

A DICTIONARY OF NIGERIAN ENGLISH

[DRAFT CIRCULATED FOR COMMENT]

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Cambridge, Sunday, 07 August 2005

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Abbreviations

AE	African English
Amer.	American (for Americanisms)
arch.	archaic
dial.	dialect
et.	etymologically
euph.	euphemism
fig.	figurative
hum.	humorous
id.	idiom
ideo.	ideophone
ins.	insulting
joc.	jocular
lit.	literally
NE	Nigerian English
NNE	Northern Nigerian English
SE	Standard English
SNE	Southern Nigerian English
sc. sl.	schoolboy slang
st. sl.	student slang
TE	Tropical English

Preface

This dictionary of Nigerian English was stimulated by some enquiries from the Oxford English Dictionary on words of putative West African origin. The OED faces an increasingly uphill struggle in its attempts to capture World English; almost every Anglophone country has now developed a set of distinctive uses, some more divergent than others. It is surprising, however, that Nigerian English has never been the subject of a published dictionary; rumours abound of mighty manuscripts, but these have yet to see the light of day. A recent publication by Igboanusi goes some way towards remedying this deficiency but the inclusion here of many words not in his dictionary indicates how much work is still to be done.

The present manuscript is a draft of a document that will eventually, I hope, become a collective product. I doubt that one individual could produce anything very comprehensive; Nigeria is too diverse and regionalised. But it seems sensible to lay down an initial marker; then additions can be made. I am circulating this to individuals I know have an interest; but please send any further information, comments, emendations etc. to the email or address given on the title page.

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Introduction

These notes are intended to raise some issues on sources, interpretation and the definition of Nigerian English.

Sources¹

One of the most difficult issues in lexicography is documenting usages in a semi-written language. If dictionaries of indigenous African languages are prepared they usually depend entirely on oral sources and thus no specific justification is given for entries. However, Nigerian English is sometimes written, especially in newspapers and magazines, and thus has some sort of orthographic tradition. Nonetheless, many of the most picturesque expressions are strictly oral and must still be captured in the present document. Although previous studies in this direction have tended to cite novels or literary works (notably Jowitt 1991) these are sometimes unrepresentative of the spoken language. I have therefore used newspaper, notices and overheard speech as sources. Example sentences not specifically sourced should be treated as based on the author's or his correspondents' experiences.

Spelling

Nigerian English is printed regularly in the newspapers and since much of it consists of using SE in extended senses spelling is generally not a problem. Some forms of pidgin origin such as 'done' have conventional representations, e.g. 'don'. However, others, such as 'rubber' are pronounced in a variety of forms, such as *rɔba*, *rɔba* etc. depending on sociolinguistic considerations. To capture this, I have written phonologised pronunciations in square brackets after head entry. Thus;

leather [lɛda]

Nigerian /Ghanaian/ West African English

One of the more surprising things about Nigerian English is the extent to which it has a common lexicon and grammar with other West African Englishes, notably Ghanaian. A guide to Ghanaian English (Kirby 1998) provides an interesting comparison with the present document and parallel forms are noted². I have less information about Cameroun, Sierra Leone and Gambia and would welcome further insights. However, the puzzle is the history of some of these forms. Do they go back to the early days of colonial presence on the coast or are they more recent products of the massive migration of Ghanaians to Nigeria during the oil-boom era of the 1970s and 1980s? Probably both, but only a detailed scanning of earlier sources will provide answers.

Pidgin versus Nigerian English

Nigerian English is regarded as distinct from Pidgin English, although the exact location of the boundary between them differs from speaker to speaker. Some expressions are regarded as strictly Pidgin, for example *pickin* for 'child' and *sabi* for 'to know'. I have thought it best to be quite inclusive, but no doubt some of the entries will be questioned.

¹ Thanks to Philip and Vicky Ostien and especially to Kay Williamson for many useful suggestions.

² Prof. Mary Esther Kropp-Dakubu of Legon University has kindly gone through the draft text and marked all those entries which also have parallels in Ghanaian English.

Auxiliaries

Often the distinctiveness of Nigerian verbs in use consists of unusual auxiliaries applied to conventional verbs. Some of these are as follows;

done

he done go he went [Pidgin!]

got

the thing got spoiled
the water got finished

has

he has go he went [just imperfect learning, not standard]

use to

he use to come here he comes here regularly [back formation from *used to*]

Student slang

Schools and universities are good but extremely localised sources of slang; Ibadan University in particular seems to have been an important source of unusual expressions. Indeed a small book was published of these expressions when Ibadan was the only university (Opara & Oleghe 1956). Asomugha (1981) began life as a compendium of student slang but was enlarged to take in some more mainstream Nigerian English expressions. Such expressions are often highly localised in time and place; few expressions mentioned in this book appear to be still in use. Where a term seems to be student slang I have noted it; this is a rich and distinct field. Kay Williamson (p.c.) has supplied a number of expressions currently (2002) in use in the University of Port Harcourt, but it is difficult to know how widespread these are.

Tropical English

There are numerous terms which may be termed ‘Tropical English’; unknown to most speakers of SE, they are nonetheless not specific to Nigeria, but are nonetheless widely used across the Anglophone tropics. This is very common in pan-tropical plants, for example ‘oil-palm’ or ‘yam-mound’. I have marked these in the text as TE.

Pronunciation spellings

These are spellings which arise because two English words are pronounced alike by Nigerians and the two spellings, which reflect different pronunciations for SE speakers, get confused or treated as equivalent. Most are nonce-forms, but the following examples are typical.

She feels her life to be sleeping away from her finger.	SE [slɪpɪŋ] and [sli:pɪŋ] merge as NE [slipɪŋ]
He is well vast in the Igbo proverbs.	SE [vɜ:st] and [vɑ:st] merge as NE [vast]
...to deep his hand in the bag	SE [dɪp] and [di:p] merge as NE [dip]
...capable of performing impossible fits	SE [fit] and [fi:t] merge as NE [fit]
She turned out to develop cold fit for the husband when the going became bad.	SE [fit] and [fi:t] merge as NE [fit]
Nigerians from all works of life ...	SE [wɜ:k] and [wɔ:k] merge as NE [wɔk]
Pack your car here.	SE [pæk] and [pɑ:k] merge as NE [pak]
laddle	reflects the common Nigerian pronunciation [ladɛl]

Source: Kay Williamson

Portmanteau words

The portmanteau word, first introduced by Lewis Carroll as a humorous excursus of Humpty-Dumpty, is a lexical reality in Nigeria. Two sound-alikes are combined into a single form as the following examples show;

impressionario is a common written form of impressario, presumably a portmanteau form ‘impressario’ + ‘impression’

virgina common spelling of *vagina* presumably by re-interpretation from *virgin*

Re-interpretation of Pidgin

An interesting process is the movement from Pidgin back into Nigerian English through relexicalisation. For example;

Pidgin	<i>de ting no gree boil</i>	the liquid will not boil
NE	<i>the kettle did not agree to boil</i>	the kettle won't boil

The pidgin expression is primary and it has been re-expressed by a speaker who sees the second formulation as more prestigious.

Style versus substance

The most comprehensive sources for Nigerian English prior to this are Jowitt (1991) and Igboanusi (2002). When native English speakers try to characterise Nigerian English it is clear that their personal perceptions play an important role in determining which lexical items or usages are distinctive. For example, Nigerian newspapers often use the stereotyped expression ‘men of the underworld’ to refer to criminals. This would be unlikely to occur in a current British newspaper, and has an archaic or jocular feel to it. Still, it is perfectly comprehensible to a speaker of standard English and the component words show no significant lexical deviation from their normal meanings. Contrast this with ‘area-boys’, also referring to criminals, which would have no meaning to a speaker of Standard English. Thus, although I have carefully been through the previous sources, I have excluded many entries that seem to be matters of style rather than true lexical difference.

From NE to SE

A similar process occurs where NE is being relexicalised to SE by certain speakers. Generally speaking, the newspapers, formerly a great source of NE expressions, have become closer to SE since the 1980s, almost certainly due to greater exposure to SE forms through the dissemination of news magazines such as Time and Newsweek. For example; ‘hotel’ is commonly applied to bars and drinking places that serve food but may have no lodging and ‘hotel’ in the SE sense is ‘guest hotel’. But modern usage is gradually replacing this so that NE is coming to conform to SE.

Spelling pronunciation

Nigerian English has one or two distinctive spelling-pronunciations, the most characteristic of which is to always pronounce written ‘ch’ as /tʃ/ even when Standard English has /ʃ/. Two common examples are the personal name Charlotte, where /tʃarlət/ is heard in place of /ʃarlət/ and ‘chalet’, pronounced /tʃalet/ rather than /ʃalet/. The second syllable of ‘chalet’ case illustrates another example of spelling pronunciation, but this is in turn a loanword into English.

Missionary English

I have marked some entries ME, ‘Missionary English’. Missionaries seem to have been responsible for some particular usages that were propagated via church materials. These include pejorative terms for traditional religion such as ‘idol’, ‘fetish’ and ‘juju’, but also a series of terms for animals, assimilating indigenous West African animals to those found in Europe and north America. These include ‘fox’ for genet and ‘rabbit’ for giant rat. [Many of the early missionaries were of Sierra Leonean rather than European origin; possibly some of these are due to their interpretations of English words.]

Scientific names, and trade names

In the early colonial era, when many new species were coming to scientific attention and the uses of those known botanically were also being explored, many West African vernacular names were developed, notably for timbers and for economic grasses. These were used in colonial literature but with a few exceptions never really entered West African speech and are rarely heard today. For example, the African olive, *Canarium schweinfurthii*, is called the ‘bush-candle’ in older literature. Charming and evocative as this name is, I have never heard it in current speech and perhaps it was only ever used by forestry officers in the colonial era. I have entered such forms sparingly, pending further evidence of their context of use. Nonetheless, there are a great many names for the timbers of Nigerian trees that are used, although in the specialised context of the timber trade. Some of these are Nigerian, used in the West African region and some have become international trade names. I have adopted the entries from FMI (1964) sometimes updated with reference to Burkill (1985 ff.).

Regional variation

There is considerable regional variation in NE, most notably between north and south, but also east and west. The lexicon presented in Igboanusi (2002) for example, is rich in Yoruba and Igbo terms, but omits many terms from the North, the Delta and Calabar. The presence of large communities of migrants, especially in urban areas somewhat blurs these distinctions but nonetheless it is possible to assign some terms to specific areas of the country. I have marked these where known, but considerable further work is required. There also seem to be quite a large number of terms local to the Niger Delta, often reflecting its specialised environment and history.

Phonology

It is not yet clear whether it would be reasonable to say NE has a phonology. Borrowings from indigenous languages in different regions import phonemes that are alien to English. For example, the labial-velars, /kp/ and /gb/ are found in SNE in loans but are generally absent from NNE, as are the items they denote. An interesting further issue is the presence of tone. Some exclamations clearly have contrastive tone, typically High-Low;

òòò tag placed at the beginning of sentences, following the assertion of a previous speaker indicating negative consequences

but lexical tone appears to have little functional role in other parts of the vocabulary.

Parts of Speech

The following table shows the abbreviations used in Column 2 of the dictionary. Some of these assignments should be regarded as highly provisional.

Abbreviation	Full form	Explanation
a.	Adjective	Describes a noun
a.p.	Adjectival phrase	Describes a noun
adv.	Adverb	Qualifies a verb
adv.p.	Adverbial phrase	Qualifies a verb
cond.	Conditional	Expresses the relation between two events
conj.	Conjunction	A word used to join two or more nouns, verbs or clauses
dem.	Demonstrative	Words used to point out something. 'this', 'that' etc.
excl.	Exclamation	Greetings or expressions that do not form part of an ordinary sentence
int.	Interrogative	Question words
n.	Noun	Refers to things, objects etc.
n.p.	Noun phrase	Phrase where a head-noun is joined to other words to form an expression
num.	Numeral	Number
part.	Particle	Short words added to complete the sentence
p.n.	Proper Name	A name of a person or object; always capitalised
p.u.t.	Pre-utterance tag	A tag or exclamation used prior to an utterance to indicate the underlying sense of the utterance
prep.	Preposition	A word positioning nouns or verbs in time or space
pron.	Pronoun	A word that stands for a noun
sal.	Salutation	A word or phrase that stands alone as a greeting or introduces a dialogue
s.t.	Sentence tag	A word or clause standing at the end of a sentence, that intensifies the meaning in some way but is unnecessary to the syntax.
v.	Verb	Expresses action
v.aux.	Verbal auxiliary	An inflected verb that co-occurs with an uninflected main verb
v.c.	Verbal complement	Additional word or words found in phrasal verbs [???
v.i.	Intransitive Verb	A verb with no object
v.n.	Verbal Noun	A noun formed directly from a verb to express a state of being [only one type; what of agentives?]
v.p.	Verb phrase	A phrase where a head-noun is joined to other words to form an expression [head-noun or verb?]
v.t.	Transitive verb	A verb with an object

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A.

Abi? s.t. Sentence tag meaning ‘Don’t you agree?’, Isn’t that right?

Corresponds to Hausa *Ko?*

about prep. just, about to *I’m about leaving.*
I’m just leaving

abroad n. as in SE, but also refers to being away from home area *We love ourselves abroad* We have good relations with other people from our home area when away from it [quoted in Trager, 2001, *Yoruba Hometowns*]

abuna n. lit. Hausa ‘thing’ but often used jocularly for penis

abura n. timber tree *Mitragyna stipulosa*

abuse n. insult *it is an abuse* it is an insult
GE

abuse v. to insult *that boy abused him well-well* the other man insulted him a great deal
GE

acada n. academe, academic work, studies
student slang

acha n. cereal, fonio, *Digitaria exilis*
< Hausa. Only grown in the Middle Belt

achaba n. motor-cycle taxi <
Hausa. Only in Northern towns. cf. **okada**

Act of God n. tin trunk painted in black and red
SNE. Outdated expression used by schoolboys in the 1970s.

Actually! excl. exclamation of strong agreement
State government has many people chopping money. Actually!

add v.i. to add s.t. to s.t. *Add more!* typically heard in a restaurant, when the diner wants more porridge or stew

adire n. traditional tie-dyed indigo cloth
< Yoruba

Afara n. Trade-name for *Terminalia superba*
also GE

African nutmeg n. tree sp. with edible nut
Monodora myristica WAE.

African olive n. fruit of *Canarium schweinfurthii* which closely resembles the European olive

African salad n. any combination of green vegetables

African time n.p. jocular way of referring to the typically casual approach to punctuality characteristic of Nigeria
not African time, please! Please be punctual!
AE

after adv. later *Some time after*

again s.t. intensifier *We will go to the market, again* does not mean for a second time,

but simply intensifies the expression. *I have no money again* similarly. Jowitt (1991:154) compares to p.u.t.s in Hausa *kuma*, Igbo *ozo* and Yoruba *mo*.

agbada n. man’s long robe < Yoruba

agree v.i. to want to, but also applied to inanimate objects
the kettle did not agree to boil

agric a. any crop or livestock variety introduced by the agricultural services. Sometimes also applied to implements.
These agric beans do not taste well or *He bought an agric plough*

akamu n. porridge type with chewy lumps in it served in the morning in the North <
Hausa Yoruba?

akara n. fried bean-cake <Yoruba.
Now widespread in many languages. GE

alhaja n. technically any woman who has been on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but often used as a title of respect

alhaji p.n. technically any male who has been on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but often used as a title of respect, or as shorthand for a businessman of Northern aspect
The alhajis have bought up all the petrol Used ironically to imply a class of crooked businessmen. GE

all what n.p. everything
I believe all what you say GE

alligator n. crocodile
Regularly used to distinguish the Dwarf crocodile *Osteolaemus tetraspis* from the Nile crocodile *niloticus*. (BBC news item 17.07.2002 reported a cargo of live Dwarf Crocodiles intercepted at Heathrow on their way from Nigeria to Japan, saying that they were **falsely** described as alligators.)

alligator pepper n. Malagueta pepper, *Aframomum melegueta*. A ground-fruited plant with spicy seeds still widely used as a condiment but no longer exported to Europe. ‘Alligator’ for ‘Malagueta’ seems to be either a mishearing or a folk-etymology

almanac n. large coloured wall-poster usually showing photos of members of a club, association, football team etc.
often with small calendar inserted pointing to its original function

altar n. rack for drying fish or keeping utensils, etc., in kitchen

amala n. black food made from yam-flour with ground yam skin incorporated <
Yoruba

ami(n)go n. white man Amigo! is shouted at foreigners in the southeast of Nigeria In Bonny in the form <i>amíngo</i> . Presumably connected with the Spanish presence in Equatorial Guinea or former trade by Spanish in the Bonny area.	<i>and wife were wearing aso oke</i> < Yoruba <i>aso oke</i>
among adv. implies 'among the group previously referred to' <i>they are among they are among the group we are talking about</i>	Aso rock p.n. inselberg adjoining Presidential villa in Abuja, hence a symbol of power and decision-making
amount n. usually short for 'amount of money' but occasionally applied to other things previously referred to <i>he gave me some amount he gave me some money</i>	assignment n. homework, student essays, projects etc. <i>they give us too many assignments</i> almost certainly borrowed from American English, perhaps in the era when the Peace Corps taught in secondary schools in the 1960s
-an suff. ending to indicate the inhabitant of a particular state <i>Kwaran, Bayelsan</i>	at all s.t. Emphasises absence or negativity <i>people were not enjoying, at all</i> GE.
and co. n.p. refers to set of matching cloths made for families, age-grades, associations etc. <i>they are sewing and co. for the wedding</i>	At all! excl. A common standalone response to a negative question or one expecting a negative answer. <i>Is this man here?</i> response <i>At all!</i>
anini n. now long-disused coin, originally one-tenth of a penny, but symbolising something of very low value like the English farthing gained additional currency in the early 1990s due a notorious bank-robber [armed robber] nicknamed Lawrence Anini	attachment n. additional hair sewn on to owner's hair, less subtle than weavon
answer v. to respond to a call or command, but not a question, to be named <i>he answers Obi</i> he is called Obi GE	August break n.p. dry spell in rainy season from late July to August SNE
anyhow s.t. placed at the end of a sentence to suggest 'indiscriminately' <i>the children were playing in the garden, anyhow</i> GE	 aunty n. term of respect used by children [younger person] to address adult women has become very common since 1980s) Sim. <i>uncle</i>
anyway p.u.t. Placed before a sentence to tone down or mitigate the implications of a previous statement or question	automatically adv. as a matter of course <i>now he is elected Governor, automatically he will chop money</i>
Apollo n. eye-infection So named because it first appeared at the time of the Apollo 11 moonshot	ayo n. mancala, board game < Yoruba
applicant n. unemployed person who is supposed to be applying for jobs <i>he is an applicant</i> [unemployed school-leaver]	B.
area-boy n. young man without a job who engages in criminal acts, usually in gangs in towns	baba n. any old man older than speaker, term of respect also <i>papa</i> . widespread term for 'father' corresponding to <i>mama</i> for older woman
arts n. usually commercial painting particularly trucks and signs <i>art by Laranto Arts, Jos</i> commonly seen on back of trucks	bacha n. temporary shed or building CE in Africa? [TE, also in Asia]
art-work n. work of art can be pluralised, i.e. <i>art-works</i>	back v. to carry a baby on the back <i>In America they don't back their babies as we do here</i>
aso-oke (1) n. heavy type of cloth <i>The designers...spared no details with aso-oke</i> [Ovation Issue 53:131, 2003]< Yoruba <i>aso oke</i>	back v. to turn one's back on <i>I just backed him and pretended not to see him</i>
aso-oke (2) n. practice of a family all wearing the same type fo cloth <i>Husband</i>	back, at my adv.p. behind <i>He was standing at my back</i>
	bad bush n. place where people who die abnormal deaths are buried or thrown away SNE
	bag n. originally a fifty-kilo jute bag but now commonly used for hundred Naira <i>a bag of money</i> = 100 pounds = 200 naira [I doubt if this is the bag originally referred to! I

<p>have thought (but not checked) it was a bag of cowries as an old standard size]</p> <p>bag v.t. to get, especially position, degree or award <i>Adamu has bagged the governorship, He has bagged an M.A.</i> Archaic English sporting terminology. Also in Indian English.</p> <p>balance n. change (for purchase) <i>Give me my balance</i></p> <p>balance v.t. to give change <i>I will balance you fifty Naira</i> I must give you fifty Naira change GE</p> <p>balance v.i. standing or sitting complacently, apparently unconcerned about anything (used of a person, possibly also of an animal) <i>See her just balancing there feeling cool about herself</i> GE</p> <p>Bambara nut n. Bambara groundnut, <i>Vigna subterranea</i> TE</p> <p>bamboo n. midrib of palm frond. Also applied to bamboo proper, though this may be called 'Indian bamboo' to distinguish it.</p> <p>bandy v.t. to bandy about <i>I have no time to bandy with them</i></p> <p>baobab n. baobab tree <i>Adansonia digitata</i>. TE</p> <p>barb v.t. to cut s.o.'s hair <i>She is barbing him</i> Back-formation from <i>barber</i></p> <p>barbing salon n.p. hairdressing salon <i>Viable small businesses ... are mostly in such trades as hair dressing and barbing salons, tailoring shops as well as "pure water" packaging businesses.</i> (Guardian 11.10.02 p. 22, col. 2)</p> <p>bath n. any type of whole-body washing, most often with a bucket <i>Have you taken your bath?</i> GE</p> <p>bath v.i. to wash the whole body by any method <i>Do you want to bath?</i> GE</p> <p>bature n. white man shouted at foreigners in northern Nigeria. Also sometimes applied jocularly to albinos. <Hausa</p> <p>be for v.p. to have, to possess <i>this moto is for you</i> this is your car</p> <p>be with v.p. to have, to possess <i>it is with him</i> he has it GE.</p> <p>beans n. cowpeas <i>Vigna unguiculata</i></p> <p>beat v.t. to strike, hit [but not necessarily violently], to fall [rain] <i>If you do that again I am going to beat you.</i> I'm going to beat you [but could be just a token blow] <i>Take care or</i></p>	<p><i>rain will beat you</i> GE. also used for rain, even when it is falling softly</p> <p>bedsheet n. sheets <i>I will put bedsheet for you</i> I'll put sheets on your bed GE.</p> <p>been-to n. s.o. who has 'been-to' Europe or America <i>this been-to is now a big man</i> GE. perhaps now becoming archaic</p> <p>Beetle p.n. Volkswagen car <i>I get Beetle</i> GE. Volkswagens were made in Nigeria and imported from Brazil long after they disappeared in Europe</p> <p>beg v.i. to plead, beg, but used in more trivial contexts than in SE. Also in the sentence tag, <i>I beg. Do not do this thing-o, I beg!</i> GE.</p> <p>Belgiana. good quality second-hand item also Belgium. < practice of importing second-hand cars and now other goods from Belgium</p> <p>beniseed n. sesame, <i>Sesamum indicum</i> there are two species of beniseed, white and black. black beniseed is <i>Sesamum radiatum</i>. ? < 'Benue seed'</p> <p>bent-back n. hunchback</p> <p>big dowry wife n.p. wife married under the big bride-price system This is a system typical of the Niger Delta, where on payment of a large brideprice the husband's family has rights over his wife's children.</p> <p>bitterleaf n. mucilaginous leaf, used to make draw soup. <i>We enjoy bitterleaf soup</i> <i>Vernonia amygdalina</i></p> <p>black a. dark-skinned <i>That boy is very black</i> GE. N.B. The colour distinctions are very clear in relative context. For example, to say <i>That black boy came to visit you</i> will be clear to the speaker who is choosing one from a set of visitors, but may refer to a distinction invisible to outsiders. opp. <i>fair</i></p> <p>black Guarea n. trade name for <i>Guarea thompsonii</i></p> <p>blackout n. power-cut</p> <p>blindman n. blind man <i>Blindman can often be seen begging outside the mosque</i> used as a category like 'policeman'</p> <p>blood tonic n. patent medicine of unknown composition, purporting to 'strengthen' blood and fight off disease < CE</p> <p>bluff v.i. to swagger, show off <i>That boy is just bluffing</i> GE. (<i>usu.</i> of young men)</p> <p>boa constrictor n. large python SNE</p>
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Bomboy	sal.	form of address to plump and healthy [male] child Also used to refer to a child, e.g. <i>How is Bomboy?</i>]	
born-again	n.	born-again Christian, a fundamentalist type of Christian who rejects all compromise with other religions. According to the predilections of the speaker this can be a simple description or extremely scornful. GE. N.B. can have a plural 'born-again's'	
borrow	v.t.	to lend <i>Borrow me this money</i>	
bottom	a.	worst <i>But it's the bottom men that make the leader</i> the worst men become leaders [Ovation Issue 53, 2003]	
bottom power	n.	influence gained by a woman or homosexual through sexual favours	
boy	n.	any male	GE.
boy	n.	house-servant from Hindi <i>bhai</i> 'servant' but re-analysed as English 'boy', hence its counterpart 'girl' (q.v.)	GE. orig.
boys' quarters	n.p.	usually a row of small rooms behind a large house where house-servants or younger relatives live GE. Abbreviated to BQ	
branch	v.i.	to turn aside, to divert to (when on the way to somewhere else) <i>I am going to branch at his house</i>	GE.
bread	n.	one Naira <i>give me ten bread!</i> the fall in the value of the Naira has meant that this is now of limited use, but used for 'money' in general. It may always have been mainly student slang. prob. cognate with SE 'bread' for money.	
breadfruit	n.	edible fruit <i>Artocarpus communis</i> J.R. and G. Forst.	TE.
breadnut	n.	edible fruit <i>Artocarpus communis</i> J.R. and G. Forst. Contrasts with <i>breadfruit</i> – no central stone	TE.
bring	v.t.	to turn back on [electricity] <i>NEPA has brought light again</i>	GE.
bring	v.t.	to hand over [usu. money] <i>Bring money!</i> A common conclusion to a bargaining session.	
brideprice	n.	payment by a man to the parents of his wife at marriage or before technical anthropological term, but also in common use in Nigeria	TE.
brocade	n.	type of cloth	q.v.
guinea brocade			
broken	n.	short for <i>Broken English</i> (q.v.)	
Broken English	n.p.	pidgin English in contrast to 'Queen's English' (q.v.)	
brother	n.	actual brother or male of the same generation in an extended family. Applied by extension to those of a comparable status in ethnicity religion, politics etc.	
brother dash me	n.p.	hand-me-down, clothes passed on from another generation of a family	
buba	n.	loose blouse	< Yoruba
buka	n.	street restaurant	< Hausa
buketeria	n.	street restaurant humorous extension of <i>buka</i> (q.v.) [Humorous blend of <i>buka</i> + <i>cafeteria</i>]	
bullet	n.	small screwed-up piece of paper flung across an exam hall containing answers to questions st. sl., used in University of Port Harcourt but there may be alternative forms in other universities	
bun	n.	any small soft cake	
burst out	v.p.	to come out onto <i>take this bush track and you will burst out onto the Onitsha road</i> (esp. roads or rivers)	
bush	n.	uncultivated land, usually open savanna AE. In originally forest areas, woodland	
bush	a.	rustic, uncouth	GE.
bush-burning	n.	preparation of land for farming by burning weeds/scrub	TE
bush-cat	n.	any wild felid GE.	
bush-candle	n.	tree, <i>Canarium schweinfurthii</i> so-called because the oil can be used in lamps. Colonial-era expression no longer in use	
bush-cow	n.	buffalo, <i>Syncerus caffer</i> GE.	
bush-dog	n.	civet-cat SNE only	
bushfire	n.	uncontrolled savanna/bush burning in the dry season	TE
bush greens	n.	any green vegetable used in soup that is gathered from the bush	
bushman	n.	unsophisticated person <i>He is a bushman!</i> he doesn't know city ways GE.	
bush-lamp	n.	kerosene lantern <i>In the rickety wooden huts of Tselekwu, kerosine bush lamps fight a losing battle to dispel some of the pervasive darkness.</i> (Guardian 11.10.02, p.22, col. 1).	<i>In</i>
bush mango	n.	tree and its fruit much prized for use in soup <i>Irvingia gabonensis</i> [cf. ogbono ']	

bushmeat	n.	any meat from a hunted animal GE. often served in special restaurants, and in <i>bushmeat soup</i>	cash-madam	n.	large-scale woman trader, generally in the south <i>this cash-madam is too tough</i> this woman trader is a hard bargainer
bushmeat	n.	female visitor from the town, as opposed to the campus/hostels; considered less sophisticated than female students student slang	catch	v.t.	to affect, to trap, to afflict <i>sickness has caught me</i> rather <i>sickness don catch me</i> Pidgin < usage in many African languages
bush-pig	n.	wild pig, usually <i>Sus</i> but can apply to <i>Phacochoerus</i> or <i>Potamochoerus porcus</i> Red River Hog in SNE.	Ceiba	n.	trade name for the kapok tree, <i>Ceiba pentandra</i> cf. silk-cotton
bush-taxi	n.	car or pickup that travels along back roads taking passengers	chaik	v.i./t.	to chat up or chase s.o. of the opposite sex; usually male to female <i>he prefers chaiking to reading.</i>
buttered	a.	with butter in, not spread on <i>buttered bread</i> common inscription on bread labels	chance	n.	in the expression Give chance! i.e. Give me room! but also give me an opportunity to do s.t. < usage in many African languages
butcher	v.t.	to cut up (any dead animal) <i>He is butchering the fish</i>	Chapman	p.n.	soft drink usually made mineral plus Ribina and fruit; similar to a non-alcoholic Sangria
by	a.	exactly at (time) <i>not</i> 'in the period up to' <i>He arrived by 2 p.m.</i>	charge to court	v.p.	to charge s.o. with an offence <i>bring money, or I will charge you to court</i>
C.					
call card	n.	visiting card	chaser	n.	man who chases women
camp, to	v.i.	to hire a room in a hotel or elsewhere and keep it for the purpose of entertaining male visitors for money through formal or informal prostitution	Che!	excl.	Expression of surprise Igbo <i>chei!</i>
camp	v.i.	(usu. in passive) stay in a group in temporary simple accommodation while on a visit for a purpose <i>We were camped in the student hostels while attending the NUGA games.</i>	check	v.t.	to see if s.o. or s.t. is present <i>we will go check him</i> we'll go and see if he's in <i>check well!</i> said by traders urging you to look round their shop
can	v.	to like [in relation to food] <i>Can you eat that type of food?</i> Do you like that type of food?	chewing stick	n.	stick from various tree species, chewed to clean the mouth and teeth GE.
can	v.	to want to <i>Can you take your bath now?</i> i.e. do you want to take a bath now?	chief	n.	term of address; used to show respect or towards male friends
cane-rope	n.	rattan-palm or the fibre derived from it <i>Calamus deeratus</i>	chicken-change	n.	insignificant amount of money, 'peanuts' <i>these people only give chicken-change</i> they only pay peanuts ? < 'chicken-feed'
canteen	n.	supermarket or large grocery store now archaic, as SE <i>supermarket</i> has replaced it, but a colonial-era expression. Borrowed into Hausa	child dedication	n.	church ceremony followed by elaborate entertainment in churches which do not practise infant baptism, [often] replacing the traditional <i>naming ceremony</i>
card	n.	fish-drying rack <i>this type of fish they put on card</i>	chin-chin	n.	triangular fried cakes served at gatherings CE
carelessly	adv.	anyhow (but used with stative verbs) <i>she was sitting there carelessly</i> she was sitting there in an inappropriate position	chock	v.t.	to place stones or wood under the wheels of a vehicle to stop it rolling away < chock n. used for aircraft in SE
case	n.	misunderstanding, big problem <i>This thing is a big case now!</i>	chook	n.	awl used by carvers GE
			chook	v.t.	to prick, to inject <i>the thorn has chooked me</i> AE

choose v.t.	to choose between two alternatives contrast with 'select'	colonial masters n.p.	stereotyped expression for British officialdom in the colonial era <i>Our colonial masters taught us this</i> Used sneeringly by some speakers but as a purely descriptive term by others
chop v.i.	to eat <i>can you chop rice? do you eat rice?</i> CE	colonial mentality n.p.	pejorative expression implying readiness to accept inferior status <i>He is showing colonial mentality</i>
chop v.i.	to embezzle (fig.) <i>He has chopped too much money</i>	come v.i.	to be returning soon <i>I am coming</i> (said by someone just leaving) GE. Only when used in the given expression, not in any other collocation
chop n.	food <i>let us go for chop</i> let us go and get some food CE	come down p.v.i.	to get down from a vehicle <i>I will come down here</i> GE.
chop-bar n.	small eating house ?<GE	company a.	describes s.o. who owns a number of companies <i>he is a company man</i> he is a man who owns a variety of businesses N.B. 'company man' is thus almost the inverse of its meaning in SE
chop-congo v.i.	to have sexual intercourse <i>I chop-congo today</i> I had sex today St. sl.	complain n.	complaint <i>the community forwarded their complains to higher authorities</i>
Christmas bush n.	bush whose leaves are used to treat wounds <i>Alchornea cordifolia</i> WAE.	complete a.	describes money and usually in the form 'not complete' <i>your money is not complete</i> the money is not enough
civilisation n.	shorthand for the colonial and post-colonial eras <i>since we had civilisation</i>	complete a.	entire. Describes a period of time and precedes the noun <i>the market burned for complete ten days</i>
class-mate n.	s.o. in the same year at school or university as the speaker <i>He is my class-mate</i> means he was my classmate a relationship much more important in Nigeria than elsewhere	compound n.	any ground of buildings surrounded by a notional or actual external perimeter CE. <? Malay <i>kampong</i>
clean v.t.	to erase	conceive v.t.	to impregnate <i>He has conceived her</i>
clean off v.p.	to wipe off, wipe away <i>Clean off that writing!</i>	condemn v.i./t.	to be worn out, useless, spoil (of objects) <i>the moto is condemned</i> the car is no longer any good <i>they have condemned it</i> GE.
clear v.i./t.	to park off the road <i>Clear the car! = Park well!</i>	conductive a.	good, appropriate, fit <i>the place is not conductive</i>
climb v.i.	to get into <i>climb that moto!</i> get into that car! cf. enter	confusionist n.	s.o. who brings about confusion <i>he is just a confusionist</i>
climb down v.p.	to get out of, to get down from <i>climb down from that machine</i> get off that motor-bike	Congo meat n.p.	meat of the giant African land snail
close v.i.	as in SE but applied to enterprises and machines, thus also 'switch off' <i>they have closed</i> the enterprise has reached closing time. <i>close the fan</i> shut off the fan GE.	continental a.	describes non-Nigerian food of vaguely European type GE. archaic BE
co-wife n.	wife married to the same husband <i>co-wives always quarrel</i> GE. =mate	cook v.t.	to heat on the fire, whether a solid or a liquid <i>she is cooking the water</i> She is boiling water GE.
coal-tar n.	asphalt road <i>Now we have reached the coal-tar again</i>	copaiba balsam n.	tree, <i>Daniellia oliveri</i> , formerly valued for its gum CE?
coast n.	urban areas <i>He has gone to coast</i> he has gone (from his home village) to work in the modern urban sector (common in the Delta) Originally coastal towns visited by European traders.		
cocktail n.	cocktail party <i>You are invited to cocktail</i> GE.		
collect v.t.	to pick up, to go and get <i>Collect your loads</i> GE.		

copyright a.	applied to a song performed by a popular entertainer previously made popular by another entertainer. Often said with slight scorn. <i>That song is copyright.</i>	cunny a.	tricky <i>a cunny man</i> a trickster < cunning?
corner-mate n.	person who shares your corner of a room typically a room, especially in Lagos and in universities with accommodation problems, is divided into four corners and each corner can be shared by two people On the analogy of <i>room-mate</i> ; also <i>bed-mate</i> in the same sense, not the SE one	cup n.	any drinking receptacle, including glasses, mugs etc.
Corper p.n.	Member of the National Youth Service Corps	cushion chair n.	armchair with cushions
correct v.c.	as in <i>to be correct</i> they are not correct they are not doing the right thing GE.	customary court n.	court where justice proceeds according to the traditions of a particular ethnic group Recognised by the Nigerian state for civil cases
cotton n.	as SE, but also cotton-wool and kapok from the silk-cotton tree	customs bar n.	commission charged on every puncheon of oil sold, deducted from the native trader's money and paid to the chief under whose auspices the supercargo had placed his ship for trading archaic, Niger Delta. cf. work-bar
could remember v.p.	for SE 'can remember' <i>I could remember when we still had kobos.</i>	cut v.i.	to be broken, cut, snapped in two <i>the wire has cut</i> the wire is cut. GE.
cover-cloth n.	long strip of cloth usually wrapped around the body when sleeping	cutlass n.	machete, used for cutting vegetation TE. cf. <i>matchet</i>
cover-shoes n.	ordinary shoes as opposed to sandals <i>Do you never wear cover-shoes?</i> [said to a persistent sandal-wearer]	cutleries n. pl.	cutlery Advert: <i>For hire: Chairs, canopies, cutleries, utensils</i>
cowitch n.	stinging vine TE. <i>Mucuna pruriens</i> < Hindi <i>kawach</i>	cutting-grass n.	cane rat, <i>Thryonomys swinderianus</i> GE. also more commonly 'grasscutter'. Throughout West Africa
cowleg n./a.	common cut of beef, often made into soup <i>cowleg soup</i> GE.	D.	
cow-meat n.	beef GE.	damask n.	damask <i>For those who do not know what damask looks like, it is an ornamented fabric with special pattern. It has a hard, paper-like texture, which softens after series of washings. ...Back in the 60s, damask was used to sew iro and buba as well as danshiki. Today, it is being limited to ipele, gele and fila, probably because it is expensive. (Nigerian Tribune 25.06.02 p4). [Very similar to standard dictionary definitions; consult expert for differences. Perhaps simply that it is not commonly used in Standard English.]</i>
cowpean.	bean, <i>Vigna unguiculata</i> More written than spoke; cf. beans . TE. <Hindi <i>kalpi</i>	dampy a.	damp
crayfish n.	shrimp, prawns	danfo n.	van used for passenger transport < Yoruba
crispy a.	concise <i>just a short crispy message</i>	danshiki n.	man's loose, short gown < Hausa
croaker n.	sea-fish spp. <i>Pseudotolithus spp.</i> WAE. very widely traded	dash v.t.	to give s.o. s.t. for free <i>Dash me this thing!</i> GE.
crown n.	king in draughts	dash n.	s.t. given for free <i>is this a dash?</i> GE.
cross carpet v.p.	to cross the floor (politician)	dead stone n.p.	any stone that looks hard but breaks easily <i>he found to his surprise it</i>
cry n.	as in SE, but also to make a noise (of objects) <i>the thing was crying</i> it was making a noise GE.		
cultism n.	practice of secret societies, especially in universities. Believed to be violent and based on traditional religion <i>Soyinka seeks end to cultism in varsities</i> (Guardian 15.7.05)		
culture n.	ceremony, cultural festival <i>They do their cultures after the harvest</i>		

<i>was dead stone</i>	calque from H. <i>matace dutse</i>		
deadness	n.	complete silence at night	
		<i>that night, there was complete deadness</i>	
deadness	n.	impotence	<i>the deadness of his penis concerns him</i>
deal on	v.t.	to deal in	<i>She deals on cloth</i>
dealer on	n.p.	dealer in	<i>Dealer on electrical equipments</i>
deep	a.	complex or pure form of a language	<i>He is speaking deep Nupe.</i>
defile the air	v.p.	to fart	<i>Who is defiling the air?</i> schoolboy euphemism
deleb palm	n.	fan-palm (q.v.)	AE
deliver	v.i., v.t.	to give birth	<i>my sister has delivered my sister</i> GE. <i>My wife has delivered a male child</i> GE.
dey	v.i.	to be, to exist	<i>plenty dey</i> there is plenty <i>God dey</i> Proverbial exclamation more pidgin than NE proper
diev.i.		to cease functioning, to no longer work	<i>the moto has died</i> GE.
dirts	n.	dirt	<i>sweep away these dirts</i>
discuss	v.i.	to discuss [mentioning no topic]	<i>We discussed for a long time</i>
disting	pron.	for 'This thing' but used generically for anything whose name has been forgotten	<i>tight the disting</i> i.e. tighten the nut Pidgin
disturb	v.t.	to annoy, to irritate, but not disturb in the SE sense	<i>he is disturbing me too much</i> GE.
disvirgin	v.t.	to deflower (a virgin)	<i>girls never forget the man who disvirgined them</i>
do	interj.?	used as equivalent to 'please' by some old-fashioned speakers	<i>Do, allow me to close early</i>
do	v.a.	used to emphasise present continuous	<i>periodic conflicts do occur</i>
doctor	n.	any expert	<i>watch-doctor</i> watch-repairer GE.
dodo	n.	masquerade or other spiritual entity performed by non-Muslims in the north	<i>they are doing dodo today</i> <Hausa
dodo	n.	fried plantain,	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> < Yoruba
...doing	n.p.	happening. Either in the phrase <i>anything doing</i> or <i>nothing doing</i>	Archaic SE ?
doll-baby	n	doll	
double face	n.	two-facedness	<i>He is a man of double face</i>
doum	n.	dum palm	French spelling used widely in the far North
douse...on	v.t.	to pour on	<i>She took a gallon containing kerosene, doused some on the girl's hands and laps and set her ablaze</i> (<i>Guardian</i> 17.06.02 p.15)
down-wine	n.	wine tapped from a fallen or felled oil or raphia palm	
dowry	n.	marriage-payment in either direction, thus = <i>brideprice</i>	
draw	a.	mucilaginous	<i>We are enjoying draw soup</i> typically in the expression 'draw soup', a sauce made from sticky vegetables such as okra and Jew's mallow.
draw	v.i.	to form long mucilaginous strings (of sauce)	<i>This soup draws well</i> GE.
dress	n.	any type of formal or elaborate clothing for either sex	<i>He is putting on his dress</i> he is putting on formal clothes GE.
dress	v.t.	to decorate, embellish	<i>dressing of Danfo</i> [Lagos sign]
dress up	v.p.	to dress	≠ to dress smartly
drink	v.t.	to ingest esp. medicine and including tablets etc.	<i>I have a terrible headache. I'm going to drink two Panadol and go to bed?</i> calque from Hausa <i>sha magani</i>
drive	v.t.	to chase away [often jocular]	<i>I came to visit you and now you are driving me! I won't come again.</i>
driver	n.	as in SE, but also chauffeur	GE.
drop (down)	v.i.	to get down from a vehicle	<i>we are dropping(down) here</i> we are getting down here GE.
drop	n.	A. section of route regularly plied by taxi or bus with a standard fare	<i>from here to the junction is two drops</i> GE. B. hire of a taxi by a single customer/group <i>Drop is how much?</i>
dubbing	n.	copying in an exam with variations, contrast <i>rank xerox</i>	
duck-fowl	n.	duck	

E.

- earnestly** adv. honestly
- ease oneself** v.t. to urinate or defecate
GE. Presumably a polite form from the colonial or missionary era
- eba** n. staple food made from boiled cassava < Yoruba. Originally low status compared with yams and standing for cheap food, but nowadays many people's preferred food
- ebony** n. timber from *Diospyros spp.*
- egusi** n. melon, or its dried and crushed seeds, used to make a popular sauce < Yoruba. *Citrullus lanatus* in NNE but more commonly *Cucumeropsis mannii* in SNE GE.
- eko** n. boiled food made from cassava < Yoruba
- elders** n. senior people in a community, usu. with connotation of authority WAE
- elephant grass** n. tall grass sp. *Sorghum arundinaceum* AE.
- emaciate** v.i. become emaciated No matter how much an elephant has emaciated, its thigh is still bigger than a hare (*Tarok proverb 365*)
- enable** v.t. to enable ...to *I humbly wish to apply for a loan to enable me buy a motor-cycle.* GE.
- ending** n. month-ending
- engage** v.t. to become engaged to *That boy has engaged Rose*
- enjoy** v.i. to be having a good time *He is enjoying he is having a good time* GE. The West African usage seems to have preceded the Californian imperative *Enjoy!*
- enlight** v.i./t. to enlighten *I enlightened him*
N.B. this has no religious connotation in Nigeria and is usually a way of saying 'I told him'.
- enlightenment** n. knowledgeable, urban, civilised *They have not yet had enlightenment*
- entire** a. qualifies plural nouns *the entire members* all the members
- envelope** v.t. to put in an envelope *Please envelope this letter for me.*
- equally** adv. also
- equipments** n. pl. equipment Advert: *Dealer on electrical equipments* GE.
- ESCORT** p.n. the number plate given to cars that drive beside or behind a big man cf. PILOT

- estacode** n. allowance for civil servants when travelling overseas on official business
- ever** adv. never *I ever went there* I never went there
- experiment** v. experiment with *He was trying to experiment a new credit scheme*
- extra** a. extra (but precedes qualified term) *extra twenty* twenty extra GE.

F.

- factory** n. building belonging to trading house
Constructed by the large coastal traders such as John Holt. They have fallen into disuse so the term is essentially historical
- fail out** p.v.i. to fail so badly that one has to withdraw from a programme of study
After six years, all students must either pass out or fail out
- faithfuls** n.pl. church members (collective noun pluralized) May not be in general use.
- fall...down** v.t. to make fall down *the rain will fall it down* the rain will knock down [the house]
- fan palm** n. palm sp. TE. *Borassus aethiopicum*. Used for construction.
- fanciful** a. fancy *I don't like to drive fanciful car*
- fancy** n. 1. fashionable clothes
2. decoration
- fara** remote *far, far bush* remote bush area GE.
- Fare Well** sal. common written form of Farewell!
- farina** n. dry food prepared from cassava <Portuguese
- farm** n. single field/ area of farmland of a particular crop *I have five farms* I have five fields GE. Usually in the south of mixed crops harvested at particular times
- farm** v. to hoe, to cultivate
- fashion out** v.p. to fashion *He was trying to fashion it out*
- fathom** n. two yards, a measure of cloth, canoe, farmland, etc. (? confined to Niger Delta³). Also *long fathom* a measure of cloth.

³ From Williamson (ined.) *Izon* dictionary. *fathom* (square measure of cloth) *short fathom* (i.e. 72" x 32") *long fathom* (i.e. 72" x 36")

fattening house, fattening room, fattening room n.p.

Institution of the Niger Delta peoples and those eastwards along the coast. Room to which unmarried girls are sent, to be 'fattened' to make them more eligible for marriage.

SNE

Federal character n. practice of ensuring that the staff in an office or ministry come from different areas so that no one ethnic group is seen to be dominant

feeding n. money for food when away
what of my feeding? What money will I get to buy food?

fence v. to put any sort of wall, including brick and cement around s.t. GE.

fence n. any wall, including brick and cement around s.t.

fetish n. shrine, ritual object *It is my fetish.* WAE. also *juju* < Portuguese

finish v.i. to have run out *What of orange?*
Orange has finished

flood n. season when river overflows into the bush (roughly August to October)
Niger Delta region

flower n. any cultivated flowering garden plant or shrub

flower n. menstruation Archaic
English origin, now ?Pidgin

flying-boat n. speedboat

foam n. foam rubber mattress *I will go to the market to buy foam*

follow v.t. to accompany *I will follow you to market* I'll go with you to the market 'to follow' in SE sense is 'go after'

follow v.t. to attend *I need money to follow that course*

follow v.t. to take a certain direction
follow that road go that way

follow behind v.t. to go after, follow SE

followership n. state of being a follower *If you have a good leader then followership is assured* [Ovation, Issue 53:117, 2003]

food n. can be as SE, but most commonly applies to starchy staples *let us go chop food* let us go and eat a full meal. *I need food, not snacks. We have food but no soup* GE.

footing adv. by foot *we must go footing.*

forprep. in, into *put water for this cup*

forp. belonging to, by (can express parenthood)
She has two children for him. Also Is this thing for you?

forbid v.t. to put a taboo on *All the members of our family forbid iguana*

foreign n. foreign places *They bring in sophisticated weapons from foreign*

fowl n. chicken GE. arch.
SE for the specific

fox n. jackal ME. in the Delta, genet

free girl n. prostitute
also *free woman*

free lifen.p. worthless life *so-so free life he dey live*

free speech n.p. speech made by guests at ceremony that is not on the programme

free woman n. prostitute
also *free girl*

French suit n. man's two-piece suit
buttoning up to the neck arch.?
1960s/1970s

fuel n. petrol (and usually not other fuels)
fuel shortages are common

fufu n. pounded yam or cassava
GE. also *fofofo*

Fulani p.n. usual Nigerian name for the FulBe people, cattle pastoralists found throughout West Africa < Hausa. GE.

funeral home n.p. funeral parlour

fura n. balls of guinea-corn with spice, usually mixed with milk <Hausa.
Food eaten mainly in the north

furnitures n. different types of furniture

G.

gallop n. hole or bump in the road
This road has too many gallops

gallon n. plastic container for liquid *She took a gallon containing kerosene, doused some on the girl's hands and laps and set her ablaze* (Guardian 17.06.02 p.15) GE. originally the 4-litre containers for oil, but now generalised to any plastic or other container in the shape of a jerry-can; cf. *rubber*

garage n. bus-station cf. motor-park

garden egg n. eggplant, brinjal,
GE. *Solanum incanum*. Applies to local, bitter varieties, including inedible types.

gar(r)i n. dried, grated cassava
WAE. Cassava is processed in this way to

eliminate the cyanide in bitter types. The name and technology were brought by the Portuguese from the New World	go about v.i. to go about locally more than is considered proper <i>that woman is always going about</i> (the implication is that this is inappropriate behaviour)
gas v.i. to fart <i>he has gassed</i> also <i>defile the air, mess up</i>	go to hell v.p. long hooked stick for getting down fruits such as mangoes Middle Belt. Presumably from the resemblance to the hooked sticks used by devils to drag down sinners.
gas n. diesel fuel	go up and down p.v. to roam about <i>see that pig going up and down</i>
Gedu-nohor n. trade-name for <i>Entandrophragma angolense</i>	go-slow n. traffic jam esp. in Lagos <i>they were caught in the go-slow</i>
gele n. head-tie < Yoruba	goatery n. place where goats are kept
general weakness n.p. tiredness, bodyache <i>I am suffering from general weakness</i> GE.	godfather n. person in position of influence able to assist you <i>Luckily, I have a godfather on the university admissions council.</i>
George [cloth] a. tie-dyed <i>adire</i> cloth with pattern representing George V, now somewhat unrecognisably	going n. motor-cycle taxi <i>I must get a going</i> Middle Belt. A calque from Hausa <i>achaba</i> (q.v.)
get v.t. to have <i>he get plenty money</i> he has a lot of money Pidgin also GE.	gongoro lorry n. Mercedes 911 truck with locally built-up sides, usually decorated < Hausa <i>gongoro</i>
get accident v.p. to have an accident <i>the moto got accident</i>	good a. full, complete [follows qualifying numbers] <i>I spent six good years in Kano</i> < SE 'a good six years'
Ghana-must-go n. fibre bag from Taiwan with zipper and tartan or other pattern used to transport goods < a period in the 1980s when Ghanaians were expelled from Nigeria and allegedly used these bags to transport their goods back home	gorilla n. chimpanzee <i>Pan troglodytes</i> . Few Nigerians have ever seen either animal so their characteristics are somewhat vague. Actual gorillas exist in small numbers along the Nigeria/Cameroun borderland.
giant rat n. wild rat, <i>Cricetomys</i> , widely sold in markets and by the roadside CE, not widely used. Often called <i>rabbit</i> in SNE	goro n. cola, used in the same way to mean, tip, bribe, entitlement < H.
girl n. house-girl formed by analogy with 'boy'	got v.a. has become <i>the beer got finished</i> the beer has run out GE.
gist n. news, more especially gossip <i>I have plenty of gist for you today.</i>	Grammar p.n. Standard English
gist v. to tell someone the news or the gossip <i>I will come and gist you this afternoon. She gisted me fully</i> More generally, v.i. gossip, talk informally: <i>We were gisting till midnight</i> Originally student slang, but now used more widely	grasscutter n. cane rat, <i>Thryonomys swinderianus</i> also 'cutting-grass'. WAE. More often printed than spoken
give v.t. to share a story with s.o. <i>Veronica gave us an experience</i>	grasseater n. fish sp. ? calque from Hausa <i>ci haki</i>
give v.t. to make available <i>they don't want to give us light</i> they are organised enough to keep the electricity on	greet v.i./t. to greet (which is a much elaborate and formulaic process in Nigeria) <i>it is correct to greet</i> greeting is appropriate behaviour. <i>She greeted him</i> implying a formal, social process GE.
give out v.p. to give away <i>she is giving out oranges</i> More general than SE	grind v.i. to grind s.t., to have s.t. ground <i>I sent my baby out to grind</i> I sent my daughter out to get it ground
giwan ruwa n. Nile perch (<i>Lates niloticus</i>) < Hausa 'elephant of the water'	
glass n. window, esp. car-window <i>Roll down the glass!</i>	
globe n. light-bulb <i>the globe has quenched</i>	

groundnut	n.	peanut	<i>She is selling groundnut</i>	TE. <i>Arachis hypogaea</i> . N.B. The singular is often used where SE would use plural. Groundnut is a pan-African Anglophone usage and is probably a calque of French <i>pois de terre</i> , or German <i>Erdnuss</i> .	<i>offence of the conductor, who was hanging on the vehicle's door [The driver] said: "One of the policemen demanded ₦200 from me alleging that my driver was hanging". (Guardian 17.06.02 p. 2)</i>
grub	v.i.	to eat	students' slang		
guber	a.	gubernatorial (i.e. referring to the election of State governors)	<i>Borno in guber race</i> (Newspaper headline)		harlot n. prostitute <i>The harlots are dancing</i> N.B. not considered archaic in Nigerian English
guidiance	n.	guidance	<i>We pray for your guidiance and protection, oh Lord</i>		harmattan n. season of dry winds and dust, usually December-February WAE. < ? but prob. via Francophone region
guinea brocade	n.	type of cloth			haste adv.c. in the expression <i>in a haste</i>
	q.v.	brocade			Have it! excl. Usually in the context of shopping, a shopkeeper will say 'Have it!' meaning 'Take it!'
guinea-corn	n.	sorghum	WAE. <i>Sorghum bicolor</i>		head n. as in SE, but also state of mind, mental state as in Californian English <i>Your head is not correct</i> You're mad (abusively rather than medically) but also 'You are seriously confused' (about some specific matter)
guest hotel	n.	hotel with accommodation	cf. <i>hotel</i>		head-load n. amount that can be carried on the head CE
guest inn	n.	hotel with accommodation	cf. <i>hotel, lodge</i>		head-pad n. quoin, circular cloth or fibre pad, to protect the head when carrying a basin or similar GE.
gunner	n.	gunsmith, gun-supplier	noticeboard sign ≠SE 'gunner'		head-pan n. large enamel basin commonly used to carry loads GE.
guy	n.	fashionable boy or young man	<American English		head-tie n. kerchief tied around the head GE.
guy name	n.	nickname	GE.		hear v.t. to understand a language <i>I hear Yoruba</i>
guyish	a.	describes s.o. behaving like a guy	(q.v.) <i>His behaviour is guyish</i>		hear v.t. to sense, smell <i>I hear the food on fire</i>
H.					heavy a. pregnant <i>My wife is heavy</i>
Haba!	excl.	Expression of surprise or amazement	< Hausa and heard mainly in the North. GE. N.B. <i>Habahaha!</i> was a common expression of joking amazement in the US in the 1940s. Related?		heed to v.t. to heed <i>The students refused to heed to their pleas.</i> [Senate minutes] (on the analogy of listen to)
had to	aux.	it was likely that...would	<i>When the war broke out many people had to die</i>		hell of n.p. plenty of <i>They were making hell of noise</i> GE. < hell of a lot of
hair-packer	n.	small elastic band with beads attached, used to adorn a hair style			hemp n. marijuana, dope archaic SE. also Indian hemp
hairy	a.	with plenty of hair (but with a positive implication)	<i>she is a hairy girl</i> she has lots of hair		hence conj. since, because <i>Hence we are going to market, we'll buy oranges</i> In SE, 'hence' means 'therefore', 'thus', 'consequently', 'it follows that': it marks the conclusions of arguments. In NE it means 'since' or 'because', marking the premises.
handset	n.	mobile phone			herbalist n. traditional doctor who treats patients, in principle with plant remedies, but
hand-work	n.	anything produced by hand, including both crafts and physical labour	<i>It is a hand-work</i> Presumably from SE 'handiwork'		
hanging	part.	state of hanging from the back of a passenger vehicle	<i>The policeman demanded ₦200 "fine" as punishment for the</i>		

<p>also other types of socially approved magical remedies GE.</p> <p>high(-)life n. musical style now rather outmoded Probably of Ghanaian origin. (1950s and 1960s)</p> <p>highly welcome excl.p. very welcome <i>You are highly welcome!</i></p> <p>hint v.t. to give a hint to s.o. <i>he hinted me that he would go</i> hinted to me ... GE.</p> <p>hit v.t. to have sex with a woman <i>he hit her in the palour</i></p> <p>hold v.t. to stand guard over, to be in place <i>We are holding the road so that no-one may disturb you</i></p> <p>hold v.i. take place, be held <i>The meeting will hold at 4 o'clock</i> arch. SE</p> <p>hold v.i. to stay in place <i>Although I patched my bicycle it did not hold</i></p> <p>holy a. describes one who is neat and clean student slang</p> <p>home n. place where some activity is carried out <i>barbing home</i> hairdressing salon <i>maternity home</i> clinic for women to give birth <i>funeral home</i> funeral parlour</p> <p>home people n.p. extended family in your home area <i>How are your home people?</i></p> <p>hometown n. association of expatriates from a particular area or tribe, formed to promote development in their area of origin</p> <p>hook v.i. to have made a woman pregnant <i>he sexed her and it has hooked</i> he had sex with her and now she is pregnant</p> <p>hook v.t. to feel (as a pain) <i>The pain hooks me there</i></p> <p>hook (s.o.) v.t. to be arm-in-arm with someone</p> <p>horn v.t. to blow the horn on a car <i>horn him!</i></p> <p>hospitality committee n. group formed to meet with incoming Fulani pastoralists and inform them of local grazing access rights Northeast Nigeria only</p> <p>hot n. short for 'hot drink', i.e. spirits <i>beer and hots for sale</i> [Notice on shopfront] GE</p> <p>hot a. alcoholic <i>any hot drink for me, sah?</i> (often said by policemen at road-blocks)</p> <p>hotel n. commonly applied to bars and drinking places that serve food but may have no lodging 'hotel' in the SE sense is 'guest hotel'. Modern usage is gradually</p>	<p>replacing this so that NE is coming to conform to SE.</p> <p>house-rent n. rent <i>the landlord has increased the house-rent</i></p> <p>How far? int. lit. how far are you going? <i>How far have you succeeded</i> (in the matter we discussed previously)? Taken as an invitation to ride with the speaker who would normally be in a vehicle. Also used when you cross paths with s.o. and want to know how far they have come.</p> <p>How now? sal. How are you?</p> <p>I.</p> <p>ibeji n. carved figures representing twins made when one twin has died < Yoruba</p> <p>ibonise v.t. to turn a foreign word into an Igbo form</p> <p>ice-block n. ice-cube <i>Bring ice-block for this mineral</i> Sometimes just 'block' in context.</p> <p>idol n. any object used in traditional religion, such as masks and carved figures ME</p> <p>if not conj. if it were not for.. <i>if not this haze, you would see the fadama clearly</i></p> <p>Igboman p.n. Igbo person N.B. In principle, the suffix -man can be applied to any ethnic group, but in fact Igboman is the most common collocation.</p> <p>iguana n. Nile Monitor Lizard <i>Varanus niloticus</i> ME.</p> <p>ijebu n. fraud, counterfeit object, fake < Yoruba</p> <p>ikebe n. buttocks, but by extension also padding placed inside dress to enlarge the buttocks < Yoruba</p> <p>ill-lucks n. misfortunes</p> <p>illegal bunkering n.p. the practice of removing petroleum products from oil pipelines and well-heads, without authorization from either oil companies or the government. It is widely thought to involve large-scale smuggling operations that use road tankers, barges and large ships offshore.</p> <p>impressionario n. impressario Portmanteau form 'impressario' + 'impression'</p> <p>in front adv. ahead <i>The house is still in front</i> [does not mean in front of us]</p>
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in soup v.c. in trouble < English
'in the soup'

in time adv. quickly, *not* within a specified period
I hope he comes in time

Indian spinach n. small herb used for sauces
Basella alba

indigenes n. inhabitants (of a particular administrative unit or region)
We are indigenes of this state.

indigenous a. local, native
Indigenous dishes are available (Abuja Tourist Guide)

information n. used without article
I received an information.

ingredients n. spices etc. used to make soup
Are you going for ingredients? GE.

interest to v.p. to have an interest to
Consequent upon the death of my sponsor, none of my relations indicated interest to sponsor my schooling activities. (Student appeal letter)

iroko n. tree sp. used for carving
WAE. *Milicia excelsa*

iron-bender n. skilled worker in the building trade who bends and cuts iron rods to the required size

ironwood n. duramen, *i.e.* the hard central wood of certain trees TE ?

issue n. children, progeny
He has many issues Not archaic in NE. Can form plural. Extension of legal term?

J.

jam v.t. to collide, to bump against, to hit
the moto jammed me the car ran into me. *He jammed her* he bumped into her

JAMB n. pronounced jam Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (?) University entrance exam
I want to do jam.

jerry-curl n. hairdressing style
GE. < American English

join v.t. to get on board transport
Where will you join taxi?

joke n. to have a formalised joking relationship with
We Tarok joke with the Chamba people

jollof rice n. rice cooked with tomatoes and spices, served with chunks of meat at parties
GE. jollof = Wolof as the dish is purportedly from Senegal

jubilate v.i. to rejoice
Because of the Buna festival, people were jubilating

juju n. anything to do with traditional religion
he has practised juju on her he has put a spell on her. *It is a juju* it is to do with traditional religion ME.

juju n. Yoruba urban music type
GE.

just sitting down n.p. staying on one place [has no connotation of actually sitting]
there we were, just sitting down, nothing doing

K.

K-legs n. knock-kneed
to have K-legs be knock-kneed

kabukabu n. private car operating as an unlicensed taxi
Danfoss, yellow taxis and the unpainted, moonlighting kabukabus tend these days to be tokunbos, used vehicles imported mostly from Belgium (NI 343:20.col.2)

kaikai n. local gin cf.
ogogoro. GE

kanda n. skin (usually of cow or goat?)
cooked and eaten as a delicacy in pepper soup, etc.

Kano cloth n. cloth woven in narrow strips on traditional looms. Woven in many places in the North, not just in Kano. SNE.

keep v.i. to stay
I kept three days in Kaduna. Don't keep late!

keep v.t. to put (on)
keep it there on the table

kero(sene) n. paraffin < American English

kiakia n. type of minibus introduced about 1950s ?now obsolescent < Yoruba
'quickly'

kick starter n. starter motor of cars as well as motor-bikes
Open the kick starter! Start the engine!

king fern n. fern sp. ground up and rubbed on for swelling
Nephrolepis biserrata SNE.

king worm n. blind wormsnaek, amphisbaenid
Typhlops sp. SNE

kiss v.t. to hit another car gently
his moto kissed me his car touched mine
Don't kiss me (often painted on back of commercial vehicles)

knicker n. in the expression *short knicker* (q.v.)

- know how to** v.p. corresponds to SE *Do you?* or *Can you? Do you know how to eat our food?* Can you eat [Nigerian] food?GE.
- kobo** n. one-hundredth of a Naira effectively went into disuse through inflation in about the early 1990s
- kola** n. 1. nut from *Cola acuminata* and *C. nitida*, presented and shared formally in ceremonies in many areas TE. Also **cola**.
2. entertainment, hence bribe, small present *Where is my cola?*
- kose** n. fried bean-cake <Hausa =akara
- kuka** n. dried powder of baobab leaves used to make draw soup < Hausa
- kulikuli** n. dried snacks made from shaped residue after the oil has been expelled from groundnuts < Hausa
- kunnu** n. drink made from cereal flour, sugar and ginger, sold in the North, but increasingly also known in southern urban areas < Hausa
- L.**
- lace** n. cloth in the style *broderie Anglaise*, with many gaps. Imported from Austria and prestigious because expensive *they are wearing lace*
- langalanga** n. curved piece of iron used to swipe at grass and knock it down
GE. an extraordinarily ineffective tool, often used by schoolchildren NNE
- lap(s)** n. thigh(s), lap *Chicken laps for sale.* [notice] // *She put the baby on her laps.* // *The deceased was seated at the back of the vehicle carrying a fellow student on her laps* (Guardian 17.06.02 p. 2) *She took a gallon containing kerosene, doused some on the girl's hands and laps and set her ablaze* (Guardian 17.06.02 p.15) GE.
- last** a. as in English but in temporal expressions it follows the noun *Sunday last, I went to Kaduna*
- last** a. final, referring to price of goods *What is your last price? The price is hundred Naira, last.*
- late** a. dead, of people [but used without 'the' and more informally than in SE] *late Chuks gave me this book* can be intensified.
- Thus *The very late Emir of Gwandu* i.e. one who died forty years ago.
- lately** adv. late *He came lately*
- launching** n. Nigerian ceremony to introduce a new publication, society or institution where money is raised through public pledges *They are having a launching for the book* GE.
- lean** a. thin, but with implication that leanness is caused by troubles
GE. Being thin does not have a positive cultural value in West Africa
- leather [leda]** a./n. plastic [bag] *put it in a leather [bag]*
- leave** v.t. to leave off, to stop *He should leave chasing girls*
- left-hand drive** n.p. hair-style where the hair is plaited into cornrows on the left of the head
s.t. also 'right-hand drive'
- legn.** leg, but also 'ankle', 'foot' *Wipe your leg on the door-mat, please!* or *My leg is paining me too much* I have twisted my ankle Adapted from African languages where leg often stands for other parts of the lower body. Parallel usages of *hand* to include arm
- leg, to have long** v.p. to be influential, to have connections
- lend out** v.p. to lend
- lick (soup)** v.t. eat "soup" While eating with me, you are licking the soup, but I am eating the porridge [Tarok proverb 425].
- lift** v.t. to give a lift to *Will you lift me to Oshodi?*
- light** n. electricity *They have taken the light* the power has gone off GE.
- light food** n. food that comes in separated grains or pieces applies to rice, macaroni etc. Contrast with 'solid food'.
- list out** v.t. to list *I cannot fully list out all its various uses.*
- load** n. bundle, pack, head-load, luggage *Collect your loads* N.B. can also have a plural, *loads*
- lobster** n. large shrimp (*Macrobrachium vollenhovenii*) Nigeria has only shrimps, no true crayfish or lobsters
- local** a. provincial, unsophisticated *he is a local man!*
- local Maggi** n. flat cakes made from the fermented seeds of the locust tree (q.v.) and used as a soup condiment <Maggi, a commercial stock cube sold widely in West Africa

locust n.	locust-bean tree <i>Parkia biglobosa</i> . N.B. locust as an insect is usually 'cricket'	<i>Parkia</i>			
lodge n.	hotel	cf. 'guest inn'			
Lolagbola	p.n. trade-name for timber from the tree <i>Oxystigma oxyphyllum</i>				
lonely a.	lonely, also alone	<i>If we go, she will be lonely in the house.</i> If we go, she will be left on her own in the house. The two meanings may well merge in African culture.			
long-leg n.	influence, personal connection with s.o. in power	<i>He gained his position through long-leg</i> <Vernacular e.g. Hausa <i>dogon kafa</i>			
loose v.i./t.	to be loose, to come loose, to untie	<i>The thing has loosed.</i> it has become loose. <i>Loose it</i> untie it.			
loss v.c.	to be lost, as in <i>don loss</i> or <i>get loss</i>	<i>The thing has got loss.</i> it has got lost			
lost n.	loss	<i>lost of thousands of Naira</i>			
Lugarda .	old-fashioned	<i>This your shoe is Lugard</i>			
luggages	n.pl. as SE but pluralised	<i>Luggages carried at owner's risk.</i> [Notice]			
luxury bus	n. large coach as opposed to bus, usually applied to small vans	also <i>luxurious bus</i>			
M.					
M & B n.	all types of medicines	lit. acronym for May & Baker, formerly a manufacturer of common pharmaceutical products			
ma n.	Term of respect used to address an older woman	<i>Ma, I don't know how to do this.</i>			
machine	n. motor-bike				
machine boy	n.p. motor-bike taxi driver	see Okada			
maclean	n. any toothpaste	< Brand name			
madam .	generic respectful term for older woman	<i>I have been hearing of this madam</i>			
maggi n.	any commercially made stock-cube	< Maggi brand name			
mahogany n.	tree sp.	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>			
majority	n.p. used without article	<i>They are majority</i> GE.			
make v.t.	to do [hair]	<i>she has gone to salon to make her hair</i>			
make accident	v.p. to have an accident	<i>The moto has made accident</i>			
Makossa	p.n. rhythmic dance music	popular in Nigeria of putative Congolese origin			
mallam .	n. technically, learned Islamic scholar	but often a title of respect for any putatively learned person, also humorous	<i>Mallam! What is the day?</i> Generalized to any male dressing in Islamic style; also title = Mr. for a Muslim		
mamban .	lead bars or ingots used to make shot for cannons	Niger Delta area. archaic			
Mami-Wata	p.n. Goddess -the subject of a widespread cult in the Niger Delta area	GE. Represented as a mermaid, with snaky hair and believed to be responsible for pulling fishermen to their deaths, although also courted to enrich people			
mammy n.	woman, usually applied to mature women who run market-stalls				
mammy market	n. market attached to barracks where products for soldiers are sold, such as dogmeat				
mammy-wagon	n. lorry converted to carry passengers on seats facing backwards	arch. as replaced by other types			
manage v.i.	to be surviving	<i>We are managing</i> GE.			
manage v.t.	to make do, to put up with	<i>He begged me to manage him in the one room</i> He asked me to put up with him staying in the same room <i>The car developed problem, but I managed it to Onitsha</i>			
market woman	n.p. woman who regularly sells in the market, trader				
match v.i./t.	to tread on, to trample on	<i>Match on it</i> trample on it	Confusion with <i>mash?</i> <i>to mash palm-oil</i>		
matchet	n. machete, used for cutting vegetation	cf. <i>cutlass</i>			
matchstick	n. match	GE.			
mate n.	co-wife	SNE			
maternity	n. maternity clinic				
mbeke n.	white man	shouted at foreigners in the south-central regions of Nigeria. In Port Harcourt area it is <i>bekee</i>			

meat n.	as in SE, but also a small piece of meat served with soups, sold by the individual chunk <i>add one meat!</i> put one more chunk of meat in the stew	
medicine n.	conventional SE sense but also extended to a wide variety of chemicals, particularly agricultural <i>insect medicine</i> pesticide GE. extended to mean charm or poison	
mediocre n.	mediocre person can be pluralised. Falling out of use.	
meeek a.	timid [but applied to mind] <i>The stock market is not for meek minds</i> [Ovation, Issue 53:159, 2003]	
meet v.t.	to encounter, but used for objects and situations <i>I met your absence</i> GE.	
mense v.i.	to menstruate <i>she has stopped mensing</i>	
mess, make a v.p.	to cast in an inferior light <i>my wife's meals will always make a mess of any food I eat outside</i> [Ovation, Issue 53:196, 2003]	
mess (up) v.i.	to fart < pidgin	
mess up with v.p.	to socialise with in a disapproved way <i>The Hausa boys were messing up with Christian girls</i>	
microchip n.	tiny piece of paper with useful information concealed on the body in an exam st.sl.	
Middle Belt p.n.	region of Nigeria between ethnic block of the Yoruba and Igbo in the south and the Hausa in the north. Roughly from south of Kaduna to north of Ilorin	
mighty a.	large, powerful, overbearing <i>it is very mighty</i> archaic in SE but current in NE and GE	
mind v.t.	usu. in the expression <i>Don't mind..</i> + pron. meaning Don't pay any attention to..	
mind v.t.	want, like <i>would you mind some biscuits?</i> Would you like some biscuits? Has no negative implication	
mineral n.	soft drink GE	
mise v.i.	to be miserly <i>I have to mise my money</i> I must mind my money carefully back-formation from 'miser'	
miss, to v.t.	to not have, to have lost <i>she missed her husband</i> her husband is no longer around (dead, divorced etc.)	
missing, to get v.c.	lost, vanished <i>Sah, the key got missing</i>	
moinmoin n.	cake made of boiled Bambara groundnuts, commonly sold in markets	
molue n.	bus used for urban transport <i>The choicest curses of the molue drivers are reserved for those in private cars – in the lingo of the road battles, the 'slaves' and 'bastards' who are drivers to the car-owning class</i> (NI 343:21.col.1) < Yoruba see Bamgbose's etymology	
money n.	as in SE but also 'cost' <i>Your money is..</i> It costs...	
money-minded a.	obsessed with obtaining money (≠stingy) <i>Girls are money-minded.</i> [Onitsha Market pamphlet]	
monkey n.	As in SE; also derogatory, insulting of a person <i>Who is that monkey?</i>	
monthend adv.	at the end of the month, when salaries are paid <i>I go pay you monthend</i> I'll pay you at the end of the month	
Mopol p.n.	Mobile Police, an extremely aggressive force brought out in times of civil emergency nickname is 'Kill and Go'	
moreso conj.	especially <i>The Dean, Student Affairs, pleaded that Senate should tread softly on the matter, moreso, as the affected students were not allowed to contest the election.</i> (Senate minutes) <i>Acknowledging our past and its lessons are more beneficial than denying it, moreso, when we use the lessons learnt to shape our past and future</i> (Vobnu, Ogoni, p. viii) <i>Moreso, when a nation or people loses her language, their culture and identity are lost</i> (Vobnu, Ogoni, p. 2) GE.	
moto n.	car <E. motor. GE.	
motor-park n.	garage for commercial vehicles, bus station <i>garage</i> in this sense is also NE	
move with v.p.	to accompany on a regular basis, usually implying friendship <i>he moves with me</i> we always go about together GE.	
Mr. Hare p.n.	common protagonist of folk-tales in the north GE. = (Mr) Tortoise in the south	
Mr. Man sal.	Way of addressing s.o. unknown to you joc. Disappearing?	
mud v.	to slap dollops of mud on a house either in building or sealing cracks <i>They are mudding that person's house</i>	
murtala n.	Twenty Naira banknote from the portrait of Gen. Murtala Mohammed who appears on the note	

N.

nama n. zebu cow <Hausa

Native Authority p.n. administrations established in the colonial era as part of the system of Indirect Rule

naming ceremony n.p. Ceremony rather similar to baptism of Islamic origin? Now normally replaced by *child dedication* in the South

native court n. courts established in the colonial era to try cases according to customary law

native cow n. small local cow as opposed to the Fulani zebu

native doctor n. practitioner of traditional medicine, cf. herbalist GE.

native law n.p. customary law of a particular ethnic group, applied in customary courts (q.v.) *they tried him according to native law* GE. this sounds rather archaic in SE but is current in NE

native potash n. potash obtained from burnt plantain peelings and stumps of palm bunches

neck-deep a. in deeply *She was neck-deep in relations with Mr. A.* ? for SE 'knee-deep'

neighbourly a. neighbouring *Fulani from neighbourly state of Borno*

NEPA p.n. the national power company, often used for electricity in general *NEPA has gone off there's no electricity* <Nigerian Electric Power Agency

net v.t. to capture *The police netted him*

never part. don't *Never you be envious of that which belongs to another!*

news n. item of news *there is a news that...*

next tomorrow adv. the day after tomorrow

Ngbati a. Yoruba *it is disheartening that the Ngbati press must do everything* (The News, 20:9, 3/2/03)

Nigerian factorn. general explanation invoked whenever a well-designed plan does not work out as expected

night-fighter n. prostitute

nko s.t. indefinite generalizing tag *Suppose they sell the land and then something comes up nko, what happens then?*

no more a. any longer *there was no more love between the couple* the couple didn't love each other any longer

non-challance/non-challant n., a. nonchalance, nonchalant
Common written error

not more adv. no longer *he was not more coming to that place*

not quite adv.p. a little, not much *I was sitting not quite far from you* I was sitting near you

not quite long adv.p. for only a short time *He had been doing this for not quite long, when..*

not reach v.i. to be inadequate, to be not enough *the money did not reach* GE.

novel n. reading matter of almost any type except the Bible and newspapers

now now adv. immediately, at once *Do it now now!*

number six n. brain *Use your number six!* student slang?

nyash n. genitals?buttocks < ?
Portuguese

nylon [lilo] a. plastic (usually bag)
has begun to replace 'leather' in this context
In the Port Harcourt area, *nylon* now largely replaced by *waterproof* in the sense of plastic bag

O.

oo s.t. tag placed at the end of sentences, to soften the statement or give it slight emphasis *I think I would do it, oo!* *Go register now, oo* [ID Card poster, March 2003]

òòò p.u.t. tag placed at the beginning of sentences, following the assertion of a previous speaker indicating negative consequences
They promised to pay on Tuesday. Ooo!
Last month they were a week late

oak-tree n. tree with strong wood, often used for canoes SNE. (*Panda oleosa* Pierre PANDACEAE)

oba n. < Yoruba. Other status titles are commonly used in the appropriate part of the country: **amanyanabo** (Eastern Ijo) etc.

Obechen. trade-name for the tree *Triplochiton schleroxylon*

Obong p.n. Traditional ruler of Efik/Ibibio peoples < Efik/Ibibio

off v.t.	to turn off, to switch off <i>light!</i>	<i>off the</i>	operate v.t.	to operate on, be operated on <i>they will operate him tomorrow</i>	
offsprings	n. offspring <i>offsprings are many</i>	<i>My</i>	opportune to	p.v. to have the opportunity to <i>He was not opportune to go to Jos</i>	He didn't have a chance to go to Jos
off head	adv. something you know without referring to a book, by heart <i>I know this off head</i>	< SE 'off the top of my head'	original	a. authentic <i>original one</i>	not a fake [applied to anything manufactured: motor parts, electrical appliances etc.] <i>original village man</i> really coming from the village [but implying down-to-earth, not citified]
office pin	n. pin	GE.	osomaalo	n. originally a name for an Ijeṣa Yoruba trade association but now a general term of an Ijeṣa person <i>Osomaalos made money, built houses but they can't pool resources</i>	[quoted in Trager, 2001, <i>Yoruba Hometowns</i> , p. 62]
often and often	adv. very often		other	a. as in SE but used with reference to both entities being discussed.	
Oga	n. master, boss term of respect often used partly ironically. <i>How now, Oga?</i>	< Yoruba	other time, the	n. some time ago, on the last occasion when.. <i>He said he met you the other time, and..</i>	
ogbanje	n. child that continually reincarnates and dies to torment the parents < Igbo = repeater = abiku < Yoruba		outing [ceremony]	n.p. ceremony after the funeral when the family puts on bright clothes and goes to church together.	
ogling	a. qualifies a noun <i>girls parading their flesh in front of ogling men</i> (Thisday 6.12.02)		outrightly	adv. completely <i>They outrightly objected to it</i>	
ogogoro	n. locally-distilled alcohol < Yoruba?		overflow	v.i. to flood, to burst banks, to gush out <i>the river is overflowing</i>	GE.
okada	n. motor-bike taxi <i>the okadas are many</i>	< Okada, a former airline with a somewhat unfortunate safety record	overhurling	n. overhauling common error in signboards	
okpokoro	n. dried, salted cod, imported from Scandinavia, now an expensive delicacy cf. also stockfish		overspeed	v.i. to go too fast <i>Do not overspeed!</i>	GE.
okrika	n. secondhand/used clothing		oyibo	n. white man <i>oyibos get money</i>	white people are rich <i>Oyibo!</i> is shouted at foreigners in central and southwest Nigeria Since the civil war it has largely replaced older terms such as <i>bekee</i> and <i>onye ocha</i> in eastern Nigeria
OmoTM	n. any soap powder GE. Omo is now discontinued in Europe but those with longer memories will know that it washes whiter		P.		
on v.t.	to turn on, to switch on <i>on the light! They onned the generator.</i>		pack	v.i./t. to put away, to remove, to steal <i>they packed it they stole it</i>	<i>packing of water</i> throwing out the water from a pond to catch the fish
on n.c.	replaces 'in' in nominal phrases e.g. <i>dealer on</i> as in <i>He is a dealer on electrical goods</i> the default preposition in NE		pack	v.t. to put inside, to tie up, to confine <i>she has packed her hair</i> she has tied it up in a bun or ponytail. <i>Those trousers pack your buttocks very well</i>	
on v.	to have on <i>if road safety stops you, you must be on seat-belt</i> i.e. you must be wearing your seat-belt		pack	v.t. to park <i>please pack your car well</i>	common error on signboards
on admission	adv.c. describes being admitted to hospital <i>I am on admission</i>				
on break	adv.c. describes taking a break <i>We are on break</i>				
on fire	adv.c. to be cooking <i>the food is on fire</i> ≠ SE 'burning'				
on seat	adv.c. the expression <i>to be on seat.</i> is to be present in the office <i>He is on seat</i>				
on transfer	adv.c. either being or already transferred <i>My brother is on transfer</i>				
one-one	adv. one-by-one, singly <i>he gave out the oranges one-one. Make two-two copies</i> can be applied to any number, <i>two-two, three-three</i> etc.				

pack in p.v.	to move in	<i>they have packed in</i>	pepper n.	chilli	TE. <i>Capsicum annuum</i> (≠ European pepper)
pack (out)	p.v.	to pack up and leave	<i>the landlord warned him to pack out</i>	people n.	usu. in the expression <i>How are your people?</i> meaning extended family
pack	v.t.	to carry away	<i>See where they are packing the sand from the riverbed</i>	pepper-fruit	n. fruit sp. chewed as a snack <i>Dennetia tripetala</i>
packer	n.	dustpan		pepper soup	n. type of consommé soup made with meat or fish and containing chilli pepper but no oil
palavern.		discussion, trouble, matter	<i>woman palaver</i>	peprisha.	peppery <i>the soup is somehow peprish</i> for 'pepperish'
		GE. often used jocularly and in humorous versions of W. African speech. < Portuguese <i>palabra</i>		periwinkle	n. small, black-shelled shellfish, extremely popular as food along the coast. <i>Tympanotonus fuscatus.</i> ≠ British periwinkle.
pain	v.t.	to be painful	<i>This my leg pains me too much my leg is very painful it pains you, why?</i> [common slogan on trucks] GE.	personnel	n. as in SE but used as a singular <i>her friend was a personnel at Kingsway</i>
palm-wine	n.	sap tapped from the terminal bud of various palms, which ferments and is used as a drink	TE.	petty petty	a. small, trifling, unimportant <i>Why do you give me such petty petty things?</i> GE.
pami	n.	palm-wine		Phar.	n. pharmacist, abbreviation used on calling cards etc.
pant	n.	women's knickers	<i>she tore her pant</i> GE.	pick (1)	v.t. to get (usually a vehicle) <i>He picked a taxi to Lagos</i> GE.
Panya	p.n.	Fernando Po	< <i>España</i>	pick (2)	v.t. to pick up (phone) <i>Will you not pick it?</i>
parable	n.	proverb	< ? from early missionaries trying to explain parables as symbolic language.	piece	n. measure of cloth GE.
parlour/palour	n.	applied both to beer-drinking places and to the sitting-room in a house. <i>Beer palour</i> or <i>Let us go sit in the palour</i> The spelling <i>palour</i> is common on notices. Despite the spelling, always pronounced <i>palə</i>		piece of cake	n.p. share of something <i>they are always asking for their piece of cake</i> ≠ SE 'piece of cake' for easy to do
parlour party	n.p.	party held in the front room of the house		PILOT	p.n. the number plate given to cars that drive in front of a big man cf. ESCORT
parry away	p.v.	to fend off	<i>Farmers try to parry away the Fulani from their fields</i>	pin	v.t. to fix (stick) in ground <i>Pin that stick here</i>
particulars	n.	car papers	<i>Show me your particulars!</i> a common demand by police at road-blocks GE.	pito	n. local beer brewed from sorghum, millet etc. NNE < Hausa. GE.
pass	c.a.	to exceed, to surpass	<i>he get money pass that man</i> < Pidgin. GE.	place	n. place of origin, either town, country or region <i>where is your place?</i> i.e. where do you come from?
pass	v.i.	to turn aside, to bend	<i>go straight then pass right</i> GE.	plate-number	n. number-plate
pass all	v.p.	best	<i>watch doctor pass all</i> < Pidgin. GE.	play	n. dance or masquerade <i>it is a play</i> it is a masquerade or dance
pass away	v.p.	to pass the time over a period	<i>a novel would help me pass away the weekend</i>	play	v.i. to play as in SE, but also to perform dance or masquerade <i>they are playing a dodo</i> they are performing a masquerade <i>They are playing masquerade today</i>
passport	n.	passport photo	<i>Bring me one passport</i>	play	v.t. to caress sexually, make love <i>They are playing love</i>
patch	v.t.	to repair a puncture	<i>I will go to the vulcaniser to patch it</i>		
pear	n.	1. avocado pear 2. fruit of indigenous tree <i>Pachylobus edulis.</i> SNE			

play v.i.	to forage about (animals) <i>They just allow the chickens to be playing in the house anyhow</i>
playground n.	place in a village where dances, masquerades, meetings etc. are held has no association with children
playmates n.	two people in a joking relationship <i>they are playmates</i> GE. this implies they can abuse each other, sometimes violently, without offence being taken. Sometimes this relationship also exist between households, clans or even tribes
please s.t.	inserted in various positions in a sentence to express deference <i>No, please!</i> Forgive me for refusing
plenty n.	plenty of <i>he get plenty children</i> GE. Pidgin
plumpy a.	plump <i>that woman is plumpy</i> GE. (older?)
poach v.i.	to have diarrhoea <i>yesterday I was poaching</i> N.B. does not mean you have taken a medicine. cf. purge
police n.	policeman <i>one police is there taking bribe</i> GE.
politics n.	shorthand for the introduction of democratic elections in 1999 <i>since there was politics we no longer pay tax on fish-ponds</i>
pomade n.	oily paste rubbed on the hair and body GE. can be extended to almost any sort of cream rubbed on the body
porridge 1. n.	heavy dumpling-like porridge of cereals such as sorghum, millet etc. served as a staple Northern
porridge 2. n.	cooked staple with sauce mixed in Southern
possible best n.	best <i>I have tried my possible best.</i>
potash n.	yellowish-grey stone from the North Ground for use in cooking and with snuff. A mixture of sodium and potassium carbonate.
potassium n.	blue mineral taken as medicine
poultry n.	poultry farm <i>The committee inspected 15 poultries on campus.</i>
pound v.t.	to pound a staple into porridge GE. not usually found in other senses
praise-singer n.	musician or singer who sings praises to eminent people in the North WAE
prawn n.	prawn, but also shrimp and other smaller crustaceans such as sqills and ghost-shrimps
pregnate v.t.	to make pregnant <i>she has been pregnated. He has pregnated her</i> Also pregnant (stress on second syllable)
press v.t.	to iron <i>He is pressing clothes</i> ≠ dry-cleaning as in SE
price v.t.	to find out the price of <i>Please price tomatoes for me!</i>
private part n.p.	genitals GE.
properties n.	property <i>Collect your properties</i>
prostitute v.i.	to behave as a prostitute <i>Becky began prostituting at age nineteen.</i> [Information booklet]
protector n.	metal grille placed over door or window as burglar-proofing
provincial a.	small-minded, dull <i>he is a provincial man</i>
pudding n.	prepared food wrapped in leaves
puff-puff n.	round fried cakes made from flour and sugar also poff-poff
puggy a.	
pure water n.	water (from any source) sealed inside plastic bags and sold cold from the fridge in the street <i>Viable small businesses ... are mostly in such trades as hair dressing and barbing salons, tailoring shops as well as "pure water" packaging businesses. (Guardian 11.10.02 p. 22, col. 2)</i>
purge v.i.	to have diarrhoea <i>yesterday I was purging</i> N.B. does not mean you have taken a medicine. cf. poach
pushfula.	pushy, ambitious, go-ahead
put on v.t.	as in SE, but also 'to wear' <i>He is putting on shoes</i> He is wearing shoes
put to bed v.i./t.	to give birth (to) <i>She put to bed a bouncing baby boy</i>
put to birth v.i./t.	to give birth

Q.

- qualitative** a. quality *The thing is qualitative* It is of good quality
- quarrel** v.t. to argue with s.o. *I quarrelled him* I argued with him
- Queen's English** n.p. Standard Nigerian English in contrast to *Broken English* (q.v.). Mainly SNE
- quelea (bird)** n. black-faced dioch, a major agricultural pest in semi-arid Nigeria < Scientific name *Quelea quelea*
- quench** v.i./t. to stop, to turn off, to extinguish *The thing has quenched* It has stopped. *Quench it!* Turn it off cf. colonial era story of someone buying an electric stove/oven (then a novelty) just before going on leave, and asking cook on his return how it was working: reply "Fine! Fire never quench!"
- query** v.t. to question intensively [over a bureaucratic misdeed] *The headmaster queried him seriously* GE.
- quite** a. qualifier in the sense of 'very' but used with negatives See 'not quite'
- Quite an age!** sal. I haven't seen you for ages!

R.

- rabbit** n. giant rat, *Cricetomys*, widely sold in markets and by the roadside. cf. **giant rat** SNE only. Rabbit as in SE in NNE.
- rank xerox** n. copying in an exam exactly, contrast *dubbing* St. sl.
- rascal** a. badly-behaved, criminal *Those rascal boys did this!*
- rascality** n. bad behaviour *he never tires of his rascality*
- rascally** a. badly-behaved, criminal *they are rascally* they behave badly
- rate** n. usu. in the expression *at the rate of* xx meaning 'it cost xx'
- reach** v.i./t. to reach in SE, but also intransitively *we have reach* we have arrived
- recent, of** adv. recently *I have not seen him of recent*
- Reduce!** excl. Lower the price!
- refusal** n. refutation commonly used in newspapers to deny s.t. is the case

- remain** v.t. to be left over *remain ten Naira* there is ten Naira left GE.
- remotely** adv. in a remote place, far away *he lives remotely in the village* he lives far away in a village
- rentagen.** rent
- reply** v.i. to reply to *he replied me*
- request for** v.t. to request *I wish to request for a loan.* GE. (on the model of **ask for**)
- research** n. used with indefinite article *The Hart Report is a very treacherous historical document to rely on for a serious research.* (Aye, E. U. 2002. The origin and migrations of the Efiks. Calabar: The Author.)
- result to** v.t. result in *They will ask you some tough questions which will result to your death if you are unable to answer them well.* RF
- revenge** v.i. to revenge an action *I will revenge* N.B. has a less serious, more jocular aspect than SE.
- rewind** v.i. repeat, start over *Prof I beg, rewind* st. sl.
- ripe** v.i. to ripen *the mango has riped* GE.
- ritualist** n. follower of traditional religion, but often with implication of s.o. who kills others for ritual purposes
- road-safety** n. A special unit intended to enforce road-safety regulations *the road-safety are taking bribe on Abuja road*
- round** n. bout of sexual activity *inability to go a second round* [common expression in adverts for traditional medicine]
- roundlight** n. Mercedes Benz sp. [defined as] *the type of Mercedes Benz with two pairs of round headlights that currently represents the summit of material achievement* (NI 343:20.col.1)
- roselle** n. green leaf, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, used to make soup TE. also **sorrel** (q.v.)
- rub minds** v.p. to interact with, to discuss with *let us rub minds*
- rubber [roba]** n. A. any strip of elastic material, such as the flexible strips used to attach loads to a bicycle *use roba to fix it to the bicycle*
B. plastic bowl, bucket or similar open container GE. around Port Harcourt

S.

sakara n. popular music style using a small frame-drum, *sakara*

Salla(h) p.n. Islamic festivals of Id-el-Fitri and Id-el-Kebir *I am going for Salla*
GE. <Arabic *sala* 'pray'

sawasawa n. fruit sp. *Annona squamosa* cf. also *soursop*

sanitation n. custom of staying in the house on some Saturday mornings so that the householders could keep 'the environment' clean
Begun in the 1970s and now discontinued

sapara n. lighter, more casual form of **agbada**
<name of Yoruba doctor who introduced it

Sapele n. trade-name for *Entandrophragma cylindricum*

say v.t. usu. in the expression *What says the time?* i.e. 'What is the time?'

scattered p.a. untidy, messy *The house is scattered*

scent-leaf n. scented green leaf
Ocimum gratissimum

schooling n. at school *Where are you schooling?* N.B. implies secondary school not University

scrape v.t. to shave off *He scraped his head* He shaved off all the hair on this head.

sea n. wide river or estuary, not the ocean
Nigerian Delta English

sea-pirates n. pl. pirates who rob passengers and leave them stranded while they make off with the boat (the equivalent on the rivers of armed robbers on the roads)

second burial n.p. ceremony held a year or more after the death of an important person

security n. security man, guard
Where is the security for this building?

see flower v.p. to menstruate

see pepper v.p. to get or be in trouble

sef u.t. emphatic? *I have been hearing of this madam and saying who is this woman, sef?* of Pidgin origin although used more widely now
Dis God sef!

Na wa oh:- me I no know

How I go take think am sef

E just dey surprise me every time I think of am!

(Pidgin poem by B. A. Mukoro-Penawei)

seize v.t. to cut off [electricity] *NEPA has seized the light* cf. also *take* *They have taken light*

select v.t. to separate out, e.g. into large and small sizes *she was selecting the good groundnuts* contrasted with choose (q.v.)

sell out v.p. to sell *she is selling out local Maggi*

semi-singlet n. type of t-shirt

send-forth party n.p. party to celebrate either a girl getting engaged or someone being posted to another part of the country

senior v.t. to be older than *He seniors me*

senior service n.p. senior ranks of the civil service

series n. Used without indefinite article *It has a hard, paper-like texture, which softens after series of washings.* (Nigerian Tribune 25.06.02 p4).

seriously adv. strongly, intensely *I will query you seriously* I will ensure you are questioned intensively [over a bureaucratic misdeed] GE.

sew v.t. to make (by sewing) **damask** *was used to sew iro and buba.* (Nigerian Tribune 25.06.02 p4) GE.

sex v.t. to have sex with s.o. *he sexed her very well* he engaged in energetic sex with her GE.

Sha p.u.t. makes the sentence that follows conditional but often simultaneously asks a question *Sha, you are going to the market, buy me some tomatoes will you please?* If you are going to the market, please buy me some tomatoes

shall have aux have (in future context) cf. 19th c. English: 'When the seas and large rivers of our globe shall have been more fully explored, many animals may be brought to knowledge of the naturalist, which at present are known only in the state of fossils' G. Young 1840 Scriptural geology (cited in S. Winchester 2001 (2002) The map that changed the world, p.116

share v.t. to deal (cards)

sharp v.t. to sharpen *he was sharpening the knife*

shea n. tree, *Vitellaria paradoxa*
GE. formerly the most common source of oil in savanna areas, but now falling into disuse. Also **shea-oak**

shea-butter	n.	oil from the shea tree GE.	or <i>add more soup, small-small</i> GE. Can also be an exclamation, <i>Small-small!</i> meaning gently, or carefully
shea-oak	n.	shea tree Colonial era expression no longer in use. 'Oak' from the shape of the leaves.	smell pepper v.p. to get a shock <i>He will smell pepper today</i> He'll get a shock
shock	v.t.	to give ... a shock <i>Take care or the thing will shock you</i>	snail-speed a. slow <i>There are many factors responsible for the snail-speed development</i> [The Tarok Woman, p. 63, TWA 2000]
short knicker	n.p.	shorts <i>you are wearing short knicker again</i>	snake-lizard n. skink
shout on	p.v.	to shout at, to talk to aggressively <i>Why do you shout on me like that?</i>	snap v.t. to photograph <i>Snap me!</i> take a photo of me arch. SE
shovel	n.	spade	so v.c. that s.t. is the the case <i>they deny so they deny that it is the case</i>
shunt	v.i.	to join a queue other than at the end st. sl.	so far as adv. p. for 'Insofar as' <i>So far as I have already come, Since I've come anyway</i> arch. SE
signboard	n.	sign, advertising hoarding GE.	Sokoto n. traditional dress associated with Sokoto
silk-cotton	n.	kapok tree, <i>Ceiba pentandra</i> TE. So called because the pods contain a fluffy cotton used to stuff pillows	solid food n. any type of pounded staple or food that does not come in separated grains applies to yam, pounded cereals etc. Contrast with 'light food'. Also 'strong food'.
since long	adv.p.	for a long time, since long ago <i>Since long, he has not come here</i>	some funny thing n.p. strange thing <i>My brother told me about some funny thing</i>
sister	n.	respect term for woman of approximately equal age and status to the speaker GE. more commonly but not necessarily used by women	somebody n. person <i>You said that you should advise me to marry him because he was a mannered somebody.</i> RF
sit down	v.i.	to stay in one place <i>sitting down and doing nothing</i> does not mean literally sitting but implies inaction	Sorry! excl. Exclamation used when someone hurts themselves or suffers a loss. GE. This is used even when it is the fault of the individual, which would be inappropriate in SE
size	v.t.	to be the right size for, to fit <i>The jacket does not size me</i>	sort v.t. bribe a lecturer to pass an exam or get a better grade <i>She has sorted the lecturer. A lecturer is not ready to teach his course, at the end he sets a paper, and of course the students sort him</i> (heard in Senate) st.sl. but now becoming generalised
slang	n.	slang expression, can be pluralized <i>It is a slang</i> or <i>Students use many slangs</i> GE.	sorting n. bribing of a lecturer to pass an exam or get a better grade <i>Sorting is too common today</i> st.sl.
slap	v.t.	to slap, but metaphorically to give great offence to so. <i>He abused me, so I slapped him well-well</i> GE. to slap someone is to insult them very seriously	so-so a. very
sleep off	v.p.	to go to sleep <i>I sat down to read my book and just slept off</i>	soup n. sauce accompanying any pounded staple GE.
slippers	n.	flip-flops, flat rubber beach-shoes	soursop n. fruit of West Indian origin TE. <i>Annona squamosa</i> cf. also
small	a.	applied to people (usually <i>small boy, small girl</i>), unimportant <i>He is just a small boy</i> He is low-status, his opinions don't matter GE.	sawasawa
small	adv.	a little, not very much <i>Let us go chop small</i> let us go and eat a little <i>wait small</i> wait a little	spark v.i. to produce showers of sparks <i>NEPA wire is sparking</i> the electricity wires are showering sparks not uncommon in the rainy season and a great source of entertainment to all
small chop	n.p.	snacks, small dishes of food GE.? more a colonial usage than genuinely part of West African English	
small-small	adv.	little by little, in small amounts <i>things are getting better small-small</i>	

those who witness it. Nigeria's equivalent of the Northern lights.	the motor-cycle taxi drivers are very irresponsible
spark v.t. to connect, as in electrical wiring <i>Spark it!</i> [said by car mechanic to second mechanic to make a connection] GE.	sweet a. delicious, good-tasting, not necessarily applied to sweet things. Extended to things other than food <i>the soup is very sweet</i> the sauce is delicious <i>The music/dance is very sweet</i> GE.
specie n. singular of <i>species</i>	sugar-daddy n. older man who supports younger woman in exchange for sex GE. < American English
spent horse n.p. person who no longer has anything to contribute ? for 'spent force'	sugar-mummy n. older woman who supports younger man in exchange for sex GE. Sugar-daddy is a longstanding Americanism but sugar-mummy is a more recent West African formation.
spoil v.i./t. to go bad, to no longer work <i>The thing has spoiled</i> It has stopped working. <i>They have spoiled all they've messed everything up</i> GE.	sue to court v.p. to bring a charge against s.o. <i>He will sue me to court</i> he will bring a charge against me
spottish a. spotted <i>the animal is somehow spottish</i>	suffer v.i. to make things difficult for s.o. <i>He was suffering me</i> he was making things difficult for me
spray v.t. to place money on the forehead of a dancer or musician at a ceremony	suya n. kebab, roasted meat on stick <i>University of suya</i> [sign on roadside kebab stand] <Hausa
spring-bed n. bed with springs as opposed to hard base	swallow v.i./t. to eat pounded yam or other foods that do not require chewing <i>No, I don't want jollof rice, I want to swallow</i> i.e. I want to eat yam etc.
squat, to v.i. to stay with friends or relatives temporarily [usually because you cannot stay in your own home] <i>she is just there, squatting</i>	sweet a. good-tasting, desirable <i>The soup was very sweet</i> ≠sugary
squelch v.i./t. to finish, to stop working (device)	swell-fish n. puffer-fish <i>Tetraodon spp.</i>
staff n. staff member, co-worker <i>He is a staff at the school.</i> Also in plural. <i>They are staffs at the college</i> Also <i>I had lunch with one of my staffs</i> GE.	T.
steal away v.t. to steal <i>I don't park my car on the road, in case thieves steal it away.</i>	tablet n. pills, a pill <i>I am going to town to look for tablet</i>
stew n. sauce accompanying staple that is boiled, such as yam, rice etc. GE.	Taiwan adj. inferior type of manufactured article (contrast Belgian)
stockfish n. dried, salted cod, imported from Scandinavia, now an expensive delicacy GE. cf. also <i>okpokoro</i>	take v.t. to eat, to prefer a type of food or drink <i>Can you take Nigerian food?</i> Do you eat Nigerian food? GE.
storey building n.p. any building with more than one storey GE.	take v.t. cut (power) <i>They have taken light</i> the electricity has gone off also <i>seize</i>
stranger n. visitor, guest <i>I see you have strangers visiting</i> GE. adapted from Nigerian languages where stranger and visitor are often the same word	take in p.v. to become pregnant, to conceive <i>She has taken in . Their daughter took in somebody</i>
strolling n. wandering about in a social fashion like the Mediterranean promenade, but also applied to animals <i>we are going for strolling</i> or <i>the pig has gone for strolling</i>	take it to be p.v. to assume that s.t. is x
strong food n. any type of pounded staple or food that does not come in separated grains applies to yam, pounded cereals etc. Contrast with 'light food'. Also 'solid food'.	Take time! excl. used to urge s.o. to do s.t. slowly and carefully
stupid a. irresponsible, uncontrolled, badly-behaved <i>those machine boys are very stupid</i>	talk less conj. let alone A lady officer had said that they had not been able to

honour tickets bought in Cameroon, talk less of the one from Nigeria.

tamba n. finger-millet < Hausa

taste v.i. to taste [but without object] *the beans do not taste well*

tasteful a. tasty *for your tasteful food* [typical restaurant sign]

taxi-park n. place where long-distance taxis congregate cf. also motor-park

tean. any drink made with hot water GE.

tea-bush n. *Ocimum gratissimum*
Term taught in schools in colonial period. =

scent-leaf

tear v.i./t. to be torn or to tear up *The cloth has torn. You can tear it, it is useless.*

tell lie v.p. to tell a lie *He is telling lie!*

temporal a. temporary *This patch is only temporal, we will fix it properly tomorrow* GE.

ten-pounder n. West African ladyfish
Elops lacerta

tent n. mosquito net ? restricted to the Delta area

that dem. fronted demonstrative *That your book*

thatch n. thatching-mat, many of which are used to thatch a house *They have bought many thatches.*

themselves pron. each other *My sisters love themselves.* or *The Husband and Wife who hate themselves* [title of an Onitsha novel]

thinking nothing v.p. to not be thinking about anything particular *I was sitting there, thinking nothing*

those days, in adv. p. in the far past *People used to go about naked in those days.*

thunder protector n. lightning protector

tiger n. leopard ME

tiger-nut n. sweet, edible corm,
Cyperus esculentus TE

tight v.t. to tighten *tight the screw* GE.

tight friend a.p. close friend

till date a.p. up till now *Thank you, god, for sparing our lives till date!* [Ovation, Issue 53:132, 2003]

tinted a. with tinted windows *he always goes about in tinted cars* he travels in a car with smoked-glass windows

tokunbo n. used vehicle, stereotypically imported from Belgium

these cars generally arrive from Cotonou and are now imported from a wide variety of European countries. The expression can also be applied to other 'second-new' items.

tolotolo a. as in toloto head, i.e. stupid
that toloto head is still trailing him < Hausa, Yoruba *toloto*, 'turkey'.

tombo n. palm-wine

tomtom n. slit-gong
SNE. N.B. This sounds rather patronising in SE but is used without pejorative implications in NE.

tong v.t. to straighten with tongs *tonging*, often seen on hairdressers' adverts

too much adv. a great deal, but not with the implication of excessively *He disturbs me too much* GE. the 'too' is often lengthened and given a glide tone

torchlight n. torch [Amer. flashlight]

toto n. vagina GE. also *tutu*

tough a. Person who tries to gain prestige by spending money *He is a tough man*

towel n. stomach-lining of animals
From its appearance. Commonly sold in the market place.

trace out p.v.t. to track down, to find the location of *I will go and trace him out*

trafficate v.i. to use the indicators on a car
GE. N.B. not considered archaic in NE

trafficator n. indicator light on vehicle
N.B. not considered archaic in NE

transport n. A. transportation *I am going to the taxi-park to try and pick transport* GE.
B. money for transport *What of my transport?*

travelled v.i. used to indicate not present out of town *Where is x? He has travelled!* GE.

trek v.i. to go by foot *I must trek to market*

trickish a. tricky *he is somehow trickish*

try v.i. to have made an effort and succeeded
You have tried! You have worked hard to achieve this. *Try your possible best!* Do your best! GE.

tube n. cigarette-holder SNE

tune to... p.v. to put on music from a particular artist or country *Tune to Congo!* Put on Zairean music!

turn v.t. to transfer food or liquid from one container to another *Please, turn the leftover soup into that plastic container* the image is turning out solid food as you might turn out a cake, but the meaning has been extended

turner n. large wooden spatula or paddle used for stirring starch and gari

U.

under repair a.p. being repaired *My moto is under repair*

uniform n. same material worn by members of a group It is commopn for members of the same family, church group etc. to have a *dress* made up from identical cloth; used or ceremonial purposes

unless a. used in response to a question, meaning roughly 'No, only x' *Do you get oranges? Unless mango.*

up-and-down n. woman's dress where the blouse and wrapper are made from the same material GE.

up to v.c. capable of doing s.t. *he is up to he can do it*

up-wine n. wine tapped from a standing oil palm

up-yam n. aerial yam
Dioscorea bulbifera

upliftment n. uplifting *This will contribute to the upliftment of the population*
Often refers to more concrete items than in SE, for example, a new pump as opposed to moral improvement.

upon all (that) conj.p. despite that *Upon all that, he still goes there*

upstairs n. building with a second floor

use v.a. in *use to*, implying to do s.t. regularly *he use to come here* he comes here regularly. GE. Marks habitual, extended to present from SE *used to*

V.

V-boot n. fashionable type of Mercedes Benz (preceding roundlight?)

VCD plate n. video-disc

vampire 1. nocturnal bird which enters and makes a noise inside roof of buildings
In Williamson (ined.)

2. hence, a bird believed to be housing the spirit of a witch
When shot down, it is not to be touched but burnt to ashes, after which the witch is believed to die within a few days

very a. actual *he is the very boy* he's the actual person arch. SE

vex v.i. to get annoyed *Mastah, no (go) vex!* Boss, don't get annoyed Pidgin

Vice n. Vice-President *He was to be the Vice of Abiola*

virgina n. common spelling of *vagina* presumably by confusion with *virgin*

vulcanise v.t. to repair a puncture *go and vulcanise the tyre* GE. archaic in SE but not in West Africa

vulcaniser n. one who repairs tyres
GE. archaic SE

W.

wack v. to eat *Man must wack!* Name of chop-bar students' slang <Pidgin

wahala n. trouble, problem *I had plenty wahala* I had lots of trouble *This boy made wahala for me* < Hausa. GE.

waist n. back, lower back *My waist is paining me* I have back-pain GE.

walnut n. nut sp. eaten as a snack
Tetracarphidium conophorum

want v.i. to be about to, to be able to *The car didn't want to start* SNE

wash v.t. 1. to develop film *So far they didn't wash it* they haven't developed it yet
v.t. 2. to celebrate a new birth or acquisition such as a car *When will you wash the car?* When will you have a small celebration for your new car? ? < Hausa. e.g. *Za mu wanke shi* we will wash it, i.e. celebrate it

wash off v.t. to wash out, clean off *he was washing off his dress* i.e. he was cleaning his clothes

watchnight n. night-watchman
giving way to *security(-man)*

waterproof n. plastic bag

wave v.t. to wave at *I waved him but he did not see me*

wax n. wax-printed decorative cloth, formerly often from Holland *she went to market to buy wax* also **Dutch wax**

wear v.t. put on *Wear your shoes!* (Parent to child)

wears n. pl. clothes *Unisex wears* [advert.]

weave-on (also **weavon**) n.
hairdressing style where additional hair is added to the natural one GE

Welldone! excl. General approval after someone has completed s.t. *Afternoon! Welldone!* [Also encouragement to someone working: equivalent to Igbo **Jísí íkè**, Yoruba **Ẹ kúšé!** [check], etc.]

well-fed a. fat [as SE but applied to animals] *a gift of a well-fed cow*

well-well adv. very well *You do this thing well-well* You should do it very well
Pidgin

what and what int. Used when the anticipated reply includes more than one item. *What and what did you buy?* GE

whether conj. stands for if, to see if... *let us go to the office, whether he is there*

whereby conj. ????

wild pumpkin n. climbing plant with yellow flowers whose fruit is used as sponge
Luffa cylindrica

will aux. would *he will like to go to Abuja*

windstrap n. whirlwind, tornado used in Kaduna. Locally analysed as 'wind's trap'.

within adv. inside [but not in an inner room] *He is within.* [i.e. he is somewhere in the building]

What of...? int. What about..? *What of my feeding?* What about money to pay for food?

wrap n. piece of food wrapped in a leaf *She gave me a wrap of moinmoin* she gave me one leaf-packet of cooked bean paste

wrapper n. cloth worn wrapped around the body from the waist to below the knees by males or females *tie your wrapper well* fix your cloth so that it stays in place

wolf n. hyena ME

woman a. female *the market is completely a women affair*

Wonderful! excl. Exclamation used for a surprising event of any type. GE. Thus on hearing of the death of a close relative it would be appropriate to say Wonderful! ? calque of Hausa *Mamaki!*

working-place n. work-place

worry v.t. to annoy, to trouble *This thing worries me too much* GE.

work-bar n. commission claimed from a supercargo by the representatives of a house to which a trade belongs on every twenty puncheons of oil bought Niger Delta, archaic

would aux. will *Federal Government would solve light problems by next year*

X.

Y.

yard n. length of cloth *I went to market to buy some yards*

yellow a. light-skinned *See that yellow boy!*

yellow fever n. hepatitis, jaundice

Yellow Fever n. traffic policeman *A Yellow Fever stopped me* so named because of their orange uniforms

Yes now! excl. Response of encouragement to rhetorical polar question. *Shall I go buy wrapper at the market? Yes, now!* Pronounced with a rising intonation on 'now'.

Z.

zana mat n. mat made from a heavy grass, used for doors and fencing < Hausa. GE.

zinc n. corrugated iron sheets used for roofing *Remain one zinc to complete it.* It only needs one sheet of corrugated iron to complete [the roof].

zone v.t. to practise zoning (q.v.)

zoning n. common political practice designed to reduce ethnic tension, whereby political positions are shared among areas in such a way that particular posts are shared out ahead of the election to specific areas; competition for each post is then limited to people from the agreed area

Numbers

- 404 n. dogmeat *404 is ready* sign outside an eating establishment Cross River, Akwa
Ibom only
- 419 n. monetary fraud *he is trying 419 on them* <the number of the act defining this as a
crime
- 504 n. Peugeot 504 saloon car, once almost the only brand on the roads
- 911 n. Mercedes-Benz 911 truck, with built-up wooden sides, the common workhorse of
commercial goods transport in Nigeria