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Exploring Collocations In Nigerian English Usage

In addition to the common-core features that link up the different geographical varieties of any language, each variety has peculiar features that aggregate to set it apart from all other varieties. While the most outstanding peculiarity relates to pronunciation, others can be found in the meaning mechanisms, discourse strategies, and a wide range of interference-induced characteristics. Collocation is also a significant variety-marker that deserves detailed attention in the characterization of second language varieties of English. Our comprehensive linguistic analysis of the large corpus of data collected for this study reveals that in addition to the usual collocations to be found in standard English usage, there are notable peculiarities and errors in the patterns of both lexical and grammatical collocations in Nigerian English, and these contribute significantly to the features that set NigE apart from other varieties of English.

1.0 Introduction:

There are different definitions of the term “collocation” by different authorities. Below are just two of them:

(a) *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2000:254):

(*Tech*) the way in which some words are often used together, or a particular combination of words used in this way. “Commit a crime” is a typical collocation in English.

(b) Crystal (1997:160):

...One way of imposing order on the thousands of lexemes which make up the English vocabulary is to group them into semantic fields ... it is obvious from dictionary definitions and thesaurus groupings that some lexemes do ‘belong together’.

By collocation therefore we mean the way words combine to form sentences and the selectional restrictions that cause certain words to go together and others not to. Words are the building blocks with which we construct sentences and ultimately convey

meaning. But words do not just combine at random to form sentences. Apart from the grammatical requirement of subjects to precede verbs and verbs to precede complements, we find that words have co-occurrence relationships that constrain them to occur naturally with some words but not with others.

For instance, a verb like “frighten” is transitive and therefore grammatically requires an object. Technically, the object position can be filled in by any nominal element (that is, a pronoun, a noun, a noun phrase or a noun clause). But in practical terms, not just any of these items can function acceptably as an object of the verb “frighten”. This is because since it is a word that has to do with the emotion of fear, it can accept as object only a word that has the feature [+animate], because only animate objects can have the emotion of fear. So out of the following options –

frighten *the lamp post / the idea / the children*

– only the last is acceptable because it is animate and therefore has the emotion of fear. In other words, only the last can collocate with “frighten”. The other two cannot because “frighten” has selectional restrictions that preclude them from occurring with it.

Even without such overt restrictions, many words go together regularly in predictable ways. We cite here Crystal’s examples (1997:105):

“Blond” collocates with “hair”, “flock” with “sheep”, and “neigh” with “horse”. Some collocations are totally predictable, such as “spick” with “span”, or “addled” with “brains” or “eggs”. Others are much less so: “letter” collocates with a wide range of words, such as “alphabet” and “spelling”, and (in another sense) “box”, “post” and “write”. Yet other lexemes are so widely used that they have no predictable collocates at all, such as “have” and “get”.

Sometimes collocations also occur in the form of set expressions, which must be used exactly as they are structured. Many of these set expressions are referred to as idioms.

Crystal (op cit) again observes that “the more fixed a collocation is, the more we think of it as an ‘idiom’ - a pattern to be learned as a whole, and not as the ‘sum of its parts’”. We give the examples “consist of”, “look down on”, “do away with”, “tend to do something”, “be tenable for”, “make (both) ends meet”, “go to the end of the earth”, “at the end of the day”.

Native speakers of English usually have no difficulty handling the different collocational structures in the language, as these have been mastered and come to them intuitively. But in a second language situation such as Nigeria, this is certainly not the case, as many of the constraints on the co-occurrence of words remain to be mastered and applied. Worse still, while native English speech tends to be highly idiomatic, there is a distinct literal ring in second language usage. That is to say that rather than express themselves idiomatically, L2 users tend to structure their sentences to state directly and literally what they mean. And this way, they miss out on a lot of the idiomatic collocations of the language. And when collocations do occur, they are often restructured and unnatural.

It is therefore worthwhile to explore collocations in Nigerian English usage to discover their structural composition, including patterns of error. Our objectives in this paper are to:

- (a) Study collocational usage in the written and spoken English of Nigerians.
- (b) Identify the different types of collocational structures.
- (c) Classify these structures into categories.
- (d) Identify and analyze any errors of collocation that occur.
- (e) Categorize these errors appropriately and account for them linguistically.
- (f) Help draw the attention of Nigerian users of English, including teachers, to

collocations as a special attribute of the language, thereby prompting them to pay closer attention to the right usages and the range of possibilities.

- (g) Make a modest contribution to the body of literature on this variety of the English language.

The data for this research were obtained from the following sources:

- (a) Spoken usages overheard among Nigerian speakers of English in different domains
- (b) Documented sources taken from write-ups on collocational usage
- (c) Personal introspection

2.0 Collocations in English:

According to Crystal (1997:162), “the notion of collocation focuses on the extent to which lexemes come together randomly or predictably.” This means that while the majority of combinations of the lexemes we use in communication are governed by chance, in numerous other cases, one item usually “calls up” another to some extent in the mind of a native speaker. For example, the expression “I saw – ” can be randomly followed by just anything that the speaker could have seen. As a result, whatever does occur after “saw” cannot be said to form a collocation with it, because there is no mutual expectancy between the two items. But in contrast, there is a mutual predictability between the lexical items involved in a collocation. Thus we can “predict” any of the following to occur with “bread” in appropriate contexts:

bread winner
bread knife

bread and butter
brown bread

sliced bread
bread crumbs

but not:

*bread spoon

*bread fork

*bread and stew.

Ukwuegbu, et. al. (2002:104) present very elaborately different types of collocations, which they classify under the following sub-headings, the first four of which are also given by Crystal (1997:163):

(a) Polywords

These are well known short phrases that function very much like individual words in the sense that their parts cannot be separated. In addition, they cannot be varied structurally.

Examples are:

by all means	once in a while	in a nutshell
once and for all	by the way	so to speak
so far so good	lest I forget	all the same
all in all	not again!	as a matter of fact

(b) Institutional Expressions

These are like polywords in that their structure cannot be varied and parts cannot be separated. But they are different because each functions as a complete sentence by itself, whereas polywords occur as part of completely expressed or clipped sentences. Institutionalized expressions include proverbs, aphorisms or maxims (true or wise sayings or principles expressed in a few words), and notable quotes. Examples:

Once beaten, twice shy.	How do you do?
Long time no see.	Have a nice day.
The buck stops here!	Enough is enough!
The more you look the less you see.	More haste less speed!
Discretion is the better part of valour.	

(c) Phrasal Constraints

These are short phrases, which like polywords, occur as parts of a sentence. But the significant difference is that they allow some degree of variation within them. Examples:

as you can see/tell/figure out...
as I was saying/mentioning ...

as it happened/turned out/transpired ...
 good morning/afternoon/evening/night/day.
 a day/short while/long time ago ...
 as far as I can see/can remember/know/can recollect...

(d) Sentence Builders

As the name implies, these are phrases that introduce whole sentences or provide the framework for constructing them. While they remain fixed themselves, they allow considerable variation within the rest of the sentence. Examples:

as you can see ...	let me begin by ...
the issue is ...	come rain or shine ...
the important point is that ...	the bottom line is that ...
that reminds me of ...	whether you like it or not...
as to be expected...	on the other hand...
that notwithstanding...	to cut a long story short...

(e) Idioms

These are fixed groups of words with special meanings that are different from the meaning of the individual words that make them up. Idioms provide excellent examples of collocations. They abound in the English language, which is highly idiomatic. As one cannot claim mastery of a language until one has mastered its idioms, it is important for Nigerians to understand the idioms of English and use them correctly. Here are a few examples with “dog”:

(a case of) dog eat dog	a dog in the manger
a dog’s breakfast/dinner	a dog’s life
every dog has his day	give a dog a bad name
go to the dogs	let sleeping dogs lie
not have a dog’s change	rain cats and dogs
the tail wagging the dog	learn an old dog new tricks

(f) Other Fixed Expressions

The following are other fixed collocations the structures of which many users frequently alter erroneously:

to run for dear life	to protect life and property
to give one's word	to pay someone back in their own coin
to learn their lesson	to use one's good offices to help another
to rule with an iron hand	to turn a deaf ear (to an appeal)
to find fault with (sbdy)	to speak in detail (about something)
to render selfless service	to have one's way (with somebody)
to put one's foot down	to reward someone tenfold/twentyfold
to succeed at all costs	to leave no room/ margin for error
to let bygones be bygones	to appeal/ report to the ... authorities.
the powers that be	to improve sbdy's conditions of service
to damage beyond repair	to treat a matter on its own merits
to effect repairs	to say something times without number
to give a free hand	to take great pains (to do something)

(g) *Prepositional Verbs*

Prepositional verbs are those verbs that obligatorily collocate with prepositions in sentence structures. This means that they must be followed by a preposition in the sentence. For instance:

My uncle *dabbles in* politics from time to time.
 She *specializes in* grammar
 The quarrel *resulted in* a fight
 They have to *conform to* the regulations
 You must *desist from* telling lies
 We are to *refrain from* drinking alcohol.
 The question *consists of* two major parts.

(h) *Phrasal Verbs*

These are lexical verbs that are combined with one or two prepositions or adverbs (also known as particles). Here are some examples:

round up (arrest/bring together/make a whole number).	
cave in (collapse)	round off (conclude)
hand out (distribute)	put up with (tolerate)
give in (succumb)	live low (hide)
give up (abandon)	look down on (despise)
do away with (discard)	turn down (reject)

Taiwo (2004) also talks about the spectrum of collocations, by which he means types, and identifies this spectrum as made up of the following:

(a) *Free combinations*, such as

run a risk	make an attempt	run a business
make way	run an errand	make an effort
run out of time	make out time	

(b) *Restricted combinations*, such as

i. adjective + noun –	hardened criminal extenuating circumstances	wonderful person beautiful girl
ii. adverb + verb –	readily admit blindly follow	totally unaware foolishly accept
iii. verb + noun	– renovate a house paint the room	decorate the tree buy a car.
iv. noun + verb	– the brake screeched tension heightened	the cloud drifted

(c) *Multi-word expressions*, such as:

i. irreversible binominals –	in leaps and bounds aims and objectives.	part and parcel bag and baggage
ii. phrasal verbs –	pull out, give up put up with	look down upon come across.
iii. idioms –	to take the bull by the horns to set the ball rolling to see the writing on the wall.	

Taiwo concludes that words that are closely associated with other words “may depend in their association on the context of a particular situation”, context referring to who is using the words and where. For example, the word “power” will collocate easily with “struggle”, “boat”, “house”, “steering” in different contexts. He also points out that in many cases collocations depend not on compatibility in meaning among the component words, but rather on convention. For example, stale or spoilt butter is said to be rancid (i.e., “rancid butter”), while egg that is no longer good to eat is said to be addled (i.e.,

“addled egg”). What Taiwo means is that it is purely a matter of convention that the terms “rancid” and “addled” go with “butter” and “egg” respectively to describe their bad state.

Williams (2003) writes that collocation is the relationship between two words or groups of words that often go together and form a common expression. If the expression is heard often, the words become “glued” together in our mind. He gives the examples of “crystal clear”, “middle management”, “nuclear family” and “cosmetic surgery” as collocated word pairs, and observes that some other words are often found together because they make up a compound noun, example, “riding boot” and “motorcyclist”. Williams further observes that English has many of these collocated expressions, and some linguists, like Khellmer 1991, argue that an English speaker’s lexicon is made up of many collocated words and phrases as well as individual items.

In Thornbury’s phrase (1998:8), words “hunt in packs”, and thus “the ability to deploy a wide range of lexical chunks both accurately and appropriately is probably what most distinguishes advanced learners [and users of a language] from intermediate ones” (2002:116).

Knowledge of collocation is important because when people have good ideas to express, they are often unable to do this successfully or effectively when they do not know the most important collocation of a key word that is central to what they want to say. The result is often outright error, or verbosity, or threatened intelligibility or a string of expressions that sounds awkward or unnatural to the native speaker of English. Hill (1999:5) gives the following examples of such inappropriateness:

**His disability will continue until he dies* (instead of: *He has a permanent disability.*)

**In the shell of a nut*

(instead of: *In a nutshell.*)

When collocations are learnt, they increase the learner's mental lexicon and his written and spoken fluency. The brain is said to have more time to focus on its message if "many of the nuts and bolts are already in place in the form of collocations of varying lengths". As Lewis (1997:15) puts it "fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity".

Islam & Timmie (2011) observe that different commentators use different and overlapping terms, such as, "prefabricated phrases", "lexical phrases", "formulaic language", "frozen and semi-frozen phrases", "lexical chunks" and "collocation". They write (p1) that:

"Lexical chunk" is an umbrella term which includes all the other terms. We define a lexical chunk as any pair or group of words which is commonly found together, or in close proximity. "Collocation" is also included in the term "lexical chunk" [and] we define it as a pair of lexical content words commonly found together. Following this definition, "base" + "principles" is a collocation, but "look" + "at" is not, because it combines a lexical content word and a grammar function word.

They conclude, like the others, that it is the ability to use lexical phrases that helps the language users to speak (and write) with fluency.

Gabrielatos (1994) observes that there is an inconsistency in the use of the terms "idiom" and "collocation" by different analysts. He notes that some of these analysts see idioms as different from collocations, while others consider idioms a subcategory of the class of collocation.

Woods (1981, in Nathinger & DeCarrico, 1992:177-178), who sees idioms and collocations as different, posits a continuum as follows: *idioms – collocations –*

colligations – free combinations. At one end of the continuum idioms are the most fixed and predictable sequences, while at the other end free combinations are the least predictable. Collocations themselves are presented as “roughly predictable ... yet restricted to certain specified items”.

The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, Vol. 2 (1983) presents a continuum too from “idiom” to “non-idiom”. It then makes a distinction between “pure idioms” (totally fixed) and “figurative idioms” (allowing for some variation). The “non-idioms” (that is, collocations) are divided into “restricted” (or “semi-idioms”), which allow a degree of lexical variation and in which some elements are used figuratively, and “open”, in which elements are freely combined and are used in a common literal sense.

Aisenstadt (1979) distinguishes between “idioms”, “restricted collocations” and “free word-combinations”. An idiom is described as one semantic unit. A restricted collocation is a combination whose constituents are used in one of their regular, non-idiomatic meaning and follow certain structural patterns. A free word-combination has variations conditioned by usage.

Cruse (1986) distinguishes between “idioms”, “bound collocations” and “collocations” proper. To him an idiom is a lexically complex unit made up of a single minimal semantic constituent; a bound collocation is an expression with inseparable constituents; while a collocation is a sequence of lexical items which habitually co-occur.

On the other hand, Kjellmer (1994: xiv & xxxiii) presents idioms as a subcategory of the class of collocations, which he defines as “such recurring sequences of items as are grammatically well-formed”. The idiom itself is defined as “a collocation whose meaning

cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its constituents”. Finally, Sinclair, Jones and Daley (2004) also regard idioms as a subclass of collocations.

In this paper, we adopt the position that idioms *are* collocational, since they fit perfectly into our definition of collocations as “the way that some words regularly go together with others, and our natural and habitual combination of words”. Next we will take a brief look at Nigerian English and some of its characteristics.

3.0 A Brief Overview of Nigerian English:

There has since been an unequivocal acceptance of Nigerian English as a legitimate variety of English worldwide and it has since taken its pride of place among the “New Englishes” (cf. Spencer, 1971; Ubahakwe, 1979; Pride, 1982; Kachru, 1982; Platt, Weber & Ho, 1984; Jowitt, 1991; Bamgbose, Banjo & Thomas, 1995; Awonusi & Babalola, 2004; Dadzie & Awonusi, 2004, Okoro, 2011a, 2011b, for example). Today, the major preoccupation of linguists and scholars on Nigerian English is to codify and characterize this variety of the language. This need to identify and describe the characteristics of Nigerian English is echoed by Jowitt (1991:35) in the following words:

As Bamgbose says, the question of whether a Nigeria English exists should by now have become a non-issue; ... The greater need now, however, is to get away from the over-flogged issues of standard vs. non-standard, international vs. internal, and to concentrate on the interesting task of specifying, describing, analyzing the forms of Nigerian English, data for which can be consciously or unconsciously supplied by a vast number of the Nigerians one simply happens to come in contact with...

And describing the characteristics of standard Nigerian English, Bamgbose (1995:20) observes that its first notable aspect is the way it has been nativized. Such nativization, he states, consists of three aspects: linguistic, pragmatic, and creative.

On linguistic nativization, Bamgbose observes that this is the aspect that is most often described in the literature (p21):

This includes substitution of Nigerian language vowels and consonants for English ones, replacement of stress by tone, pluralization of some non-count nouns, introduction of culture-specific vocabulary terms, back formation, semantic shift, different verb-preposition combinations and some Nigerian L1-induced syntactic structures...

In talking about the second aspect of nativization, which is the pragmatic use of English in a second-language situation, Bamgbose observes that in the Nigerian situation, “the rules of language use typical of English in native situations have been modified under pressure from the cultural practices of the Nigerian environment” (p21). We should recall that language is culture-bound, and since English is foreign to the indigenous culture of Nigerians there are necessarily aspects of that culture that it will be incapable of expressing adequately. Hence the pragmatic need arises to use the language to replicate these aspects of the culture.

Bamgbose (1995:21) gives the example of the replication of numerous indigenous greetings in English: “welcome”, “well done”, “sorry”, “thanks for yesterday”, “safe journey”, “how?”, “till tomorrow”. There is also the well-known use of English kinship terms by Nigerians to apply to persons not covered by such terms in native speaker usage. It will be recalled that pragmatics refers to speaker-meaning – the meaning that extra-linguistic constraints or the context of use imposes on what is being said.

Finally, the third aspect of nativization – creativity – is observed to manifest itself in two ways. Bamgbose puts it this way (p21):

...first, expressions are coined to reflect the Nigerian experience or world view. Expressions such as “to take in” (to become pregnant), “been-to” (one who has travelled abroad, particularly to England), “sufferhead” (a luckless

person), “arrangee” (someone employed in illegal currency deals), “four-one-nine” (a dupe [actually *a fraudster*]) are coined. Second, authentic Nigerian native idiom is translated into English in such a way as to reflect the mood of the situation or character...

Next to nativization, Bamgbose points out the continuing influence of biblical language, and the equally significant importation of Americanisms, which has been on the increase recently, thanks to the enormous advances in electronic communication and increased international travel and interaction.

What we have at present therefore is a variety of English (Nigerian English) so uniquely characterized that, as Jowitt points out, it is time to get away from the over-flogged issues of “standard” vs. “non-standard”, “international” vs. “internal”, and get down to the task of describing and analyzing its forms.

It is in pursuit of this objective, that we attempt in this paper an exploration of the aspect of collocational usage in Nigerian English. Our purpose is specifically to explore collocations in Nigerian English usage in order to identify their characteristics and account for them linguistically, using data collected from a wide range of sources: written, spoken, formal and informal.

4.0 The Data Collection:

Data for this study were collected from the following sources:

1. Spoken usages overheard among Nigerians of all persuasions in all sorts of formal and informal contexts: classrooms, market places, the streets, school premises, the electronic media, different registers.
2. Written usages from a wide range of sources including student essays, the print media and textbooks
3. Secondary sources documented in the literature on Nigerian English
4. The researcher’s own introspection as a speaker of Nigerian English

We collected a total of 152 sentences made up as follows:

- *Primary source:*
 - a. Spoken (Electronic Media): 20 sentences
 - b. Spoken (Other Sources): 10 sentences
 - c. Written (Student Essay): 10 sentences
 - d. Written (Print Media): 10 sentences
 - e. Written (Textbooks and Literary Works): 10 sentences
- *Secondary source:*
 - a. From Kujore (1985): 40 sentences
 - b. From Jowitt (1991): 30 collocations
 - c. From Okoro (2000): 12 sentences
- *Personal introspection:* 16 sentences

The data from spoken usages (item 1. above) were collected through the *simple* or *non-participant observation* method (which involves the unobtrusive and systematic observation of the phenomenon being studied). And since all the data needed were directly observable from the different and diverse sources, questionnaires and interviews were unnecessary, and participant observation was hardly called for.

As much as possible, each collocational item in the data is presented completely in the micro-context of use, namely, the entire sentence in which it occurs. This is done, first, to show the structural relationship between the collocation and other items in the sentence, and secondly, to reveal its full range of meaning so that those collocational structures that need to be accounted for in terms of semantic transfer from L1 can be readily recognized as such.

These data sentences are first presented in two main groups, namely, *primary sources* and *secondary sources*. The primary sources are in turn grouped into the categories: spoken (electronic media), spoken (other sources), written (student essays),

written (print media) and written (literary works). Each item in the secondary source is itself traced to its original documented source.

The method of analysis consists of structurally analyzing each item, and where necessary its meaning implications. Structures are grouped according to their peculiar characteristics including errors and error types. The characteristics of each group are then rigorously analyzed and these characteristics are then accounted for linguistically in terms the violation of identifiable native-English collocational constraints, or in terms of L1 and other notable influences. For purposes of comparison, native speaker equivalents of particular collocations are examined alongside these NigE collocations.

5.0 Data Analysis:

A rigorous syntactic analysis of the data reveals the following characteristics present in the collocational structures identified in Nigerian English. (We hasten to add that some of these characteristics may be found in other “Englishes” and perhaps even in native-speaker varieties. But it is their *collective* aggregation that characterizes Nigerian English.):

5.1 Omission of Collocational Elements

The collocations that exhibit this feature are presented below, each identified by the number assigned to the data sentence in which it occurs. The omission is marked with the symbol “∅” and to facilitate our subsequent discussion, the omitted item is given in brackets at the end of the collocation.

DS 1 / DS88	...enable government ∅ serve you better (to)
DS2	...she had ∅ stroke (a)
DS5 / DS42	...raise ∅ alarm (the)
DS10	...put to ∅ test (the)

DS12	...dismiss the report with a wave of Ø hand (the)
DS17	The equipment ... is already on Øground (the)
DS18	...give them the benefit of Ø doubt (the)
DS21	...you Ø suppose Ø to know (are, -ed)
DS23	...once Ø a while (in)
DS24	...on Ø phone (the)
DS74	...bite Ø more than you can chew (off)
DS86	I dropped Ø near the hospital (off)
DS93	...take the law into your Ø hands (own)
DS96	...hold him Ø to ridicule (up)

As we can see, the omitted items are all grammatical words, that is, function words. They are:

- a. the “to” element of a *to*-infinitive verb (DS1)
- b. articles, definite and indefinite (DS2, 5, 10, 12, 17, 18, 24)
- c. the auxiliary verb “are” (DS21)
- d. the preposition “in” (DS23)
- e. phrasal verb particles “off” and “up” (DS74, 86, 96)
- f. the determiner “own” (DS 93)

It is significant that no content words are omitted, perhaps indicating a concern to retain the meaning of the collocation intact. But it appears that since function words are peripheral to meaning, these could be omitted at will.

5.2 Inclusion of Redundant Collocational Elements/ Reduplication

This feature was exhibited by the following collocations. The redundant section of each structure is italicized.

DS3	...peculiar to human beings <i>alone</i>
DS7	...fewer <i>in number</i>
DS8 / DS132	In my <i>personal</i> opinion, <i>I think that</i>
DS9	There is an adage <i>which says</i> that
DS11	<i>fellow</i> accomplices
DS20	Some of our clients <i>include</i>
DS29 / DS 71	<i>secret</i> ballot
DS30	blue <i>in colour</i>

DS33	five- <i>five</i> volunteers
DS34	He responded <i>by saying</i> that
DS35 / DS135	He was frowning <i>his face</i>
DS36	causes of x include.... <i>among others</i>
DS45	broke the stones into small <i>small</i> pieces
DS50	wedding <i>ceremony</i>
DS61	can be traceable to
DS62	can be attributable to
DS77	can be <i>possible</i>
DS89	Explain <i>the reason</i> why
DS97	x include books, pens, pencils <i>and so on</i>
DS131	A general consensus <i>of opinion</i>
DS133	to shut up <i>his mouth</i>
DS134	A crowd <i>of people</i>
DS136	book <i>for... in advance</i>
DS137	2.00 am <i>in the morning</i>
DS138	funeral <i>ceremony</i>
DS139	<i>completely</i> unanimous
DS140	great mutual respect <i>for each other</i>
DS141	Popular <i>with the people</i>
DS142	I have no doubt <i>in my mind</i>

As these examples show, the majority of redundancy cases involve saying the same thing twice in different ways. And because different expressions are involved, the speakers are unaware of the redundant repetition. For example, if something is *peculiar* to human beings, it applies to them alone. Someone's *opinion* is of course what he or she *thinks*, and is therefore *personal* to that person. In like manner, an *adage* is a saying; and to *respond* is to *say* something. *Balloting* is *secret* voting; and a crowd refers to *people*, not dogs or sheep.

In other cases (e.g., DS33: “five *five* volunteers” and DS45: “small *small* pieces”), the repetition or reduplication involves direct transfer from the mother tongue, where concepts like uniformity and urgency are expressed by repeating the relevant lexical items. For example, in Igbo and Yoruba, urgency is expressed in the terms “ngwa ngwa”

and “kia kia” respectively. The result of this transfer phenomenon is obvious in exchanges such as:

- A: How much are these oranges?
 B: *Twenty-twenty* naira (uniformity)
 Olu, the boss wants you *now now*. (urgency).

5.3 *Substitution of a Lexical Element or Elements within the Collocational Structure*

This feature is present in the following recorded collocations. The foreign items are italicized and the usual ones are entered in brackets.

- DS13 ...one form of right or *the other* (another)
 DS25 it was *smooth* sailing (plain)
 DS27 it *does* not worth it (is)
 DS32 dabbled *into* politics (in)
 DS37 the *rest* students (other/ remaining)
 DS40 tried to *convince* me to go (persuade)
 DS42 *bags* four years jail term (receives [a four-year jail term])
 DS54 I don't *hear* Yoruba (understand)
 DS64 *on* his own accord (of)
 DS65 *with* admiration (in)
 DS66 admitted *into* the university (to)
 DS67 *for* my advantage (to)
 DS70 aim *to reach* here (at reaching)
 DS75 begin *from* this point (at)
 DS76 her insults made my blood *rise* (boil)
 DS80 congratulations *for* (on)
 DS81 every nook and *corner* (cranny)
 DS82 *dancing* to the gallery (playing)
 DS87 has an edge *over* (on)
 DS90 lay *your* finger on (a)
 DS92 more *grease* to your elbow (power)

A closer examination reveals that the substitution results from four factors, namely:

(a) Failure to recognize the right lexical items in formulaic structures (e.g. DS25: “*plain sailing*”, DS76: “made my blood *boil*”, DS81: “every nook and *cranny*”, DS82: “*playing to the gallery*” DS92: “more *power* to your elbow”).

(b) Confusion of meaning (e.g. DS13: “one form of right or *the other*”, DS40: “tried to *convince* me to go” and DS54: “I don’t *hear* Yoruba”). DS13 implies only two rights, whereas what is meant is an indefinite number of rights. DS40 confuses the meanings of “convince” and “persuade”. We persuade people *to act*, but convince them to adopt a certain line of *thinking*. Finally, DS54 confuses “to hear” with “to understand”. We will certainly *hear* the spoken words of any language, but may not *understand* them. Further investigation reveals that DS54 is the result of direct transfer from the mother tongue. In virtually all Nigerian languages, one and the same word is used for the expressions “to hear someone/something” and “to understand a language”, and in each case that word translates more readily into the English word “hear”.

(c) Misuse of prepositions. As the data show, this is the most pervasive factor. The misuse of prepositions in English has proved to be a widespread and lingering problem, resulting from the lack of overt usage rules to guide the user.

(d) Outright breach of grammar (e.g., DS27 “it does not worth it” and DS37 “the rest students”). It is worth mentioning that some of these collocations are also influenced by Nigerian Pidgin, which has continued to exist in a diaglossic relationship with Nigerian English. For example, the Pidgin equivalent of DS27 is “e no worth am”, with “no” doubling up as “does/do not”. So the pidgin “e *no* worth am” becomes the Nigerian English “it *does not* worth it”!

5.4 Restructuring of Collocations

This involves the extensive alteration of the structure of well known collocations, as in the following – the correct or usual structure is entered in brackets after each

example:

- DS 4 for a good one year (for one good year)
 DS14 not been opportuned to (not had the opportunity to)
 DS22 that your friend (that friend of yours)
 DS26 on the steering (sitting behind the steering wheel / driving)
 DS38 knocking their heads together (playing one off against the other / another)
 DS68 What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander. (Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.)
 DS72 has put to bed (has given birth)
 DS73 A beggar has no choice. (Beggars cannot be choosers)
 DS78 chanced to be present (had the opportunity to be present)
 DS79 clarifying that point from (get clear that point from / seek clarification on that point from)
 DS98 intimated me of his intention (intimated to me his intention / intimated to me that he intended)

While some of these, e.g. DS38, DS68 and DS73, may have resulted from an attempt to simplify the original collocations, others cannot be so easily accounted for. Many of the latter also involve grammatical breaches.

5.5 *Literal Translation of L1 (Idiomatic/Figurative) Structures*

The following are literal translations from L1. The meaning of each structure is entered in brackets after it.

- DS19 to *close the mouth of those* who will object (to silence objectors)
 DS53 His *head is not correct* (He is mentally unbalanced)
 DS55 I cannot yet *find a mouth with which to tell the story*. (I'm speechless)
 DS56 I want one of my sons to join these people and *be my eyes there*. (I am sending one of my sons as my representative among those people)
 DS57 My spirit tells me that *those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow*. (I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight).
 DS69 You *won't see my hand now* until later. (My plans will unfold in due course).

DS60 *water the ground* (lobby)

Many literal translations in Nigerian English are the direct result of the unconscious influence of mother tongue interference. But many others, especially those found in literary works such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, and Okara's *The Voice*, are the writers' conscious effort to produce, as Achebe himself puts it (1966) "...a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings". Much has already been said in the literature about this conscious Nigerianization or nativization of English, and we need not pursue the subject here.

5.6 Use of Clichés:

Most Nigerian speakers of English are unaware of the standard advice about clichés – that they should be avoided as much as possible. Their English usage is therefore often generously laced with clichés.

Our DS101 through to DS130 (see **APPENDIX**) are examples all taken from Jowitt (1991:144-146), who classifies them into:

- clichés of formal style (e.g., *aid and abet*; *does not augur well*)
- clichés of informal style (e.g., *bouncing baby boy*; *day in, day out*)
- proverbs common to BE and NE (e.g., *no smoke without fire*)
- proverbs peculiar to NE (e.g., *what a man can do, a woman can also do*)
- direct translation from MT (usually restricted in usage to the ethnic group in question) (e.g., *when two elephants fight, the grass suffers* – from various MTs; *The lizard said that if he fell from a tree and no one praised him, he would praise himself* – from Igbo)

5.7 Peculiar Collocations

These are collocations which may or may not have been influenced by the mother tongue but which have become notable usages in Nigerian English. The following examples occur in our data:

- DS47 but met his absence (he was not in)
 DS49 second to the last (last but one)
 DS58 not on seat (not immediately available)

Other examples not in the data but from personal introspection are present in the following sentences.

1. I will see you *next tomorrow*.
2. It was the turn of *his senior wife* to prepare his meals.
3. There are a lot of *chain gallops* on the road.
4. *I'm coming*. (meaning: "I'll be back in a moment.")
5. The community *conferred a chieftaincy title* on him.

Examples like two and four are obviously interference-induced. In Nigeria's polygamous culture, collocations like "senior wife", "junior wife", "senior mother", "junior mother" are commonplace. And the following leave-taking terms in the three major Nigerian languages when the speaker intends to return shortly –

Hausa: I na zua.

Igbo: A na m abia / Ka m biakwa.

Yoruba: M om bo.

– all translate literally to "I am coming".

Our investigations have shown that this applies to the equivalent terms in numerous other Nigerian languages. The collocation in 5 results from a culture-specific practice common in Africa. But the collocations in DS47, DS49, DS58, and sentences 1 and 3 cannot be satisfactorily explained as arising from mother tongue interference. Whatever their sources, these collocations occur regularly in Nigerian English.

5.8 *Faulty Amalgamation of Collocational Element*

Here, superficially related items are taken from two different structures to form a hybrid (and often grammatically incorrect) collocation. The following examples clearly illustrate this.

DS46: *the Abacha's* administration

6. He *washed his hands off* the matter.

7. We were warned to *guide against* pickpockets.

Sentence DS46 involves the faulty amalgamation of the expressions “Abacha’s administration” (which focuses on Abacha himself) and “the Abacha administration” (which focuses on the administration itself). The contrasting expressions “Abacha’s” and “the Abacha” are then merged to form the unacceptable hybrid “the Abacha’s administration”.

In sentence 6, the two different expressions involved are “*wash one’s hands of* something” and “*take one’s hands off* someone”. “Wash” is then taken from the first expression, and “off” from the second, to form the faulty amalgamation: “*wash one’s hands off a matter”, meaning to dissociate oneself from it.

In sentence 7, a similar amalgamation occurs involving the expressions “to guide someone or something” (meaning to provide direction), and “to guard against someone or something” (meaning to provide protection).

5.9 Alteration of the Grammatical Property of Collocational Items

Here, the grammatical features of some of the collocating items are altered, inadvertently. Some of these alterations result in questionable variations, while others yield outright ungrammatical forms. Examples are given below with the original grammatical property given in brackets:

DS6	looking <i>old</i> by the day (older)
DS15	to protect <i>lives</i> and <i>properties</i> (life and property)
DS16	ran for <i>their</i> dear <i>lives</i> (ran for dear life)
DS28	to succeed at all <i>cost</i> (... at all costs)
DS39/ DS99	a <i>motor</i> accident (a motoring/road traffic accident)
DS42	<i>four years</i> jail term (four-year jail term)
DS43	solicit <i>for</i> x (solicit x)

DS44	at the <i>helms</i> of affairs (the helm of)
DS51	I <i>am seeing</i> you, don't move. (I can see you...)
DS52	I <i>am hearing</i> you, speak on! (I can hear you...)
DS63	the <i>above</i> students (the above-named students)
DS69	is advocating <i>for</i> x (is advocating x)
DS83	<i>delivered a child</i> (was delivered of a child)
DS84	demand <i>for</i> x (demand x)
DS85	describe in <i>details</i> (in detail)
DS91	at his <i>fingers' tips</i> (fingertips)
DS95	the <i>meeting will hold</i> (will be held)
DS100	was not <i>opportuned</i> (did not have the opportunity)

The alterations are obvious from the data, and can be classified as follows:

- a. Those that involve making singular nouns plural (DS15, DS16, DS44 and DS85)
- b. Those that involve reducing plural nouns to singular (DS28)
- c. Those that involve turning lexical verbs to prepositional verbs (DS43, DS69, DS84)
- d. Those that involve splitting up compound words (DS42 and DS91)
- e. Those that involve adding *-ing* to state-of-being verbs (DS51 and DS52)
- f. Those that fail to make the appropriate inflection of some items (DS56 and DS39/99).

Of all these, alterations involving the pluralization of nouns occur more frequently than the others. A plausible explanation is that in these collocations, many of which are set expressions, the plural forms of the nouns involved seem *more logical* than the correct singular forms.

5.10 Peculiar Category Shifting of Collocation Items

Here, items that traditionally belong to a particular word class (part of speech) are shifted to another word class in a way that appears peculiar to Nigerian English. Examples are as follows:

8. He *tipp-exed* the error.
9. Please go and *xerox* these documents.
10. She *flitted* the room to kill the mosquitoes.

Here, “Tipp-Ex”, “Xerox” and “Flit” are the proprietary names of a brand of correcting fluid, a particular make of electronic equipment, and a brand of insecticide, respectively. In other words, they are traditionally proper nouns. But in the collocations above, they have been category shifted to function as verbs.

Other similar usages are indeed not hard to find in Nigerian English:

11. Don't *jealous* other people.
12. Amina *seniors* me.
13. The dress did not *size* her.
14. Who do such girls expect to marry them after they have *uselessed* their bodies?
15. The teacher *pregnanted* one of his students.
16. Remember to *off* the television before you go to bed.

5.11 *Absence of Frequently Occurring Native-Speaker Collocations*

To conclude this section, let us examine another unique feature of collocational usage in Nigerian English. This is the marked *absence* of many of the collocations which are common in native-English usage.

Native-English is highly idiomatic and colloquial when appropriate. In contrast, Nigerian English has been described as rather on the literal and bookish side (Ubahakwe, 1974). As a result, very many of the idiomatic collocations that occur in British and American English are conspicuously absent in Nigerian English. We give below just a few examples taken from Watcyn-Jones (1990):

1. I usually buy my clothes *off the peg*. It's cheaper than going to a dressmaker.
2. All right! All right! *Keep your hair on!* There's no need to lose your temper.
3. Jimmy's feeling *a bit under the weather* today, but I expect he'll be *as right as rain* by the weekend.
4. *A:* How far is it to Little Hampton?
B: About ten miles *as the crow flies*.
5. *You cut it fine!* Another minute and we'd have left without you.

6. Did you see Jonathan this morning? He looked *like death warmed up*. It must have been quite a party last night!
7. A: You're drunk!
B: No, I'm not. I'm *as sober as a judge*!
8. Don't ask James to do anything practical; *he's all fingers and thumbs*.
9. By the way, Joyce, my husband *was tickled pink* at your asking him to judge the flower show.
10. British people have a reputation for *keeping a stiff upper lip*.

The italicized collocations and many more similarly idiomatic expressions hardly occur as notable features of Nigerian English.

In the concluding section of this paper we present the summary of our findings and our conclusion.

6.0 Findings and Conclusion

6.1 Findings

Careful analyses of these sentences reveal 10 distinct peculiar characteristics of collocational structures in Nigerian English.

(a) Omission of collocational elements

This involves mostly function words, while hardly any content words are omitted. This is perhaps because of the latter's important meaning-bearing function.

(b) Inclusion of redundant collocational elements/reduplication

This occurs mostly in the form of repeating the same thing using different words. But there are also instances of pure reduplication, involving the repetition of the same word in sequence to express urgency, uniformity, and so on.

(c) Substitution of a lexical element or elements within the collocational structure

This occurs as a result of the confusion of related word pairs, and from the misuse of prepositions – a rather universal problem.

(d) Restructuring of collocations

This occasionally results from an attempt to simplify the original collocation, while there is no apparent reason for the restructuring of others. Some of the restructuring result in grammatical breaches.

(e) Literal translation of L1 idiomatic and figurative structures

These simply show the continued manifestation of mother tongue interference in Nigerian English.

(f) The use of clichés

Many collocations which have become clichés continue to be used freely among Nigerians, betraying the lack of awareness of the standard advice that clichés should be avoided as much as possible.

(g) Peculiar collocations

These contribute significantly in marking out Nigerian English as a distinct variety of the language. While some can be considered acceptable as standard variation, others are quite obviously sub-standard.

(h) Faulty amalgamation of collocational elements

This involves taking parts of two different collocations and amalgamating them to form a hybrid. As the label we have assigned to this phenomenon suggests, the amalgamation is faulty and therefore unacceptable as standard usage.

(i) Alteration of the grammatical property of collocational items

This involves among others, changing number in nouns, turning lexical verbs into prepositional verbs, transitive verbs into intransitive, and stative verbs into dynamic. The collocations resulting from these processes are all grammatically unacceptable.

(j) Peculiar category shifting of items within the collocation

Although category shift in word classes is a normal process in English, the shifts involved here are peculiar in the sense that they mostly involve using proprietary proper nouns as verbs.

(k) In addition to these ten distinct characteristics of collocations in Nigerian English, there is also the marked absence of commonly occurring native-English idioms.

6.2 Conclusion

Our investigation of collocations in Nigerian English reveals clearly that words do not operate as independent and interchangeable parts of the lexicon, but as part of a lexical system. It is therefore necessary for any user of English not only to build up an active vocabulary, but also to be aware of collocation and the selectional restrictions on words as they enter into collocational relationships with other words.

To nurture this awareness, it may be useful to isolate the concept “collocation” as a topic on the school curriculum and teach it to pupils, perhaps beginning from the senior secondary level, with particular attention paid to the collocational characteristics of Nigerian English as discussed here.

Again, the teaching and learning of proper collocations can be enhanced by making more effective use of the dictionary. We say ‘more effective use’ because the average Nigerian usually consults the dictionary for just two reasons: to look up meaning and to verify spelling – both of which amount to gross underutilization of the dictionary.

For the purpose of our recommendation here, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition)* are particularly useful. For example, if we look up the words 'allow', 'enable' and 'help' in the latter dictionary, we will find the following bolded entries respectively:

allow:	allow sb/sth to do sth
enable:	enable sb/sth to do sth
help:	help sb (to) do sth

From this essential piece of information about how these words combine with other words, we learn that sentences 1a and 1b below are both correct since *to* is optional with the verb *help*:

- 1a. Please, *help me look* into the matter.
- b. I will *help you to look* into the matter.

But sentences 2b and 3b are both grammatically wrong because *to* is mandatory for the verbs *allow* and *enable*

- 2a. *Allow him to perform* his statutory functions.
- b. **Allow him perform* his statutory functions.
- 3a. A dictionary will *enable you to improve* your English.
- b. *A dictionary will *enable you improve* your English.

To give another example, a brief visit to the dictionary to look up the key words "steer", "stay" and "wash" will quickly reveal that the usual collocations are:

- "to *steer* clear of something" (meaning to avoid it)
- "to wash one's hands *of* something" (meaning to dissociate oneself from it)

instead of

- "to *stay* clear of something"; and "to wash one's hands *off* something"
- (which are more likely to be heard among Nigerian speakers).

Above all, early fossilization in the learning of English, which is the bane of the average Nigerian, needs to be checked. Because L2 users of English quickly acquire

enough of the language to do basic reading and writing, and adequately carry on their phatic communion (that is, their daily interpersonal communication), the subsequent attitude is usually that nothing further needs to be learned about the language. What little formal learning is done terminates prematurely at the end of secondary school (except for those who go on to study English/linguistics at the tertiary level), and while it lasts it is mediated by debilitating factors such as large and unmanageable class sizes, poorly trained and poorly motivated teachers, lack of facilities, and learner apathy. There is the need for the Nigerian user of English to shake off this early fossilization and make formal and informal learning of the language an ongoing process instead of continuing to take it for granted.

To facilitate this learning also requires an avid reading habit. The accusation that Nigerians have no reading culture has become quite a cliché. The average Nigerian is said to usually read only what he/she *has* to. But extensive reading not only informs, it also exposes the reader to a wide range of language use in different discourse strategies.

Finally, communication involves not just *what* is said or written but *how* this is done. *What* is the message being conveyed, while *how* relates to the wide ranging details of pronunciation, word choice, sentence structure, collocation, etc. Unfortunately, this simple fact of *how* is usually lost on many, who therefore tend to concentrate their attention almost exclusively on only the *what* during the communication event. We believe that consciously paying attention to *how* competent speakers and writers use English is also an effective learning strategy.

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APPENDIX

We present below the data collected from various sources for this paper under the indicated categories. As we mentioned in the main text, the collocational structures are presented in context, the context for each collocation being the entire sentence in which it occurs. The relevant collocation in each sentence is italicized and the sentences are numbered serially for ease of reference, beginning with DS1 (Data Sentence No. 1).

Primary Source:*(a) Spoken (Electronic Media):*

- DS 1: This will *enable government serve you better*.
 DS 2: The doctor said *she had stroke*.
 DS 3: This is *peculiar to human beings alone*.
 DS 4: I stayed with them *for a good one year*.
 DS 5: He said he was not trying to *raise alarm*.
 DS 6: You are looking *old by the day*.
 DS 7: This second group are *fewer in number*.
 DS 8: Deregulation is *a step in the right direction*.
 DS 9: There is *an adage which says* that all days are for the thief...
 DS10: The new policy is being *put to test*.
 DS11: She refused to name her *fellow accomplices*.
 DS12: President Obasanjo *dismissed the report with a wave of hand*.
 DS13: People quickly lay claim to *one form of right or the other*.
 DS14: I have *not been opportuned* to go there.
 DS15: The police are there *to protect lives and properties*.
 DS16: When the Ikeja bomb blasts started, everyone *ran for their dear lives*.
 DS17: The equipment for the job is already *on ground*.
 DS18: Why don't you *give them the benefit of doubt?*
 DS19: They use any means *to close the mouth of those* who will object.
 DS20: *Some of our clients include* banks, finance houses and insurance companies.

(b) Spoken (other sources):

- DS21: But *you suppose to know better*.
 DS22: I saw *that your friend* yesterday.
 DS23: You should go out *once a while* and relax.
 DS24: She was *on phone* when you arrived.
 DS25: It was *smooth sailing* all the way.

DS26: Don't answer your cell phone when you *are on the steering!*

DS27: It *does not worth* the trouble!

DS28: They are determined to succeed *at all cost*.

DS29: They voted by *secret ballot*.

DS30: The car was *blue in colour*.

(c) *Written (Student Essays):*

DS31: This course will *enable me attain* my goals in life.

DS32: He *dabbled into* politics without considering the implications.

DS33: They counted *five-five volunteers* from each group.

DS34: When they questioned him, he *responded by saying* that he knew nothing about the matter.

DS35: I asked him why he was *frowning his face* at me.

DS36: Causes of soil erosion *include* poor farming techniques, over-grazing, mining activities, improper construction techniques, *among others*.

DS37: *The rest students* were dismissed and asked to go home.

DS38: Instead of settling the dispute, he was busy *knocking their heads together*.

DS39: He died in *a motor accident* two years ago.

DS40: She tried to *convince me to go* there with her.

(d) *Written (Print Media):*

DS41: Human Rights Watch *raises alarm over* OPC.

DS42: TV manager *bags four years jail term*.

DS43: He also *solicited for* some measure of debt relief.

DS44: ... whoever sits *at the helms of affairs* as president of the nation has the authority to appoint whomever he deems fit.

DS45: The workers broke the stones into *small small pieces*.

DS46: The forum condemned *the Abacha's administration* for its high-handedness.

DS47: We paid a visit to the MD's office but *met his absence*.

DS48: He pointed out to them that *one tree cannot make a forest*.

DS49: His office was the *second to the last* at the far end of the passage.

DS50: The conference of speakers of state legislatures congratulated the speaker, Bayelsa State House of Assembly on the occasion of his *wedding ceremony*.

(e) *Written (Textbooks and Literary Works):*

DS51: I *am seeing you*, don't move!

DS52: I *am hearing you*, speak on!

DS53: Some of the townsmen said Okolo's eyes were not right, *his head was not correct*.

DS54: I'm sorry, *I don't hear Yoruba*.

DS55: It is true indeed my dear friend. *I cannot yet find a month with which to tell the story*.

- DS56: *I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there.*
- DS57: *My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow.*
- DS58: We went to see the officer in charge but he was *not on seat*.
- DS59: A: What are your plans for the committee you are heading?
B: You *won't see my hand now* until later.
- DS60: Our task was made easier because the President had *watered the ground*.

Secondary Source:

- *The following are taken from Kujore (1985):*
- DS61: The fire incident *can be traceable* to a live cigarette end which has been carelessly dropped.
- DS62: His brilliant success in the examination *can be attributable* to his ability and interest in the subjects.
- DS63: The *above students* should see me immediately.
- DS64: He came *on his own accord*; we did not request or force him to do so.
- DS65: 'Ho!' she exclaimed *with admiration*.
- DS66: Amina has been *admitted into the university*.
- DS67: Her early arrival was *for my advantage*.
- DS68: *What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander*.
- DS69: The association is *advocating for* a universal free primary education policy.
- DS70: You should *aim to reach* here before noon.
- DS71: The election of officers was *by secret ballot*.
- DS72: My wife *put to bed* last night.
- DS73: We had better take what they offer – *a beggar has no choice*.
- DS74: Learn not to *bite more than you can chew*.
- DS75: It is better to *begin* the exercise *from* this point.
- DS76: That was a saucy girl. Her insults *made my blood rise*.
- DS77: *It can be possible* to walk eight kilometers in one hour.
- DS78: *I was chanced to be present* when he told the story.
- DS79: I should *clarify that point from* the principal.
- DS80: I offer you my *congratulations for* your success in the elections.
- DS81: We have searched *every nook and corner* for the lost brooch.
- DS82: The minister in his address was merely *dancing to the gallery*.
- DS83: My wife *delivered a child* last night.
- DS84: The general *demanded for* the surrender of the enemy's forces.
- DS85: Describe *in details* what you have observed.
- DS86: He gave me a lift in his car, and *I dropped near the hospital*.
- DS87: Yinka is a mature student, so he *has an edge over* you in that regard.
- DS88: This new information will *enable us take* the right decision.
- DS89: He could not *explain the reason why* he took the money.
- DS90: Don't you dare *lay your finger on* that little girl.
- DS91: The manager had all the facts *at his fingers' tips*.
- DS92: You've done well, Lanre – *more grease to your elbow!*

DS93: If you hit back a man who has hit you, then you are *taking the law into your hands*.

DS94: Cheers for the bride! *Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!*

DS95: The next *meeting will hold* next Wednesday.

DS96: There was no intention to *hold him to ridicule*.

DS97: The articles in the drawer *include books, pens, pencils, and so on*.

DS98: He *intimated me of his intention* to marry Bimpe.

DS99: Wale was killed in a *motor accident*.

DS100: *I was not opportuned* to speak to him.

- *The following are taken from Jowitt (1991):*

(a) Cliches of formal style

- DS101: aid and abet
 DS102: (does, etc) not augur well
 DS103: last but not (the) least
 DS104: to mention but a few
 DS105: the order of the day
 DS106: (can, could) not be overemphasized

(b) Cliches of informal style

- DS107: bite the hand that feeds one
 DS108: bouncing baby boy
 DS109: the brain behind
 DS110: day in, day out
 DS111: men of the underworld
 DS112: the national cake
 DS113: spread like a bush fire in the harmattan
 DS114: go down memory lane
 DS115: hook, line, and sinker
 DS116: every Tom, Dick, and Harry

(c) Proverbs common to BE and NE

- DS117: (There is) no smoke without fire.
 DS118: All that glitters is not gold. (Not all that glitters is gold).
 DS119: When in Rome do as Rome does. (When you are in Rome do like the Romans.)
 DS120: Cut your coat according to your cloth. (Cut your coat according to your size.)
 DS121: Blood is thicker than water.
 DS122: Half (a) loaf is better than none.
 DS123: Behind every successful man there is a woman.

(d) Proverbs peculiar to NE

- DS124: Nobody is above mistake.
 DS125: What a man can do a woman can also do.
 DS126: God never sleeps.

- DS127: Money is hard to get but easy to spend.
 DS128: The downfall of a man is not the end of his life.

(e) Direct translation from MT

- DS129: When two elephants fight, the grass suffers. (various MTS)
 DS130: The lizard said that if he fell from a tree and no one praised him, he would praise himself. (Igbo)

• *The following are taken from Okoro (2000):*

- DS131: There is a *general consensus of opinion* that the political parties should be scrapped.
 DS132: In *my personal opinion*, I don't *think* that the NTA should air only Nigerian programmes.
 DS133: She screamed at him to *shut up his mouth*.
 DS134: A *crowd of people* quickly gathered on the scene of the accident.
 DS135: He *frowned his face* at me.
 DS136: They were advised to *book* hotel accommodation *in advance*.
 DS137: It happened at 2.00 *a.m. in the morning*.
 DS138: The *funeral ceremony* took place at the local church.
 DS139: The legislators were *completely unanimous* in support of the motion.
 DS140: The two would leaders had great *mutual respect for each other*.
 DS141: Fela was *popular with the people*.
 DS142: I have no *doubt in my mind* that the process will work this time.