

## Variant Word Stress Patterns in the Spoken English of Selected Nigerian Teachers

By

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### Abstract

Earlier studies on word stress patterns in Nigerian English (NE) have focused mainly on how it differs from British English (BE) and have presented a picture of homogeneous and deviant word stress patterns in NE. Currently, little is known about the variant word stress patterns in NE. In line with the above statements, this study examines empirically the variations in the stress patterns in spoken English, but does so in relation to selected Nigerian teachers. The data were sourced through a text-based research instrument designed to test the stress placement of some English words by purposively selected teachers drawn from Kano, Oyo and Imo states, representing the three major ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria. From each of the three states, 108 teachers who were indigenes were selected from primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education making 324 in all. They were made to read prepared passages made up of 50 items in context and in isolation. A close perceptual analysis was carried out to ascertain the differences in the performance of the respondents on word stress. The paper employed Metrical Theory for the data

analysis. The study revealed that the subjects manifested sophisticated (VIII), standard (VII) and non-standard (VI) variant word stress patterns in their articulations. It concluded that variant stress patterns of the NE are direct consequences of some sociolinguistic variables.

**Key words:** Nigerian English, word stress, variant patterns, and sociolinguistic variables

### 1. Introduction

The distinct spoken English of Nigerians has been ascribed to phonological, social, historical, political and pedagogical factors. Gut (2002) specifically links the distinct pronunciation of Nigerian English (NE) to its prosody. Since this study concentrates only on the word stress aspect of the English prosody, it is essential to clearly contextualize the meaning of stress. The term 'stress', from the production/articulation's point of view is the degree of force with which a syllable is produced (Roach 2000 and Adeyanju 2003). Scholars with this view agreed that greater muscular energy is exerted when a stressed syllable is uttered than the one used for an unstressed syllable. From the

listener's perspective, Roach (2000:94) also explains that "all stressed syllables have prominence as their basic feature". In this study, the term 'stress' denotes performance that is articulatory which gives relative prominence to syllables in words, phrases or utterances.

Word stress in Nigerian English has attracted the attention of scholars like Atoye, (1991) and Fajobi, (1998) who have described word stress patterns of some words in NE as either 'deviant patterns' or 'outright errors'. This categorization stems from their employment of linguistic and contrastive approaches using the British English (BE) notion of 'correctness' in their assessment of NE word stress patterns. The findings from these studies were based on a sociolinguistic fallacy that all Nigerians, irrespective of their educational and linguistic backgrounds, have homogeneous stress placement patterns that are uniquely Nigerian. This fallacy occurred because these scholars disregarded Tagliamonte's (2006) caveat that the English language should be defined based purely on the group of people who speak it.

Therefore, NE is viewed in this study as a variety of English that reflects the sociolinguistic ecology that it finds itself in. As earlier works on variation in NE, like Jibril (1982) and Akande's (2008), focus mainly on the segmental level, there is a dearth of studies using variation scales in describing NE word stress patterns, hence the motivation for this study. The present study investigates the variation in word stress placement in the English pronunciation of teachers from three major ethno-linguistic groups in

Nigeria. It describes the variant stress patterns noticeable in NE using the Metrical Theory tenets.

## **2. Earlier Studies on Variety Differentiation in Nigerian Spoken English**

A language variety is often open to multiplicities of forms which occur across social and geographical groups (Biber *et al*, 2007 and Salami, 2010). Variation, according to Labov (1969), involves different ways of saying the same thing. It is a complicated occurrence, especially in multilingual and multicultural settings like Nigeria. The different forms of English usage in Nigeria have been variously described as 'errors of usage' (Salami, 1968 and Vincent, 1974). This paper however treats NE as a variety of English that has responded to the Nigerian sociolinguistic realities which has therefore evolved some distinct linguistic features, especially at the level of word stress placement patterns.

Variation study, according to Tagliamonte (2006), is premised on the heterogeneity and mutability of language as a result of time and space which make a language to change from one generation to another and from one region to another. This heterogeneity of language forms has led to the emergence of world Englishes of which NE is one. Also, language variation conveys abundant non-linguistic information such as social identity, history and socio-economic status of speakers.

The spoken English of Nigerians manifests some varied forms because speakers produce different forms in different contexts whether formal or

informal. Literature abounds on the heterogeneity of spoken NE (Jibril, 1982; Udofot, 2007 and Akande, 2008). Akande (2008:431) remarks that “by listening to the spoken English of a Nigerian, it is normally possible to predict the part of the country such a speaker came from”. In spite of the noticeable distinguishing features existing in the spoken English of Nigerians, little has been done in investigating the correlation between variability and social variables as they affect word stress placement among speakers of NE. This study intends to fill this gap.

The study draws insights from the schemas of Banjo (1971, 1996) and Udofot (1997) in their description of variant stress patterns in NE. It focuses on speakers of Banjo’s (1971) Variety III of NE who are university graduates, which was later modified in Banjo (1996:78) to include home background and the quality of education received by such graduates at the primary and secondary levels. Speakers of Variety III of NE make vital phonemic discrimination which makes it satisfy the twin criteria of acceptability and intelligibility. Bamgbose (1982) has described this variety as Educated Nigerian English (ENE).

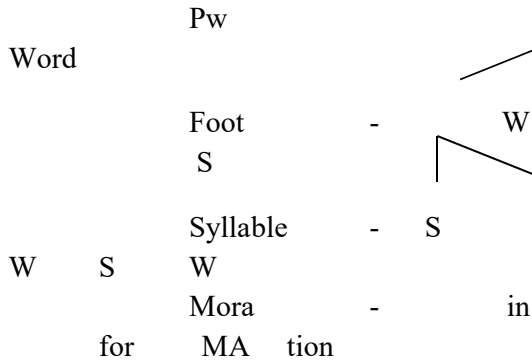
In identifying the variant word stress patterns noticeable in NE, insights were drawn from Udofot’s (1997) NE schema of VIII, VII and VI for the sophisticated, standard and non-standard variants, respectively. Udofot (2004:108) identifies that spoken English in Nigeria at times is not “a correlate of educational status”. Her classification differs from Brosnahan’s (1958) and Banjo’s (1971)

classifications in that she categorizes VII as the standard variety in line with Jowit’s (1991) identification of popular NE as the standard, which Nigeria should aim at. Consequently, she categorized the varieties based on NE speakers’ training in English pronunciation and their linguistic backgrounds. Realizing the relevance of accentuation in determining the varieties of NE, Udofot (1997) categorizes the variant stress patterns in NE under three levels. First, the VIII, Sophisticated Variety stress pattern, shares some features with the BE patterns in terms of syllable that receives the primary stress. The only difference between it and the BE pattern lies in its accent (cumulative aural effect which identifies where a speaker comes from). Next is the VII, which she calls, ‘Standard Variety’. It is the English spoken by teachers with tertiary education which shows some significant differences from the speakers of VIII in terms of stress placement. Finally, the VI, nonstandard variety, includes stress patterns that fail the twin criteria of international acceptability and intelligibility among the educated NE speakers. This variant stress pattern is characterized by the creation of more syllables which involve vowel substitutions and insertions. It equally involves the progressive stress shift strategy noticed in the VII.

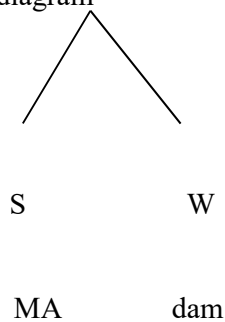
### 3. Theoretical Framework

This paper draws insights from Metrical Theory which uses a binary approach in reflecting the relationship of prominence between the constituents in a word in describing of the variant stress patterns in NE. Using Napoli’s (1996) prosodic hierarchy, Prosodic word (PW), Foot (F), Syllable ( $\delta$ ) and Mora ( $\alpha$ ), the study

focuses on the syllable and the foot units because they form the domains that are relevant to the description of stress and rhythm in NE. A foot contains two or more syllables which exist in binary relationship of strong (S) and weak (W) as shown in the diagram below:

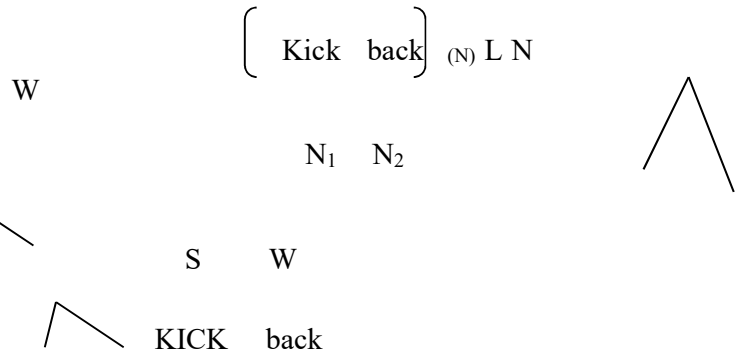


The assignment of S and W nodes is governed by two rules: Lexical Category Prominence Rule and Nuclear Stress Rule. Lexical Category Prominence Rule applies only to simple and compound words. Applying this rule to the word ‘madam’ will produce *MAdam* with the SW pattern as shown in the below diagram

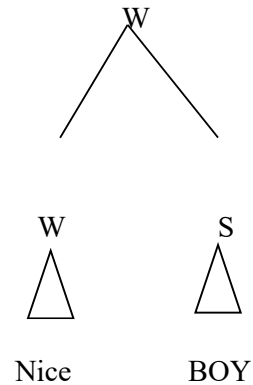


Similarly, the compound prominence rule, according to Giegerich (1992:256) states that “in a pair of sister nodes  $[N_1N_2]_L$  where L is a lexical category,  $N_2$  is strong if it branches above the word level”. It follows, therefore, that since the compound word, *kickback* falls within the word level; the  $N_2$  will be weak while  $N_1$

will be strong. This rule can be exemplified with *kickback* thus:



The Nuclear Stress Rule applies to constituents above words like phrases and clauses, hence the Phrasal Prominence Rule which states that “in a pair of sister nodes  $[N_1N_2]_P$  where P is a phrasal category,  $N_2$  is strong” (Giegerich, 1992:253). So in a phrase like *nice boy*, *boy* will be strong (S) while *nice* will be weak (W). The reason is simple. English is a head-last language and because the headword usually comes after the modifier. In phrases, the headwords are more prominent than the modifiers; so they usually receive the primary stress.



Additionally, a Metrical Grid is further employed to visually represent the syllable that is next in rank to the most

prominent one thereby helping us to illustrate stress as “a hierarchical rather than a relational property” (Kager 1995:328). The metrical grid representation of the stress pattern on the word *MAdam* is:

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      x
      3
      x   x
      1   2

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The metrical grid MA dam or SW pattern in *madam* lays credence to the prominence of the first syllable in the word.

#### 4. Methodology

The data for the study were obtained through a text-based research instrument designed to test the stress production of some English words by purposively selected teachers. They were drawn from Kano, Oyo and Imo states, representing the three major ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria. From each of the three states, 108 teachers who were indigenes were selected from primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education making 324 in all. The test instrument used comprised a questionnaire which was divided into three sections (see Appendices). Section A contained items for eliciting some demographic information about the respondents. Section B contained prepared passages made up of 50 items read in context and in isolation. The selected items covered bi-syllabic, tri-syllabic, polysyllabic and compound words. The test items contained words that are commonly used in every day discourse of the subjects. The respondents' readings of these items were recorded. An auditory analysis was carried out to ascertain the differences in the performance of the

respondents on word stress in context and in isolation. The study employed SPSS to quantify and test for significance where independent variables occurred. The emerging variant patterns were described using the Metrical Theory and Grids tenets.

#### 5. Findings

The analysis revealed that in all the 50 test items, the subjects manifested variant stress patterns in 26 of the items where progressive and regressive stress shifts occurred. It also discovered that the subjects, irrespective of their sociolinguistic characteristics, produced the VIII (Sophisticated Variant of stress) pattern which shares some features with that of BE in the rest 24 items. In these words, the syllables that receive the primary stress did not manifest stress shifts. Our observation is discussed under words without stress shifts and those with stress shifts.

##### 5.1 Words without Stress Shift

This phenomenon of no stress shift became apparent in these bi-syllabic words in items 3 *TOTal*, 4 *STAtion*, 7 *SISter*, 8 *MARy*, 10 *OPens*, 11 *LOVely*, 12 *MOney*, 14 *AMple*, 23 *NARrow* and 50 *MARket*, etc. where the respondents' overall performance stood at 96.6%, 2.8% and 0.5% for VIII, VII and VI patterns respectively (see Table 1 below). The higher percentage score recorded for the VIII, sophisticated variant, marked it as the dominant pattern in those items. Specifically, in item 3 *total*, out of the total obtainable score of 324, the subjects recorded 322 (99.9%) for VIII *TOTal*, 2 (0.6%) for VII *toTAL* and 0% for the VI. This same scenario was noticed in other items listed above. In all of them, the

subjects manifested predominantly the strong-weak (SW) stress pattern by placing the primary stress on the first syllable (see Table 1 below):

**Table 1: Words with Dominant VIII Pattern**

Items	Isolated				
	V3		V2		V1
	N	%	N	%	N
3 Total	322	99.4	02	0.6	-
4 Station	317	97.8	07	2.2	-
5 Beside	310	95.7	09	2.8	05
7 Sister	323	97.7	-	-	01
8 Mary	309	95.4	10	3.1	05
9 Arrives	309	95.4	10	3.1	05
10 Opens	324	100	-	-	-
11 Lovely	324	100	-	-	-
12 Money	320	98.8	04	1.2	-
14 Ample	320	98.8	04	1.2	-
15 Opportunity	311	96	09	2.8	04
21 Capital	320	98.8	02	0.6	02
23 Narrow	321	99.4	03	0.6	-
25 Perfect(adj)	314	96.4	10	3.1	-
26 Present (adj)	273	84.3	40	12.3	11
29 Understand	319	98.5	03	0.9	02
33 Education	318	98.1	05	1.5	01
35 Investment	321	99.1	01	0.3	02
37 Justification	286	88.3	38	11.7	-
38 University	321	99.1	02	0.6	01
39 Leadership	320	98.8	04	1.2	-
44 Download	296	91.4	28	8.6	-
46 Downgrade	296z	91.4	28	8.6	-
50 Market	324	100	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>7516</b>	<b>96.6</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>41</b>

Similarly, in other bi-syllabic words like *beSIDE*, *aRRIVE* and compound words like *down LOAD (V)* and *down GRADE (V)*, the subjects replicated the weak-strong (WS) stress pattern in BE. This is in consonance with Atoye’s (1989) view that English words that are not stressed on the initial syllable are usually stressed correctly in NE.

Furthermore, stress shift did not occur in some English tri-syllabic words in items 21 *Capital* and 39 *LEAdership* where the subjects produced the dominant ‘strong-weak-weak’ (SWW) pattern. Equally, the VIII patterns of SWSW, WSW and WSWSW were replicated in their enunciation of items 33 *eduCation*, 35 *inVEStment* and 37 *JustifiCation* respectively. The subjects’ performance in these 322 words underscored the fact that words with endings like *-tion* and *-ment* pose no difficulty to NE speakers. The VIII was the dominant stress pattern noticed in their spoken English. This means that there is no inter- and intra- variety variation in the productions of these words in NE.

**5.2 Words with Stress Shift**

In the other 26-items, it was apparent that the VII standard stress pattern which differs significantly from the BE/VIII of NE was dominant. This VII pattern is marked by the progressive and regressive stress shifts. It is a variant stress pattern which shows some major differences from that of VIII. Out of the total obtainable score of 8424, the subjects scored 2896 (34.4%), 5002 (59.4%) and 526 (6.2%) for VIII, VII and VI patterns in isolation and 2981 (35.4%), 4668 (55.4%) and 775 (9.2%) for VIII, VII and VI respectively in sentences. Though other variant forms occurred in these items, but the VII pattern was dominant (see Table 2 below):

**Table 2: Showing Subjects’ Articulation of Items with Dominant VII Pattern**

Items	Isolated			
	VIII	VII	V1	VIII

	No	%	No	%	No	respondents exhibited the VI pattern of
1 Madam	221	68.2	92	28.4	11	also exhibited in the subjects' production
2 Petrol	170	52.6	152	47.1	2	of some verbs with contrastive stress such
6 Hospital	224	68.1	100	30.9	-	as <i>reBEL</i> (V) and <i>perfect</i> (V). For example
13 Purchase (N)	79	24.4	245	75.6	-	in item 22 <i>rebel</i> (V), 86 (26.5%) of them
16 Vegetable	137	47.3	151	46.9	36	realized the 41. VII 148 pattern 4 <i>reBEL</i>
17 Identify	66	20.4	257	79.3	01	94 (30.2%) realized the VII pattern <i>Rebel</i>
18 Criticism	65	19.8	243	75.3	16	while 144 (44.4%) respondents realized its VI
19 Broadcast	150	46.3	169	52.2	05	pattern [ri:bi]. This VI is characterized by
20 Telephone	102	31.5	222	68.5	-	creation of extra syllable through the
22 Rebel(N)	86	26.5	94	30.2	144	insertion of the epenthetic <i>Di</i> in item
24 Present(V)	112	34.6	203	62.6	09	2.8 311 96 3.4 02 0.6
27 Rebel (V)	109	33.6	54	16.7	161	249 <i>Perfect</i> (V) 63.6 (20.6%) realized its VII
28 Perfect (V)	66	20.5	256	78.9	02	pattern <i>PERfect</i> , 256 (78.9%) realized its
30 Character	165	50.9	158	48.8	01	VII pattern <i>PERfect</i> while 206 (6%) realized
31 Bachelor	201	62	120	37	03	0.9 VI 196 61.5 124 38.3 04 1.2
32 Educated	58	17.9	257	79.3	09	2.8 71 21.9 232 71.6 21 6.5
34 Justify	58	17.9	263	81.2	03	0.9 63 19.4 260 80.2 01 0.3
36 Civilized	37	11.4	285	88	02	0.6 62 19.1 235 72.5 28 8.6
40 Identified	45	13.9	271	83.6	08	2.9 49 19.2 275 84.8
41 vice president	50	15.4	269	83.1	05	impairment. 12.3 277 85.5 07 2.2
42 Desk top	101	31.2	232	68.8	-	However, progressive stress shift
43 Laptop	106	32.7	218	67.3	-	(PSS) appeared very productive in the data
45 Football	200	61.7	124	38.3	-	analysed. This PSS is the avoidance of
47 Favourite	122	27.7	199	61.4	03	primary stress on early syllables in words.
49 Category	57	17.6	254	78.4	13	It manifested in 23 out of the 50 test items
<b>Total</b>	<b>2896</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>5002</b>	<b>59.4</b>	<b>526</b>	used for this research. The effect 775 (26.2%)

We also discovered that Regressive Stress Shift (RSS) occurred in very limited items tested in the study. Its manifestation was noticed in the compound word item 41 (vice president), which according to Standard BE has its primary stress on the second node *PREsident*. This makes the word sound as ‘vice *PREsident* thereby manifesting the metrical stress pattern of WSWW. But it was discovered that out of the total obtainable score of 324, 50 (15.4%) respondents realized it as *vice PREsident* (WSWW), 269 (83.1%) realized it as VII (*VICE president*) thereby changing the metrical pattern of WSWW to SWWW. However, 5(1.5%) of the

evident in the shifting of the primary stress on early syllables in BE/NE VIII to late ones in NE. The PSS occurred in some bi-syllabic, tri-syllabic, polysyllabic and compound words hereunder described. It was evident in the subjects’ pronunciation of only 5 bi-syllabic items: 1 (madam), 2 (petrol), 22 (rebel N), 45 (football) and 19 (broadcast) thereby manifesting WS for the VII instead of SW of the BE/VIII pattern. For example, in item 1 (madam), out of the obtainable score of 324, 221(68.2%) realized it as MADAM thereby manifesting the VIII variant pattern of SW. 92 (28.4%) of them realized its VII pattern as maDAM (WS) while 11 (3.4%) of them realized it as MADAM thereby

manifesting the VI strong-strong (SS) pattern. This strong-strong (SS) pattern is referred to as stress clash in metrical phonology. The observance of this phenomenon in the VI pattern manifests the syllable-timed rhythm often noticed in the spoken English of some categories of Nigerians. Ditto in item 2 (petrol), 170 (52.6%) realized as it VIII (PETrol), 152 (47.1%) as VII (peTROL) and 2 (0.3%) as VI (peTIrol) patterns respectively.

PSS was equally observed in eight tri-syllabic words in which the subjects manifested the progressive stress shift in the data analysed. These are analysed under the following subdivisions:

a. Shift from Initial to Medial Syllable: The shift of the primary stress from the initial syllables to the medial syllables in ‘*HOSpital*’, ‘*VEGEtable*’, ‘*CHAracter*’ and ‘*CAtegorY*’ to produce *hosPItal*, *vegeTABLE*, *character* and *caTEgory*. This shift has created a variant stress pattern WSW that differs from that of BE/VIII.

b. Shift from Initial to Final Syllables: though some of the subjects produced SWW pattern in *TELEphone*, *JUStify*, *CIVilized* and *FAVourite*, we observed that over 200 (61%) out of the 324 respondents manifested this type of shift thereby producing the metrical pattern of WWS as the dominant pattern. The VII pattern was also dominant in the subjects’ articulation of some polysyllabic items like ‘educated’, ‘favourite’ and ‘criticism’. For example, in item 18 ‘criticism’, 65 (19.8) subjects placed the primary stress correctly on the first syllable to produce the VIII variant pattern of CRITicism. Also, 243(75.3%) of the respondents shifted the primary stress to the second syllable thereby producing

its VII pattern of ‘critIcism’ while 16 (5%) of the respondents produced the VI pattern by shifting the primary stress to the penultimate syllable. In *favourite* and *educated*, the respondents shifted the primary stress on the first syllable *FAvourite* and *EDucated* [SWSW] to the final and pre-penultimate syllables to produce *favouRITE* (WWS) and *eDUcated* respectively to create WSWW. The VII pattern in the analysed data showed that in words ending in *-ism*, the primary stress is shifted from the initial syllables to the pre-penultimate syllables. In *identify* and *identified*, it was observed that the subjects manifested two variant patterns with the VII strand being dominant. Though, the VIII strands of these words are realized as *iDENTify* and *iDENTified* but 257 (79.3%) and 271(83%) subjects produced the VII strand as *identiFY* and *identiFIED*’ by shifting the primary stress from the pre-penultimate syllables to the final syllables.

## Discussion of Results

Reasons can be adduced for the absence of stress shifts in some of the bi-syllabic words earlier identified in the study. The initial syllables in *total* /əʔ↔ʊʔλ/, *station* /əʔʔɛɪʔv/, *market* /əʔɑ:κɪʔ/, *teacher* /əʔɪ:ʔʔ↔/, *money* /əʔʔvɪ/, *narrow* /əʔvθp↔ʊ/ contain nuclei elements with longer vowel duration than the second syllables with weak syllables containing either syllabic consonants or short vowels like /↔/, /ɪ/ or a closing diphthong /↔ʊ/ (Roach, 2000). Consequently, the syllable weight becomes a factor in NE stress placement. Additionally, these words



represent the relatively common ones used in everyday conversations by the subjects.

The PSS and RSS patterns (Atoye, 1989 and Simo Bobda, 2010) observed in the data are visually illustrated with metrical grids. For example, the word ‘vice president’, which in BE/NE VIII has its primary stress on the second node *president*. It is normally realized in BE as *vice PRESident*. This is metrically represented as *WSWW*. The metrical grids representation of VII and VI patterns in the data are presented to show the prominent heights of the variant stress patterns in the word described above:

<b>VIII</b>		<b>VI</b>		<b>VII</b>
x		x	x	x
3		3	3	3
x	x			x
x		x	x	
1	2			2
1		1	2	
vice PRESident				
VICE president		VICE		
PRESident				

The first syllable of the second node ‘president’ in ‘vice president’ is more prominent than the first node ‘vice’ in BE/VIII pattern of NE as shown with the prominent height 3. However, NE’s VII presents the opposite version of what obtains in its MD representation with its prominent height reversed to the first node *vice*. The prominent height shifts from the second node in VIII to the first node in VII. The regressive shift is however modified in VI where very few subjects

realized it with the assignment of equal prominence to the two nodes. With this equivalence of prominence to the two nodes, the metrical pattern becomes *SSWW*. That is, two strong syllables are now adjacent to each other. This phenomenon is referred to in Metrical phonology as stress clash. Speakers of BE do not permit two strong sister nodes in their articulation but this is occurring in NE.

Also, the metrical grid representation of stress patterns in some bi-syllabic, tri-syllabic, polysyllabic and compound words are hereunder described. In disyllabic words, the subjects’ pronunciation manifested the progressive stress shift in only 5 items: 1 *madam*, 2 *petrol*, 22 *rebel* (N), 45 *football* and 19 *broadcast*. For example, in *petrol*, the progressive stress shift strategy was used by the subjects for the realization of the VII pattern. The primary stress moved from the initial syllable, *PETrol* /ʊpetr↔λ/ to the final syllable to produce *petROL*.

		<b>VIII</b>	
		<b>VII</b>	
		<b>VI</b>	
			x
			7
	x		
x			x
	3		
3		5	6
	x	x	x
x		x	x
x			



Like all VI patterns, the patterns in these words [ɸεγI∪τεIβλ] and [κΘ∪τIγορI] are characterized by the creation of extra syllables through vowel insertion to break cluster of consonants and the realization of weak syllables as strong ones. In the subjects' pronunciations, it was observed that the tonal representations for *vegetable* and *category* were *MMHL* and *LHML* respectively. Hence the metrical patterns of *WWSW* and *WSWW* were used by some of the subjects in pronouncing them. The metrical grids above showed the syllables with the most prominent heights in the two words. The third syllable *ta* in *vegetable* and the second syllable *te* in *category* were the most prominent syllables in the two words as attested to by their prominent heights 7 in the two metrical grids.

### **Social Variables Affecting the Variant Stress Patterns**

Towards ascertaining some of the factors responsible for the identified variant stress patterns in the spoken English of Nigerian teachers, the study measured the relationship between the variable and the subjects' placement of stress on words in NE using the T-Test and ANOVA statistical tools. The study measured the effects of social variables of sex, academic discipline, age, ethnic group, academic qualification and educational level of teaching of the subjects on the placement of stress on English words see Appendix for Tables. While t-test is used for the difference in between two variables on the placement of stress on English words, ANOVA is used for variables that are more than two. The

analysis revealed that sex ( $t= 168, p>0.05$ ) and academic discipline ( $F=2.330, p>0.05$ ) were insignificant. This study has shown that the variant stress patterns in the respondents' English pronunciations have no gender or academic discipline colourations. The discovery on gender is in contrast to earlier findings by Trudgill (1974) and Atoye (1985) that women adhere to the norms associated with the Standard English pronunciation. This was not the case in word stress in NE.

However, the social variables of age, ethnic group, academic qualification and teaching level were significant in determining the variant word stress patterns in NE. These variables: age ( $F=4.001, p< 0.05$ ), academic qualification ( $F=9.114, p< 0.05$ ), ethnic group ( $F=11.139, p< 0.05$ ), teaching level ( $F=11.065, p<0.05$ ) significantly affect the variant stress patterns in NE (see Appendix).

### **Conclusion**

The data analysis revealed that heterogeneity of word stress patterns exists in the English pronunciation of the subjects studied. The three variant stress patterns identified in this study are the VIII (sophisticated), VII (standard) and VI (non-standard). They are significantly affected by the social variables of age, ethnic group, academic qualification and educational level. Finally, it concludes that the variant stress patterns in NE are not 'errors' going by the systematic manner of their occurrence and pervasiveness among the various cadres of Nigerians. This thinking is in consonance with Jibril's (1982:17) observation that "an isolated second language learner can commit errors

but a whole country cannot be considered to be in error". This implies that variant stress patterns in NE are analyzable and describable.

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## Appendices

### *Read these passages*

#### **Passage A**

Regularly, Madam Benson buys some petrol at the Total filling station beside Sister Mary's hospital. Whenever she arrives, she opens her lovely bag to pay certain amount of money to the petrol attendant after the purchase. The big market near the station gives her the ample opportunity to buy some biscuits and vegetables from different categories of sellers. Some of these traders sell by the road side to make quick sales. These sellers are already averse to criticism from regular radio broadcast against such acts.

#### **Passage B**

After receiving a signal through the telephone, the rebels ran over the capital

city by coming in through the narrow path. They decided to present to the city a perfect Christmas present. But the people were able to rebel against them before they could perfect their plans. Later on, attempts were made to identify those behind the attack on the city.

**Pass  
age C**

Many people nowadays find it difficult to understand the character often shown by some bachelors who are educated though, have little or nothing to show for their education. They lack the ability to justify the huge societal investment on them. They pretend to be civilized but there are no traces of civilization in them. There is no justification for having gone through the university at all. At times, we wonder at the type of leadership they will give to the nation.

**Pass  
age D**

The vice president of the association was unable to use either the desktop or the laptop computer when he was about to download some information relating to the current status of football in Nigeria from the internet. To him, the selection of third class players by the coaches due to favouritism will downgrade the Super Eagles' ratings in the soccer world. However, one fact was identified by him 'Nigeria, any day, is a favourite in the game'.

*Source: All the passages were composed by the researcher*

1. Madam Rebel (V)	14. Ample	27.
2. Petrol Perfect (V)	15. Opportunity	28.
3. Total Understand	16. Vegetable	29.
4. Station Character	17. Identify	30.
5. Beside Bachelors	18. Criticism	31.
6. Hospital Educated	19. Broadcast	32.
7. Sister Education	20. Telephone	33.
8. Mary Justify	21. Capital	34.
9. Arrives Investment	22. Rebel (N)	35.
10. Opens Civilized	23. Narrow	36.
11. Lovely Justification	24. Present (V)	37.
12. Money University	25. Perfect (Adj.)	38.
13. Purchase Leadership	26. Present (Adj.)	39.
	40. Identified	
	41. Vice-president	
	42. Desktop	
	43. Laptop	
	44. Download	
	45. Football	
	46. Downgrade	
	47. Favourite	
	48. Favouritism	
	49. Category	
	50. Market	

**Words in**

**Citation**

**Read the following words**