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WHEN WORDS ACQUIRE A NIGERIAN LIFE: PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL MOTIVATIONS OF SEMANTIC VARIATION IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Words acquire meaning through use, and use takes place within social worlds. This paper examines the pragmatic and sociocultural motivations of semantic variation in Nigerian English through a corpus-assisted analysis of selected content words. It draws on a preselected lexical dataset established from earlier documented scholarship and subsequently queried in the International Corpus of English-Nigeria (ICE-Nigeria) through AntConc, with ICE-Great Britain (ICE-GB) serving as a comparative reference. The analysis combines frequency, concordance and collocational evidence with lexical-semantic, pragmatic and sociocultural interpretation. Five representative items; go-slow, snap, hot, anyhow and now-now, illustrate different pathways through which familiar forms acquire locally salient meanings or pragmatic functions. The analysis shows that go-slow is strongly associated with traffic congestion and delayed movement; snap has a salient photographic use; hot participates in evaluative meanings; anyhow can carry recurrent interpersonal and evaluative force; and now-now uses reduplication to intensify temporal immediacy and expectation. These patterns are interpreted not as arbitrary departures from British English but as outcomes of recurrent usage within a Nigerian sociocultural and communicative ecology. The paper argues for an integrated account in which corpus evidence establishes recurrent distributional patterns, lexical semantics identifies the meaning relationship, and pragmatic and sociocultural analysis explains why particular interpretations become useful, recognisable and potentially conventionalised.

KEYWORDS: Nigerian English, corpus, pragmatics, semantics, variation, sociocultural, extension

INTRODUCTION

Languages change as communities use them. This is particularly visible when a language crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries and becomes embedded in a new social environment. Nigerian English has developed through institutionalisation, multilingual contact and everyday use. Its

distinctive character is consequently not restricted to accent or grammar; it also includes recurrent differences in lexical meaning and pragmatic function (Bamgbose 15; Kachru 133).

The present paper asks why particular meanings become useful and recurrent in Nigerian English. A semantic description can identify a changed sense, but a fuller explanation requires attention to the communicative situations in which that sense repeatedly occurs. Pragmatics is relevant because meaning is partly shaped by what speakers accomplish in interaction, while sociocultural analysis is relevant because those communicative purposes arise within lived social conditions.

The paper draws on a preselected set of content words: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, established in earlier documented stages of the broader doctoral investigation. The items were queried in ICE-Nigeria through AntConc, with ICE-GB used as a comparative reference. The analysis combines frequency, concordance and collocation with semantic and contextual interpretation. The twelve cases selected here are intended as analytically representative rather than exhaustive. The central argument is that Nigerian English semantic variation is best explained through an integrated account of lexical form, recurrent usage, pragmatic function and sociocultural experience. The corpus provides the evidence for recurrence; semantic analysis describes the relationship among senses; pragmatic analysis identifies communicative force; and sociocultural interpretation explains why particular meanings are useful in Nigerian contexts.

This paper is concerned with a distinction that is important for the study of Nigerian English: identifying a locally distinctive meaning is not the same as explaining its emergence or stability. The former is principally descriptive; the latter is explanatory. The distinction matters because lexical-semantic variation is embedded in discourse. A word becomes socially meaningful through recurrent situations in which speakers use it, through the lexical company it keeps, and through the expectations that interlocutors develop from repeated encounters with it. Corpus evidence is particularly valuable at this point because it allows the analyst to move from an impression that a form is 'Nigerian' to evidence concerning the distribution and contextual patterning that make the claim defensible.

The present study consequently treats Nigerian English as a patterned variety rather than as a collection of exceptional expressions. This position is compatible with the wider World Englishes literature, but it is also compatible with a corpus-linguistic insistence on observable evidence. The two positions need not be opposed. The sociolinguistic framework explains why variation is expected, while corpus evidence demonstrates how variation is realised in use. Semantic analysis then identifies the relation between the established and locally salient senses, and pragmatic interpretation helps explain the communicative work performed by the form.

The central contribution is thus explanatory rather than merely classificatory. The study asks not only what meanings occur in Nigerian English, but why particular interpretations become useful, recurrent and socially intelligible. The answer emerges from the interaction of lexical resources, communicative

practice, sociocultural experience and repeated contextual use, with corpus evidence providing the empirical basis for distinguishing established patterns from isolated impressions. The paper is consequently not organised around the assumption that every Nigerian English form represents a single type of semantic change. The selected cases involve innovation, borrowing, local compounding, metaphorical extension, technological adaptation, pragmatic specialisation and reduplication. This diversity is analytically useful because it demonstrates that semantic variation in Nigerian English is a heterogeneous process shaped by recurrent use rather than by one universal mechanism.

The analysis also maintains an important distinction between corpus evidence and interpretation. Frequency indicates distribution; concordance establishes the immediate context of occurrence; collocation reveals recurrent lexical association; and semantic and pragmatic interpretation explains the significance of those patterns. A difference in frequency is therefore not automatically treated as a difference in meaning. Meaningful claims arise where distributional evidence converges with contextual and collocational behaviour. The representative cases are drawn from a doctoral dataset rather than selected afresh for this article. Three items are retained from each content-word category to reflect the structure of a wider study: *go-slow*, *wahala* and *senior wife* for nouns; *branch*, *flash* and *settle* for verbs; *hot*, *stubborn* and *local* for adjectives; and *now-now*, *fast-fast* and *seriously* for adverbs. The purpose is not to reproduce the whole doctoral dataset but to demonstrate, through a balanced set of cases, how recurrent corpus patterns become interpretable as semantic variation.

MEANING, CONTEXT AND LANGUAGE CONTACT

Lexical meaning is not entirely independent of use. Cruse's treatment of lexical semantics emphasises contextual distinctions among related senses, while Geeraerts shows how lexical categories are shaped by prototype effects, variation and usage (Cruse 61; Geeraerts 12). Cognitive approaches similarly recognise that speakers map linguistic forms onto experiences and conceptual domains in flexible ways (Lakoff 38; Langacker 50). The Nigerian setting adds the dimension of language contact. English operates alongside numerous Nigerian languages, and bilingual speakers routinely negotiate meanings across linguistic and cultural systems. Contact linguistics is therefore useful for understanding semantic transfer and culturally grounded interpretation. Canagarajah's account of translingual practice is relevant because it emphasises the resourcefulness of multilingual speakers rather than treating variation simply as deficiency (Canagarajah 61).

At the same time, a sociocultural explanation must remain evidence-based. It is not sufficient to say that a meaning is cultural merely because it occurs in Nigeria. The analyst must show how the lexical item repeatedly occurs in contexts associated with a particular experience, activity, evaluation or communicative purpose. This is where corpus evidence becomes methodologically consequential. The study therefore adopts a cautious conception of causation. Corpus evidence can demonstrate contemporary recurrence and patterned association more directly than it can reconstruct every historical stage of semantic change. The interpretation must consequently distinguish what the corpus

establishes from what sociocultural reasoning plausibly explains. Such restraint strengthens the analysis by preventing attractive cultural explanations from becoming unsupported historical claims.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper is anchored on the World Englishes Paradigm, Lexical Semantics, Contact Linguistics, the Usage-Based Perspective and Corpus Linguistics. The World Englishes Paradigm provides the sociolinguistic frame for understanding Nigerian English as a localised variety whose patterns develop through its functions and history of use (Kachru 133). Lexical Semantics provides the descriptive resources for identifying extension, shift, specialisation and related semantic relationships (Cruse 61; Geeraerts 12). Contact Linguistics contextualises the multilingual ecology in which English operates, while translanguaging approaches emphasise the resourcefulness of multilingual speakers (Canagarajah 61). The Usage-Based Perspective connects recurrent use with entrenchment and conventionalisation (Bybee 11; Langacker 50). Corpus Linguistics supplies the empirical procedure through which these theoretical claims can be examined. Frequency establishes distribution, concordance reveals contextual realisation, and collocation identifies recurrent association (Sinclair 68; Stubbs 65).

The frameworks are complementary rather than competing. World Englishes explains why localisation is expected; lexical semantics describes what kind of meaning relationship is involved; contact linguistics identifies the multilingual conditions; usage-based theory explains how repeated association can become entrenched; and corpus linguistics provides the evidence through which these relationships can be demonstrated. This integration is central to the paper's explanatory ambition.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a corpus-assisted qualitative–quantitative design. Approximately 300 content-word items were preselected from earlier documented scholarship, including Banjo, Jowitt, Igboanusi, Dada and Nimram. They were subsequently queried in ICE-Nigeria through AntConc, with ICE-GB serving as a comparative reference. The items were not newly invented for the present article; the procedure begins from a documented lexical dataset and tests its corpus attestation and contextual behaviour. AntConc supplied frequency, concordance and collocational evidence. Frequency was treated as an indicator of distribution rather than as proof of semantic difference. Concordance lines were examined to identify recurring contexts, while collocational patterns were used to establish semantic fields and recurrent associations. The final interpretive step connected these patterns with lexical-semantic, pragmatic and sociocultural explanation. Twelve representative items: three nouns, three verbs, three adjectives and three adverbs, were selected from the analysed PhD dataset to provide balanced coverage of the four content-word categories. The selection is purposive and illustrative rather than statistically exhaustive. ICE-GB is used as a reference benchmark, not as a prescriptive measure against which Nigerian English is judged.

This procedure follows a central corpus-linguistic principle: interpretation should be constrained by observable patterns. The sequence is therefore frequency, concordance, collocation and interpretation. The aim is to establish not simply that a form occurs, but how it occurs, what it repeatedly occurs with,

what meaning emerges from those patterns, and what social or communicative conditions make that meaning useful.

REPRESENTATIVE CORPUS-ASSISTED ANALYSES

The representative cases reported below are drawn directly from already analysed examples in a doctoral study. The selection is therefore not a new lexical inventory constructed for this article. Three items are retained from each of the four content-word categories so that the discussion mirrors the structure of an earlier investigation: *go-slow*, *wahala* and *senior wife* for nouns; *branch*, *flash* and *settle* for verbs; *hot*, *stubborn* and *local* for adjectives; and *now-now*, *fast-fast* and *seriously* for adverbs. The earlier analysis explicitly identifies these items in its category-level discussion and relates their meanings to semantic extension, shift, borrowing, reduplication and pragmatic specialisation. The present article consequently uses the corpus evidence as the basis for explanation rather than introducing examples from outside the thesis.

Nouns: Go-slow

This study identifies *go-slow* as an innovative noun referring to traffic congestion. Its importance lies in the fact that the expression has moved from the literal idea of moving slowly to a conventional label for a recurrent Nigerian transport experience. In the corpus, its interpretation is consequently not secured by the component words in isolation but by their recurring association with traffic conditions and movement. The semantic process recorded in the dataset is innovation. The meaning is culturally intelligible because congestion is a familiar urban experience, and the expression provides an economical lexical label for it. In corpus terms, the significance of *go-slow* lies in the convergence of lexical form, recurrent contextual association and a socially salient referent. The example therefore illustrates how a lexical item can acquire local conventionality through repeated use in a recognisable communicative environment.

Nouns: Wahala

Wahala is classified as a borrowed item whose Nigerian meaning denotes trouble, difficulty or social complication. The analysis places it within the wider pattern of borrowing through which Nigerian English incorporates forms that have become communicatively useful beyond their source-language setting. Its semantic force is especially revealing because the item is not restricted to one narrowly defined type of problem; it can label a range of difficult or troublesome situations. The corpus-assisted interpretation therefore concerns both lexical integration and semantic range. Recurrent contexts make the meaning recoverable to Nigerian English users without requiring translation. The case demonstrates that borrowing is not merely the importation of a form: once a borrowed item becomes established in recurrent Nigerian discourse, its distribution and pragmatic usefulness become part of the semantic system of Nigerian English.

Nouns: Senior wife

This study classifies *senior wife* as a local compound associated with polygamous family structure. Its semantic significance comes from the social relationship encoded by the compound. Although both

components are familiar English words, their combination provides a culturally specific category of marital hierarchy. The corpus perspective is therefore important because it allows the researcher to examine the contexts in which the expression is used in relation to wives, marriage and family organisation. The case demonstrates that semantic innovation may occur without borrowing or radical alteration of an individual word. A familiar lexical resource can be combined productively to name a culturally salient relationship. In this respect, *senior wife* supports the finding that noun variation is closely connected with the need to label experiences and social structures that are particularly salient within Nigerian society.

Verbs: Branch

The analysis treats *branch* as a semantic shift in which the road-related sense of branching away is extended to the act of stopping somewhere briefly while travelling. The attested example, “I branched at his house after work,” makes the interpretation particularly clear when contrasted with the British-oriented sense represented by branching off a main road. The semantic process is therefore metaphorical: physical deviation from a route provides the conceptual basis for temporary social deviation from one's journey. The corpus evidence is valuable because the meaning is recoverable from recurring contexts of movement, destination and visiting. The item shows how an existing English verb can be repurposed to encode a common social practice without requiring a newly created lexical form.

Verbs: Flash

Flash is analysed in this study as a semantic shift arising from technological adaptation. The Nigerian meaning refers to making a brief telephone call, commonly without intending the receiver to answer, as in “Flash me when you reach home.” The meaning developed within the communicative environment of mobile telephony, where a brief call can function as a signal, request or prompt for a return call. The contrast with the conventional sense of briefly emitting light is therefore not arbitrary: both involve brief signalling, but the Nigerian use relocates the signalling function into telephone communication. The case demonstrates the value of corpus-assisted semantic analysis because the crucial evidence lies in the interaction between the lexical form and the communicative practice surrounding it.

Verbs: Settle

Settle is included in the discussion as a verb whose Nigerian meanings encompass financial assistance, compensation, facilitation and, in some contexts, unofficial payment. The semantic development is therefore strongly tied to social and economic interaction. Rather than treating all occurrences as one undifferentiated meaning, corpus analysis allows the surrounding discourse to establish which interpretation is activated in a particular context. The findings place *settle* among verbs whose meanings have expanded through repeated social practice. Its significance is that it demonstrates how semantic variation can encode culturally recognisable interpersonal arrangements. The form remains recognisably English, but its recurrent Nigerian contexts provide additional interpretive possibilities that are not adequately captured by treating the item only through a general dictionary definition.

Adjectives: Hot

The analysis identifies *hot* as an adjective whose semantic field extends from physical temperature to physical attractiveness. The change is evaluative and metaphorical: the sensory intensity associated with heat is mapped onto a social judgement about appearance. The corpus perspective allows this interpretation to be distinguished from literal temperature contexts through the surrounding nouns and discourse of appearance. The item is therefore a useful demonstration of how adjective meanings can become socially loaded. Its Nigerian relevance does not consist simply in using an English word 'incorrectly'; rather, the recurrent evaluative association gives the form a recognisable meaning in Nigerian discourse. The example supports the conclusion that adjectives are particularly responsive to cultural attitudes and social perceptions.

Adjectives: Stubborn

Stubborn illustrates a broader evaluative extension. The analysis notes that the adjective can move beyond human personality and describe diseases, social problems and mechanical faults. The underlying notion of resistance is retained, but the range of possible referents is widened. This is a particularly useful corpus-linguistic case because the semantic interpretation depends on the noun phrase in which the adjective occurs. When the referent is a person, the established character-related meaning may be activated; when the referent is a disease, problem or mechanical fault, the interpretation concerns resistance or difficulty. The variation therefore demonstrates how collocational environment can help determine which part of a lexical item's semantic potential becomes salient in Nigerian usage.

Adjectives: Local

This study treats *local* as an evaluative adjective whose Nigerian usage can carry implications concerning sophistication, exposure, prestige and social status. The word consequently moves beyond geographical reference into social evaluation. Its meaning is particularly dependent on discourse context: in one environment it may retain the ordinary geographical sense, while in another it can position a person, object or practice on a scale of modernity or social prestige. This makes *local* a strong example of pragmatic and evaluative semantic development. The corpus-assisted approach is useful precisely because it permits the researcher to distinguish these environments through concordance and collocational behaviour rather than assuming that every occurrence has the same meaning.

Adverbs: Now-now

Now-now is identified in the study as a reduplicated adverb expressing strengthened immediacy. The corpus examples include "Come now-now" and "I need it now-now." The repetition does more than duplicate the temporal reference of *now*: it heightens the speaker's expectation that an action should occur immediately or without delay. The frequency discussion reports that the form occurs in ICE-Nigeria but not in ICE-GB. This distributional contrast becomes analytically meaningful when read together with the concordance evidence, because the contexts show the form functioning as an

intensifier of temporal urgency. The item therefore illustrates the interaction of morphological repetition, semantic intensification and pragmatic force.

Adverbs: Fast-fast

Fast-fast is another reduplicated form explicitly analysed in the study. The base adverb *fast* expresses speed, while repetition intensifies the meaning towards very quickly or as speedily as possible. The concordance examples include “Do it fast-fast” and “We ran fast-fast to catch the bus.” In these contexts, repetition strengthens not simply the description of speed but the communicative expectation of urgency. The form therefore provides evidence that semantic innovation in Nigerian English can operate through productive manipulation of an existing lexical resource. Its significance for corpus linguistics lies in the way distribution, concordance and pragmatic interpretation converge: the recurring form is visible in the corpus, its local function is visible in context, and its meaning is explained through that patterned use.

Adverbs: Seriously

Seriously demonstrates a different type of adverbial development. The analysis describes its movement from a conventional intensifying function towards a stance-marking role that can express disapproval, surprise, urgency or emphasis. The examples “Seriously, you need to stop that” and “Seriously, that thing is expensive” show how the item operates at discourse level rather than merely modifying a verb or adjective. Its meaning is consequently partly interactional: the speaker uses the adverb to signal an attitude towards the proposition. This case is important because it prevents the analysis of semantic variation from being reduced to lexical substitution. Meaning may also change through pragmatic strengthening, whereby a form becomes an established resource for managing interpersonal stance.

The twelve cases collectively preserve the analytical logic of this study. They also demonstrate why frequency cannot be treated as a substitute for semantic analysis. Distribution identifies recurrent forms; concordance reveals the local discourse environment; collocation helps establish semantic preference and contextual association; and interpretation explains the sociocultural or pragmatic motivation. This study therefore retains the earlier study's corpus-assisted orientation: quantitative evidence is used to locate and substantiate patterns, while qualitative interpretation explains what those patterns mean and why they are meaningful in Nigerian English.

Taken together, the findings support an integrated corpus-assisted account of Nigerian English semantic variation. World Englishes explains the legitimacy of localised development; lexical semantics identifies the relationship between established and emerging senses; contact and sociocultural perspectives illuminate the environment in which meanings become useful; usage-based theory explains the role of recurrence and entrenchment; and corpus linguistics provides the observable evidence linking these levels. The contribution is therefore not simply a catalogue of Nigerian meanings but an account of how patterned use helps produce and stabilise them.

The adverbial cases make the pragmatic dimension especially clear. *Now-now* and *fast-fast* use reduplication to intensify immediacy and speed, while *seriously* can function as a stance marker expressing emphasis, surprise, disapproval or urgency. These examples demonstrate why semantic analysis based solely on dictionary equivalence is insufficient. Concordance context reveals the communicative work performed by the form, while recurrent association provides evidence for its conventionalisation.

The verb cases show that semantic variation may develop through conceptual extension and communicative practice. *Branch* maps movement away from a route onto a brief social visit; *flash* adapts an existing verb to mobile-phone signalling; and *settle* acquires locally salient interpersonal and economic interpretations. The adjective cases similarly show that meaning is sensitive to collocation and evaluation: *hot*, *stubborn* and *local* can all move beyond narrowly literal readings when the discourse context supplies a socially recognisable interpretation.

The noun *go-slow* illustrates semantic innovation through a familiar urban experience, while *wahala* shows how a borrowed form can become integrated into Nigerian English discourse. *Senior wife* demonstrates that local semantic specification can also arise through productive combination of familiar English resources to name a culturally salient relationship. Across these cases, the relevant meaning is sustained by recognisable social experience rather than by the lexical form in isolation.

The twelve cases reveal that semantic variation in Nigerian English is not driven by a single mechanism. The noun cases show how recurrent Nigerian experiences and social structures become lexically named; the verb cases show extension and technological or interactional adaptation; the adjectives demonstrate evaluative and metaphorical development; and the adverbs show pragmatic strengthening and productive reduplication. The analytical value of the corpus lies in making these tendencies observable across repeated contexts.

DISCUSSION

The adverbial evidence extends the argument into discourse pragmatics. *Now-now* and *fast-fast* show how repetition can intensify an instruction or expectation, while *seriously* illustrates how an adverb can become a resource for stance. These patterns suggest that semantic variation is sometimes inseparable from interactional function. The Nigerian meanings are not simply additional dictionary senses; they may also encode urgency, insistence, evaluation or interpersonal positioning. Corpus-assisted semantics is consequently most powerful when lexical distribution is interpreted alongside discourse purpose.

The adjective cases demonstrate the importance of evaluation in semantic variation. *Hot* can characterise attractiveness, *stubborn* can describe resistance in entities other than people, and *local* can move from geographical description towards social evaluation. These developments show why concordance lines are indispensable. The same adjective can support different interpretations

depending on its referent and collocational environment. Corpus analysis thus makes it possible to observe not merely whether a meaning exists but the linguistic environments in which that meaning becomes salient.

The verb cases reveal a complementary pattern in which semantic development is closely associated with action and interaction. *Branch* conceptualises a brief diversion in a journey as a visit; *flash* recruits an established lexical item for a technologically mediated signalling practice; and *settle* extends into socially recognisable economic and interpersonal situations. In each case, the meaning is motivated by a communicative activity. This supports a usage-based interpretation in which repeated encounters between form, activity and context strengthen an association until speakers can employ it with little need for explicit explanation.

The selected noun cases also show that semantic variation can be socially indexical. *Go-slow* evokes a recognisable transport experience; *wahala* carries a socially familiar interpretation of trouble or complication; and *senior wife* names a culturally structured marital relation. These meanings are intelligible because Nigerian speakers encounter the relevant experiences repeatedly. The corpus therefore provides a bridge between lexical semantics and social knowledge: recurring discourse environments make the meanings recoverable, while social experience makes them communicatively useful.

The comparative use of ICE-GB is similarly interpretive rather than prescriptive. A form occurring in ICE-Nigeria but not in ICE-GB provides a useful signal of localisation, but absence from the comparison corpus is not treated as proof that the form is uniquely Nigerian. Corpus size, genre, sampling and contextual distribution must be considered. The stronger evidence comes when a distributional difference is accompanied by a distinctive concordance pattern and a coherent semantic interpretation. This is why the present analysis gives priority to converging evidence rather than isolated frequency contrasts.

A further strength of the corpus-assisted approach is that it permits the researcher to separate lexical availability from semantic conventionalisation. The presence of a form in ICE-Nigeria does not by itself establish a Nigerian sense. What matters is whether its recurrent contexts demonstrate a patterned interpretation that differs from, extends or pragmatically enriches an established sense. This distinction is particularly important because Nigerian English contains many forms shared with other varieties. The analytical task is therefore not simply to identify unfamiliar words, but to establish where familiar forms participate in locally patterned meanings.

CONCLUSION

The study consequently contributes to Nigerian English scholarship by linking empirical corpus evidence with an explanatory account of semantic development. It also demonstrates the value of corpus linguistics for studying postcolonial varieties in which meaning is shaped by contact, social

experience and communicative need. Future research can extend the dataset across genres, regions and emerging digital communication, but the present findings establish a firm corpus-assisted basis for understanding semantic variation in Nigerian English.

The principal contribution of the study is methodological as well as descriptive. By moving from frequency to concordance, collocation and interpretation, the analysis demonstrates how corpus evidence can substantiate claims about semantic variation without reducing meaning to statistics. The corpus establishes recurrence and distribution; contextual and sociocultural interpretation explains why particular meanings become communicatively useful.

Semantic variation in Nigerian English becomes more intelligible when lexical forms are examined in their recurrent contexts of use. The twelve cases drawn from the doctoral dataset show that Nigerian meanings arise through several interacting processes, including innovation, borrowing, local compounding, semantic extension, technological adaptation, pragmatic specialisation and reduplication. The findings therefore support a view of Nigerian English as a patterned variety in which meaning is continually negotiated through use.

The study contributes to knowledge by integrating corpus evidence with lexical-semantic, pragmatic and sociocultural explanation. Its methodological contribution lies in treating frequency as evidence of distribution, concordance as evidence of contextual realisation and collocation as evidence of recurrent semantic association, before moving to interpretation. This makes the corpus a tool for explaining meaning rather than merely counting forms. The approach is complementary to earlier Nigerian English scholarship and provides a replicable basis for further corpus-assisted semantic research.

Contribution to Knowledge and Corpus Linguistics

The findings have practical implications for English teaching, lexicography and language technology. Teachers can distinguish systematic Nigerian English usage from individual error while still preparing learners for contexts requiring broader international intelligibility. Lexicographers can use recurrent corpus evidence to distinguish established Nigerian senses from occasional contextual meanings. Language technologies likewise need contextual resources capable of recognising Nigerian semantic patterns rather than mapping all forms mechanically onto British or American meanings.

Implications for Teaching, Lexicography and Language Technology

The study is bounded by the scope of ICE-Nigeria, the purposive selection of twelve representative cases and the need to privilege analytical depth over exhaustive treatment of the approximately 300-item doctoral dataset. Future research should extend the analysis across more genres, regional and social groups, and emerging digital communication. Longitudinal corpus work would also help determine which currently recurrent meanings become further conventionalised and which remain context-dependent.

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