A VARIATIONIST ANALYSIS OF ZERO QUOTATIVE IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study explores the ways speakers of Nigerian English re-create their own speech and the speech of others in narrative discourse using *zero* quotative. It investigates how the speaker's choice of *zero* quotative is constrained by both linguistic (the content of the quote, grammatical person of the quotative, and tense/time reference of the quotative) and social (age, regional origin, sex, and social class) factors. The quotative forms in this study were transcribed from sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 180 participants in Nigeria. The study adopts Variationist Sociolinguistics (Labov 1963, 1966; Tagliamonte 2012), using a mixed-methods approach that relies on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. For multivariate analysis of the quotative forms, a statistical program called *Rbrul* (Johnson, 2009) was used. The findings establish that *zero* quotative has an important presence in Nigerian English and the speakers of this variety of English use *zero* quotative in marking dramatic effects and creating immediacy. This study offers insight into understanding the mechanisms of linguistic change and how *zero* quotative functions in Nigerian English.

Key Words: Nigerian English, Zero Quotative, Speakers, Variation, Quotative System

Introduction

Buchstaller (2014: 49) rightly observes that quotations are commonly multiple-perspective constructions, which contain the perspective of the current speaker as well as that of the reported speaker. She suggests that quotations only need to be "good enough". This suggestion entails that "good enough" is simply negotiated by the

interlocutors themselves as defined by the context. My conceptualisation of quotation in this study is in line with Buchstaller's (2014: 54) definition of quotation as "a performance whereby speakers re-enact previous behaviours (speech/thought/sound/voice effect and gesture) while assuming the dramatic role of the original source of this reported behaviour". The interest in this approach lies in her showing how the speaker simultaneously creates interpersonal involvement in producing direct speech using quotative markers.

The quotative system in English consists of a wide array of verbs that function as dialogue introducers. Apart from the more traditional quotatives such as *say*, and *tell*, the literature on quotatives has a heavy focus on *be like*. Other prominent quotative forms include *go* which is less transparent; and *think* which is a marker of inner reflection. Interestingly, the semantics of each quotative form constrains its use with each form having a slightly different function. For instance, Romaine and Lange (1991: 235-240) report that while *say* introduces speech without the contribution of any pragmatic effect, *think* is mostly used to report internal dialogue, whereas *go* functions as an option for direct speech and non-lexicalised sounds or gestures. On the other hand, the rise of *be like* as a viable quotative form upsets the balance amongst the more traditional quotative verbs as *be like* provides a new choice to speakers, "the partitioning of forms within the system must necessarily re-organise" (Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999: 57). Moreover, local norms of story-telling and styles of narration differ in many respects, lending themselves to a myriad of pragmatic ramifications that are conveyed by the use of quotatives.

Another quotative form that attracts the attention of sociolinguists is *zero* quotative, which occurs "where direct speech is with neither a reporting verb nor an attributed speaker" Mathis and Yule (1994: 63). This quotative form is less transparent and it is often signalled through performative cues or when there is a clear change in speaker. Thus, the referent is recoverable from the linguistic context, and this is usually signalled with an obvious turn-taking structure or

voice quality indicators. In Nigerian English (NigE), it is common for speakers to use *zero* quotative to re-create their own speech and the speech of other speakers in narrative discourse and free conversations. By way of illustration, I mark the *zero* quotative site with ø to match with structurally determined changes in reported speaker in conversational speech as illustrated in example (1) below.

(1) He is a very harsh teacher I met in that school. Whatever you do is totally wrong, he will just come to the class *change of voice* ø "okay, you Blessing, did you do your homework?"
Normal voice ø "yes, sir".
Change of voice ø "let me see it".
Normal voice ø "okay".
Change of voice ø "you take it, this your homework is not comfortable at all, it is not good, I do not like your homework. You have to go and do another thing. The point I want there is not written. So, go and change your homework you need to research your homework very well".
Normal voice ø "okay, sir".
Change of voice ø "ehen… Blessing do not forget, if you are coming tomorrow make sure you bring your broom, your toilet paper, and then you buy a carton of chalk for us".
Normal voice ø "okay, sir".
Change of voice ø "it is not only Blessing, everybody in the class. If you come give it to your Class Rep, she will write the names that paid all their items". If we come late, he was the only teacher who used to beat us.

In (1), the speaker narrates her encounter with a teacher who had always disturbed students' peace in her class. In the process of the narration, she uses *zero* quotative in all nine turns in the constructed dialogue. Here, the turn-taking and the voice quality are the key indicators that signal who is being reported in each of the quoted utterances in the

speech. For instance, in the first turn we know that the speaker is re-constructing the teacher's speech when she changes her voice and utters "okay, you Blessing did you do your homework?" When she switches to her normal voice, we know that she is re-constructing her speech with "yes, sir". This is clear because the turn-taking structure and the adjacency pair of the question-answer show which utterance is attributed to the speaker and which is attributed to the teacher despite the absence of an overt introductory quotative.

However, the primary focus of this study is on *zero* quotative in NigE. The study develops a comprehensive account of the acquisition and spread of zero quotatives in NigE, which broadens our understanding of the mechanisms of linguistic change. Thus, the aims of this study are achieved by seeking answers to the following questions: (1) What is the frequency distribution of the different quotative forms in NigE? (2) Who are the principal users of *zero* quotative in NigE? (3) Do factors such as age, regional origin, sex, and social class affect the use of *zero* quotative in NigE? (4) What are the linguistic constraints that condition the occurrence of *zero* quotative and how do they interact with social constraints?

Previous research

The sociolinguistic origin of quotatives is traced back to the early 1980s when Butters first noted the use of narrative *go* (Butters, 1980) and *be like* (Butters, 1982) as dialogue introducers in American English. The first example of quotative *go* is recorded in the speech of male American speakers born after 1955 and this quotative form is described as a feature of casual conversation among American speakers under the age of thirty-five (Butters, 1980: 305). According to Butters, quotative *go* is most frequently used in the present tense. Two years later, Butters (1982: 149) reports *be like,* which is used to quote unuttered thoughts. Since Butters' attestation of the quotatives *go* and *be like* in the literature, studies on the diffusion of quotatives into other varieties of English have increased steadily. Tannen (1986) in her study of oral

American narratives examines the ways dialogue is introduced in conversational storytelling. She reports that *say* is the traditional and thus most commonly used quotative in her 18 stories, followed by *go* and *be like* (Tannen, 1986: 315-321). She suggests that ways of introducing dialogue fall along a continuum starting with *zero* quotative in informal conversation and ending with "graphic verbs" typical of literary narratives. She reports that *be like* is next to *zero* on the continuum as its effects depend on the way the dialogue is voiced by the speaker, whereas *go* is identified as an informal feature similar to *be like* in register but similar to *say* in meaning (Tannen, 1986: 324).

One remarkable study of *zero* quotative is the one carried out by Mathis and Yule (1994), and it focuses on the casual conversational speech of American women. The study establishes that *zero* quotative serves a range of dramatic purposes mainly in situations where other quotative forms such as *be like*, *go*, and *say* would be possible but are not used. In many cases, *zero* quotatives are used as representatives of an interaction between two distinct participants where the speaker quotes what each participant says without employing quotative frames to achieve a dramatic effect (Mathis & Yule 1994: 74). According to Kohn & Franz (2009: 259), quotative frames consist of 'syntactic bracketing of directly reported speech or inner dialogue, as in *my brother says, "you so scaredy-cat, you should get out"* and *I was like, "no, no, no, no"'*. Moreover, *zero* quotative also occurs when a speaker gives voice to his attitude, or the attitude of other speakers in direct speech form, where there is no evidence of actual interaction being reported. Other studies on quotatives that pay attention to *zero* quotative include Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999), Cukor-Avila (2002), Winter (2002), Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2004), Kohn and Franz (2009), D'Arcy (2010), Fox (2012), and Gardner et al. (2020).

Fieldwork and methodology

The fieldwork was carried out in two bouts of data collection, the first was from April to June 2019 and the second was in December the same year. The first bout that lasted for three months gathered data from 150 participants through face-to-face sociolinguistic interviews while the second bout that lasted for only one month collected data from 30 participants tallying 180 altogether. I selected my participants using a combination of stratified random sampling (judgement or quota sampling) and snowball (or social network) sampling methods. In preparation for the fieldwork, I contacted family members, friends, and old colleagues to help with mechanisms that would mobilise potential participants for the interviews. The interviews were conducted at different locations such as recreational centres, bookstores, cafes, restaurants, university campuses, private homes, mosques, churches, grocery stores, and many more.All 180 interviews conducted were structured into modules organised into what Labov (1984) refers to as "conversational networks". The basic modules I employed are dreams, family, fights, games, peers, and school for adolescent and young adult participants. I employed family, marriage, politics, school, and work for middle-aged and older participants. However, there is no fixed order to guide the transition through the modules and the questions for elicitation of quotatives depend on the participants' willingness to narrate experiences or talk about a particular topic. Each of the recordings lasted for 45 minutes which is the standard set for this study. I analysed the data within Variationist Sociolinguistics, also known as the Language Variation and Change (LVC) paradigm (Labov 1963, 1966; Tagliamonte, 2012). This core sociolinguistic theory explains linguistic variation and the effect of social patterns such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status on linguistic variables, which represent change in progress in different speech communities around the world.

The social factors considered in this study are the social variables age (adolescents, 15-20; young adults, 21-30; middle-aged

adults, 31-50; and older adults, 51 and above), regional origin (the north and the south), sex (male and female), and social class (lower class, middle class, and upper class). The linguistic factors considered are the tense/time reference of the quotative (past tense, present tense, and future time reference), the grammatical person of the quotative (first-person singular, first-person plural, second person, third-person singular, third-person plural, and neuter), and the content of the quote (direct speech, gesture, and thought). Table 1 below presents a sampling grid showing how all the social factors pattern in the sample.

Table 1: Sampling grid by age, social class, sex, and regional origin

Age and social class	North		South		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Adolescents (lower class)	7	3	7	4	21
Adolescents (middle class)	3	8	3	6	20
Adolescents (upper class)	1	-	1	3	05
Young adults (lower class)	6	3	3	6	18
Young adults (middle class)	5	7	8	2	22
Young adults (upper class)	-	2	1	3	06
Middle aged (lower class)	1	6	3	2	12
Middle aged (middle class)	6	1	2	6	15
Middle aged (upper class)	4	4	5	3	16

Older adults (lower class)	-	2	2	2	06
Older adults (middle class)	2	1	2	1	06
Older adults (upper class)	10	8	8	7	33
Total	45	45	45	45	180

The analysis in this study relied largely on the quantitative approach because my set of data was quantified into numbers, figures, or graphs, which enabled me to investigate the frequencies of use of different variables. The statistical procedure was conducted using Rbrul (Johnson, 2009), a special program developed for data analysis in sociolinguistic research, specifically variationist analysis. This version of the statistical software was accessed from http://cran.r-project.org/ and it was compatible with both Macintosh and Windows. The analysis is based on 4,053 tokens of different quotative forms extracted from the data set.

Results

I present the results in two major parts. The first part presents the distributional analysis of the overall quotatives. The second part displays the results of multivariate analysis of *zero* quotative and the findings are discussed in the context of similar studies conducted for other varieties of English.

Distributional analysis

Table 2 and Figure 1 present the overall distribution of the different quotatives totalling 4,053 tokens. The traditional *say* is the most frequently occurring quotative (N = 1620, 39.9 percent), closely

followed by *zero* (N = 1020, 25.2 percent). Noticeably, the results for *zero* as the second most prominent quotative form in NigE differ from Tagliamonte and Hudson's (1999) findings for British English, where *zero* accounts for only 10 percent, lower than *say*, *go*, *be like*, and *think*. The results also differ from Tagliamonte and Hudson's (1999) findings for Canadian English, where *zero* is less frequent than *say* and *go*.

Table 2: Overall distribution of quotatives in Nigerian English

Quotatives	**Number**	**Percentage** (%)
Ask	159	3.9
Be like	568	14.1
Say	1620	39.9
Tell	508	12.5
Think	54	1.3
Zero	1020	25.2
Other	124	3.1
Total	**4053**	**100**

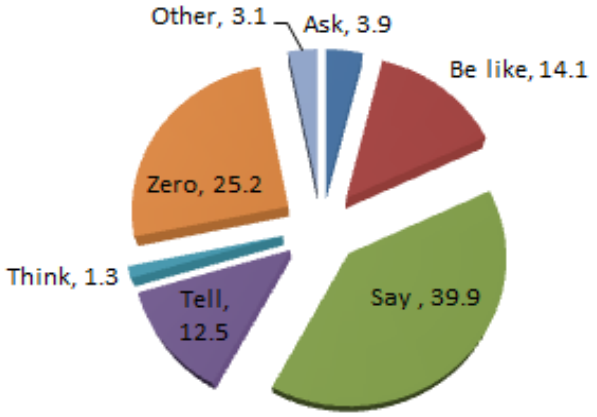


Figure 1: Overall distribution of quotatives in Nigerian English

The third most frequently occurring quotative in my data is *be like* (N = 568 occurrences (14.1 percent). *Tell* (N = 508, 12.5 percent) is used less than half as often as the *zero* quotative. *Ask* (N = 159, 3.9 percent) and *think* (N = 54, 1.3 percent) are used even less. The remaining 25 quotatives put together makeup merely 3.1 percent of all quotatives in the data. They are classified in the category "other" and they have 124 occurrences as follows: *advise* (6), *alert* (1), *announce* (1), *answer* (1), *apologise* (1), *argue* (1), *call* (50), *claim* (1), *complain* (5), *cry* (3), *decide* (10), *explain* (1), *feel* (19), *go* (3), *pray* (3), *promise* (2), *reply* (2), *respond* (2), *scold* (1), *scream* (1), *shout* (6), *state* (1), *that is + speaker* (1), *warn* (1), and *whisper* (1). For the rest of the analyses, the category "other" will receive less attention.

Multivariate analysis

This section reports the factors that contribute to the use of *zero* quotative in NigE, using a multivariate analysis program called Rbrul (Johnson, 2009) for the analysis. Rbrul reports too much information, but I focus more on what is essential for interpreting my results step by step. Rbrul reports deviance, which measures how well a model fits the data, or how the data deviates from the predictions of the model; the smaller the deviance, the better the fit. It reports degrees of freedom (DF), which explains the number of parameters in the model, and it also reports a grand mean. Rbrul reports the strength of each factor group known as factor weights. If the factor weights are above 0.5, they favour the application value, while factor weights below 0.5 disfavour it. Rbrul also reports log odds, which are raw coefficients for a regression model measuring the effect of size, which reflects the strength of the relationship between a factor and the dependent variable. If log odds are above 0, there is a positive correlation between the variables and that favours the application value, if they are negative, the correlation is negative and that disfavours the application value. The larger the number, the bigger the effect size. In addition, Rbrul reports percentages of each variant per cell. Basically, the greater the factor

weights, the greater the percentage of the variant should be. The program also reports likelihood-ratio chi-square tests to determine whether an independent variable is significant or not.

Table 3 below displays results of a multivariate analysis that tested the social and linguistic constraints operating on the use of *zero* quotative in NigE. The results reveal that the effect of age is not statistically significant (p value = 0.0881) as a factor conditioning the use of *zero*, with the middle aged (FW 0.544), the adolescents (FW 0.539), and the young adults (FW 0.514) favouring it, whereas the old age group (FW 0.404) disfavouring it. The effect of social class is statistically significant (p value = 1.02e-05), with the upper class (FW 0.630) strongly favouring the use of *zero,* favoured slightly by the middle class (FW 0.503), and disfavoured by the lower class (FW 0.367).

The Table shows that the effect of sex is not statistically significant (p value = 0.169), with the males (FW 0.526) slightly favouring the use of *zero* and the females (FW 0.474) slightly disfavouring it. This finding corroborates the findings in Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999), who report that *zero* quotative is not sensitive to speaker sex in either British or Canadian English. In contrast, *zero* quotative is slightly favoured in British English in the study by Buchstaller and D'Arcy (2009). However, regional origin too is not statistically significant (p value = 0.336) as a factor conditioning the use of *zero*, with the south (FW 0.519) slightly favouring it and the north (FW 0.481) slightly disfavouring it.

Table 3: Contribution of social and linguistic factors on the use of *zero* quotative in NigE

Total number of tokens	4053
Deviance	2919.258
Df	18
Grand mean	0.252

Factors	Log odds	Tokens (N)	Proportion of application value	Factor weight
Age	P. value = 0.0881			
Middle aged	0.177	993	0.238	0.544
Adolescents	0.157	1124	0.283	0.539
Young adults	0.055	963	0.209	0.514
Older adults	-0.389	973	0.272	0.404
Social class	P. value = 1.02e-05			
Upper class	0.534	1284	0.287	0.630
Middle class	0.012	1451	0.246	0.503
Lower class	-0.546	1318	0.224	0.367
Sex	P. value = 0.169			
Males	0.105	1991	0.266	0.526
Females	-0.105	2062	0.238	0.474
Regional origin	P. value = 0.336			
South	0.0766	2156	0.271	0.519
North	-0.0766	1897	0.230	0.481
Grammatical person	P. value = 4.12e-08			
Third-person singular	0.6580	1534	0.319	0.659
First-person plural	0.4200	96	0.302	0.603
First-person singular	0.0815	1863	0.204	0.520
Third-person singular	-0.0442	441	0.224	0.489
Second person	-0.5233	54	0.241	0.372
Neuter	-0.590	65	0.138	0.356
Tense/time reference	P. value = 3.11e-311			
Present	2.112	1442	0.5910	0.892
Future	-0.383	407	0.1350	0.405
Past	-1.729	2204	0.0513	0.151

Content of the quote	P. value = 2.58e-05			
Speech	0.807	3959	0.255	0.691
Gesture	0.150	27	0.111	0.537
Thought	-0.957	67	0.119	0.277
Speaker	Random			

Turning to linguistic constraints, the effect of grammatical person is statistically significant (p value = 4.12e-08) as a factor conditioning the use of *zero* in NigE, and the favouring effect is in third-person singular contexts (FW 0.659). It is also favoured in first-person plural (FW 0.603) and slightly favoured in first-person singular (FW 0.520) contexts, whereas the use of *zero* is disfavoured in third-person singular (FW 0.489), second person (FW 0.372), and neuter (FW 0.356) contexts. For tense/time reference, the effect is statistically significant (p value = 3.11e-311) and the strongest favouring effect is in the present tense (WF 0.892) contexts. It is slightly disfavoured in the future time reference (FW 0.405) and strongly disfavoured in the past tense (FW 0.151) contexts. The results for the content of the quote show that the effect is statistically significant (p value = 2.58e-05), with *zero* favoured with direct speech (FW 0.691), slightly favoured with gesture (FW 0.537), and strongly disfavoured with thought (FW 0.277).

Effect of age and sex on the use of *zero* quotative

Table 4 and Figure 2 report results for cross-tabulation of age and sex to determine their effect on the use of *zero* quotative in NigE. The results reveal that the adolescent females (N = 166, 16.3 percent) are the most frequent users of *zero* quotative, closely followed by the adolescent males (N = 152, 14.9 percent). For the young adults, females (N = 101, 9.9 percent) slightly lead males (N = 152, 14.9 percent). While the middle-aged males (N = 150, 14.7 percent) lead in the use of *zero* quotative over the middle-aged females (N = 86, 8.4 percent), the old

females (N = 138, 13.5 percent) lead the old males (N = 127, 12.5 percent). For the interaction test between age and sex on the use of *zero* quotative, the chi-square analysis proves that the interaction is statistically significant at $p < .001$, with the adolescent females leading.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation of age and sex on the use of *zero* quotative

	Females		Males		**Total**	
	N	%	N	%	**N**	**%**
Adolescents	166	16.3	152	14.9	**318**	**31.2**
Young adults	101	9.9	100	9.8	**201**	**19.7**
Middle aged	86	8.4	150	14.7	**236**	**23.1**
Older adults	138	13.5	127	12.5	**265**	**26**
Total	**491**	**48.1**	**529**	**51.9**	**1020**	**100**

χ^2 (3): 17.041, $p < .001$

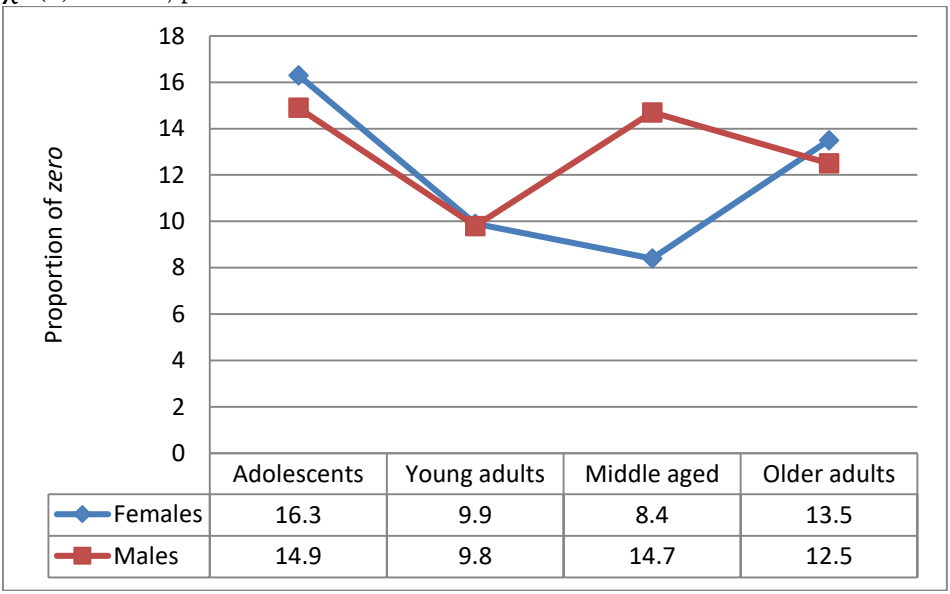


Figure 2: Interaction between age and sex on the use of *zero* quotative

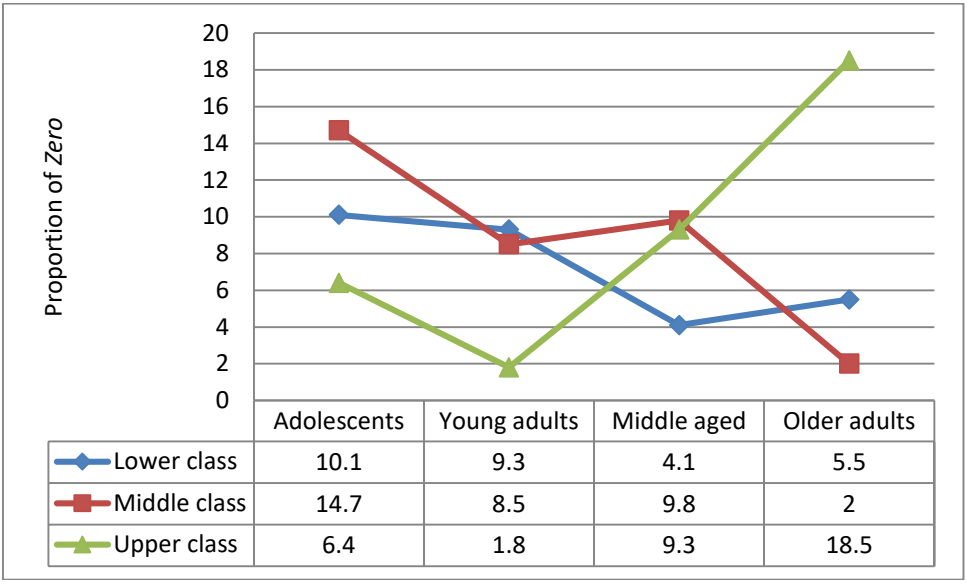
4.2.2 Effect of age and social class on the use of *zero* quotative

As shown in Table 5 and Figure 3, the results for cross-tabulation of age and social class reveal that the upper-class old age group (N = 189, 18.5 percent) is the most frequent user of *zero* quotative, leading by a wide margin over the lower-class old (N = 56, 5.5 percent) and the middle-class old (N = 20, 2 percent). The middle-class adolescent group (N = 150, 14.7 percent) is the next in frequency, leading the lower-class adolescent group (N = 103, 10.1 percent) and the upper-class adolescent group (N = 65, 6.4 percent). With respect to the middle-aged group, the middle class (N = 100, 9.8 percent) leads over the upper class (N = 95, 9.3 percent) and the lower class (N = 41, 4.1 percent). Among the young adults, the lower class (N = 95, 9.3 percent) leads the middle class (N = 87, 8.5 percent) and the upper class (N = 19, 1.8 percent). The chi-square analysis illustrates that the interaction between age and social class on the use of *zero* quotative is strongly significant at $p < .001$, with the upper-class old age group leading.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of age and social class on the use of *zero* quotative

	Lower class		Middle class		Upper class		**Total**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	**N**	%
Adolescents	103	10.1	150	14.7	65	6.4	**318**	**31.2**
Young adults	95	9.3	87	8.5	19	1.8	**201**	**19.6**
Middle aged	41	4.1	100	9.8	95	9.3	**236**	**23.2**
Older adults	56	5.5	20	2	189	18.5	**265**	**26**
Total	**295**	**29**	**357**	**35**	**368**	**36**	**1020**	**100**

χ^2 (6): 272.69, $p < .001$



	Adolescents	Young adults	Middle aged	Older adults
Lower class	10.1	9.3	4.1	5.5
Middle class	14.7	8.5	9.8	2
Upper class	6.4	1.8	9.3	18.5

Figure 3: Interaction between age and social class on the use of *zero* quotative

4.2.3 Effect of sex and regional origin on the use of *zero* quotative

For cross-tabulation of sex and regional origin, Table 6 and Figure 4 show that while the southern females (N = 299, 29.3 percent) use *zero* quotative more frequently than the southern males (N = 285, 28 percent), the northern males (N = 244, 23.9 percent) favour the use of *zero* quotative compared to the northern females (N = 192, 18.8 percent). The interaction test between sex and regional origin on the use of *zero* quotative proves that the interaction is statistically significant at $p < .05$, with the southern females leading.

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of sex and regional origin on the use of *zero* quotative

	North		South		**Total**	
	N	%	N	%	**N**	%
Females	192	18.8	299	29.3	**491**	**48.1**

Males	244	23.9	285	28	529	51.9
Total	**436**	**42.7**	**584**	**57.3**	**1020**	**100**

χ^2 (1): 5.128, $p < .05$

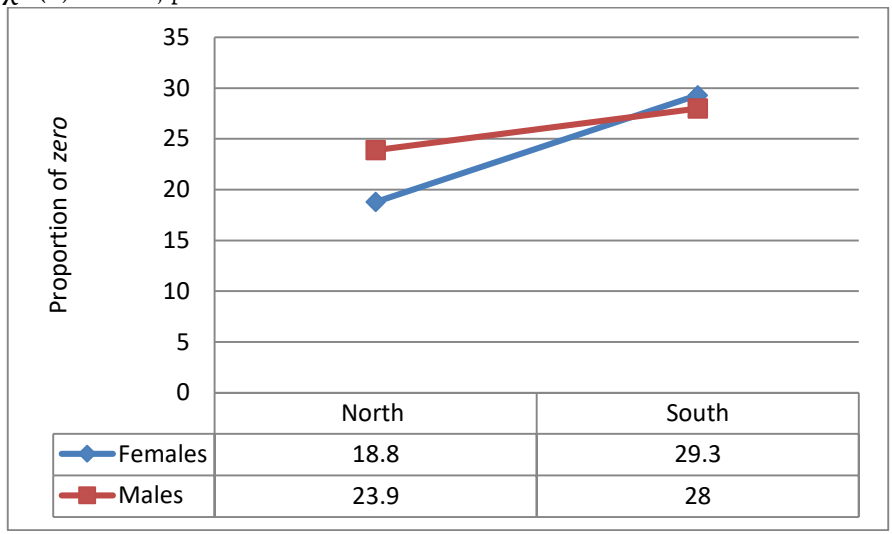


Figure 4: Interaction between sex and regional origin on the use of *zero* quotative

Effect of sex and tense/time reference on the use of *zero* quotative

The findings in Table 7 and Figure 5 illustrate that *zero* quotative occurs most frequently in the present tense with males (N = 450, 44.2 percent) leading females (N = 402, 39.4 percent). Females (N = 61, 6 percent) slightly lead males (N = 52, 5.1 percent) in the use of *zero* quotative with the past tense. Similarly, females (N = 28, 2.7 percent) slightly lead males (N = 27, 2.6 percent) in the use of *zero* quotative with the future time reference. The interaction test between sex and tense/time reference of the quotative on the use of *zero* quotative demonstrates that the interaction is not statistically significant at $p > .05$, with males leading in the present tense.

Table 7: Cross-tabulation of sex and tense/time reference on the use of *zero* quotative

	Past		Present		Future		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Females	61	6	402	39.4	28	2.7	**491**	**48.1**
Males	52	5.1	450	44.2	27	2.6	**529**	**51.9**
Total	**113**	**11.1**	**852**	**83.6**	**55**	**5.3**	1020	100

χ^2 (2): 2.026, $p > .05$

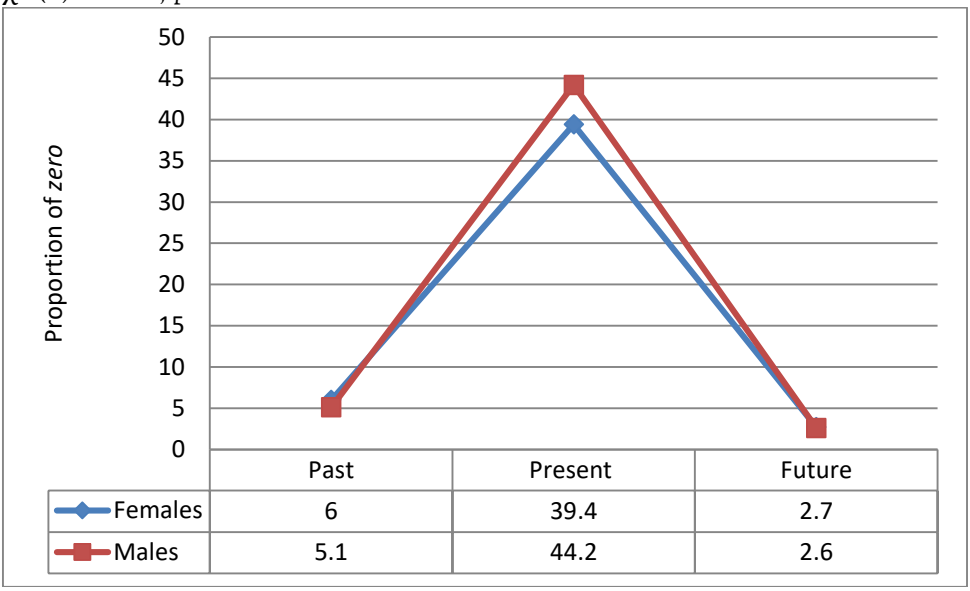


Figure 5: Interaction between sex and tense/time reference on the use of *zero* quotative

Effect of social class and the content of the quote on the use of *zero* quotative

According to Table 8 and Figure 6, the upper class (N = 366, 35.9 percent) uses *zero* quotative with direct speech most frequently. Similarly, both the middle class (N = 353, 34.6 percent) and the lower class (N = 290, 28.4 percent) favour the use of *zero* quotative with direct speech. For thought, the middle class (N = 4, 0.4 percent) slightly leads the lower class (N = 3, 0.3 percent) and the upper class (N = 1, 0.1 percent). In the case of gesture, the results show that the middle class

did not express gesture with *zero* quotative, whereas the lower class (N = 2, 0.2 percent) slightly leads over the upper class (N = 1, 0.1 percent). The chi-square analysis reports that the interaction between social class and the content of the quote on the use of *zero* quotative is not statistically significant at $p > .001$, with all three classes leading in favour of direct speech.

Table 8: Cross-tabulation of social class and content of the quote on the use of *zero* quotative

	Direct speech		Gesture		Thought		**Total**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	**N**	%
Lower class	290	28.4	2	0.2	3	0.3	**295**	**28.9**
Middle class	353	34.6	0	0	4	0.4	**357**	**35**
Upper class	366	35.9	1	0.1	1	0.1	**368**	**36.1**
Total	**1009**	**98.9**	**3**	**0.3**	**8**	**0.8**	**1020**	**100**

χ^2 (4): 10.876, $p > .001$

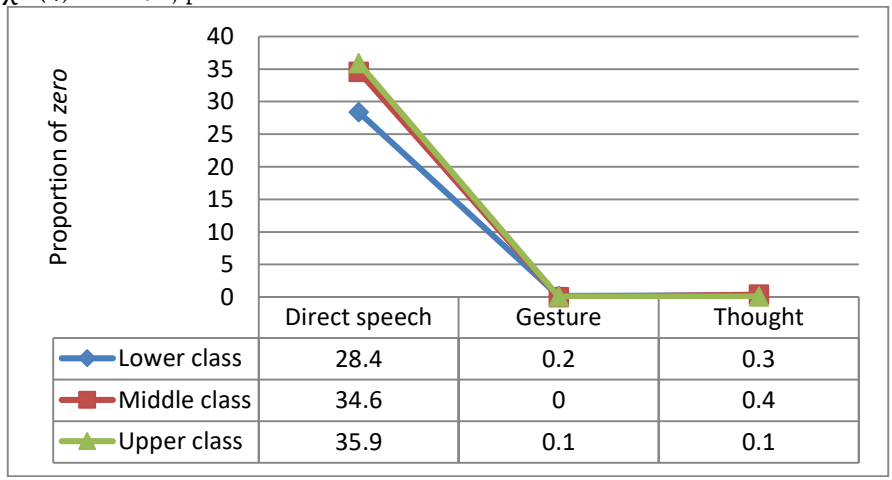


Figure 6: Interaction between social class and content of the quote on the use of *zero* quotative

Discussion

The analyses presented here have demonstrated that *zero* being the second most frequent quotative is already established as part of the quotative system. Notably, in NigE narrative discourse, the absence of an explicit quotative marker allows speakers to construct attitudes serving some dramatic effect which cannot easily be achieved when an overt quotative form is used. Thus, speakers of NigE use the *zero* quotative in encoding their emotional state for dramatic effect as illustrated in (2).

(2) That is the reason why he was very angry with me. After he knows the truth then he told me he was sorry. He said he thought that I insulted his parents. ø "How will I insult your parents since me too I have parents". I told him "I am sorry". That is when we came back the way we were before.

In (2), the *zero* quotative reflects the urgency of the speech being constructed. The interactants in this narrative are two, a lady and her male friend. The lady had quarrelled with her friend, and they did not talk to each other for few weeks. The lady's friend was wrongly informed that she had insulted his parents behind him, and that was why he kept a distance from her. When he found out that she did not insult his parents, he decided to renew the friendship. When he told her that he thought she insulted his parents, she uses the available option of *zero* quotative to dramatically demonstrate the urgency to explain herself ø "how will I insult your parents since me too I have parents". She was eager to explain herself without creating any linguistic distance, and that is why she did not opt for an overt quotative form such as "I immediately *told* him", "I immediately *said*" or "Immediately, I *was like*" in her response. Haiman (1983: 781) describes the linguistic distance between two expressions as "the number of syllables (or even the number of seconds) between them". This suggests that the lady's emotional state could only be accomplished with the *zero* quotative. Example (3) is another instance that illustrates the dramatic effect achieved by the speaker who opts for *zero* quotative.

(3) They were talking I did not answer them. So, when I was turning, I gave her a slap. My mother slapped me back ø "Halima, get back inside the house". I went back inside the house after I gave her a slap and my mum returned the slap back to me. I came back I did not know what they said.

In (3), Halima narrates her misunderstanding with one lady who came to Halima's mother to complain about how she allegedly mistreated her. The mother was trying to reconcile Halima and the other lady when Halima slapped the lady out of anger. The mother who was upset immediately slapped Halima and sent her back inside the house to avoid further drama. In Halima's version of the reported event, she uses the option of *zero* quotative to dramatically demonstrate the speed with which her mother attempted to control the situation ø "Halima, get back inside the house". If Halima had chosen to report the speech with, for example, *tell*, *say*, *or be like*, the speed which she apparently desires to represent would be diminished.

This study has suggested that while *zero* quotative occurs globally, its linguistic and social constraints are shaped not only by their global usage but also adapted into local norms of use. The results in the analyses provide a piece of evidence that *zero* has been adopted in this way and is more diffused in the local linguistic system in Nigeria. For instance, in Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999) for both British English and Canadian English *zero* favours 'non-lexicalised sounds'. In the case of NigE, the analysis shows that *zero* quotative is almost limited to direct speech compared to thought and gesture. However, *zero* quotative is favoured by the south over the north in NigE. Comparable findings are in ethnicity-based studies carried out by Kohn and Franz (2009) who investigate the quotative system norms within African American communities and Latino communities in two cities, Durham, and Hickory, and another one by D'Arcy (2010) who investigates how Maori and Pakeha English speakers in New Zealand use the resources of English quotatives to construct dialogue. My results for *zero* quotative in the south support the findings in Kohn and Franz (2009) that

African American speakers favour *zero* quotative and this corroborates the finding in D'Arcy (2010) for Maori English. Table 9 presents the constraints for *zero* quotative in NigE based on the multivariate analysis I carried out in this study.

Table 9: Constraints for *zero* quotative in Nigerian English

Linguistic constraints	
Content of the quote	Direct speech
Grammatical person	Third person (singular)
Tense/time reference	Present tense
Social constraints	
Age	Not significant
Regional origin	Not significant
Sex	Not significant
Social Class	Upper class

In this study, I have observed that there is no wide generational variation across all four age groups, and the effect of age on the use of *zero* quotative is not statistically significant. The *zero* quotative is commonly used among the adolescent speakers, followed by the oldest age group, the middle-aged group, and then occurs least among the young adults. Similarly, males prefer *zero* quotative than females, but the difference is not statistically significant. For social class, this quotative form is most frequent among the upper-class speakers, followed by the middle class, and then the lower class. Turning to grammatical persons, *zero* is favoured in third-person singular contexts, followed by first-person singular, and then third-person plural contexts. The *zero* quotative occurs infrequently in first-person plural contexts, followed by second person, and even less in neuter contexts. For tense/time reference, *zero* occurs most frequently in the present tense, followed by the past tense, and then future time reference.

Conclusion

Overall, this study has reported the results of the distributional analyses as well as the multivariate analyses for both linguistic and social factors describing how they condition the use of *zero* quotative in NigE. The study has also demonstrated the ways *zero* quotative is used in order to express reporting the speaker's stance while it performs different discourse-pragmatic functions without distorting the meaning in the speech being reported. However, based on my data, the key discourse-pragmatic functions of *zero* quotative in NigE are marking dramatic effect and creating immediacy. In addition, this study has provided an initial description of the patterns of use of *zero* quotative in NigE. Future research can investigate whether and how the quotative system changes over time. An investigation into speakers' attitudes towards *zero* and other quotative forms can also be carried out. This will deepen our understanding of how different quotatives are perceived by the speakers of NigE.

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