

<b>Topic</b>	Diversity of the English Language – A Reflection on Nigerian English	<b>Duration</b>	90 minutes
<b>Type</b>	Lesson Plan		
<b>CEFR level</b>	B2		

#### GOALS/PURPOSE/AIMS

- Develop awareness of different varieties of English.
- Reflect on the role of English in a country like Nigeria.
- Strengthen reading skills and critical thinking through text work.
- Recognise and challenge bias in relation to different English accents.

#### MATERIALS/RESOURCES USED

- **Video “The Power of Language” by Kólá Túbòsún**  
 TEDx Talks (2020, January 20). The power of language (Kólá Túbòsún) [Video]. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXPRDwV93NI>
- **Quote**  
 [T]he English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new African surroundings.

*Chinua Achebe (Nigerian novelist), 1965, p. 30*

Source:

Achebe, C. (1965). *English and the African Writer*. *Transition*, 18, 27–30. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2934835>

- **Reflection Task (Questions)**

- What does the author mean by saying that English can “carry the weight of my African experience”?
- What is meant by “a new English” in this context?
- Can you think of examples of linguistic adaptations that illustrate the concept of “a new English”?
- How does this idea connect to the role of English in Nigeria?

- **Useful Websites (Selection)**

- OED: Introduction to Nigerian English  
<https://www.oed.com/discover/introduction-to-nigerian-english?tl=true>
- OED: Nigerian English in the OED January 2020 update  
<https://www.oed.com/discover/nigerian-english-in-the-oed?tl=true>

## **PROCEDURES (STRUCTURE)**

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### **1. Pre-Lesson Activity (Individual Work):**

Learners listen to the TEDx Talk “The Power of Language” by **Kólá Túbòsún** and take notes.

**2. Lead In (Plenary Work):**

The teacher writes “Global Englishes” on the board.

Learners brainstorm, the teacher collects their answers on the board.

Guiding Questions:

- Which countries use English?
- Does English sound the same everywhere?
- Are there any other differences besides differences in pronunciation?

**3. Reading Phase (Pair Work):**

The teacher distributes the text *Promotion of the English Language in Nigeria*.

Promotion of the English Language in Nigeria

The spread of English and its promotion in Nigeria could be attributed to several factors such as the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society, language policies adopted by the government, the status of the English language as a lingua franca and as an official language, the attitude of Nigerians towards the English language, the state of Nigeria’s indigenous languages, English as a means of securing lucrative jobs, a ticket for gaining admission to schools in Nigeria and the prestige accorded English and its speakers.

Nigeria is a linguistically diverse region with diverse ethnic groups. Several scholars have estimated the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria at 250 to over 500 (Coleman 1958,

Hansford et al. 1976, Crozier & Blench 1992, Eberhard et al. 2019). Most of these languages are not mutually intelligible. With these diverse languages, the only language that is easily understood by almost every Nigerian is the English language, which is spoken in different forms (Broken English, Standard English). This is one of the enhancing factors for the wide dissemination and promotion of the English language in Nigeria.

Another factor that has led to the promotion of the English language in Nigeria is the language policy introduced by the colonial administration, which Nigeria adopted after gaining political independence in 1960. The colonial administration ensured that their language policy in all colonies benefited the English language. Most of the countries that made up the Commonwealth of Nations including Nigeria were at one time in history under British control and these countries continue to be linguistically controlled indirectly by the use of English as an official language. Even the language policy adopted and still practised by these countries is still in favour of the English language, as their education policy shows, where English is still the main language of instruction in schools and the language of evaluation.

Also, English has been the official and widely accepted language in the Nigerian society. It is the only language that has effortlessly broken all ethnic, social and linguistic barriers. In Nigeria, there is hardly any place where you will not meet people who speak English, even if it is the Broken English variant. English is not restricted to any particular ethnic group, society or cultural affiliation; it is the language for almost everybody. This has expedited its spread and promotion in the Nigerian society.

The status of English as an official language in Nigeria amidst the numerous indigenous languages available has also helped to promote the language in the country. English as an official language has been assigned important functions as the language of the media, education, politics, legislation, and banking.

Owing to the seemingly indispensable roles English plays in practically all sectors of the country, the general disposition towards the language in Nigeria is advantageous to its spread and growth. In today's Nigerian society, literacy is credited to be the ability to speak and write English. Anyone who cannot read and write is called an illiterate. Today, many parents do not allow their children and their wards to speak their indigenous languages, it is English. Most private and public schools do not allow their students to speak their native languages during school hours, and teachers are also prohibited from speaking indigenous languages during school hours. The penalty ranges from payment of mulct to suspension or heavy work. Everyone wants to communicate with others in English, regardless of their proficiency level in the language.

Another factor that has facilitated the promotion of the English language in Nigeria is the state of Nigeria's indigenous languages. Of the 525 indigenous languages in Nigeria (Eberhard et al. 2019), only 19 are institutional (developed to the point that they are used and sustained by institutions beyond the home-community), 76 are still developing (they are well used, though not yet widespread or sustainable), and the rest are either in trouble (intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken but with hope of revitalisation) or dying (the only fluent users are older than child-bearing age, revitalisation is difficult). In most

Nigerian languages, standard orthography, the modernisation of the numbering system and the production of literary material are lacking. This has undoubtedly promoted the use of the English language in Nigeria, pushing most of the Nigerian languages to the background.

The ability to speak English well increases the chance of securing good jobs in Nigeria. Job interviews are conducted in English, regardless of the type of work. This began during the colonial administration in Nigeria and has continued to this day. As a means to safeguard employment, everyone learns and speaks English. This enhances and promotes the English language in Nigeria.

The English language serves as an entry filter into a tertiary institution in Nigeria. For a person to gain admission into any school in Nigeria, at least a credit pass (50%) in English is required. There are too many people who want to attend tertiary schools, so schools need to filter or search for eligible candidates through the effective use of English, as this is the dominant language of instruction in schools. With this constraint, aspiring candidates have to learn and be proficient in spoken and written English. This promotes the spread and growth of English in Nigeria.

Also, proficiency in the use of English attracts much admiration and respect from the society. Good English skills are seen as a sign of good education in society, and those who do not speak the language are not respected because they are considered to be uneducated. Good English language skills can lead to an upward shift in the status of the user. The values associated with the ability to speak English cause many people to learn and speak English and this translates into its being widespread throughout Nigeria.

Source:

Oyebola, F. K. (2020). *Attitudes of Nigerians towards Accents of English*, pp. 12-15

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Students read the text and answer the following questions in pairs:

- Why is English widely spoken in Nigeria?
- What role do indigenous languages play in Nigeria compared to English?
- What are the advantages of English as a lingua franca in a multilingual country?
- What are the disadvantages of English as a lingua franca in a multilingual country?
- Why do some people in Nigeria prefer English over their own language?

**4. Comparison of Results (Plenary Work):**

Students compare their answers and discuss the main findings from the reading.

The teacher moderates the discussion and highlights key points from the text, ensuring all aspects are covered.

**5. Reflection Task (Group Work):**

(Groups of 4)

Learners interpret the quote from Chinua Achebe and reflect on the following questions:

- What does the author mean by saying that English can “carry the weight of my African experience”?
- What is meant by “a new English” in this context?

- What is the role of prejudice against certain English accents? Can you think of examples of accent discrimination in your environment or in the media?
- Can you think of examples of linguistic adaptations that illustrate the concept of “a new English”?
- How does this idea connect to the role of English in Nigeria?

Each group summarises their thoughts on a poster and prepare a brief oral presentation.

*Note: Learners can explore Nigerian English further by referring to the “Useful Websites” provided.*

### **6. Presentation and Discussion (Plenary Work):**

Each group presents the results of the reflection task to the class.

The teacher moderates a class discussion, emphasizing key points about the adaptability of languages, particularly English as a global language.

### **7. Closure (Plenary Work):**

The teacher provides a brief summary of the lesson, highlighting the following points:

- English is a diverse language that evolves differently across the globe.
- Nigerian English serves as an example of how language reflects history and culture.
- A positive attitude towards linguistic diversity not only fosters better global communication but also helps to reduce prejudice against certain accents.

**Homework (optional):**

Research another variety of English (e.g. Singaporean English, Indian English, Australian English) and prepare a brief description for the next lesson.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

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**ASSESSMENT/REFLECTION**

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