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24. Communication & Social Reception of the Nigerian Pidgin in Cross River State

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Introduction: The Genesis, Growth & Development of the Nigerian Pidgin

The Nigerian pidgin has its origin around the mouth of the Cross River and the Niger Delta. Specifically, "the Pidgin centres were, for a long time, Warri,/Sapele, Port Harcourt and Calabar" (Elugbe 1995:286). Though linguists had not seen the Nigerian Pidgin as indigenous to Cross River State, we would like to state that it is indigenous to this state for as Jibril (1995:232) observes:

The earliest written record of an NP-like language is, of course, Antera Duke's diary, which dates back to the 18th century.

The Nigerian pidgin (NP) is one of the several languages spoken in Nigeria by Nigerians of all classes or statuses (Okon, 1997:181). It was originally spoken as a trade language throughout what is now the southern states and in the sabon garis of the northern states and also spoken as a first language by some people (Crozier and Blench, 1992). Nigerian Pidgin is "essentially a product of urbanization (Mafeni 1972:98). Since it is a product of urbanization, Nigerian pidgin came as a result of language contact. With the contact between English and Nigerian languages, the ratio is 70:30% (sic). That is, Nigerian pidgin is made up of 70% English and 30% Nigerian languages (Akpanglo - Nartey, 1988:125). In addition, Elugbe (1995:292) agrees with Faraclas that "Nigerian Pidgin has most of the linguistic features of Nigerian Standard English (NSE) and those that typify many other Nigerian languages. Based on the substrates and their percentage, the Nigerian Pidgin "is thus, linguistically and sociolinguistically, a complicated phenomenon" (Mafeni, 1972;99). Elugbe sees this combination as follows: "the vocabulary of the Nigerian Pidgm is English while its grammar is Nigerian, Elugbe Though the Nigerian Pidgin consists of English and other substrates, we wish to, in the words of Wardhaugh (1986:55), assert that

... pidgin is not seen as a 'bad' variety of any language, but a language or variety of a language with its own legitimacy, i.e. its own history, structure, array of function...

In spite of the complexity of the Nigerian Pidgin, it serves different functions in the Nigerian society and "pidgin seems to be, today, a very widely spoken lingua franca, many towns and city dwellers being at least bilingual, in pidgin and an indigenous language" (Mafeni 1972:98). The use of the Nigerian Pidgin has an extensive scope for as Jibril (1995:233) observes, the functions of NP have become more extensive. Furthermore, he states, that news broadcasts, current affairs discussion programme, news bulletins are some of the programmes that "tend to favour NP... as the language of the masses." In spite of the frequent use of the Nigerian Pidgin, the attitudes of the speakers towards it is ambivalent. Jibril (1995:234) observes that the attitude to NP among Nigerians range from adoration to disdain. In a similar vein, Elugbe (1995:287) confirm this negative attitude as follows:

One meets highly placed government officials who speak Nigerian Pidgin but do not believe it should be a located a role in Language policy in Nigeria.

In spite of this attitude of disdain by some Nigerians, Jibril (1995:238) acknowledges the recognition and acceptance of the Nigerian pidgin thus:

The rise of NP and its increasing use in domains hitherto dominated by English are directly attributable to its increasing RECOGNITION [emphasis mine] as a medium in case communication with the masses... some members of the Nigerian elite who alone are responsible for its literary use.

We would wish to state that with the contemporary development where the Nigerian pidgin is used in writing literary works, it (NP) has come of age to be recognized by the government as a developed language that can perform any linguistic function assigned to the Nigerian Pidgin.

Linguistic Map of Cross River State

Cross River State is one of the states where many languages are spoken. The issue of the number of languages spoken in Cross River State has always been a subject of controve sy. For instance, Essien (1982:118-122) observes the existence of twenty-five languages. These languages are classed into cluster with a number of dialects and 'near dialects'. The formulae for the classification into dialects and near dialects, are as follows. The grouping into dialects is based on the criterion of mutual intelligibility, whereas the near dialects are based on the notion of 'uni-directional intelligibility' (i.e. where speakers of 'A' understand 'B' without learning it". To substantiate the issue of the number of languages spoken in Cross River State, Essien (1987:27) cites works that had already been done by linguists on Cross River Languages. For example, he cites Crabb (1969) who estimates that the number of languages spoken in old Ogoja province only is put at about fifty (50). On the other hand, the Rev. Bettie (1978) asserts that "every village spoke its own language". From the estimates and comments, we would liken Cross River State then to the 'Tower of Babel'. Anyway from further researches, Essien' (1987:28) has identified through the use of mutual intelligibility criterion that there exists

About fifty languages, consisting of individual languages, direct cluster and groups of languages in language clusters.

Historically, these languages were native to Cross River State but with the advent of Akwa Ibom State, some of these languages namely: Ibibio, Annang, and Ibeno among others, ceased to be indigenous languages of Cross River State. Using the most recent classification of Nigerian languages, Crozier and Blench (1992:117-118) have observed the existence of sixty-three (63) languages in Cross River State with two nearly extinct and one (1) extinct. We do not agree with them on the number of languages because some of these languages could be described as dialects. In spite of our disagreement with Crozier and Blench, Cross River State of Nigeria makes an interesting case study in the number of languages spoken. As Egbokhare (2001:116) states—the approximate number of languages spoken in Cross River State is thirty-four (34) with a population of 1,865,604. He does not state whether these languages are indigenous to Cross River State. A more recent work—(Udoh 2001)—observes the existence of thirty-five (35) languages with about one

hundred and sixty-eight (169) dialects. These languages are indigenous to Cross River State.

Since in every state, especially in the towns, groups coverge and live to perform one duty or another, so it is in Cross River State. Besides, the 35 languages spoken in Cross River State, Calabar metropolis, as the state capital is a melting pot of other languages like pidgin, Hausa, Ibibio, Igbo, Ishan, Bamenda, Yoruba, Tiv, among others. As such Cross River State can rightly be described as one of the centres of linguistic diversity in Nigeria. A look at the short description of the linguistic map of Cross River State shows that there is a problem - the problem is that of the varied languages and one wonders which one would be used as a language of communication among the various groups living in the State.

In many Nigerian towns where Nigerians of different linguistic backgrounds converge and live together, the common language of communication is the Nigerian Pidgin. This statement is not new in Cross River State. For as Essien (1982:123) asserts, the variety of English in use-

The variety of English in question is often *PIDGIN [emphasis mine] which is emerging as a lingua franca in the polyglot part of the state.

To further affirm his earlier assertion, Essien (1987:42) posits the use of the Nigerian pidgin as a means of communication in primary schools and states as follows:

....in the urban areas such as Ikom and Ogoja, where children with different language backgrounds can be found in school, *PIDGIN is used as a *MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION [emphasis mine] in the lower primary.

This statement posits the Nigerian pidgin is highly recognized and appreciated by the people and the different arms of government. Similarly, the systems/organs of the society also make use of Nigerian Pidgin in communicating. One of such organs is the Cross River State Radio Service (CRSRS).

Communication

The Cross River Radio, which is an organization, is a vehicle for communication created to serve the recreational, educational, social and informative needs of the people where the organization is located. This section sets out to define communication. There are varied definitions of communication and I would like to give some below. Communication may be defined as:

The process by which one person through the use of audible and visual symbols, engenders meaning in one or more listeners... (Andersen et al. 1964:27).

On the other hand, Hunt (1980:29) sees communication as some mechanism which "involves one person trying to create meaning in another".

Whereas Ross (1977:110) asserts that:

Communication is a process involving the sorting, selecting, and sending of symbols in such a way as to help a listener perceive and recreate in his own mind - the meaning contained in the mind of the communicator.

From the foregoing, we wish to state that three basic issues are observed in these definitions. Communication involves:

- (a) The creation of meaning in the mind of the listener similar to the meaning in his own mind (addresser).
- (b) The transfer of information through the use of symbols which can be verbal or nonverbal or both.
- (c) Thousands of potential stimuli and these stimuli become a message when the individual assigns it a meaning.

Based on the definitions and issues involved, we posit that communication is the process of transfer of information from one person to another and the medium of transfer in this case is the Nigerian pidgin which can be described

as the lingua francs of the different linguistic residents in the Calabar metropolis. Using the UNESCO definition of a lingua franca;

It is a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate 'communication between them (Wardhaugh 1986:55).

The Roles of Communication: The Cross River Radio Programme Services

The Cross River Radio, which is an arm of the media in the state, performs the following functions:

- 1. to inform
- 2. to entertain
- 3, to educate
- 4, to persuade
- 5. to influence (cf. Oluikpe, et al. 1993:188-189)

In performing these functions, the Cross River State radio has a number of languages which the presenters make use of. Such languages are: English, Efik, Eiagham, Bekwarra and the Nigerian Pidgin, among others. Of the different languages used by the Cross River Radio in presenting the various programmes, none has succeeded in performing these functions as does the Nigerian Pidgin. Elugbe (1995:296) who quotes Gani-Ikilama states *PIDGIN is central to the lives of many Nigerians, especially in places like Bendel* CROSS RIVER and Rivers States. The Cross River Radio through its various programmes in the Nigerian Pidgin has succeeded in performing these functions. As observed, by Lanihun (2000:25) "communication is the life blood of any organization". Some of the programmes which are aired through the use of Nigerian Pidgin in the Cross River Radio include: "Koko joint", "News in Special English", "Basket Mouth", "Sunday Special and "Wetin de happen". The use of the Nigerian Pidgin in communication is not peculiar to the Cross River Radio, as the Radio Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) also air the following programmes in Pidgin: "One thing at a Time", "Papa Ajasco", "Rainbow City", and "Charley Boy Show", among

others. Series of adverts are also aired through the use of the Nigerian Pidgin both at the federal and state levels.

Purpose of Study

Given the importance of the Nigerian pidgin as a language of communication, this study, seeks to appraise the communicative/social recognition of Nigerian pidgin in Cross River State with a view to proffering suggestions on the issue of language planning/policy in Cross River State in particular and Nigeria in general. The specific objective of the study were:

- (1) To determine the effective use of the Nigerian Pidgin by Cross River Radio Service (CRSRS) in communication.
- (2) To find out if the use of the Nigerian Pidgin in communication appeals to the listeners.
- (3) To identify the roles of the Nigerian Pidgin in communication
- (4) To determine if the use of the Nigerian pidgin in communication adapts to the changing social conditions of today in Cross River State.

From preliminary studies, it was observed that the programmes "Koko joint" and "Sunday Special" appear more to people and this observation prompted an extensive research into the use of the Nigerian pidgin in communication in Cross River State.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a set of fourteen (14) item questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A dealt with questions, which were used to elicit responses on the communicative/social acceptance of the Nigerian pidgin. The questionnaire items were formulated around five clusters with ten (10) of the items in the first section. The questions were to test the specific objectives of the study. They responded to each of the items using a two point scale of YES (2 points), and NO (1 point). The 10th question was open-ended. Section B, on the other hand, dealt with the biodata of the informants. (See appendix 1). Of the two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaire distributed, one hundred and fifty (150) subjects completed and returned same. This number amounted to 75% return rate.

Population

Residents of Calabar metropolis of diverse linguistic groups were selected. The subjects comprised people of varied ages and levels of education in order to discover how effective the Nigerian pidgin is in communicating the programmes transmitted by the Cross River Radio.

Statist cal Analysis

The following statistical procedures, viz. the mean, standard deviation, ttest and simple percentages were used for the calculations in order to authen icate our findings.

Result

Table 1: percentage of subjects based on sex

VARIABLE SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE		
Male	94	62.7		
Female	56	37.3		
Total	150	100		

Table 1 gives a summary of the gender distribution of the subjects. There is a slight difference between the two groups of subjects. The nale respondents out-numbered their female counterparts. The female subjects constituted 37.3% while the male gave the remaining 62.7%. The difference does not in any way suggest that the males are superior to their females in their acceptance of the use of the Nigerian Pidgin in Communication.

Table 2: Percentage of Subejcts by Age

VARIABLE - AGE	M	ALE = 94	FEMALE = 56		
	FREQ.	PERCENT	FREQ.	PERCEN1	
Below 21 years	24	25.5	22	39.3	
Above 21 years	70	74.5	34	60.7	
Total	94	100	56	100	

Table 2: The subjects were categorized into two levels of age distribution. There were under 21 years old male numbered 24 and constituted 25.5%; female of the same bracket were 22 gave 39.3%. On the other hand, those

above 21 years reflected the adults in the Nigerian society and the frequency and percentages are as given; male subjects were 70 which represented 74.5% and the female numbered 34 subjects which constituted 60.7%. The age group constituted one of the variables to find out if both the young and the adults appreciate the use of the Nigerian pidgin as a language of communication.

Table 3: Percentage of Subejcts Educational Level

VARIABLE		GENDER					
EDUCATIONAL		MALE	FEMALE				
QUALIFICATION	FREQ.	PERCENT	FREQ.	PERCENT			
F.S.L.C.	21	22.3	15	26.8			
WASC/SSCE	23	24.6	17	30.4			
TERTIARY	50	53.1	24	42.8			
TOTAL	94	100	56	100			

The use of educational level was to find out if the use of Nigerian Pidgin in communications in Cross River State depended on one's level of education. Nigerian Pidgin is one of the languages used by the Cross River Radio in broadcasting these programmes: "Koko joint" and "Sunday Special". The subjects' level of education was classified into three major groups, viz: First School leaving Certificate - male numbered 21 with 22.3%, the female - 15 constituted 26.8% of the total people for the study. A second group, the WASC/SSCE - male were, 23 or 24.6% and the female 17 or 30.4%. In addition, those at the tertiary level comprised male 50 or 53.1% where the female were 24 or 42.8%. This particular group constituted more in number because their level of education has given them many years of exposure to the use of Standard English which is an opportunity for social mobility within the Nigerian speech community. The reason for the uneven distribution and a higher n umber of respondents in the third category was to determine whether this class of respondents does recognize that the Nigerian pidgin is a language for effective communication.

Table 4: Percentage of the Occupational Level of the Subjects

VARIABLE	N	1ALE	FE	MALE
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	FREQ	PERCNT.	FREQ.	PERCENT
Self-employed	17	181.1	15	26.8
Government-employed	29	30,8	13	23.2
Student	26	27.7	18	32.1
Others	22	23.4	10	17.9
Total	94	100	56	100

Occupation is regarded as an important variable for this study. For the purpose of analysis, four groups of employment are enlisted, that is: self-employed, government-employed, student and other. For the self-employed category, the male comprised 17 or 18.1% whereas female were 15 or 26.8%. The second group of the government-employed male constituted 29 or 30.8 while the female were 13 or 23.2%. The students were 26 or 27.7% for male and 18 or 32.1% for female. In addition the last group-other-comprised 22 or 23.4 for male and 10 or 17.9% for female.

If the government employed and the students are taken together, they constituted 86 subjects or 57.3%. These two categories formed the dominant group. This is so because of their knowledge of Standard English and these categories tend to act as the model for the Nigerian environment. The other two classes show a manifestation of their nature of duty, which puts them, in regular touch with a cross-section of the society and the use of the Nigerian pidgin as the only means of communication.

Table 5: The Mean, SD and T-Test for Responses on Variables 2-9

	8	MAL	ES	FEM/	ALES	T-VALUE
		N =	94	N =	56	T-VALUE
VAI	UABLES	X	SD	X	SD	
2.	l understand the language in	23	32.53	11	14.7	*2.58
	the programmes					
3.	I like the language used in the	14.3	31.80	10.6	14.72	*4.87
	programmes		20000000 CONTROL O			

4.	I enjoy listening to the	15.33	27.53	10.6	14.55	*6.91
	programmes					
5.	I don't enjoy listening to the	4.88	15.95	4.27	9.82	1.49
3	programmes					
6.	I learnt a lot of new things	12.71	25.01	8.67	14.84	*6.41
	from the programmes					
7.	I like listening because it	6.23	16.80.	4.8	10.22	*3.33
	confirms grapevine			100		
	information.				•	
8.	I like listening because of the	3.57	12.56	4.27	9.63	*2.06
	time it is presented.					
9.	Would you want more air-	6.38	17.50	6.25	11.68	0.049
	time for the programmes?			•		
*SI	GNIFICANT AT P<0.05					
		105				

The result as presented in table 5 shows that both the male and female population in Cross River State use Nigerian Pidgin in communication. The table further shows the existence of significant difference in the mean responses of both the male and female subjects regarding their recognition, acceptance and use of Nigerian Pidgin in communication in the state. Both groups do have access to listening to and speaking Nigerian pidgin. The results affirm our earlier assumption that the use of Nigerian pidgin is quite extensive as it is quite informative as well as confirm events/issues within the society. In order to confirm objective 4: a look at Table 5 attests to the fact that the Nigerian Pidgin has adapted to the social condition of today in Cross River State. Item 6 and 7 with the values show a significant difference in the response of the informants that any political, social, cultural, economic, educational and health issues can be presented to the listeners through the use of the Nigerian Pidgin.

Discussion

Nigerian Pidgin is a language accepted and recognized by Nigerians of all levels of education/class as a language that is effective for communication (cf. Bamgbose 1991, Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Elugbe 1995, Jibril, 1995; Okon 1997, Essien 1998 and Egbokhare 2001). From the different studies and observations, though there are still problems on how to write the Nigerian.

pidgin, the point of focus in this paper is the fact that the Nigerian pidgin is highly accepted and recognized by Nigerians of all classes irrespective of the language family to which he/she belongs. Nigerian Pidgin is the language for *SOCIAL COMMUNICATION.

Implication for Language Planning and Policy

Language planning is a prerequisite for the development of any country. In Nigeria, Omamor (1994:59) asserts that:

Language planning since independence has been a series of un coordinated events and happenings characterized by a glaring al sence of declared language policy objectives even though activities connected with language development, normally engendered by language planning, have been going on in Nigeria.

It is n the light of this situation that this writer would like to call on the Nigerian government to wake up to its responsibility by making a categorical statement on the issues of language in order to ensure development educationally, socially and otherwise.

As Egbokhare (2001:117) states "Pidgin thrives in a linguistically heterogeneous environment where contact is marginal..." Nigeria, with a total of about four hundred and thirty-six (436) languages (Okon, 2000:187), is a heterogeneous environment and the extensive use of the Nigerian pidgin as a language of communication is widely accepted. From this study, the different languages spoken in Cross River State confirm a significant reliance of Pidgin as the language for communication, identification, belonging, and for unity among the diverse speakers of Nigeria's numerous tongues. Since it is the language that unites the people, it is necessary for the government to assign some specific role to the Nigerian pidgin. In contemporary times, it is the language the government uses in creating awareness in political, social, health and educational issues.

Bamgbose (1991:20) had earlier observed that Pidgin is a language for wider communication (LWC). In addition, he rates Pidgin as a "language for Nationalism and also useful for vertical integration." It is a language of the masses and also spoken by both the clite and non-clite in Nigeria (cf. Gani-

Ikilama 1990, Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Eka 1992, Elugbe 1995, Jibril 1995, Okon 1997, Udofot 1997, Essien 1998, Egbokhare 2001 and Obasi 2001:10).

Omamor (1994:46) states that "Nigerian pidgin plays the role of a lingua franca in parts of the north and in some southern states especially the coastal areas". We wish to disagree in part because in today's Nigeria, all the states even in the somewhat monolingual states, make use of Nigerian pidgin because of the diverse ethnic/linguistic groups that live and work in the thirty-six states and Abuja. Therefore, in agreement with Faraclas quoted by Elugbe (1995:292), we would like to submit that the government, language planners and policy makers and implementers must recognize, accept and reflect the use of Nigerian pidgin as one of the official languages that is assigned specific function and status within the Nigerian linguistic map.

Conclusion

Nigerian pidgin is a language widely spoken in Nigeria; therefore, it is pertinent that the language must be developed to its full potentials. Communication between the literate and illiterate people is made possible through the use of Nigerian pidgin. Egbokhare (2001:113) has listed fifteen different programmes that make use of Nigerian Pidgin. The number is an affirmation of the recognition given to Nigerian pidgin. Everyday, new programmes are transmitted for example: "The Charly Boy Show" is a TV programme in pidgin. Similarly, "Wetin dey Happen" is a recent programme in Cross River State that also uses Pidgin. These programmes with more to come, place the Nigerian pidgin - the language of communication - on a pedestal above all other languages of communication. In sum, I would like to recall Okon's (1997:181) earlier suggestion that Nigerian Pidgin can contribute to "resolving the problem of a lingua franca in Nigeria".

This repeated call by Okon (1997, 2002) for the use of Nigerian Pidgin as a national language buttresses Essien's (1998) definite recommendation on the introduction of the Nigerian Pidgin with specific roles and functions assigned to it. Furthermore, he drew up a new language policy which includes the gradual implementation of the Nigerian pidgin as a national language (cf. Essien forthcoming). As already stated the use of the Nigerian pidgin is not new in Cross River State and this paper has proved the extensive use of the Nigerian pidgin in all facets of communication.

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