

## GENDER, AGE & LANGUAGE FAMILIARITY: THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF THE USE OF AMERICANISMS IN A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Adedeji, Kofo<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Lagos.

\*corresponding author: kofo474@yahoo.com

**Citation:** Adedeji, K. (2020). Gender, Age & Language Familiarity: The Sociolinguistics of the use of Americanisms in a University Campus. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 79-96

### ABSTRACT

---

The aim of this paper is to establish aspects of the sociolinguistic profile of Nigerians, specifically Nigerian undergraduates of the University of Lagos in Southwest Nigeria regarding the use of American and British English lexis and grammatical/structural forms. The impetus for this study is the observation of an increase in the use of American English in the face of the British norm-dependency official status of Nigeria. Data was collected from a hundred Nigerian university undergraduates of the University of Lagos aged 16-30 years old. Salient sociolinguistic information such as gender, age and language familiarity were juxtaposed with the usage of the two geographical variants of English. Two major outcomes are: American lexical and grammatical norms and expressions are more frequently used than British forms; female undergraduates use these Americanisms more often than their male cohorts.

**Keywords:** gender, age, sociolinguistics, undergraduates, Americanisms

### INTRODUCTION

---

The spread of English across the world through colonialism and trade has resulted in the emergence of many varieties of the language. Kachru (1985) presents a model of the heterogeneity of English in a grouping of the diverse geographical types of the language across the world. Referred to as the three concentric circles, the model represents areas where English is used as the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. According to Kachru, the circles represent the patterns of acquisition, the type of spread and the domains in which English is used across cultures and societies. The Inner Circle refers to the traditional bases or the origin of English, dominated by the mother-tongue varieties, where English acts as a first language. The countries of the Inner Circle are the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. They are said to be 'norm providing'. The Outer Circle consists of

the non-native English environments, where the language has become part of a country's institutions, and plays an important second language role in multilingual settings. These countries have a history of colonization and the English used is described as 'norm-developing': Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Singapore, India, and Malaysia etc. The Expanding Circle countries are those where English is learnt as a foreign language. These territories do not have a history of colonization by members of the Inner Circle but English is used as a foreign language and as a useful tool for international communication. These are also known as 'norm-dependent' countries.

Kachru's model is an accurate representation of the spread of English across the world, and it puts Nigeria within the Outer Circle and norm-developing division as the country was colonized by Britain. Besides this, Nigeria has officially adopted an exonormative model option and this makes British English the standard for the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. However, unlike British English, American English does not have any official status and neither does it perform any formal function in Nigeria. But this lack of institutional standing does not seem to have hampered the expansion of American English in Nigeria and the rest of the world where it has a similar non-official status. Modiano (1977) was one of the first to express this in the 1970s when it was observed that the two most dominant varieties of English in the world as at then were the British and American varieties. Two decades later, Bobda (1998) also observed that British English and American English constituted the two main poles in the vast English-using community of the late 1990s. This trend has continued till present day as more recently in 2018, Alftberg conducted a study on the usage of American and British English in a Swedish secondary and it was concluded that "as many as sixty-nine percent of the students mix features from the two varieties."

### **Americanisms vs. Britishisms**

Some other authors have focused on the convergences and divergences between the two varieties, referring to distinctly American forms of spelling, pronunciation, lexis and grammar, as Americanisms and the converse British forms as Britishisms. Bobda (2008) is a reflection of the arguments of other 21st century research studies which conclude that although there is a marked similarity between the two varieties, there exists significant differences which are important enough to differentiate them. Pronunciation differences pointed out by Bobda include: rhoticity and darkening of [l] across the board, the nasal twang and some word stress differences in words ending in -ize, -or and -er. Bobda also argues that there are certain words in both varieties which have different meanings. For example, words such as first floor and second floor (American English) and British English ground floor, first floor and second floor, pants and trousers, gas and petrol, 2/12/1998 (American English 12th of February 1998) and 12/2/1998 which is British. One cannot but imagine the problems that might surface if an American English speaker is directing a British English speaker to the first or second floor whereas the British thinks it is the ground floor or first floor.

In Nigeria, British English is the norm that is recommended for teaching and learning. This is as a result of pre-colonial era of the slave trade before its abolishment in 1807. The British came to Nigeria as a result of legitimate trade but this became the slave trade. When the slave trade was abolished in 1807, the freed slaves came back to Nigeria having acquired the language of their masters and became teachers of English in schools established by the missionaries. Hence, a variety of Nigerian English emerged which can be rightly described as dependent on the British norm. Thus, at the different levels of linguistic description: spelling, pronunciation, lexis and grammar, Nigerian English is dependent on the British variety. Also, Received Pronunciation (RP) is regarded as the model and it possesses certain attendant social values in the country.

### **Americanisms: Growth and Expansion**

Matthew (1931) that the first person to use the term “Americanism” was John Witherspoon, one of the early presidents of the Princeton University. In 1751, it was defined as “a use of phrase or terms, or a construction of sentences, even among persons of rank and education, different from the use of the same terms or phrases, or the construction of similar sentences in Great Britain”. This may be explained as the use of the American variety within the Great Britain or within the communities where standard British English is the model. A considerable number of works exist on Americanisms: (Modiano, 1996; Campbell 1996; Mencken 1973; Foster, 1968). Baugh (1993) refers to an Americanism as a word, which is currently used in American English and has a different equivalent in the British variety; a word which refers to something exclusively characteristic of American realism, a word which originated in American English but has since spread to other varieties of English. It also refers to a word or an expression which originated in British English but is no longer used among the British, but is still used on the North American continent.

Mencken (2006) maintains that Americanisms have been adopted by the British and can be commonly heard on both sides of the Atlantic, while Foster remarks on the use of the term among the younger generation because it is deemed to be “the hall-mark of the tough-guy and the he-man” (1968:53). It has become the marker of a popular and influential new generation who are exposed to the dialect through the internet, movies, music and travelling. Foster traces the origin of Americanisms to Britain and claims that most people have failed to recognize most of the forms as Americanisms. Investigating the use of Americanisms by European, Asian and Russian youths, Campbell (1996) concludes that it is used in casual conversation, even when many of these youths have been taught only British English.

The reputation of British English as the language of prestige and supremacy in most English-speaking communities or former colonies of Great Britain has been established by scholars. The growing challenge posed by the increasing frequency of usage of American forms has also been widely documented. In Cameroon, Atechi (2009) concludes that Cameroon English is gradually leaning towards American

English dominance. In a study involving university undergraduate students, the use of lexical and grammatical forms of both the American and the British varieties was investigated. The conclusion was that the respondents preferred the use of American lexical items in different spheres including education, transportation, fashion and clothing. Campbell (1996) estimates that seventy (70%) the roughly 350 million native English speakers speak American English. Comparing the population figures of the two leading mother tongue varieties, it is concluded that there are more American English speakers than there are British English speakers. The US has a population of about 260 million as against 55 million for Britain, which makes the likelihood of encountering an American variety greater than the British variety. Other causes of the increase in the use of American English have to do with the computer and the internet, the mass media, trade, the Peace Corps, and immigration policies.

Bobda (1998) further explains the causes of the increase in the use of American variety by giving the following explanations:

- The last few decades have witnessed an ever-increasing political grip of America on the planet. In the late 1980s the US penetrated and consolidated its position in formerly socialist territories.
- The lead of the US in the computer and internet industry has long been established as the US dominates the computer industry and the favoured language of the industry is English. Hence, the use of American English.
- American radio and television networks have established presences all over the globe.
- Trade with the US has steadily risen in volume over the past few years, even in territories formerly controlled by Britain and considered by many people to be out of bounds to Americans.
- The Peace Corps, founded by President J.F Kennedy in 1962, has also been a major cause of emigration of Americans to various parts of the third world, where volunteers have been working in the medical sector, agriculture and in English language teaching.
- The immigration laws of Britain coupled with the alleged inhospitality of the British, have of late diverted to America students and people from various parts of the world seeking greener pastures. This chain has yielded more migration to the US, in the sense that people tend to follow friends and relatives living in the states.

Campbell (1996) reports that in Cairo, as recently as 1984, some university students received lower grades if they used American spellings instead of British. Modiano (1996) posits that “we find teachers, British people as well as natives of the country in which they work, who follow the British English standard, and scorn the American English” (1996:7). Also, according to Campbell (1996), the beginning of the marked lead of American English can be traced to the decades after World War II, which corresponded to the simultaneous rise of the United States (US) as a military and technological power and the decline of the British Empire. Since then, American

English has continuously spread its tentacles all over the globe. The British made English an international language in the nineteenth century with empire building, but Americans have been the driving force behind the globalization of English since the twentieth century.

### Americanisms in Nigeria

In Nigeria, scholars began to examine the term 'Americanisms' a long time ago. According to Awonusi (1994), the acceptance of the American variety is clearly linked to the increasing role of the US as a superpower in the affairs of the world. Therefore, the popularity of the American accent gradually enhanced its global acceptability in non-native-speaker communities. American influences became noticeable from the 1960s when American Peace Corps volunteers worked in Nigeria. The volunteers freely used the various dialects of American English in many parts of Nigeria. Then, the first generation of American trained professionals arrived on the West Coast of Africa in the nineteenth century. This also brought about the popularity of the American accent.

Politically, Nigeria and the US have also interacted closely. In 1979, Nigeria opted for the American-style presidential system and abandoned the former Westminster model of political organization and government. This prompted many legislators and officials to visit the US in order to study the American political system. Trade between Nigeria and the US has also increased over the years, signifying an era of closer economic co-operation. The existence of Americanisms is as a result of many years of relationship between the Americans and Nigeria. This relationship as explained above traverses economic, political and educational interactions. Since 1960, evidence of influences of American English have been observed in Nigerian English and some of the problems caused by this ascendancy have been highlighted. Some of these observations will be discussed below.

Awonusi (1994) clarifies that in Nigeria, the Received Pronunciation (RP) and the Standard British English are the recommended model accent and variety for the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. However, according to Awonusi, the American accent and variety have exerted heavy phonological and lexical influences on Nigerian English. Yod-dropping, t-tapping, use of a diphthong rather than a monophthong in *privacy*, retention of the glottal fricative /h/ in city names like *Birmingham* and *Cunningham* are some of these phonological influences. Lexical influences include *drapes*, *editorial*, *water heater*, etc., instead of *curtain*, *leader*, and *immersion heater* which are British. Besides an examination of phonological and lexical influences, the sociolinguistic implications of the use of American forms among one hundred Nigerians living in Lagos in 1994 was also investigated. The outcome was that sixty-four (64%) of Nigerians selected lexical items that are distinctly British while thirty-six (36%) expressed a preference for the American variety. It was concluded that Nigerian English is still largely British norm-dependent. However, an admission that the percentage of users of the American form is high

enough to accept the growing influence of Americanisms in Nigeria is also made.

Bamgbose (1995) focused on the attitude of Nigerians towards Americanisms have a negative perception among Nigerians. Tracing the introduction of the American accent into Nigeria through the American Peace Corps members who were volunteers in Nigeria as well as the trained American professionals in the West Coast of Africa, in the nineteenth century, it is claimed that both groups abandoned their Americanisms as soon as they set foot in Africa. The abandonment of their accent coupled with problems such as lack of intelligibility led to the lack of appeal of this variety.

Igboanusi (2003) examined the knowledge, uses and attitudes towards the features of Americanisms in Nigeria. Based on data samples from newspapers, news magazines, radio, television, supermarkets and observed conversations, it was concluded that there is growing use and awareness of Americanisms in Nigeria. It is further explained that Nigerians choose the American variety instead of British variety in the face of the threat by examiners that the American variety is unacceptable in Nigeria. Major reasons why trained American professionals on the West Coast of Africa Nigerian youths choose Americanisms is to appropriate to themselves the perceived prestige that is attached to speaking with a foreign accent. Igboanusi concludes that by the end of the twenty first century, American English would have equalled the British English in terms of influences in all contexts and therefore advocates exposure to the three varieties of British, American and Nigerian Englishes.

Ogbulogo (2005) agrees with the conclusions of many studies on the growing influence of the American variety of English in Nigeria. This variety is referred to as the “wanna construction”, which is observable in the speech of many young Christian missionaries, company executives, undergraduate and postgraduate students. The study was conducted at the Covenant University in Nigeria which has a strong connection with the Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma US. Illustrations from the data include:

1. I **wanna** say welcome to you.
2. I **wanna** tell you that you are the ones we have been waiting for.
3. You’re **gonna** have access to computers as senior staff.
4. God is **gonna** be giving us bread tonight.

It was observed that this “wanna construction” is pervasive in every sphere of life on the university campus.

In another study which involves undergraduates in an African university - the University of Ghana, Lawer (2019) explored vocabulary and spelling differences between American and British English as well as attitudes to the two varieties. 57.7% of the students used American lexis and spelling forms while 42.3% selected British

forms. Although slight, the preference for Americanisms is sufficiently established in this study as the figures show that the usage of this variety is more frequent.

### DATA COLLECTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC OF RESPONDENTS

Questionnaires were used to gather data in order to evaluate the preference for American lexical items and syntactic patterns. A written response was required from one hundred students (100) of the University of Lagos in three different sections:

- (a) The descriptive section which provides information for the respondents regarding the questionnaire with explanations and illustrations of Americanisms.
- (b) Demographic and background information of the respondent such as: age, level, faculty, gender etc. This was necessary to check for gender differences in the acceptance and use of Americanisms.

Care was taken to ensure that male and female respondents were approximately equal in number. Out of one hundred respondents, fifty (50%) were male while the other fifty (50%) were female. Thirty-six (36%) were between the ages 16 - 20, forty four (44%) were between the ages of 21 - 25 years and twenty (20%) were between 26 - 30 years. Twenty (20%) were from the Faculty of Arts, Business Administration and Education, ten (10%) were from the faculties of Law, Science, Engineering and Social Sciences. While sixteen (16%) were in 100 level, twenty six (26%) were in 200 level, twenty two (22%) were in 300 level, twenty six were in 400 level and ten (10%) were in 500 level. The table below presents a summary of certain sociolinguistic information of the respondents:

**Table 1**

	Variables	Percentage of Respondents (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	50%
	Female	50%
<b>Age</b>	16-20 years	36%
	21-25 years	44%
	25-30 years	20%
	Arts	Male 10

<b>Faculty</b>		Female 10
	Business Administration	Male 10 Female 10
	Education	Male 10 Female 10
	Engineering	Male 5 Female 5
	Law	Male 5 Female 5
	Science	Male 5 Female 5
	Social Science	Male 5 Female 5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male 50 Female 50 Total 100</b>
<b>Level of study</b>	100 200 300 400 500	16  26  22  26  10

**Table 1: Gender, Age, Faculty & Level of Respondents.**

Items in the second section of the questionnaire were designed to ensure that the respondents had a good understanding of both American and British English and could sufficiently differentiate between the two. Examples include: At what age did you become exposed to the English language? To which there were various responses: Seventy (70%) respondents were 3 years old, twelve (12%) respondents were 6 years old, two (2%) were 8 years old and sixteen (16%) others could not tell their specific age. The next question was: Are you aware of the fact that British English is the norm for teaching and learning in Nigeria? Ninety-six (96%) of the respondents were aware while four (4%) were not. The next question was: Do you know that the American dialect is now much more commonly used in Nigeria than the British variety? Seventy-four (74%) of the respondents were aware, twenty-two (22%) were not aware while four (4%) of the respondents could not tell. Next item was: Can you differentiate between the British and American dialect in English? Fifty-eight (58%) of the respondents could differentiate between the two dialects of English, thirty-two (32%) of the respondents could not while ten (10%) of the respondents were not sure that they could. The questionnaire also sought to know: Do you feel that the American dialect is better than British dialect? Twenty-eight (28%) of the respondents did not think so, sixty-four (64%) of the respondents felt that British English is better while eight (8%) of the respondents could not tell which variant was better. This section also includes a list of statements which the respondents were to provide answers to: Examples of such statements are:

- The cost of ..... is high. (a) transport (b) transportation
- We're going on a ..... soon. (a) vacation (b) holiday
- Excuse me, I need to go to the ..... (a) toilet (b) restroom

The students' responses were studied from in order to describe and interpret the frequency of use of lexical items and patterns as well as gender differences as regards the use of the American variants.

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

---

The data collected for the study was analyzed and interpreted based on the respondents' patterns and use of American lexical items and syntactic patterns. The total response of all items in the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS - Statistical Percentage for the Social Sciences Version 25, to get the accurate percentage (%) from the data collected. Also, descriptive statistics was employed in computing and analyzing the data. This was done to measure and interpret the extent to which Americanisms are used by selected University of Lagos students and the frequency of the use of British and American lexical items and syntactic patterns. It also helped in performing an adequate interpretation of the level of gender differences in the use of Americanisms by the respondents.

### Test Items

Each of the twenty lexical and grammatical items of American English and its British English variants were shown to the one hundred respondents. The word list is presented below:

#### Lexical Items:

British	American
transport	transportation
queue	line
holiday	vacation
toilet	restroom
semi-detached	duplex
motorway	expressway
paraffin	kerosene
dynamo	generator
mackintosh	raincoat
shop assistant	sales girl

**Table 2: Lexical Items**

#### Grammatical Items:

British	American
got	gotten
one	he
all the	all
in a sale	on sale
as	like
at home	home
have lost	lost
to	through
has already	already
future	the future

**Table 3: Grammatical items**

### Analysis of Responses

From the data collected, eighty (80%) of the respondents selected *gotten* which is American while twenty (20%) selected *got* which is the British equivalent. British English past tense of *get* is *got* while the American English past participle equivalent is *gotten*. British English and American English use different pronouns for the indefinite pronoun *one*. The data collected shows that sixty (60%) of the respondents selected *one* which is British while repeating the indefinite pronoun *one*, while (40%) of the respondents selected *he* which is the American equivalent. Most phrases in British English have articles, while those of American English do not. Hence, the *the* in British expressions is usually omitted in American English. The data collected shows that ninety-two (92%) of the respondents prefer to use the American variant

*all* and eight (8%) of the respondents selected the British variant *all the*. In American English, there are different uses of prepositions in the construction of phrases. From the data collected seventy-six (76%) of the respondents preferred the American variant *on sale* while twenty-four (24%) selected the British variant *in a sale*. Our analysis of the data collected shows that fifty-four (54%) of the respondents selected *like* which is the American variant while forty-six (46%) chose *as* which is the British equivalent. Seventy-four (74%) of the respondents prefer *transportation* which is the American variant while twenty-six (26%) selected *transport* which is the British equivalent. Data collected shows fifty-eight (58%) of the respondents prefer the American variant *home*, which when used as an adverb does not need the addition of *at* while forty-two (42%) selected the British equivalent that requires the use of *at*. For the lexical item "lost," sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents selected *lost* which is the American variant and thirty-eight (38%) chose the British equivalent *have lost*. The data collected reveals that fifty-eight (58%) of the respondents prefer *line* which is the American variant and forty-two (42%) selected *queue* the British variant. Sixty-six (66%) of the respondents chose the British variant *to* while thirty-four (34%) prefer *through*, which is the American equivalent.

Also, seventy-three (73%) of the respondents prefer to use *vacation* in the sentence structure which is the American variant while twenty-seven (27%) of the respondents chose the British equivalent, *holiday*. Also, seventy-six (76%) of the respondents chose the American variant *restroom* in the sentence structure over the British variant *toilet* which was chosen by twenty-four (24%) respondents. Eighty-one (81%) of the respondents chose *duplex* which is the American variant to fit into the structured sentence while nineteen (19%) *semi-detached* which is the British equivalent. The data collected reveals that thirty-four (34%) of the respondents chose *motorway* which is the British variant and sixty-six (66%) chose *expressway* which is the American variant. Eighty-seven (87%) of the respondents chose the American variant *kerosene* while thirteen (13%) chose *paraffin* which is the American equivalent. Our analysis of the data collected shows that ninety-two (92%) of the respondents chose *generator* which is the American variant while eight (8%) chose *dynamo* which is the British equivalent. Ninety-five (95%) of the respondents chose *raincoat* which is the American variant while five (5%) chose *mackintosh* which is the British equivalent. The data collected reveals that sixty-three (63%) of the respondents chose *sales girl* which is the American variant and thirty-seven (37%) chose *shop assistant* which is the British variant. The use of the present perfect tense differs in both varieties such that when referring to an action which has begun in the past, but is going on in the present, speakers of British English use the present perfect, while Americans tend to use the past simple tense. Hence, sixty (60%) of the respondents picked the British alternative *has already* while forty (40%) selected the American variant, *already*. Sixty-two (62%) of the respondents chose the British variant *future* while thirty-eight (38%) chose *the future* which is the American equivalent.

Table 4 below presents the percentage values of the responses of the questionnaire while the following graph, (Figure 1) shows the comparison between American and British lexical items based on the responses of the respondents.

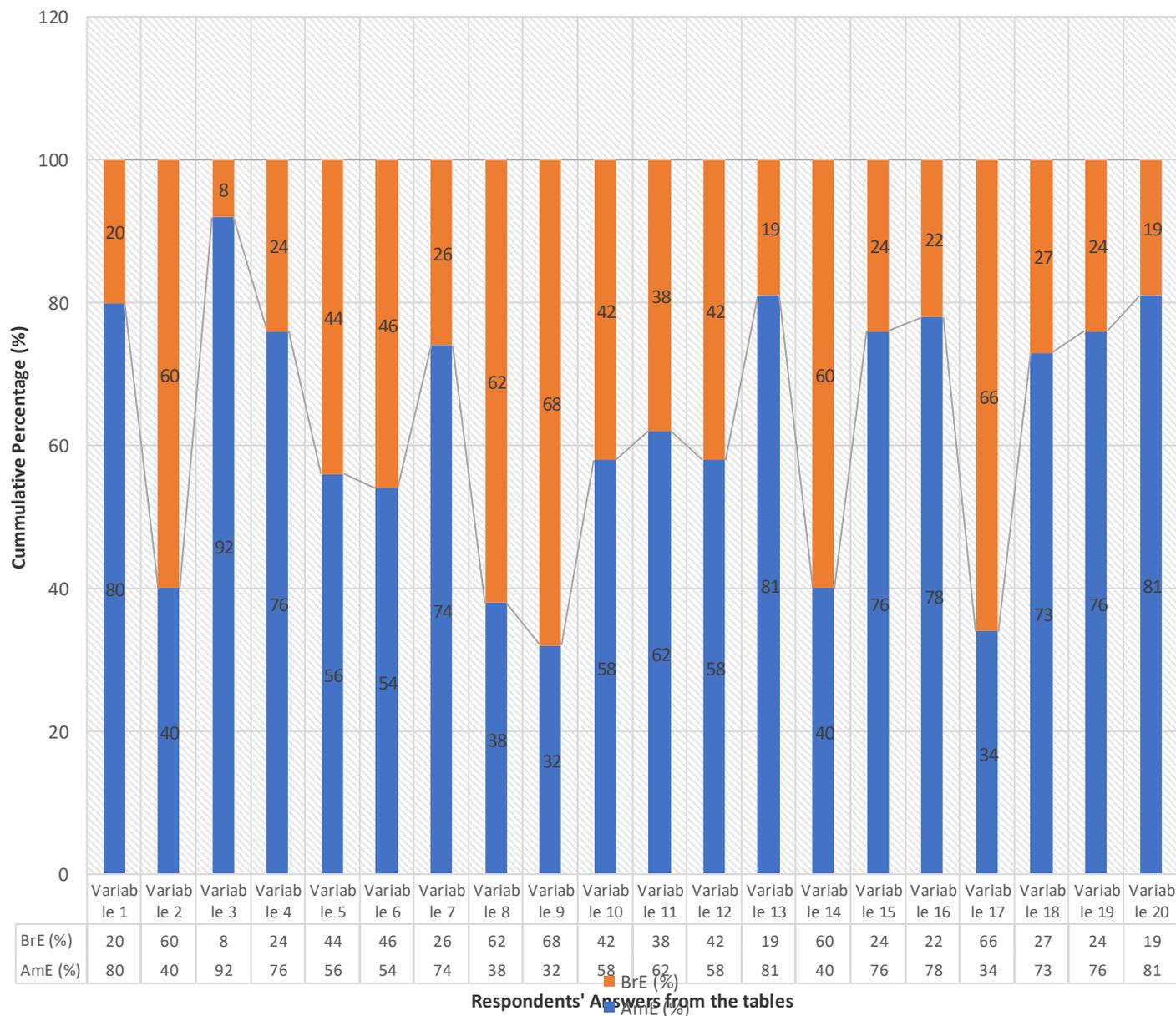
Table 4: Total percentage figures for British and American Lexical and Grammatical Items

BrE Lexical Items	Total % Responses	AmE Lexical Items	Total % Responses	BrE Grammatical Items	Total % Responses	AmE Grammatical Items	Total % Responses
transport	26	transportation	74	got	20	gotten	80
queue	42	line	58	one	60	he	40
holiday	27	vacation	73	all the	8	all	92
toilet	24	restroom	76	in a sale	24	on sale	76
semi-detached	19	duplex	81	as	46	Like	54
motorway	34	expressway	66	at home	42	home	58
paraffin	13	kerosene	87	have lost	38	lost	62
dynamo	8	generator	92	to	66	through	34
mackintosh	5	raincoat	95	has already	60	already	40
shop assistant	37	salesgirl	63	future	62	the future	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	Sub-total: 235 235/1000 = 0.235 x 100% = <b>23.5%</b>		Sub-total: 765 765/1000 = 0.765 x 100% = <b>76.5%</b>		Sub-total: 426 426/1000 = 0.426 x 100% = <b>42.6%</b>		Sub-total: 574 574/1000 = 0.574 x 100% = <b>57.4%</b>

The table above presents the percentage figures for the use of both the grammatical and lexical items. The American English lexical choices were selected with more frequency (76.5) than the British choices, while the grammatical choice section showed a more even balance of 57.4% for American grammatical items and 42.6% for British items.

**Figure 1: Graph showing the comparison between the frequency of usage of American and British items and expressions**

### AmE - BrE features in Nigerian English

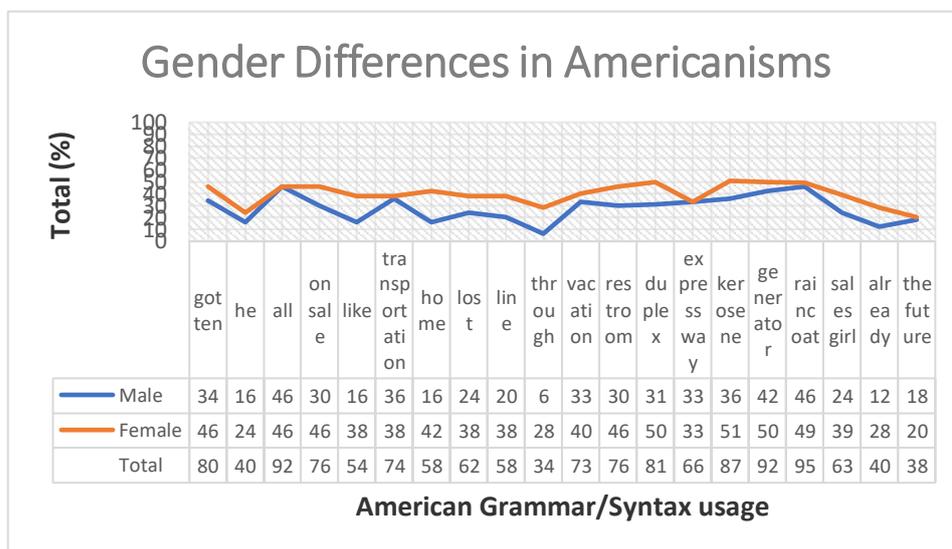


**Table 5:** Gender Differences in the Use of Americanisms

American Lexical/Grammatical items	Male (number of responses)	Male (% of responses)	Female (number of responses)	Female (% of responses)	Total number of respondents
gotten	34	42.5	46	57.5	80
he	16	40	24	60	40
all	46	50	46	50	92
on sale	30	39.4	46	60.5	76
like	16	29.6	38	70.3	54
transportation	36	48.6	38	51.3	74
home	16	27.5	42	72.4	58
lost	24	38.7	38	61.2	62
line	20	34.4	38	65.5	58
through	6	17.6	28	82.3	34
vacation	33	45.2	40	54.7	73
restroom	30	39.4	46	60.5	76
duplex	31	38.2	50	61.7	81
expressway	33	50	33	50	66
kerosene	36	41.3	51	58.6	87
generator	42	45.6	50	54.3	92
raincoat	46	48.4	49	51.5	95
sales girl	24	38	39	61.9	63
already	12	30	28	70	40
the future	18	47.3	20	52.6	38
		Total: 792/20 items= 39.6%		Total: 1207/20 items= 60.4%	

**Table 5: Gender Differences in the Use of Americanisms**

Frequency of use of Americanisms by male and female undergraduates is shown in the table above. Out of the 20 grammatical and lexical items tested, the female undergraduates selected the American variants about sixty percent of the time (60.4%) while their male cohorts selected American variants about 40 per cent of the time (39.6%).



Our analysis on gender differences in the use of Americanisms by University of Lagos students shows that eighty (80%) of the respondents chose *gotten* which is the American variant, forty-six (46) of these respondents were females while thirty-four (34) were males. The American variant *he* was chosen by forty (40%) however, twenty-four (24) of the respondents were females while sixteen (16) were males. From the data collected, ninety-two (92%) of the respondents chose the American variant *all* however, there was a tie between the male and female respondents that chose the variant. Seventy-six (76%) of the respondents chose the American variant *on sale*, forty-six (46) of the respondents were females and thirty (30) were males.

The American variant *like* was chosen by fifty-four (54%) however, thirty-eight (38) of the respondents were females while sixteen (16) were males. Seventy-four (74%) of the respondents chose the American variant *transportation*, thirty-eight (38) of the respondents were females and thirty-six (36) were males. Fifty-eight (58%) of the respondents chose *home* which is the American variant while forty-two (42) were females, sixteen (16) are males. Sixty-two (62%) of the respondents chose the American variant *lost* while thirty-eight (38) were females, twenty-four (24) were males. The American variant *line* was chosen by fifty-eight (58%) however, thirty-eight (38) of the respondents were females while twenty (20) were males. Our analysis also shows that thirty-four (34%) chose *through* the American variant, while twenty-eight (28) were females, six (6) were males. Seventy-three (73%) of the respondents chose the American variant *vacation* however, forty (40) of the respondents were females while thirty-three (33) were males. Seventy-six (76%) of the respondents chose the American variant *restroom*, forty-six (46) of the respondents were females and thirty (30) were males. The American variant *duplex* was chosen by eighty-one (81%) however, fifty (50) of the respondents were females while thirty-one (31) were males. Sixty-six (66%) of the respondents chose *express* which is the American variant however, there was a tie between the male and female respondents that chose the variant. Our analysis also shows that eighty-seven (87%) chose *kerosene* the American variant while fifty-one (51) were females, thirty-six (36) were males. Ninety-two (92%) of the respondents chose *generator* which is the American variant while fifty (50) of the respondents were females, thirty-six were males. Ninety-five (95%) of the respondents chose *raincoat* which is the American variant however, there was a tie between the male and female respondents that chose the variant. The American variant *sales girl* was chosen by sixty-three (63%) however, thirty-nine (39) of the respondents were females while twenty-four (24) were males. Our analysis also shows that forty (40%) chose *already* the American variant while twenty-eight (28) were females, twelve (12) were males. Lastly, from the data collected, thirty-eight (38%) of the respondents chose the American variant *the future* however, twenty (20) of the respondents were females while eighteen (18) were males. As explained above, the data shows that the female students selected the American variants more often than their male counterparts.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

---

The major finding is the pervasiveness of American lexis and grammatical forms which is used with more frequency than the British forms by the Nigerian undergraduates. For example, Fifty-eight (58%) of the respondents chose *line* which is the American variant against forty-two (42%) which chose *queue*, the British variant. It should also be added that a majority of Nigerian users do not know the British equivalent of these American lexical items. With the percentage of use of American lexical items at 76.5% and British lexical items at 23.5%, the popularity of American forms is well established. American grammatical forms are also more popular but the popularity is not as well defined as it stands at 57.4% while the

British grammatical forms were selected with slightly less frequency at 42.6%. Secondly, familiarity or exposure is shown to be a determinant of frequency of usage. The respondents who have access to the internet and watch American movies selected American forms more frequently. Thirdly, gender differences in the usage of the features of American English by University of Lagos students was investigated with the conclusion that the female respondents prefer to use American variants (60.4%) more often than their male counterparts (39.6%). This confirms a finding that is relatively well established in sociolinguistic literature that women tend to use prestige forms more often than men.

This study shows the extent to which students in the University of Lagos use Americanisms and also examines the increase in the use of the American variety of English in Nigeria, a country which is British norm dependent. The pervasiveness of the American variety of English study and provides useful information regarding the sociolinguistic reality of Americanisms among a selected group of Nigerian undergraduates.

## REFERENCES

---

- Atechi, S. (2009). The Influx of Americanisms into Cameroon English: Some Pedagogical Implications. *Papers in English Linguistics* 10, 23-43.
- Awonusi, S. (1994). 'The Americanization of Nigerian English'. *World Englishes*, 13, 1 pp. 75-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2004). Cycles of Linguistic History. In A.B.K. Dadzie & Segun Awonusi (eds), *Nigerian English: Influences and Characteristics* (pp 46-65). Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.
- Bamgbose, A. (1995). English Language in Nigeria Environment. In A. Bamgbose, A. Banjo & A. Thomas (eds), *New Englishes: A West Africa Perspective* (pp. 9-26). Ibadan: Mosuro.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1971). English Language in Nigeria. In J. Spencer (Ed.), *The English language in West Africa* (pp. 35-48). London: Longman.
- Baugh A.C. & cable, T. (1993). *A History of the English Language*. London: Routledge, pp 361.
- Bobda, A. (1998). British or American English, Does it Matter? *English Today* 56, 14(4) 13-18.
- Campbell, K. (1996a). American English is fast becoming a World Language. *Nexus Africa*, 2 (4), 9 &10.

- Campbell, K. (1996b). The World Rushes to speak American English. *Christian Science Monitor* 88 (196), p. 10.
- Egwuogu, C.B. (2007). The Effect of Americanisms on the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. In D. Adeyanju (ed), *Sociolinguistics in the Nigerian Context*, vol 1, (pp 187-199). Ile Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Foster, B. (1968). *The Changing English Language*. UK: Penguin Books.
- Graddol, D. (1997, 2000). The Future of English: A guide to forecasting the popularity of the English language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. British Council.
- Igboanusì, H. (2003). Knowledge, use and attitude towards Americanisms in Nigerian English. *World Englishes* 22, 14 pp 579-604.
- Jowitt, D. (1991). *Nigerian English Usage: An Introduction*. Lagos: Longman
- Kachru, B.B. (1985). *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*, Oxford: Pergamon.
- Labov, W. (1996). *The Social Stratification of English in New York, Washington DC*: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Mencken, H. (1973). *The American Language: An inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Modiano, M. (1996). The Americanization of Euro-English. *World Englishes*, 15(2), 207-215.
- Ogbulogo, C. (2005). 'Another Look at Nigerian English'. *Ogun*: Covenant University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (2000). Differences in American and British Vocabulary: Implications for International Business Communication'. *Business Communication Quarterly* Vol. 63, No. 4, pp. 27-39.