

WORD STRESS
IN
NIGERIAN (IGBO) ENGLISH

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SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the thesis - **WORD STRESS IN NIGERIAN (IGBO) ENGLISH** - submitted to the **School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Lagos**, for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D)** is a record of original research carried out by **ANYAGWA, CAROL NGOZI** in the Department of English.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my amiable father, **Late Chief Eugene Nnaeto Onyibo**, who, having sowed the seed of insatiable thirst for knowledge in me, looked forward to this degree even more than I did; but did not live to see his dream come true.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

ATR	– Advanced Tongue Root
BWS	- Backward Stress
C	- Consonant
C ₀	- zero or more consonants
FWS	-Forward Stress
Hz	- Hertz (the unit of measurement of pitch)
IE	- Igbo English
iff	- if and only if
L	- Lexical category
L1	- First Language
LCPR	- Lexical Category Prominence Rule
MP	- Metrical Phonology
MS	- Main Study Respondent
ms	- Milliseconds
(M)NRP	- (Modern) Non-Regional Pronunciation
N1	- Node 1 (First element in a binary constituent)
N2	- Node 2
(S)NE(A)	- (Standard) Nigerian English (Accent)
NSR	- Nuclear Stress Rule
P	- Phrasal category
PNE	- Popular Nigerian English
PS 1	- Pre-Stressed One
PS 2	- Pre-Stressed Two

RP	- Received Pronunciation
S	- Strong (vowel/ syllable)
SFS	- Speech Filing System
SGP	- Standard Generative Phonology
SN	- Stress Neutral
SPE	– Sound Pattern of English
SS	- Self Stressed
TRP	- Traditional Received Pronunciation
UTT	- utterance
V	- Vowel
W	- Weak (syllable/ vowel)
YE	- Yoruba English

SYMBOLS USED

[± (feature)] - Presence or absence of a feature

→ - changes to/ is realised as

/ - the locus of action

- word boundary

— - Segment position

~ - varies with

{ } - substitutable patterns

// - phonemic representation of a sound

[] - phonetic representation/ feature matrix

ɳ - dental

w - labialized

δ - syllable

RP VOWEL SYMBOLS USED

/i:/ - high, front, tense vowel (as in **FLEECE**)

/ɪ/ - mid-high, front, lax vowel (as in **KIT**)

/ɛ/ - mid, front, lax vowel (as in **DRESS**)

/æ/ - low, front, lax vowel (as in **TRAP**)

/ɑ:/ - low, back, tense vowel (as in **START**)

/ɒ/ - low, back, lax vowel (as in **LOT**)

/ɔ:/ - mid-low, back, tense vowel (**THOUGHT**)

/ʊ/ - mid-high, back, lax vowel (as in **FOOT**)

/ u:/ - high, back, tense vowel (as in **GOOSE**)

/ ʌ/ - mid-low, central, lax vowel (as in **STRUT**)

/ ɜ:/ - mid-high, central, tense vowel (as in **NURSE**)

/ ə/ - mid, central, lax vowel (as in **comMA**)

IE VOWEL SYMBOLS USED

/i/- as in **SEAT** and **SIT**

/ɛ/ - as in **GET** and **MEN**

/e/ - as in **LATE** and **WAIT**

/a/ - as in **CART** and **CAT**

/ɔ/ - as in **COT** and **CAUGHT**

/o/ - as in **GOAT** and **NO**

/u/ - as in **PULL** and **POOL**

/ia/~ie/ - as in **HEAR** and **WHERE**

/au/ - as in **HOW** and **POUND**

/ai/ as in **HEIGHT** and **WHITE**

/ɔɪ/ as in **BOY** and **TOY**

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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of the phonetics and phonology of word stress in Nigerian English with emphasis on the Igbo accent. Set against the backdrop of the widely attested variability of the English language both among national varieties and within national boundaries, the study sets out to establish the existence of heterogeneous patterns of stress assignment within the Nigerian English Accent (NEA). It also closely describes the phonological and metrical patterning as well as the acoustics of Igbo English (the regionalised accent of L1 Igbo speakers of Nigerian English (NE hereafter)) stress. The data were predominantly gathered from tape recordings of the speeches of sixty educated subjects randomly selected from basilectal and mesolectal speakers of NE who speak the Igbo language as their first language (L1). L1 Igbo acrolectal speakers of NE were, in this study, not categorised as speakers of Igbo English since the accent of that stratum of the NE accent continuum is devoid of regionalisms. The data were analysed perceptually, statistically, metrically, and acoustically - using a computerised speech laboratory (SFS/WASP). Hinged on the theoretical constructs of Metrical Phonology and Accent Continua, the study reveals that Igbo English (IE hereafter) operates a highly predictable stress system which is significantly different from the stress systems of other geo-ethnic accents of NE but co-varies with them from the Standard British English accent. The acoustic analysis also demonstrates that IE stress is phonetically marked by higher vowel pitch with or without accompanying longer vowel duration. These findings imply that any clear statement on the prosody of the NEA should stem from a consideration of possible variations within its geo-ethnic accents (bearing in mind that national varieties like Nigerian English describe educated varieties that cut across all boundaries within the country). In other words, the emphasis should be on convergent features. The outcome of this study provides an invaluable reference document for linguists (especially phoneticians,

phonologists and sociolinguists), anthropologists, language planners and second language researchers as well as teachers and learners of English as a second language. The insight into the nature of NE stress, the predictability and acoustics of Igbo English stress and the application of the Metrical stress theory to the analysis of IE phonology, which the study provides, is a boost to existing literature on NE. By providing a basis for an objective and empirical description of the NEA, this study is considered a step further from previous attempts towards the identification and codification of the emerging convergent Standard Nigerian English Accent. The work is organised into six chapters: Chapter One, the Introduction, presents the Background to the Study, Research Problem, Research Objectives, Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, Significance of the Study, Scope of the Study and Operational Definition of Terms. In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, the extant views of scholars on related topics are reviewed. The topics include: Variability in World Englishes, Identifying Standard Nigerian English, Regional Accents of Nigerian English, the Concept of Igbo English, Stress in Standard British English, Stress in S.P.E., Stress in Non-native Englishes, the Concept of Syllable Weight and the Accent Continuum. In Chapter Three, the Research Design and Methodology for the study are presented. This is followed by Chapter Four, Data Presentation and Analysis I, where the data from the pilot study and other preliminary investigations are presented and analysed perceptually. In Chapter Five, Data Presentation and Analysis II, data from the Main Study are presented and analysed metrically and acoustically. In Chapter Six, the final chapter, the Findings of the Study and Conclusions drawn from them are presented. The chapter is further rounded off with Recommendations, Implication of the Findings, Suggestions for Further Studies and Contributions to Knowledge.