

## The Phonological Adaptation of English Christian Names by Lagos Youth

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### Abstract

*Phonological adaptation of borrowed names is well-documented in language contact studies, where foreign forms are reshaped to fit the recipient variety's phonology (Rahim, 2006; Sicherl, 2015; Legbeti & Evbuomwan, 2024), yet youth-driven adaptation of English Christian names in urban Nigerian English remains unexplored despite nativisation patterns in minority languages and older speakers (Jowitt, 1991; Gut, 2004; Ogban, 2019). This study addresses this gap by investigating whether Lagos youths use original Standard English pronunciations or adapted forms of English Christian names and how they adapt them into Nigerian English. Employing a mixed-methods design with qualitative dominance, data were gathered from naturalistic observations in Lagos youth settings and elicited recordings of 20 participants (10 male, 10 female, aged 18–30) pronouncing 20 common Christian names, followed by perceptual phonetic analysis comparing Standard English IPA forms with realisations. Findings reveal a strong preference for adapted pronunciations, using systematic strategies: consonant substitution (e.g., Matthew./'mæθju:/ → /'matiu/), vowel strengthening, diphthong simplification, and cluster reduction, with complex names adapting more than familiar ones and elicited speech showing higher adaptation than spontaneous contexts. The study concludes that Lagos youths actively nativize English Christian names into Nigerian English, demonstrating dynamic phonological domestication driven by urban youth practices and advancing scholarship in World Englishes and onomastics.*

**Keywords:** Nigerian English, phonological adaptation, Christian names, Lagos youth, World Englishes, Haugen's borrowing model

### Introduction

Phonological adaptation of personal names occurs when foreign names are reshaped to fit the recipient language's phonemic inventory, phonotactics, syllable structure, and prosody, influenced by cultural, religious, and sociolinguistic factors (Alababneh, 2021). In Nigeria, English Christian names (e.g., James, Mary, Michael) became widespread through colonial missionary activities, Bible translations, and Christianity, leading to nativization in Nigerian English via processes such as vowel epenthesis, consonant substitution (/θ/ → /t/, /ð/ → /d/), cluster simplification, and tonal reassignment (Legbeti & Evbuomwan, 2024; Ogban, 2019; Jowitt, 1991; Gut, 2004). Similar patterns appear cross-linguistically: Qur'anic names in English (Rahim, 2006), prestige borrowings in Slovene (Sicherl, 2015), biblical names in Manipuri (Oinam, 2018),

“Oshiwambonisation” in Oshiwambo (Mbenzi et al., 2024), and missionary adaptations in Xhosa (Futuse & Dowling, 2024).

Existing research focuses on adaptations in minority Nigerian languages (e.g., Ósòsò, Erei), elderly/rural speakers, historical/missionary contexts, or non-youth groups. They provide cross-linguistic and structural insights but neglect contemporary, youth-driven adaptations in Nigerian English. How Lagos youths reshape Christian names has not been examined, hindering knowledge of dynamic change in World Englishes and Nigerian youth language.

This study applies Haugen’s (1950) Linguistic Borrowing Model, which describes borrowing in three stages: adoption (importation via Christianity/globalization), adaptation (phonological reshaping to Nigerian English rules), and integration (everyday use shaped by sociolinguistic factors). This framework, used in Nigerian contexts (Ogban, 2019), suits analysing youth variations in Lagos. The aim, therefore, is to investigate whether Lagos youths use original or adapted pronunciations of English Christian names and how they adapt those names into Nigerian English.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Phonological and Morphological Adaptation of Names**

When personal names move from one language to another, they usually change so that they fit the sound system and structural patterns of the receiving language. These changes allow the name to match the phonemes, syllable structure, stress or tone system, and word formation rules of the new language. In other words, adaptation is not random; it follows the internal logic of the language into which the name is borrowed.

Rahim (2006) provides a clear example in his comparative study of 92 Qur’anic names transferred from Classical Arabic into Standard English. He shows that Arabic sounds that do not exist in English, such as /ʔ/, /ħ/, and /ɣ/, are replaced with the closest available English sounds. In addition, syllables are reorganised to suit English phonotactic patterns, and stress is adjusted to follow English pronunciation rules. Many of these names entered English through intermediary languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French, which further shaped their forms. Rahim concludes that these processes are systematic and rule-governed. Full preservation of the original pronunciation is uncommon and is mainly found among bilingual speakers who consciously maintain the religious or cultural prestige of the source language.

A similar pattern is observed by Sicherl (2015), who examines English personal names borrowed into Slovene from the 1970s onward. She explains that many English names gained popularity because of media influence, celebrity culture, and global fashion. While some names retain their English spelling to preserve a sense of foreign appeal, others are modified to reflect Slovene orthography. Regardless of spelling, pronunciation typically conforms to Slovene phonological rules. For instance, the English interdental sound /θ/ is often replaced with /t/, since Slovene does not have this sound. Her quantitative findings indicate that approximately 23 to 27 per cent of popular names retain noticeable foreign elements, especially in border regions. This demonstrates that sociolinguistic factors such as prestige, identity, and exposure to global culture influence the degree of adaptation.

Comparable tendencies appear in African contexts. Oinam (2018) analyses 64 biblical names in translations of the Bible into Manipuri and finds substantial influence from Hindi. Nearly half of the adapted forms reflect Hindi phonological patterns. The adaptation processes include substitution of unfamiliar sounds, such as rendering /θ/ as /th/ and /v/ as /b/, as well as restructuring syllables to match the preferred CV and CVC patterns of Manipuri.

In southern Africa, Mbenzi and colleagues (2024) describe the process of adapting Christian names into Oshiwambo, a phenomenon they refer to as “Oshiwambonisation.” The process involves consonant substitution, prenasalization, weakening of consonants, and the addition of prefixes and suffixes. For example, the diminutive prefix *ka-* may be attached to a name, and vowel insertion is common to maintain open syllables. The researchers observe social variation in these patterns: bilingual and urban speakers tend to preserve more foreign features, whereas rural and monolingual speakers more fully integrate names into the local phonological system. These outcomes reflect historical language contact, first with German and Afrikaans, and later with English.

In the Nigerian context, Legbeti and Evbuomwan (2024) examine the adaptation of 40 English names by elderly speakers of Ósósò. They report frequent vowel epenthesis, especially the insertion of /i/, to maintain a simple CV syllable structure and avoid consonant clusters that are not permitted in the language. Other processes include consonant substitution, deletion of problematic segments, and replacement of English stress with tonal patterns, since Ósósò is a tone language. Similarly, Ogban (2019) studies English loanwords, including proper names such as *Patrick* becoming *Patriki*, in Erei. Using a borrowing framework, he identifies vowel insertion,

consonant substitution, and cluster simplification as regular strategies shaped by religious influence, education, and sustained sociolinguistic contact.

Futuse and Dowling (2024) trace missionary-era borrowings into Xhosa, showing how Christian names were reshaped to fit the noun-class system and orthographic conventions of the language. Earlier borrowings were often fully integrated into Xhosa grammar, whereas more recent forms sometimes retain more features of the source language.

Across these studies, consistent adaptation strategies emerge. Borrowed names typically undergo substitution of unfamiliar sounds, insertion of vowels to break up consonant clusters, simplification of syllable structures, adjustment of stress or tone patterns, and morphological integration through affixation or shortening. Nevertheless, the extent of adaptation varies. In contexts where foreign names carry social prestige, partial preservation is common, as observed by Sicherl. In languages with strict phonological constraints, more extensive restructuring occurs, as demonstrated in the studies of Ósósò and Oshiwambo. Social variables such as age, bilingualism, literacy, and urbanisation also shape the outcome.

Within Nigerian English phonology, similar processes of nativisation are evident. Sounds such as /θ/ and /ð/ are frequently realised as /t/ and /d/, reflecting alignment with indigenous phonemic inventories, as noted by Jowitt (1991) and Gut (2004). These broader tendencies show that name adaptation forms part of a systematic restructuring process within Nigerian English, guided by local articulatory preferences and sociolinguistic realities.

### **Loanword Processes in Name Adaptation**

Loanword theory generally treats personal names as lexical items that pass-through stages of borrowing, adaptation, and integration. Studies such as those by Ogban (2019) and Futuse and Dowling (2024) demonstrate that religious and cultural contact often motivates borrowing, while phonological, prosodic, and morphological systems determine how the borrowed name is reshaped. Adaptation typically occurs at multiple linguistic levels: individual sounds may change, syllable structures may be reorganised, stress may be replaced by tone in tone languages, and morphological markers may be added to fit the grammatical system of the receiving language.

At the same time, differences exist across communities. In some contexts, especially where global or colonial languages carry prestige, borrowed names may retain noticeable foreign features. In others, structural constraints lead to full assimilation into the local system. Social variation is also important. Younger, bilingual, and literate speakers often attempt to approximate the original

pronunciation more closely, whereas older or monolingual speakers tend to prefer fully nativized forms.

Although previous research provides valuable cross-linguistic insight into how names are adapted, relatively little attention has been given to youth-driven phonological adaptations in multilingual Nigeria. In particular, there is limited research on how urban Lagos youths reshape English Christian names within Nigerian English. The present study addresses this gap by examining these dynamics among youths in Lagos, thereby contributing to scholarship in Nigerian onomastics and World Englishes.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods design with qualitative dominance in order to examine how Lagos youths adapt English Christian names into Nigerian English. While the core objective is to identify and interpret phonological adaptation strategies, descriptive quantitative procedures (such as frequency counts, percentages and tables) were used to summarise recurring patterns. These numerical summaries are descriptive rather than inferential and serve to support, not replace, the qualitative phonological analysis.

The study was conducted in youth-dominated contexts within Lagos, Nigeria, including universities, churches, and social gatherings, to ensure authentic speech data. Twenty participants (10 male, 10 female) were selected through purposive sampling. Participants were between 18 and 30 years old, which defines “youths” in this study. They were primarily undergraduates and multilingual speakers with a Nigerian indigenous language as their first language and English as a second language acquired through formal education. All reported regular exposure to Standard English in academic contexts and frequent use of Nigerian English in informal interaction. This sociolinguistic profile is essential because pronunciation patterns are influenced by age, linguistic background, and exposure level.

The sample size of twenty is appropriate for the study’s scope, which focuses on identifying systematic phonological patterns within a defined urban youth speech community rather than making nationwide statistical generalisations. Phonological processes typically display regularity, and detailed transcription-based analysis requires a manageable dataset to ensure depth and accuracy.

Data were collected in two phases. First, naturalistic observations of spontaneous name pronunciations were documented using field notes and audio recordings obtained with informed consent. Second, participants completed a controlled pronunciation task involving a standardised list of twenty common English Christian names containing phonological structures known to trigger adaptation. Recordings were made individually in quiet settings to ensure clarity.

Observer bias was minimised through the use of a standardised word list, consistent recording procedures, repeated listening during transcription, and systematic IPA-based analysis. Adaptation strategies were identified using a clearly defined coding framework to ensure consistency.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. The first stage involved phonetic transcription of Standard English forms and comparison with Nigerian English realisations to identify adaptation processes. The second stage classified pronunciations into Standard English, Nigerian English, or hybrid forms, after which frequencies were calculated and presented descriptively. Ethical standards were observed through informed consent, anonymity, and restricted academic use of recordings.

### **Analysis of data**

This section presents findings structured according to the first two research objectives, guided by Haugen's (1950) Linguistic Borrowing Model. The model frames the process as: adoption (initial importation of English Christian names via Christianity and globalisation), and adaptation (phonological reshaping to fit Nigerian English norms). The third aspect of the model, integration, is not applied in this study. First, the male and female names studied are listed in a table. Next, the standard English pronunciations of the names are present alongside their Nigerian English variants. Following this are tables presenting a statistical summary of participants' production of the names and the most common Nigerian adaptations of each word.

### **A List of Male and Female English Christian Names**

**Table 1: Twenty (20) Selected English Christian Names**

<b>Male Names</b>	<b>Female Names</b>
Matthew	Elizabeth
Stephen	Deborah

Thomas	Esther
Nathaniel	Rebecca
Joseph	Ruth
Michael	Rachel
Gabriel	Hannah
Emmanuel	Joanna
Samuel	Phoebe
Paul	Sarah

### **Standard English Pronunciation and Nigerian English Variant(s)**

**Table 2a: Male Christian Names**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Standard English Pronunciation (IPA)</b>	<b>Nigerian English Adaptation(s) (IPA)</b>
Matthew	/ˈmæθjuː/	/ˈmatiu/
Stephen	/ˈstiːvən/	/ˈstiːviːn/, /ˈstifiːn/
Thomas	/ˈtɒməs/	/ˈtɒmas/
Nathaniel	/nəˈθæniəl/	/naˈtaniəl/, /neˈtaniəl/
Joseph	/ˈdʒəʊzəf/	/ˈdʒosef/
Michael	/ˈmaɪkəl/	/ˈmaikəl/
Gabriel	/ˈgeɪbriəl/	/ˈgebriəl/
Emmanuel	/ɪˈmænjʊəl/	/ˈimanwəl/
Samuel	/ˈsæmjʊəl/	/ˈsamwəl/, /ˈsamuel/
Paul	/ˈpiːtə/	/ˈpita/, /ˈpite/

### **Matthew**

In Standard English, *Matthew* is pronounced /'mæθju:/, with the interdental fricative /θ/ and the palatal glide /j/. Nigerian English adaptations, /'matiu/ or /'matu/, replace /θ/ with /t/, a common substitution due to the absence of dental fricatives in most Nigerian languages. The glide /j/ is often dropped, yielding a simpler vowel sequence. This reflects both consonant substitution and simplification of complex clusters.

### **Stephen**

Standard English *Stephen* /'sti:vən/ contains the voiced fricative /v/. Nigerian English forms /'sti:vi:n/ and /'stifi:n/ show two strategies: in the first, a full long vowel is preserved and the final syllable strengthened with /i:n/; in the second, /v/ is replaced by /f/, a process of consonant substitution.

### **Thomas**

The Standard English form /'tɒməs/ shows a short rounded vowel /ɒ/ and a schwa in the second syllable. Nigerian English /'tɒmas/ retains a full vowel /ɔ/ instead of schwa and lengthens the final vowel. This is an example of vowel strengthening and avoidance of reduced vowels.

### **Nathaniel**

Standard English /nə'θæniəl/ begins with a schwa and contains the interdental /θ/. Nigerian English forms /na'taniəl/ and /ne'taniəl/ show two patterns: substitution of /θ/ with /t/ and replacement of schwa with a full vowel, either /a/ or /e/. This demonstrates consonant substitution and preference for open full vowels.

### **Joseph**

In Standard English /'dʒəʊzəf/, the diphthong /əʊ/ is central. Nigerian English forms /'dʒosɛf/ replace /əʊ/ with a monophthong /o/ and shift the final schwa to /ɛ/. This shows diphthong simplification and schwa strengthening.

### **Michael**

The Standard English /'maɪkəl/ has a diphthong /aɪ/ and a schwa. Nigerian English /'maikɛl/ maintains the diphthong but replaces schwa with /ɛ/, showing vowel strengthening.

### **Gabriel**

Standard English /'geɪbrɪəl/ contains a diphthong /eɪ/ and a schwa in the final syllable. Nigerian English /'gebrɪəl/ replaces /eɪ/ with /e/ and schwa with /ɛ/, yielding a fully syllabic rhythm. This exemplifies diphthong simplification and syllable-timed rhythm.

### **Emmanuel**

The Standard English /ɪ'mænjʊəl/ features a reduced initial vowel /ɪ/ and a glide + schwa sequence. Nigerian English /'ɪmɔnwəl/ shifts stress to the initial syllable, replaces schwa with /ɛ/, and simplifies the glide cluster. This shows stress reallocation and vowel strengthening.

### **Samuel**

Standard English /'sæmjʊəl/ has the /jʊəl/ sequence, which is complex. Nigerian English forms /'sɔmwəl/ and /'sɔmuəl/ simplify the glide and replace schwa with /ɛ/. This shows glide simplification and syllabic expansion.

### **Peter**

The Standard English form /'pi:tə/ has a long vowel /i:/ and a final schwa. Nigerian English /'pɪtə/ or /'pɪtɛ/ replaces schwa with full vowels /a/ or /ɛ/. This demonstrates avoidance of schwa and vowel strengthening.

**Table 2b: Female Christian Names**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Standard English Pronunciation (IPA)</b>	<b>Nigerian English Adaptation(s) (IPA)</b>
Elizabeth	/ɪ'lɪzəbətθ/	/e'lɪzabet/, /e'lɪzabɛθ/
Deborah	/'dɛbərə/	/'debɔra/
Esther	/'ɛstə/	/'ɛsta/
Rebecca	/rɪ'bɛkə/	/'rebeka/
Ruth	/ru:θ/	/rut/, /ruf/
Rachel	/'reitʃəl/	/'reʃɛl/, /'retʃɛl/
Hannah	/'hænə/	/'hana/

Joanna	/dʒoʊ'ænə/	/dʒo'ana/, /'dʒwana/
Phoebe	/'fi:bi/	/'febe/
Sarah	/'sɛərə/ or /'serə/	/'sara/, /'sera/

### **Elizabeth**

Standard English /ɪ'lɪzəbəθ/ contains both schwa and the interdental /θ/. Nigerian English forms /e'lɪzəbɛt/ and /e'lɪzəbɛθ/ replace the initial /ɪ/ with /e/, strengthen the schwa to /a/ or /ɛ/, and in one variant retain /θ/, while in another replace final /θ/ with /t/. The strategies are vowel strengthening and consonant substitution.

### **Deborah**

Standard English /'debərə/ ends with schwa. Nigerian English /'debɔra/ replaces schwa with /a/ and inserts a rounded vowel /ɔ/, producing a fuller trisyllabic form. This reflects schwa replacement and syllabic expansion.

### **Esther**

The Standard English /'estə/ ends with schwa. Nigerian English /'ɛsta/ replaces schwa with /a/, demonstrating a **shift to full vowels**.

### **Rebecca**

Standard English /rɪ'bɛkə/ contains a schwa. Nigerian English /'rebeka/ replaces the initial /ɪ/ with /e/ and the final schwa with /a/. This shows vowel substitution and strengthening.

### **Ruth**

The Standard English /ru:θ/ ends with interdental /θ/. Nigerian English forms /rut/ and /ruf/ replace /θ/ with /t/ or /f/, both common substitutions in Nigerian English. This is consonant substitution.

### **Rachel**

In Standard English /'reɪtʃəl/, the diphthong /eɪ/ and final schwa are key. Nigerian English /'refɛl/ or /'retʃɛl/ simplifies the diphthong to /e/ or /ɛ/ and strengthens the schwa. The /tʃ/ may also weaken to /ʃ/ in one form. This illustrates diphthong simplification and vowel strengthening.

### **Hannah**

Standard English /'hænə/ ends with schwa. Nigerian English /'hana/ replaces it with /a/, an example of schwa avoidance.

### **Joanna**

The Standard English /dʒoʊ'ænə/ features the diphthong /oʊ/ and schwa. Nigerian English /dʒo'ana/ or /'dʒwana/ simplifies the diphthong to /o/, deletes schwa, and sometimes compresses syllables with glide /w/. This shows diphthong simplification and cluster reduction.

### **Phoebe**

Standard English /'fi:bi/ has the long vowel /i:/. Nigerian English /'febe/ replaces the long vowel with a short /e/, showing vowel lowering and simplification.

### **Sarah**

The Standard English /'sɛərə/ or /'serə/ has either a diphthong or schwa. Nigerian English /'sara/ and /'sera/ replace these with full vowels, making all syllables clear. This is diphthong simplification and full vowel substitution.

### **Analysis of Participants' Pronunciation of Male and Female English Christian Names**

The percentages in Tables 3a and 3b below represent the proportion of the 20 participants who produced either the Standard English pronunciation or a Nigerian English adaptation during the controlled elicited pronunciation task. For each name, the researcher listened to the audio recording of all 20 participants pronouncing that specific name. Each participant's production was classified into one of two categories: Standard English pronunciation or Nigerian English adaptation, meaning the realisation showed at least one clear adaptation strategy such as consonant substitution, vowel strengthening, diphthong simplification, or cluster reduction. If a participant produced multiple slight variants during repetition, only the most consistent or clearest token was coded to avoid double-counting the same speaker. The count for each category was then tallied, with the total always equalling 20 participants. The percentage was calculated using the formula of the number of participants in the category divided by 20 and then multiplied by 100, rounded to the nearest whole number for readability. This ensured that the Standard English percentage plus the Nigerian English adaptation percentage always summed to 100 per cent for each name. The column labelled "Common Variants Heard" simply lists the most frequent adapted realisation or realisations observed within the adapted group. All percentages are descriptive only, derived

solely from the elicited task data, and reflect direct coding from the individual recordings to provide transparency and consistency in linking the raw audio evidence to the summary figures in the tables.

**Table 3a: Participants’ Pronunciation of Male English Christian Names**

Name	Standard English Pronunciation (%)	Nigerian English Adaptation (%)	Common Variants Heard
Matthew	25%	75%	/'matiu/
Stephen	20%	80%	/'sti:vi:n/, /'stifi:n/
Thomas	30%	70%	/'tɔmas/
Nathaniel	15%	85%	/na'taniɛl/, /ne'taniɛl/
Joseph	40%	60%	/'dʒɔsɛf/
Michael	50%	50%	/'maikɛl/
Gabriel	35%	65%	/'gebrɪɛl/
Emmanuel	10%	90%	/'imanwɛl/
Samuel	25%	75%	/'samwɛl/, /'samuɛl/
Paul	45%	55%	/'pita/, /'pitɛ/

The statistical analysis of male names reveals a clear preference among Nigerian youths for phonological adaptations over standard English pronunciations. Names such as *Emmanuel* (90% adaptation) and *Nathaniel* (85% adaptation) show the strongest tendency toward Nigerian English forms, largely due to the simplification of complex syllable structures and the replacement of less familiar sounds such as /θ/. Similarly, *Stephen* (80%) undergoes consistent adaptation, where the voiced fricative /v/ is replaced with approximations like /f/ or lengthened vowels, aligning with common substitution patterns in Nigerian English.

By contrast, names like *Michael* (50%) and *Peter* (55%) display a more balanced distribution between standard and adapted forms, suggesting these names are widely recognised in both their international and localised versions. Interestingly, *Joseph* (60% adaptation) retains relatively

strong recognition of its standard form compared to other names, which may reflect its long-standing presence in both religious and cultural contexts.

The data indicates that the degree of adaptation is influenced by phonological complexity, the presence of sounds less common in Nigerian English, and the entrenched status of certain biblical names in everyday usage. Names with simpler phonemic structures or global familiarity (e.g., *Peter* and *Michael*) are more resistant to adaptation, while those with more marked or less common sounds (e.g., *Nathaniel*, *Stephen*, *Emmanuel*) are heavily localised.

**Table 3b: Participants’ Pronunciation of Female English Christian Names**

Name	Standard English Pronunciation (%)	Nigerian English Adaptation (%)	Common Variants Heard
Elizabeth	20%	80%	/e'lizabet/, /e'lizabεθ/
Deborah	25%	75%	/'debɔra/
Esther	40%	60%	/'esta/
Rebecca	30%	70%	/'rebeka/
Ruth	15%	85%	/rut/, /ruf/
Rachel	25%	75%	/'refɛl/, /'retʃɛl/
Hannah	50%	50%	/'hana/
Joanna	20%	80%	/dʒo'ana/, /'dʒwana/
Phoebe	10%	90%	/'febe/
Sarah	35%	65%	/'sara/, /'sera/

The analysis of female names shows even stronger evidence of phonological adaptation than the male names. *Phoebe* (90% adaptation) and *Ruth* (85%) are among the most consistently localised, largely because of sounds like /θ/ and the initial /f/ in *Phoebe*, which are frequently replaced by more familiar Nigerian English sounds such as /t/ or /b/. Similarly, *Elizabeth* (80%) and *Joanna* (80%) undergo systematic adaptation, with simplification of stress patterns and vowel substitutions reflecting Nigerian English phonotactics.

In contrast, names like *Hannah* (50%) and *Esther* (60%) retain stronger ties to their standard English forms. This resistance to adaptation may be explained by their shorter syllable structures and relatively simpler phonemes, which align more closely with Nigerian English sound patterns. *Sarah* (65%) also shows partial preservation of its standard form, reflecting its strong biblical presence and familiarity across Christian communities.

The results suggest that female names containing marked phonemes or multi-syllabic complexity (e.g., *Elizabeth*, *Phoebe*, *Joanna*) are more likely to be adapted, while those with simpler, universally recognisable structures (e.g., *Hannah*, *Esther*) show greater stability. The strong tendency toward adaptation highlights the role of Nigerian English in reshaping name pronunciations to fit local phonological norms, while cultural familiarity serves as a stabilising influence for some widely used biblical names.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings clearly show that Lagos youths predominantly use adapted pronunciations of English Christian names rather than the original Standard English forms, with adaptation rates averaging over 70% across the elicited data. This directly answers the study's sole objective: to investigate whether Lagos youths use original or adapted pronunciations and how they adapt those names into Nigerian English. The high proportion of adapted realisations confirms that adapted pronunciations are the norm among this urban youth group, while original forms are used less frequently and mainly for shorter or highly familiar names.

Guided by Haugen's (1950) Linguistic Borrowing Model, the results illustrate that the adaptation stage is the most prominent in this context. English Christian names have long been adopted into Nigerian society through Christianity and globalization, but Lagos youths actively reshape them phonologically to conform to Nigerian English rules. The main adaptation strategies include consonant substitution (particularly /θ/ → /t/ and /v/ → /f/ or vowel lengthening), vowel strengthening (replacing schwa /ə/ with full vowels such as /a/, /ε/, or /ɔ/), diphthong simplification (e.g., /əʊ/ → /o/, /eɪ/ → /e/ or /ε/), and cluster or glide reduction. These processes are systematic and driven by Nigerian English phonotactics, such as preference for CV syllable structures, avoidance of dental fricatives, and use of full vowels instead of reduced ones. Such patterns align with established features of Nigerian English (Jowitt, 1991; Gut, 2004) and echo name adaptation strategies reported cross-linguistically (Legbeti & Evbuomwan, 2024; Sicherl, 2015), but are here documented specifically in the speech of contemporary urban youths.

Names with phonological complexity or marked sounds showed the strongest adaptation (e.g., *Emmanuel* at 90%, *Phoebe* at 90%, *Nathaniel* at 85%, *Ruth* at 85%), where non-native features like interdental fricatives, schwa, or complex diphthongs were consistently replaced or simplified. In contrast, shorter or more familiar names exhibited greater retention of original pronunciations (*Michael* at 50%, *Hannah* at 50%, *Peter* at 55%), suggesting that cultural-religious entrenchment and phonological simplicity allow partial preservation of the standard form. Female names showed a slightly higher average adaptation rate (74%) than male names (70%), likely due to greater phonetic complexity in several multi-syllabic examples, though the difference is not substantial. In summary, Lagos youths adapt English Christian names into Nigerian English far more than they retain the original pronunciations, employing predictable phonological strategies that reflect systematic nativization. While religious and cultural significance is preserved, the names are reshaped to fit the sound system of Nigerian English, demonstrating active domestication by this demographic. These results extend Haugen's model by showing the adaptation stage as dominant among urban youths and contribute to Nigerian onomastics and World Englishes by documenting contemporary youth-driven phonological change in a postcolonial multilingual setting.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined how Nigerian youths adapt English Christian names into Nigerian English pronunciation, showing that the changes are systematic rather than arbitrary. The analysis revealed strategies such as sound substitution (e.g., /θ/ → /t/ or /s/), cluster simplification, and stress modification, all of which align names with Nigerian English phonological rules. Participant data confirmed that while a few names like *Peter*, *Michael*, and *Hannah* were often pronounced close to their Standard English forms; most were consistently localised into Nigerian English variants. These findings highlight that Nigerian English operates as a distinct system with stable pronunciation patterns and that Nigerian youths actively reshape global English names into forms that are both phonetically natural within their variety and socially meaningful in their cultural context.

## **Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that greater attention be given to the role of Nigerian English in shaping the way English Christian names are used in everyday life. Teachers, church leaders, and community figures can promote awareness of both Standard English and

Nigerian English pronunciations, helping youths develop flexible competence depending on context. Linguists and educators should also consider these adaptations as part of legitimate language use, rather than errors, since they reflect systematic phonological processes.

For further research, future studies could expand the sample size to include youths from rural areas and different regions of Nigeria to capture broader variation. Comparative studies with other African countries where English coexists with indigenous languages may also reveal whether similar adaptation strategies occur. Additionally, acoustic phonetic analysis could be employed to provide more precise evidence of vowel quality and consonant substitution patterns, and longitudinal studies might explore how pronunciation practices change over time with increased exposure to global media. Such extensions would deepen understanding of how Nigerian English continues to evolve in contact with Standard English.

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