Kerswill & Trudgill, 2005; Hinskens, Auer, & Kerswill 2005; Cheshire, Kerswill, & Williams, 2009; Sandhu & Holloway, 2015).

Deducting from Groves (2008) the language attitude which creates the controversy that makes the dichotomy between language and dialect not clear is the issue that today deserves a careful description. For Milroy and Milroy (1999), prescribing how language should be used is the attitude that non-scholars hold,

contrary to sociolinguistic perspective which describes a language without regard to mere social or value judgement. Like ‘norms’ and ‘values’, ‘attitudes’ are arbitrary. As such, language essentially derives its arbitrary feature from the people’s arbitrary attitudes, which possesses the power to structure their language in a way that is generally acceptable only by them, and places all languages and variants of a language on equal basis (Palander, Riionheimo & Koivisto, 2018). Perhaps the most important conclusion derivable from Garrett, Coupland, and Williams (2003) is that, in sociolinguistic terms (and not ‘purely linguistic’), the unavoidability of the influence of attitude on language is the fundamental force that drives language variation.

2.3 Variation, Variability, Variable and Variant

As one of the key terms, variation has been defined in 1.8 as the difference in the use of (English) language and also one of the different forms of language. As a different form of a language, the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading is a variation because it is one of the forms of English pronunciation. This allows variation to be used interchangeably with ‘variant’. As such the imitation of RP by Nigerians in news reading can also mean a variant of English pronunciation, but variant does not refer to the differences in use of English, the way variation does. This is why the research is not focused on the difference, for example, between the imitation of RP by Nigerians and CNN English in terms of pronunciation. The degree to which variants of a language vary is called variability. Arguably, the variability between RP and imitation of the RP by Nigerians, for example, is relatively low because the latter is an imitation of the former. If it is viewed as a concept composed of two or more variant forms, English language becomes variable, and will therefore be treated as such to

appropriately enable the imitation of RP considered as a variant (or variety) of the English pronunciation.

It has been said in 2.2 that English changes because it is a living language. In each of its changes, there is variation which is described using the analytical tools of the linguistic variable and variable rule, which altogether forms the main interest of sociolinguistics as shown in Labov 1969 and Hazen (2010). Although variation and variability have been alternatively used by authors such as Labov (1966, 1989, 1994 & 2007), Wells (1990, 1994, 1997 & 1998) Trudgill (2000, 2001 & 2008), Milroy and Milroy (1999), Garrett (2010) and Cruttenden (2014), the two are different. First, they are different as conceived in this research, and secondly, as shown in the five observations below by Wolfram (2006):

1. If structure is at the heart of language, then variation defines its soul.
2. As Sapir (1921: 147) put [sic] it, “Everyone knows that language is variable.”
3. Variability is everywhere in language,
4. An essential construct in the study of linguistic variation is the LINGUISTIC VARIABLE, a structural unit that includes a set of fluctuating variants showing meaningful co-variation with an independent set of variables.
5. Operationally, the linguistic variable has been used to encompass a wide range of fluctuating variants.

The first three sentences are in defence of sociolinguistics against the doubtful superiority claimed by theoretical linguistics, and the last two sentences show the difference and relationship between language variation and variability. From the first