Abstract

The degree to which varieties of English emerging from multilingual settings and users in societies like Nigeria, Singapore and India exhibit peculiarities distinguishing them from those established varieties of British and American English has been shown to differ from one variety to another (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984, and Gorlach, 1999). Combining corpus-linguistic methods on data drawn from Nigerian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE), this paper investigates the extent to which structural simplification hypothesis is manifested in the Nigerian English determiner system, and how variables of proficiency levels, text types, register, and determiner form influence frequency distribution of structural types found. Applying a revised principle of accountability (Labov, 1972; Tagliamonte, 2012), together with relevant concepts in New Englishes and test statistics on extracted 105, 262 noun phrases, we showed that structure of determination in Nigerian noun phrase follows a specific one-word pattern (97%), irrespective of proficiency levels, text types, register, and determiner form initiating the determination process. Simultaneously, two or three-word pattern is found to be almost non-existent (3%), given same variables above. It follows that one-word ordering pattern develops from scenario of overuse of definite article at the expense of demonstratives and quantifiers. Given such strong preferential pattern irrespective of factors tested, we can then conclude that cognitive processes engaged with construction of determination in Nigerian English strongly reflect influences of cross linguistic performance transferred from local languages operating syntactically unique determiner system from that of English.
Keywords: determiner structure pattern, oversimplified structure, noun phrase, Nigerian English.