Research article

Polysemous usage in domesticated English varieties: A case study of the verb 'see' in Nigerian English

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Abstract

The concept of domestication, nativization or localization has been at the forefront in the discussions on non-native varieties of English. Scholars are beginning to draw more attention to how the English language is being adapted to the culture of non-native speakers, while still retaining many of its original features as used by native speakers. The domestication of English is now a reality in the former colonies of Britain. This draws attention to the importance of context in usage. This work looks at the lexical verb see and its domestication in the Nigerian English usage. It examines the use of the verb in the various forms of spoken, written and CMC modes by Nigerians. The study identifies fifteen different senses of the verb see considered to be peculiar to Nigerian English usage, cutting across the educated and the uneducated lectal domains. These usages reflect the extension of the basic Standard English senses of the word within the Nigerian worldview to express the Nigerian experience.

Keywords

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1. INTRODUCTION

Change and expansion are part of the reality of the use of lexical items. Items already in existence in a language can change in meaning or even become moribund and obsolete, while new ones are formed and added to the lexicon. One important fact about linguistic dispersion is that concepts that exist in other cultures filter into and are appropriated by other languages, which have contact with such cultures. English language, being one of the most widely dispersed languages in the world constantly has its lexical items go through such changes and expansion. This is particularly true in the context of its existence in places far away from its origin.

The "context of situation" and "context of culture" are indispensable parameters for any meaning interpretation of the lexical organization of a language (Daramola 2004, 242). This effect of situation and culture has given rise to the emerging and increasingly autonomous varieties called the "new Englishes" or "non-native Englishes". According to Kachru (1997, 212), the term new Englishes symbolizes the functional and formal variations, divergent sociolinguistic contexts ranges and varieties of English in creativity, and various types of acculturation in parts of the western and non-western world.

A New English according to Platt, Weber and Ho (1984, 201) can provide a background and an identity for its speakers, which an "alien" English, "something abroad", never could. Several scholars have examined the new Englishes, identifying their distinct features and proposing that they be recognized, codified and taught. These scholars include: Akere (1978); Adeniran (1979), Bamgbose (1982), Mehrotra (1982), Platt, et al. (1984), Kujore (1985), Awonusi (1990), Bamiro (1991), Banjo (1995), Adegbija (2004), and so forth. New Englishes are also referred to as nativised, indigenised, domesticated or localized Englishes because they have been adapted to express the sociolinguistic realities of the contexts in which they are used.

Erling (2006, 405) identifies that new Englishes are characterized by pronunciation and intonational patterns that reflect the ones of the local languages, a slight difference in grammar and sentence structure, borrowing from the contact languages and most significantly, the use of existing English words to express new meanings.

This paper looks at the uses of one of English basic lexical verbs – the verb *see* and how it is conceptualized in Nigeria, a non-native environment. In the discussing the conceptualization of the verb in the Nigerian linguistic experience, I examine the different shades of meaning the verb has acquired in the Nigerian English across the different lectal variations.

English Language in the Nigerian Experience

The coming of English language into the shores of Nigeria could be traced back to the earliest contacts between the Europeans (first the Portuguese and later the British) and the people of the coastal regions of Nigeria. Awonusi (2004, 46-66) identifies three major periods in the development of English in Nigeria. The first period was the period before the advent of missionary education, when the Portuguese sea merchants and pirates, in search for a new sea route to India arrived in the West African coast and started trade relations with the inhabitants. They established a port in the ancient Benin Kingdom. The second period was the period of missionary activities. This period witnessed the influx of Christian missionaries into Nigeria. The

teaching of English flourished in the schools established by these missionaries. This period is particularly significant because it marked the beginning of western education in Nigeria. The third period was the colonial period and independence. The colonization of Nigeria by the British led to the entrenchment of their language as the language of administration. It also became the language in the educational system (Akindele and Adegbite 1999, 57).

By the time Nigeria got her independence in 1960, English language had already been so entrenched in the educational and political structure of the country that the only option left to Nigerians was to enhance the survival and nurture of the language in the country. The fact that this language came to operate in an extreme multilingual context also helps to sustain its use as it now serves as a useful tool for effective cross-cultural communication

Akindele and Adegbite (1999, 60) identify the broad functions of English in Nigeria. Firstly, it performs the function of accommodation. This is because the language is used for international and inter-ethnic communication. It is also used to foster political stability in the nation. Secondly, it performs the function of participation, i.e, it is used as a crucial instrument for those who desire to participate in social, political and economic life of the nation. Thirdly, it performs the function of social mobility because it the major means for enhancing both horizontal and vertical mobility in the country.

In contemporary times, English has been fully entrenched in the social life of an average Nigerian. It is the second language of many educated Nigerian and its use has been institutionalized across different linguistic domains of the Nigeria society – business, official communication, schools, the media, and even in home setting. The use of English is not restricted to the educated Nigerians. Even those who did not have the opportunity to study English through formal education use the basilect form of the language, which is generally referred to as the Nigerian Pidgin (NP). In spite of its stigmatization by some educated Nigerians, NP continues to flourish as a medium of inter-ethnic communication, especially among the uneducated people. It has also gained prominence in the media and is considered important enough for some state broadcasting services to give news in it. Also many federal, state and private agencies use it for jingles and advertisements on the radio, television and billboards. Nigerian literary writers and musicians have used it as their medium of expression. For instance the late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the Afro Beat musician popularized the use of NP not just to sing, but to criticize some policies of the government. Likewise, authors, such as Chinua Achebe, Tunde Fatunde, the late Mamma Vatsa and Ken Saro Wiwa used NP in their creative writings

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to outline the polysemous uses of the lexical verb see in Nigerian English and discuss the various meanings the verb has acquired over the years in a number of domains in the country. The study will also draw a comparison between the way the various senses of the verb are conceptualized in the Nigerian and Standard English usage contexts.

Studies on Lexical Domestication and Multiple Meaning

The study of multiplicity in word meaning has a long history in the philosophy of language, linguistics, psychology and literature. According to Ravin and Leacock (2000, 1), the complex relations between meanings and words were first noted by the Stoics (see Robins 1967). They observed that one concept can be expressed by several different words (synonymy) and one word can have different meanings (polysemy). In contemporary Linguistics, multiple meanings are studied under Lexical Semantics.

Lexical domestication according to Adegbija (2004, 23) is the most documented aspect of domestication. Other levels of domestication according to him include phonological domestication, idiomatic domestication, syntactic domestication, pragmatic domestication and semantic domestication. Adamo (2007, 44) observes that domestication at the lexical level in the Nigerian English is manifested in three ways: loan words, coinages and semantic shifts or extension. Loan words refer to wholesale transfer (or borrowing) of lexical items from Nigerian languages into English, for example, such words like: *oba* (king in Yoruba), *gèlè* (head tie), *dòdò* (fried plantain), *móínmóín* (a meal made from ground beans paste), etc. Semantic shift has to do with meanings being restricted or extended, e.g: to escort (in Nigerian English means 'to follow somebody somewhere', whereas in the standard British English, it means: "to go with someone or a vehicle especially to make certain they arrive safely or that they leave a place" or "to go with someone and show them a place" (Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary). Coinages are lexical items coined in local English to suit the local context. For instance in Nigeria, there are such lexical items as *chewing stick* (a stick used to clean the teeth), *go-slow* (a traffic situation in which vehicles move at slow pace because of an obstruction on the road), *cover cloth* (a long strip of cloth usually wrapped around the body while sleeping), *market woman* (a woman trader in the local market), and so forth.

Adegbija also while discussing lexical domestication identifies some productive processes, such as neologism, hybridization, analogisation, transliteration, transfer, affixation and acronymisation (Adegbija 2004, 23). Adegbija (2003) also identifies idiomatic variations in Nigerian English. According to him, these variations are the type whose meaning cannot be easily deduced from the meanings of the component parts. For instance, the expression *small boy* in Nigerian English may not necessarily mean "a boy who is small", but "an inexperienced person". Likewise, the expression *long leg* does not mean "a leg that is long", but "the use of undue influence to achieve a goal" (Adegbija 2003, 43).

Adegbija and Bello (2001) carried out a study of the semantics of the word "ok" in Nigerian English, observing that despite that some of the senses of 'ok' use by Nigerian speakers may be readily accessible to speakers of English in other contexts, several other senses of the word have been totally domesticated and are anchored in the Nigerian sociolinguistic and pragmatic contexts. They identify many additional senses of the word in the Nigerian environment, such as its being used as a gap filler, to express surprise, to terminate a discourse, to bid someone a farewell and to convey a rebuke (Adegbija and Bello 2001, 89).

Wong (2006) studies the contextualisation of the word "aunty" in Singaporean English. According to the author "aunty" is a social honorific in Singaporean English, which refers to a distinct kind of people. This cultural attitude is similar to that of the Nigerian English speakers.

Kinship terms such as *aunty*, *uncle*, *brother*, *sister*, *father* and *mother* have been re-interpreted to assume different meanings. For instance, according to Adegbija (2004, 25), *aunty* can refer to any friendly woman much older than a younger person and *uncle* may refer to any man much older than a younger person. Daramola (2004, 251) also corroborates this that beyond blood relationship, other socio-cultural factors such as age, deference, position, class or intimacy can dictate which kinship terms may be used to address a person.

Warsi (2004) looking at the process of "Indianization" observes that in choices of words, in imagery, and in the nuances of meaning, the Indian variety of English is significantly different from the native English varieties. According to him "Knowing that a single word denotes a particular set of things in one language is no guarantee that it will denote the same set of things in another language!" This is also true when we compare the non-native varieties, such as the Indian, Nigerian, Singaporean English with the British and American varieties.

Several other scholars have documented the peculiarities of English usage in Nigeria to express the people's socio-cultural experience. They include: Jowitt (1991), Dadzie and Awonusi (2004), Igboanusi (2001), Kujore (1985), and so on. This study is a cross between lexical and semantic domestication. In addition to looking at how the lexical item is used, it also looks at the various meanings normally associated with it in the different domains of its usage.

A work much related to this because of its focus is Alm-Arvius (1993). Alm-Arvius did a comprehensive investigation of the synchronic uses of the English verb *see*. She links the different uses of the verb to a polysemous structure in which it is a near-synonym of several other expressions such as "take action", "make sure", "attend to", "accompany", "meet", "visit", "consult", "understand", "consider", and so forth. Alm-Arvius argues that the polysemous approach to the description of the verb allows for a better description of the important distinctions between various types of applications of the verb. Given that some other meaning may actually arise from sources other than the verb itself, Saxton (1995), in her review of Alm-Arvius' work, argues that the different senses of the verb see identified by Alm-Arvius may not take into consideration other factors, which contribute to sentence meaning. This present work is significantly different from Alm-Arvius' in the sense that while she concentrated on the polysemous use of the verb see in the mother tongue context, this study examines the domestication of the same verb in a second language context and how the different senses identified contrast with its use in the mother tongue context.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data for this work was derived mainly from different domains of spoken English discourse in Nigeria through participant observation. In addition, written discourse and computer-mediated discourse data were sourced from news reports and internet forums respectively. The examples presented in this paper represent the general patterns of conceptualization and usage of the verb across the different domains covered by the research.

This work is situated within the frameworks of Lexical Semantics and Contact Linguistics. Lexical Semantics is concerned with the identification and representation of the semantics of lexical items. A major focus of interest in Lexical Semantics is the central problem of accounting for the astonishing range of variation in the interpretation of a single word in different contexts. It

is not always easy to differentiate between polysemy and homonymy. One way this is often done is to see polysemes as having similar linguistic roots, i.e, etymologically and semantically related, while homonyms are said to have different linguistic roots. According to Ravin and Leacock (2003, 2), this distinction is not always straightforward, "especially since words that are etymologically related can, over time, drift so apart that the original semantic relation is no longer recognizable." Theories of polysemy usually rest on one of two hypotheses:

1. there is a literal meaning from which the other meanings are derived (a *linear* explanation), for example, the literal meaning of *mouse* is the rodent; a derived meaning is the computer mouse.
2. there is a core meaning with specific senses triggered either by the context or by rules (a *subsuming* explanation). For instance, in the sentence: "I saw him going to the bank to make some payments", the other meanings of *bank* and *see* are not considered at all, because the context of the sentence has clearly spelt out the meanings of these polysemous words. Words, when considered out of context are usually tagged with one general meaning. However, in everyday speech, our usage of words is almost never ambiguous.

Contact Linguistics studies languages in contact and the resultant effects of the contact on the usage of bilingual users of such languages. One of the major phenomena of languages in contact is lexical expansion, which is the primary concern of this work. The data for this work was sourced from one of the non-native varieties of English—the Nigerian English, where our discussion is focused on how Nigerian users of English have extended the basic meanings of the verb see to reflect their unique socio-cultural experience, while still retaining other polysemous senses the verb has originally in the native English contexts.

3. The Lexical Verb *see*

The most basic meaning of the lexical verb *see* that is usually listed in all the English dictionaries is associated with the use of the eyes, i.e, "to perceive visually", as in the expression

I can see you clearly

However, the verb is also associated with the mind when it is used to mean "to understand" or "to imagine", as in the expression:

I see the point you are making.(understand)
I see Bola coming out with a first class. (imagine)

The verb is also used idiomatically. Tables 1 and 2 below present some usages and meanings of the verb see in standard British English.

Table 1. Some meanings and usage of the verb *see*

SN	MEANING	USAGE
1	to perceive visually	*She saw a snake on the stairs.*
2	to imagine	*I see you as an orator.*
3	to experience	*The poor lady has seen terrible days in her life.*
4	to visit	*My family hopes to come and see you.*
5	to watch	*Did you see the documentary on Yankari games Reserve?*
6	to look up information	*For further explanation, see page 18.*
7	to have an opinion of something	*I see the matter differently.*
8	to make sure	*Please see that all lights are switched off before you go to bed.*
9	to consult	*With your frequent complain of headache, don't you think you need to see your doctor?*
10	to help	*Joan, please see your aunty to the bus station.*
11	to find out	*See who is at the door.*
12	to spend time together	*Are you seeing any of those girls*
13	to understand	*I see what you mean*

Table 2. Some Idiomatic usage of the verb *see*

SN	MEANING	USAGE
1	to see the back of somebody (to stop dealing with an unpleasant person)	*At last, I have seen the back of that haughty fellow.*
2	to see something coming (to realize that there is going to be a problem before it comes)	*Most Nigerians saw the fuel pump price increase coming.*
3	to see for oneself (to find out or be sure)	*I heard that the multi-story building is burning, but I have to see it myself.*
4	to see somebody through (to help the person)	*When she lost her father, her uncle had to step in to see her through her education*

| 5 | to see the light of the day (to be available /show to people) | *Thank God! The project has finally seen the light of the day.* |

Some of the usages highlighted in the tables above have peculiar syntactic characteristics. For instance, *see* with the meaning "to understand", "to make sure", and "to experience' is not used in the progressive tense (to be seeing). So it will not be correct to say:

1) *I was seeing your point yesterday
2) *I was seeing that all lights were switched off before I went to bed.
3) *The poor lady is seeing terrible days in her life.

However, the verb with the meaning "to spend time together" is typically used in the progressive tense (see Table 1, No 12). It will be odd to use the verb with the meaning "to spend time together" in the simple present or past forms, as in:

4) Did you see any of those girls?
5) He saw one of those girls yesterday.

The latter examples will only be meaningful in the sense of visual perception, and not in the sense of spending time together with somebody.

In addition to the different uses of the verb *see* listed in the Standard British English dictionaries, Nigerian English usage has domesticated the use of the verb in order to express concepts unique to the Nigerian context. Jowitt (1991, 128) describes this kind of extension of meaning as "semantic adjustments." According to him, this enables Nigerian English speakers to meet their communicative needs in the context of English language use in the country.

In the next section of this paper, we shall be examining and discussing the various conceptions and usage of the verb *see* and how it is used in the different domains in Nigeria and how these uses differ from its use in the standard usage contexts.

The Uses of the verb 'see' in Nigerian English

In this paper, we have identified 15 different ways of using the verb "see" in Nigerian English, which do not resemble any of the typical ways the verb is used in the Standard English. Though these usages cut across different domains, the meanings are clear to average Nigerian English users. It should also be noted that the usage is not limited to colloquial contexts. The verb is equally domesticated in formal and institutionalized contexts. Some of the usages have been identified as translation of expressions in some local languages, while others are used in the NP and the uneducated varieties of English in Nigeria. The identified usages are discussed below.

USAGE 1:   *When last did you see your husband?* (When last did you have sexual relationship with your husband?)
MEANING: To engage in sexual relationship

This sense of the verb is a one of the ways Nigerians euphemistically express the idea of having sexual relationship. It is an extension of the native English sense of the verb see that means "to experience." This conceptualization of sexual relationship as an experience rather than an act is a deliberate and pleasant way of speaking about sex. The use of this sense does not preclude that of the sense of visual perception. This means this utterance may have two different interpretations depending on the context.

    (i) that of a woman who is consulting a gynecologist.   [SEE = experience]]
    (ii) that of a woman whose husband is missing.   [SEE = visual perception]

The first sense is the core meaning, while the second sense is specific meaning conceptualized by Nigerian non-native speakers to express their cultural experience, where talking about sex using direct expressions is not acceptable.

    USAGE 2:   *When last did you see your menses/period/flower?* (When last did you menstruate?)
    MEANING: "to experience the menstrual cycle"

The verb here also refers to "experience" and the context is similar to context (i). Another context where this is common is a casual conversation among women, where one of them expresses her concern about her irregular period by saying "*I don't see my menses regularly*" or "*I have not seen my menses this month.*" Conceptualizing, menstrual period as flower is another euphemistic way of talking about the experience in Nigeria.

    USAGE 3:   *I am waiting for you to see me.* (I am waiting for you to give me something now.)
    MEANING: To give some form of gratification, especially money or material gifts

This usage was encountered in contexts where people were dealing with law enforcement agents. In Nigeria, people sometimes expect the person who needs some favour from them to "see" them, i.e, to give monetary or material gifts, which some Nigerians believe will help to quicken the process. This usage is common in contexts where people need to secure contracts, get customs papers, deal with policemen, secure admission for their children into a school, securing employment, and so forth. Other verbs that are commonly used to express the same concept in Nigerian English are the verbs "to settle", "to wet the ground", "to grease the palm of somebody", and so forth. The concept of *tip* in British English is the closest equivalent of this idea, but it is not exactly the same. A *tip* refers to "small amount of money that is given to someone in addition to what you owe for a service" (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners). The conceptualization of the verb see in usage 3 is that of an action rather than an experience.

    USAGE 4:   *You will see yourself.* (You will see the bad effect of your action.)
    MEANING: To express that somebody will experience the repercussion of his/her behaviour

This usage is typically in the future tense. It also implies "experience", but a futuristic one. It is the translation of the Yoruba expression "*wàá rí ra e*" (*you will see yourself*). It was encountered often in the context of warning a recalcitrant person about the consequences of his or her behaviour.

USAGE 5:   *See me in my office immediately.* (Come to my office immediately to explain what you have done.)
MEANING: To summon somebody to come and explain something"

The context of this usage was that of a superior to a subordinate. The boss used the impolite imperative form, "see me in my office", to imply that the addressee would likely be reprimanded for a bad behaviour. This is different from another sense of the verb which is polite and implies an invitation for a discussion. The linguistic and paralinguistic features accompanying the utterance determine the meaning. For instance, the tone of the voice, the speaker's countenance and the events that preceded the utterance determines which meaning is being conveyed. Hence, we have the following possible senses

SEE [POLITE] = to discuss
SEE [IMPOLITE] = to reprimand

USAGE 6:   *You see yourself? / See you life.* (Can you see how badly things have turned out for you?/ Look at how things are going for you).
MEANING: To make somebody to realize how badly they have behaved

Usage 6 is a translation of Yoruba expression "*sé o rí ayé e?*" (*Can you see your life?*) The context was that of an adult reprimanding a younger person or a superior to a subordinate. It was intended to take the hearer into retrospection about his/her past behaviour, which had obviously landed him/her in the present state. One of the contexts of this utterance was that of a secondary school girl who got pregnant and another was that of a teenage boy who was arrested for crime.

USAGE 7:   *I see you!* (I have discovered your secret/the thing you have been hiding.)
MEANING: To indicate that a secret has been unfolded.

"To see" here is to unfold a secret. The use of the verb in this context is synonymous with the use of the verb "to discover" or "to uncover". The expression was sounding a note of warning to another whose secrets have been uncovered.

USAGE 8:   *See my leg!* (Please watch out for my leg.)
MEANING: To watch out and be careful"

The verb in this usage is synonymous with the expression "to watch out", or "be careful" in British English. This usage was observed in contexts where somebody was notifying another

because the former did not want to be hurt by the latter's action. It was in a busy market where a cart pusher who was moving too close to a woman walking in the opposite direction was notified with this expression.

USAGE 9: *See my daddy.* (look at my daddy) *See this woman.* (look at this woman)
MEANING: To look at

In Nigeria, the expression in Usage 9 was meant to call the attention of others to someone or something. Despite that the verbs "to look at", "to watch" and "to see" are generally connected in sense, Standard English has clear ways of differentiating between them. For instance, "to look at" is typically connected with the sense of "considering carefully", while "to watch" is associated with "looking attentively." Both expressions" involve conscious efforts of directing one's sight or mind towards an object or issue. However, "to see", when used in association with the eyes, involves a less conscious effort. Everyone with eyes that function will literally see any object before them without any conscious effort. In Nigerian English, these distinctions are not very clear. Since the three verbs imply visualizing, many times, the verb "to see" is used to imply any of the three senses. This explains the senses of verb in Usages 8 and 9.

USAGE 10: *See, my husband has been busy lately.* (for your information, my husband has been busy lately.
MEANING: To get somebody's attention and also as a discourse marker

The verb *see* here has a dual function, first as a discourse marker – a word that functions primarily as a structuring unit of spoken language. It is used to mark the boundary in discourse. Secondly, it also brought the listener's attention to a particular kind of linkage of the coming utterance with the immediate discourse context (Redeker 1990; Schiffrin 1987). Merle, Hanson, Peetra, Frid and Fillipson (1999) describe discourse markers as cues that are related to the left edge of the discourse. It also functions as what Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) calls a frame (a word that indicates the boundary of a discourse).

USAGE 11: *You did not see me do it Okay?* (Do not tell anyone that I did it)
MEANING: To warn a person not to disclose what he/she sees

For someone to claim to see in this context implies that the person will disclose what he/she sees. The conceptualization here connects the senses of sight and speech. It is an indirect way of telling someone to "keep quiet" about what he or she sees. It was also a warning that under no circumstance should someone disclose what he or she saw.
The remaining four usages identified below were identified in the context of the basilect form of Nigerian English, the NP.

USAGE 12: *You go see pepper/wahala/blood.* (You will experience trouble.)
MEANING: To threaten that someone will experience/ get into trouble

The verb *see* here is similar to the sense of the verb that means "to experience." The object of this verb when used in this sense – *pepper* and *wahala* always denotes unpleasantness. To "see" any of these in NP is to experience trouble. *Wahala* is the Hausa word for "trouble". This expression has gained acceptance in usage in NP. Hausa is one of the substrates of NP in Nigeria. The Nigerian English conceptually maps this sense of the verb "to see" with the three nominal items identified in usage above to produce the domesticated meaning of experiencing trouble.

USAGE 13:   *See me see trouble.* (Just imagine what is happening to me)
MEANING: to imagine what is happening.

The expression "see me, see trouble" is a fixed expression simply used to call attention of people to something considered strange that the speaker is witnessing. "Trouble" here does not necessarily mean difficulty. It may just be something the speaker considers awkward, out of place, or a pleasant surprise. In some instances, the context may even be that of a joke.

USAGE 14:   *I see the boy with my kòroókòró eyes.* (I saw the boy with my very eyes.)
MEANING: To witness something.

The use of *see* in this context simply means "to visualize" The visualization however is emphatic using the word *eye*, which ordinarily will be redundant in any similar standard English expression,. The word *kòrókòró* is a Yoruba adjective which is borrowed into NP, which could be translated as *very*. It is used to show emphasis

USAGE 15:   *Una see am?* (Do you realize it?)
MEANING: "to realize something

"To see" here means "to realize". Its usage is meant to bring something to the notice of the hearer, which he/she might not have thought about. The word *una* is the NPE's way of expressing the second person singular or plural pronoun *you*, while *am* is the expression of third person singular object (*he, she, it*).

From all the usages listed above, it is clear that the verb "see" has been conceptualized to acquire the socio-cultural experience of the speakers of English in Nigeria where English, according to Braj Kachru in his foreword to Bamgbose, Banjo and Thomas (1995, vi) is no more a guest in the linguistic ecology of West Africa, but has become an integral part of the linguistic family.

It is obvious from the findings that Nigerians have invested English with a cultural power in order to meet their communicative need in the language. So, naturally most of the expressions in the indigenous languages have found relevance even in the context of English usage in contemporary Nigeria. This has further reinforced the assertions by several other scholars who have worked on the lexical domestication of English in Nigerian.

4. CONCLUSION

The lexical verb *see* has been conceptualized to reflect the Nigerian experience through extension of its basic native English meanings. In addition to the native English usage, the verb has acquired other meanings in Nigeria, such as: "to watch out", "to look at", "to discover", "to regret", "to offer some gratification", "to imagine", and "to realize." In addition, we also discussed its use as a discourse boundary marker. The polysemous uses of the verb that are identified in this paper cut across the different lectal domains – the educated, and the uneducated varieties of English in Nigeria. The general acceptance of these polysemous senses of the verb *see* according to Adegbija (2003, 56), imply a tacit linguistic and cultural maintenance mechanism that demonstrate the independence of Nigerian English from its original source – the British English.

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