Linguistic Innovation in the Use of Pidgin: A Study of Nigerian Pidgin (Np) In Selected Nigerian Cities

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Abstract

Pidgin has been described as a language of necessity having developed as a result of contact between people with no language in common but a need to communicate with one another. Recently, pidgin has generated a lot of interests among linguistics because it has evolved over time to become a language in its own right. This study, which is anchored on the lexical gap theory, considered the factors necessary for linguistic innovations observable in Nigeria Pidgin used in Port Harcourt, Warri, Owerri and Aba. This research is regional in focus; a subset of the population was observed for a short period of time to discern the type of pidgin used. The research method employed was descriptive while participant observation method with the aid of a recorder was used for data collection. The participants were selected via random sampling and their speeches duly analyzed. The study sample cut across both youths and adults of no particular gender, class and age in the streets, markets, motor parks, hospitals, offices, tertiary institutions and restaurants the research areas. The recorded conversations as well as the notes taken were transcribed and subjected to content

analysis. It was discovered that the intensity of contact, the function which communication must serve and the degree of similarity between languages trigger linguistic innovations. Pidgin is an evolving subject and although a lot of research has been carried out in this area, it is nonetheless exhausted. This work advocates for the development of pidgin ethnography by harnessing its unique features to pave way for its possible adoption as a national language in Nigeria.

Introduction

Pidgin is aptly described as a language of necessity having developed as a result of contact between people with no language in common but a need to communicate with one another. Pidgin is therefore otherwise referred to as a contact language. Contact between people speaking different languages results in linguistic innovation depending on the length/intensity of the contact, the type of social, economic and political relationship between the people, the functions which communication between them must serve and the degree of similarity between the languages they speak.

Consequently, Thomason (2001) defined a contact language as a "new language that arises out of a contact situation" (p.158). It is a new language because its lexicon and grammatical structures cannot be traced to a single source language; the lexicon is usually derived from the superstrate language (the dominant language) while the grammar is derived from the substrate language(s) – the indigenous languages. The lexicon and grammar borrowed from either of the language are most often not left in their 'original" state but undergo some changes which Holm (2010) described as "distortions" or mutilation of languages that is not genetically related to the original languages.

Innovation simply involves the "creation" or "invention" of lexical items that were hitherto not present in a language in order to fill a lexical gap.

Innovation entails some linguistic manipulations in a bid to effectively communicate and achieve meaning in communication.
Communication is usually one of the pressing needs in any contact situation. To overcome this challenge, people must make certain linguistic choices and these choices are also largely dependent on the length/intensity of the contact. A minimal contact produces an emergency language (pidgin) which will enable a basic interaction in order to fulfill a specific need. They do not need an elaborate language but few vocabularies accompanied with gestures simple enough to convey meaning and to meet the immediate need. However, if the contact is prolonged, the vocabularies become more expressive. Creativity also comes in at this point largely due to the degree of similarity or otherwise of the languages in contact.

The type of relationship between a people also influences the development of this new language (Pidgin). A temporary relationship such as the one associated with trade generates limited vocabulary, usually non-basic linguistic items – noun, verbs, adjectives and adverbs- but if the people become more socially involved, a case of extended relationship that transcends trade, the vocabulary is enlarged to accommodate function words to better express feelings, ideas, and situations. As the relationship deepens, the functions as wells as the domains of use also expand.
The enlarged functions coupled with the wider domains of use give rise to linguistic innovations in the use of pidgin. Thus, McArthur (cited in Okitikpi, 2016) classified pidgin into two; expanded and restricted pidgin. Restricted pidgin is one that is short-lived while the expanded pidgin is one that evolves and stabilizes over time serving some distinct functions especially in a multilingual society like Nigeria.

Pidgin, in its enlarged form, serves as a means of communication in all human endeavours. However, it is used more widely and conveniently in a multilingual and heterogeneous setting than in a bilingual and

linguistically homogenous speech community. Port Harcourt, Warri, Owerri and Aba in Nigeria represent these distinct speech communities.
Warri, for instance, is a coastal city situated in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which was a provincial capital to British rule. It served as the base for Portuguese and Dutch slave traders and other trading activities and therefore had direct contact with both the Europeans and the Portuguese. The major ethnic groups in Warri are Urhobo, Ijaw and Itsekiri. Warri, like any other city, usually experience influx of people from other ethnic groups notably Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. It is a multiethnic city boasting of several indigenous languages. The languages of the natives are so distinct and diverse that they barely understand one another. This situation in addition to their interactions with the "foreigners' promoted the use of pidgin as a primary means of communication among the people.

Port Harcourt, like Warri, is a coastal town lying along the Bonny River located in the Niger Delta. It was created by the colonial masters to serve as a port for the exportation of coal mined in Enugu. It is an industrial city and although originally owned by Ijaws and Ikwerres it is also home to neighbouring ethnic groups notably Ogoni, Kalabari, Okirika and Igbo. Other 'foreigners' like Yorubas and Hausas also reside in the city. Expectedly, in a city with such a mixed population, Pidgin is widely spoken in all its nooks and crannies.
Unlike Port Harcourt and Warri, Owerri and Aba are home to Igbos, one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and in spite of the fact that Aba (in particular) is the commercial centre of the East, Igbo is the dominant language commonly spoken with a mixture of English and pidgin. The people use pidgin more as a necessity than choice. They can both be best described as bilingual and homogenous speech communities.

Theoretical Framework

The Lexical Gap Theory

This present study is anchored on the lexical gap theory proposed by Adrienne Lehrer. This theory is concerned with how words could be invented, converted or borrowed to fill a gap in language usage. When speakers of two distinctly different languages interact, there are bound to be lexical gaps which must be filled if communication must be effective. Thus, Hickey (2001) outlined two major ways for extending word stock in order to fill lexical gaps in a language. The first process is the utilization of native resources. This practice consists of compounding and derivation. In compounding, two or more elements are combined to form a single word. For instance, housewife is a combination of house and wife. Derivation, on the other hand, involves the addition of a productive ending to a lexical stem in order to create a new word such as child + -ish (childish).

The second process entails borrowing from another language. This process is the more common of the two processes. According to Hickey, there are basically two reasons for borrowing: (1) to fill a lexical gap which may exist in a language either because such words are not available in that particular language or because what is available cannot adequately express the intended meaning. (2) The second reason borrowing occurs is because of the relative prestige of the speakers using the "superior" language as was the case with many French loan words in European languages in the 18th century.

There is yet another way of enlarging word stock and that is through linguistic invention, which involves the creation of new words that hitherto did not exist in any of the languages in contact but formed through coinages to better express the speakers' thoughts.

Literature Review

The Concept of Language Change

Borrowing is "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language" (Thomason and Kaufmann, 1988,

p.38). In a typical borrowing situation, speakers of a particular language borrow a linguistic form from another language and integrate same into their own form. Although Sapir and Jakobson (cited in Thomason, 2001) opined that there is a limit to what can be borrowed between languages as a language can only incorporate features of a foreign language that corresponds to its own structure, Thomason (2001) contrasted this view as she claimed that there is no limit to what could be borrowed or adapted from one language to another.

Borrowing indeed cuts across all levels of language – phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. All features of a language can be borrowed whether or not they fit into the structure of the recipient language. Words or phrases could be borrowed for convenience in a situation where the speaker feels that the borrowed word or phrases would better express an idea. Borrowed linguistic items are usually phonologically nativized and differ from the source language in pronunciation. For instance, the word *milk* is borrowed from the English language but has been natvized by the Igbo speakers and pronounced as *miliki.*

Borrowing results in loss, addition and replacement of linguistic features and at this level, the structure of the receiving language is drastically altered producing a 'new' language.

Substratum interference is the type of interference "that results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift" (Thomason & kaufman, 1988, p.38). Imperfect learning, however, does not imply an inability to learn in the real sense of the word rather it is more of an attitudinal disposition where a group consciously or unconsciously use features that are absent in a target language (the superstratum). Thomason (2001) argued that this kind of interference may occur with or without language shift. Thomason's position can be illustrated with the variety of English known as the Nigerian English (NE). NE, which is spoken by both the educated and the uneducated alike, has numerous interference features from the indigenous languages. Some of these features are introduced into the English language to better express some culture-specific experiences

which the speakers feel may not be otherwise adequately captured in the English language. This is what Okoh (2015) described as creative translation.

The Nigeria Pidgin (NP)

The Nigerian Pidgin (NP) evolved as a result of contact between European traders and was cultured in the Niger Delta region of the country where the traders first established contact with the natives. (Ativie, 2009). NP is an English-based pidgin spoken in Nigeria. Its superstrate is English (hence, the term "Nigerian Pidgin English) while the substrates are derived from the numerous indigenous languages.

NP has metamorphosed from the debased, low class language of the illiterate and artisans with no social relevance to a socially significant language owing to its role and expanded domains of use. Consequently, Mensah (2011) described it as "a complete language in its own right with its own 'soul' and vitality" (p.216).

NP is a neutral and widely accepted medium of inter-ethnic communication with many linguists clamouring for its adoption as the National language. It has continued to evolve and develop over time to serve as a language of communication not only among speakers of different languages but among those who share a common language. That is to say, it is used in both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic communication. An estimated number of people who speak Pidgin as first or second language is put at one (1) million and over forty (40) million respectively (Faraclas, 1996). NP cuts across all social strata

Innovation in Nigerian Pidgin

Language and innovation are quite inseparable. The fact that language is creative and productive makes room for innovation where new or novel linguistic items are introduced into the lexicon to produce new utterances. The enlarged function and extended domains of use came with expanded

vocabulary brought about by linguistic creativity {innovation}. This much was echoed by Edwards (1994) who claimed that "the very existence of pidgin shows linguistic creativity" (p.42). Linguistic versatility in the use of NP led to innovation enriched with translations and coinages, metaphors, idiophones, euphemisms and proverbs that where hitherto absent in earlier restricted versions of NP spoken in the early 60s and 70s.

Translation, according to Okoh (2015), is an "indisputable key to communication, development and understanding in our multilingual world" (p. 8), having established the role of translation, Okoh then defined it as "a straightforward rendition or transposition of thoughts from a source to a target language" (p.8). The culture of a people is embedded in its language; consequently, there are certain concepts that are present in one culture but are not in the other and to achieve a linguistic equivalence in describing such culture in a foreign language has always proved a herculean task due to the socio-cultural distance between both languages. Translations are expressions used to portray the socio-cultural norms of the people while reflecting their total experience as a people. They come in handy when a foreign language is found to be deficient in capturing the desired effect. This view is aptly captured by Okoh (2015) while re-enacting a scene in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where Ezeani, the chief priest of the earth goddess reprimanded Okonkwo for shattering the peace during the Week of Peace:

> Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her…The Igboness, Africanness, indeed ultimate unEnglishness, of being on top of someone (a woman) is obvious. The alternative expressions given above, which are decently dressed and in the euphemistic accoutrements of polite or polished English, will certainly serve any artist's objective. But more importantly, Achebe's description here is so carefully crafted that the native speaker will grasp, even be enchanted by, the local idiom of sexual

> connection, while the non-Igbo can simultaneously savour its delightful flavour. Thus, Achebe's creative translation here displays a more exciting and stimulating countenance than, say, such authentic English equivalents of going to bed with, making love to, sleeping with, or committing adultery/ fornication/immorality. Even to the greenest or most naive foreign reader, the whole idea of lying on top of one cannot be a question of playing mere games (p.10-11).

Translation necessitates coinages, a manifestation of linguistic creativity. Creative translation and coinages are common in Nigerian Pidgin. They are used to fill lexical gap, evoke some shared cultural feelings and add colour to the language. Some instances of coinages/ translations in NP include:

Bad belle - jealousy
homtrobul - to indicate that one's kinsmen are responsible for one's travails.
Kari sholda - (proud)
Opun ai (eye) - boldness
At ol at olnaim be winch – half bread is better than nothing

Metaphors are referential in meaning. They assign meaning to objects based on social economic and political situations and so they give room to creativity. In NP, some lexical items derived from the superstrate source represent totally different concepts and meaning. Example

Word	-metaphorical representation
Pepe (spice for food)	-naira note
wáít (colour)	-fifty naira note
Wet ground	-gratification
machin ground	-goat leg
Bush allowance	-Extra but unaccounted for profit -gained for doing something
jaz	-diabolic influnce
man no man	-undue favourtism

botom power -sexually induced favourtism
donatus -a woman of easy virtue

Metaphors are conceptual in meaning. Bush allowance reflect Ikwerres(An Ethnic group in Rivers State) social behaviour, a widely held practice whereby a potential lessee (of a land) is required to buy drinks for the potential landlord prior to gaining full access to the property. Donatus, although a male-name and therefore a noun, in this context it is derived from the verb "donate" which means "to give" (money or food) and so used conceptually to represent a woman of easy virtue. Jazz is a kind of dance. Dancing involves bodily movement to match the speed and rhythm of a piece of music (external influence). Hence, it is used in the sense that anyone under a diabolic influence is under the control of external forces and therefore acts abnormally.

Idiophones are also creatively used in pidgin to give meaning. Here, the meaning of a word/concept is derived from the sound it is associated with. Idiophones are usually formed by repeating the entire form or sequence of vowels and consonants to generate some possible meaning relation. Some idiophones used in pidgin include

Kokoroko -morning (A cock's crow signifies the dawn of a new day)
Waa -bright
Kakraka -very strong
Gidigba -unshakable

Euphemisms are linguistic devices that are used to handle words and expressions forbidden by social conventions (Mensah, 2011). Some culture-specific phenomena promote the use of euphemism. Taboos are one of such phenomena. A Taboo is an act or behavior that is forbidden based on the social or religious meaning attached to it. For instance, vulgarity is forbidden in the Nigerian culture especially among women and as a result, certain words, which are socially regarded as vulgar, are euphemized. Other words that are also euphemized are religious words and words that

describe sensitive issues. Some taboo words and the euphemistic representations are illustrated below:

brọkọs/prik (penis)	-apparatus
dai (die)	-kpémé
fọk (sexual intercourse)	-hámá

Nigerian Pidgin continues to evolve with the use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions which not only have been translated but creatively coined to embellish the new language. They express the people's belief system making the language more colourful and appealing to its users; something they can easily identify and relate with. Examples are illustrated below:

To piss no hard but fowl no fit.
Translation: That something is easy does not mean everybody can do it.
No matter how dark room wan be, man gostill locate woman breast.
Translation: There is always a way when something is at stake
If person too tey for party e go follow dem wash plate
Translation: Never outstay your welcome
Escort me, Escort me, naim slave trade take start.
Translation: Serious things sometimes start like joke
Pikin wen use agbada take stat guy go talk wetin e go wear wen e old.
Translation: There is time for everything
Manwey borrow cloth go party no dey dance too much
Translation: Do not misuse the opportunity given to you
Na from clap dance dey start.
Translation: Things do not just happen, there is always a cause.
Today's newspaper na tomorrow Suya wrap
Translation: No condition is permanent

Research Methodology

The data were sourced through participant – observation. The researchers went to different places such as institutions of higher learning, motor parks,

hospitals, offices, markets etc. in the study areas and without pre-informing the audience took some notes of their conversations and also tape-recorded others where possible. The researcher did not pre inform the participants so as not to interfere with the natural flow of their conversation. However, when all was done, they were informed of the researcher's mission and motive and the conversation was played back to them. The researcher also gave some of them papers and asked them to write some of their sentences. The researcher, thus, obtained the participants' permission to use the materials but those who objected to the study had their materials discarded.

Results and Discussions

The conversations below illustrate the innovations associated with the use of coinages, metaphors, translations, proverbs and euphemism in Nigerian Pidgin.

Conversation 1

Speaker A: I don nearly waka pass your shop sef. I no come sabi the shop again.
Speaker B: wetin una won buy?
Speaker A: Na chicken
Speaker B: We no get chicken, na only wiliwili we get. No road to pass buy market and I no won kill myself.
Speaker C: Chai, mummy, where we go see beta chicken buy naa?
Speaker B: Enter market, some people still get

The above conversation was observed by the researcher in Mile 1 Market in Port Harcourt. Speaker A wanted to buy chicken but Speaker B told her that "wili wili" was available. "wili wili" simply refers to chicken feet and head. The term is a coinage which is one of the characteristic features in both Port Harcourt and *Wafi* pidgin. Coinages give pidgin a certain flavor and richness that makes it more endearing. The speaker could have said "chicken feet and head" but the use of the term "wili wili" is obviously

more appealing, moreover, there is mutual understanding such that there is smooth flow of conversation between the interactants.

Conversation 2

Speaker A: customer give me assorted
Speaker B: Ha much own u won?
Speaker A: like two thousand
Speaker B: how u want am? I get shaki, ranabat, abode, bible, floater, liver, kidney, heart, make I put all?
Speaker A: u know as I dey want am naa.
Speaker B: Customer u go add small moni o.
Speaker A: Add which moni? You no dey know customer. I don be your customer for years you still sell anyhow for me. Cut for me make I go my way jare
Speaker B: How I no go know mai customer? U be ma pesinnaa. we don tey
Speaker A: oya cut for me naa and put jara o.

The above conversation was also observed in Mile 1 Market, Port Harcourt. It is observed that the terms such as "shaki", "ranabout", "abodi", "bible", and "floater" were inventions designed to fill a lexical gap. They are being used to refer to a cow's entrails. In Owerri and Aba, such would have been simply referred to as *afoanu* or *ngwongwo* due to the speaker's ability to draw from a common language to fill such a gap but in the Niger Delta, because there is no single unifying language where people could draw from to fill such gaps, they invent words in a bid to achieve meaning.

Conversation 3

Speaker A: Pesin never enter sidon well come dey show up
Speaker B: Me I tire for am o
Speaker A: Leave am na, e go soon shock, imtink say im head dey hot, e neva jam people wey their own deycomot fire.

Speaker B: No main am, na initial gragradey worry am, ego soon chill like ice water. E never see somtin.

The discussants in the above conversation which took place in a hospital in Port Harcourt are referring to somebody who newly assumed a position and is being hard on the subordinates. Speaker B puts down the subject's behavior as "initial gragra". The expression implies a show of power that cannot be sustained over time and that is why Speaker B goes on to claim that "e go soon chill like ice water". These are all creative use of language that spice up conversation and make pidgin a delight.

Conversation 4

Speaker A: O boy, you dey draw nyash go back o
Speaker B: For where, no dulling for my side
Speaker A: You sure? I dey watch your matter and I no come like wetin I dey see
Speaker B: Notin to worry, ground still level

Wafians are more creative in their use of pidgin through outright inventions of lexical items, coinages laced with proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The above interaction observed in Warri is between two friends where one of the discussants tries to express his concern over a friend's apparent lack of commitment in a particular venture. "you dey draw nyash go back" indicates that Speaker B is lagging behind and not as active as expected but he refuted this as he claims that there is "no dulling for my side". In other words, he is as active as ever. A more direct and simplified way of expressing the same opinion would be something like "u no dey perform" or 'U no dey show interest". But that would be too simple for *Wafians* whose brand of pidgin is almost picturesque; it evokes images that one could easily identify and relate with.

Conversation 5

Speaker A: Elohor, you reach Onome shop today?
Speaker B: I reach there, wetin make you dey ask?
Speaker A: You know wetin make me dey ask, no pretend like say you no know. Wetin you tell am? WetinIgho tell us naim you don go open your mouth for that side?
Speaker B: Abeg, abeg, abeg, stop am. Wetin you mean? So you dey call me aproko?
Speaker A: I no need to call you aproko, you no say you be one. Your mouth no get valve at all. I sorry for you sha.
Speaker B: Sorry for yourself, madam raicho
Speaker A: Make you continue, but remember say fly wey no get special adviser naimdey follow dead body enter grave. One day this your mouth weydey leak go put you for trouble you go see am.

Conversation 5 was observed in a friend's house in Warri between two friends. The exchange is over Speaker B's inability to keep a secret. We notice the use of such word like "aproko" which is obviously a euphemism for gossip". To 'open mouth" is a translation which literarily means that Elohor talks carelessly. This is further underscored in the expression 'You no get valve for mouth", a euphemism for a talebearer. A valve is a controlling device for the flow of liquid or gas. The implication here is Speaker B lacks the ability to control herself and hence cannot keep a secret. But rather than say "e dey talk any how", *wafi* uses an expression that would better convey the desired effect. One could easily picture "an open mouth" and "a loose valve" and relate with it. All of these demonstrate the extent of Elohor's lack of self control!

"Riacho" (short for righteousness) in conversation 5 is a metaphor used to describe one who is seen to display a holier-than-thou attitude. Speaker A employs the use of proverb "fly wey no get special adviser na im dey follow

dead body enter grave" to make her intentions clear; her point is to caution Elohor to desist from her despicable character.

Conversation 6

Speaker A: when I dey look dis my neighbor e dey pepper me for body
Speaker B: forget that man, im own mumu no get part two. You no see say the wife don cook am done?
Speaker A: I dey tell you ee, na pawpaw for that woman hand. I no know whether e no get family sef. If to say I be im brother I for slap that jaz comot for im body.
Speaker B: I weak for the man, anyway sha, every aboki with im own kettle, abeg yan me wetin happen last night.

The discussion above is centered on the domestic life of a couple known to the discussants. It reveals the participant's displeasure over a particular man's weakness and inability to be in charge in his house as expected which they attribute to the wife's diabolical manipulations. "To cook done" insinuates that the man is no longer in his right senses due to external diabolic influence and for that reason he became "pawpaw", a metaphor for a weakling, "Jaz" also connotes the same diabolic influence. In the people's worldview, a man is supposed to be "omnipotent" in his house and not engage in any domestic work so any man that acts otherwise must have been "cooked" by the wife. In other words, he is no longer in his "original" state of mind because nothing that is cooked remains the same. That explains why the man in question has become "pawpaw". Although the lexical items such as 'pawpaw", and "jaz" were borrowed from foreign languages, they have been mutilated and now portray entirely different meanings that are not related to their original meaning.

The conversation is further embellished with proverb. The proverb "every aboki with im own kettle" expresses the idea that life's challenges, though diverse, is peculiar to all humans. This proverb is derived from the "Aboki's" penchant to have a kettle of water handy for ablution as required

by their religion. Aboki therefore is a referent for people from Northern Nigeria especially of the Muslim faith. Life's challenges are applicable to the human race in the same way that a kettle of water (for ablution) is relevant to an *aboki*. There is an embedded meaning in the use of proverb and it is a trace of the people's culture and belief system in the new language.

Conversation 7

Speaker A: This tin wey NEPA dey do pesindey tire me o

Speaker B: Dem be big winch naa, dem no dey even flash am for my side at all

Speaker A: Pesin dey roast for this heat. If to say I gather small bar I for try buy even if na I pass my neighbor take am dey blow fan

The above conversation which took place in a neighbourhood in Warri revolves round The National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) now Power Holding Development Co-Operation. In spite of the change of names, NEPA remains a referent for the electricity company. The discussants' use of metaphors such as "big winch" (wicked people) and "I pass my neighbor" (small generating set) added much colour to the conversation. In fact the mutilation and conversion of the word "witch" to "winch" gives the conversation that local flavor which is the hallmark of W*afi* Pidgin.

Conversation 8

Speaker A: You know see say The Law come my house yesterday come dey vomit rubbish; dey warn me say make I no near im babe again

Speaker B: talk true

Speaker A: I dey tell you ee, na see finish be that one naa but I go do am something e go sabi say juju quiet no mean say na water dem dey take serve am.

The use of proverb in conversation 8 drives home the speaker's point better. The proverb; "juju quiet no mean say na water dem dey take serve am" simply means that the speaker should not be taken for granted because of his gentle disposition. "Juju' is an idol or deity and the worshippers usually use local gin (Kaikai or ogogoro) for their oblations in the service of the deity. No matter then how benevolent the deity is, its worshippers cannot present water to it in place of local gin or else they would invoke its wrath. This is a strongly held view by the locals. "Juju" is something anybody could easily relate with and so the proverb graphically demonstrates the consequences of taking one for granted.

The expressions "vomit rubbish" and "see finish" are translations which simply mean to speak nonsense and to look down on someone respectively. "To vomit" is more vivid than simply saying "the pesin dey talk rubbish". These are all innovative ways of filling a lexical gap and making the language more appealing with a good dose of humour.

Conversation 9

Speaker A: How you don settle with Oba?
Speaker B: I go their house go confront am
Speaker A: wetin e come talk?
Speaker B: wetin e fit talk? E be won open eye for me but I no just sen am. I still tell am wetin dey my mind.
Speaker A: That tin wey e do no good at all but I like as you take handle am. Next time e no go try am.
Speaker B: You suppose no say me I no fit fear darkness come shit for body naa. if I no tell am I for no happy with myself:

The proverb "I no fit fear darkness come shit for body" used in conversation 9 better expresses the speaker's position. It simply reveals the speaker's boldness in handling issues irrespective of whose ox is gored. Its use is reminiscent of an old local setting where the convenience is set apart from the living quarters such that one is forced to step out of the safety of one's living quarters to make use of the convenience even in the dead of the night.

No adult can ever be so afraid of darkness as to defecate on him/herself but would rather confront his fear.

Conversation 10

Speaker A: wetin dey happen between you and your girl?

Speaker B: leave that girl, I don finish with am. In short *onwezi ihe gbasara mu na ya.* it's over

Speaker A: *nwoke m, jiri ya nwayo,* wetin she do?

Speaker B: You see, that night my papa die, na she be the first person I call for morning tell am. She just tell me sorry but she no come see me. I come later travel go my village to tell my *umunna* and stay like two days, she no call me and even as I come back, she still no call me. So I come call, *iji marakwa,* you understand? She come say she go come see me say she dey busy. That thing *ewe m iwe* like this but I tell am no problem sha. During this time, I come meet one girl, correct babe like this, *ma na agwa, ma* everything, di girl dey, *I ma nooo.* She dey do everything for me we Lizzy no dey do; she dey cook, clean house, wash cloth, no stress. So when Lizzy come my house, I no just look am. By that time *onwezi ihem ji ya kporo.*

Speaker A: She do bad now and come dey complain to me gain.

Speaker B: *nna hapu onye ahu,* I don find better girl, *onye a kupuru ya* well well

Speaker A: *Nna* na your happiness count *biko.* Me sef no go fit tolerate that kind tin

The above conversation is quite typical of the type of pidgin spoken in the South-East (Owerri and Aba). There is a tendency to draw from the

common language "Igbo" to fill lexical gaps. We therefore notice a lot of code mixing and what could at best be described as "Igbo-pidgin". Pidgin here is straightforward albeit with sufficient trace of the substrate which could interfere with the conversation flow especially to outsiders.

Pidgin is a simple, unambiguous language at the initial stage but the wider the scope and domains of use the more it expands also in usage. The expanded use and function give rise to linguistic creativity in order to fill communication gaps and to enable the people express their worldview in their own terms. In Owerri and Aba pidgin remains simple and uncomplicated because its use is also quite limited. Whenever there is a gap, the substrate comes in handy to fill it. Contrastively, in Port Harcourt and Warri, Pidgin is the primary mode of communication. Thus, there is innovative use of pidgin to fill any lexical gap as the people cannot necessarily rely on any particular substrate language. The people use coinages, slangs, translations, euphemism, metaphors and proverbs to bring about innovation in pidgin.

Due to the extensive use of pidgin in this region (The Niger Delta), the language continues to evolve incorporating new vocabularies constantly to describe the social, political and economic experience of the people. To fill a communication gap, there is a lot of linguistic manipulations and inventions via coinages, the use of metaphor, euphemism, translations and slangy expressions. This could be attributed to the fact that there is no single unifying language where the people could readily draw from to fill such gaps as is the case in the South-East. Linguistic inventions enrich NP and make it colourful and therefore more appealing to the people.

Conclusion

The study x-rayed the linguistic innovations inherent in Nigerian pidgin and also provided the reasons for that. It has been well illustrated that Nigerian Pidgin is rich and colourful, a full- fledged language (albeit in some regions) due to linguistic inventions to fill lexical gaps. It; therefore, cannot be overlooked or ignored. It has come to stay in Nigeria having

penetrated into every conceivable sociolinguistic domain. It therefore deserves attention because of its social significance in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and linguistically diverse entity like Nigeria. It is a bridge builder; bonding a people that otherwise could not communicate due to social differences such as class and ethnicity as demonstrated in this study. Its widespread usage is an indication of its acceptability in the country as it seems to fill the void occasioned by the absence of a national language. Consequently, it has remarkably gained a foothold in the Nigerian social and linguistic space and can no longer be wished away.

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