

## **The Use of Nigerian Pidgin English on Cartoons**

**By**

**Worukwo, Glory Ikechukwu**

**Email: [gloryworukwo@yahoo.com](mailto:gloryworukwo@yahoo.com)**

**&**

**Chukwu Friday**

**Department Of English and Communication Art, Faculty of Humanities,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt**

### **Abstract**

This study seeks to investigate the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in cartoons. The data for the analysis were generated from Vanguard Newspaper and comedy video clips downloaded from YouTube. The analysis employed the Multimodal Discourse Analysis model, paying particular attention to the lexical and grammatical structures of the Pidgin English used in the cartoons. The analysis also shows that cartoons enhance the understanding of verbal and visual communication, making room for text-to-reader relationship in a socio-cultural context of communication. The study shows that the Nigerian Pidgin English makes use of Nigerian native language variables as well as the variables of the Standard English as its lexifiers. The local language lexical variables provide a quicker understanding of the language of the cartoons as they are drawn from the sociolinguistic backgrounds of Nigerian native languages and thereby creating local context in linguistic communication.

**Keywords: Pidgin English, Standard English, Lexical Variables, Cartoons, Communication**

### **Introduction**

Nigerian Pidgin English has been described as a trade contact language. Its emergence is traceable to European African interlanguage situation in 17th century during the European's trade activities at the coastal regions of Africa (Osoba, 2014, p.27). In spite of its dislocated form from the Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin has continued to serve a wider range of purposes in almost all areas of national endeavours. The language constitutes of the lexicons of the

European languages mainly English, Portuguese and French and the lexical variables of the African languages especially the local variables of Nigerian languages (Mensa, 2012). The Nigerian Pidgin English is inarguably an alternative language; it is the language of those who cannot afford the 'prestigious' Standard English to participate in communication. Though Nigerian Pidgin as common as it seems is not common; it has become extensively the language of all people – literate and non-literate for the purpose of commonality in sharing of ideas. The language has today become a child of necessity in building national cohesion especially in a country like Nigeria without a legal provision of a national language. Indeed, all the regions of Nigeria can comfortably communicate in Pidgin for a smooth running of businesses and social integrations. The most popular cities of Nigeria which are also the business or trade hubs of the nation have Nigerian Pidgin as a medium of communication; The language is spoken in Port Harcourt, Sokoto, Lagos, Kanu, Kaduna, Ibadan, Asaba and Benin cities by people from diverse cultural and linguistic environments (Osoba, 2014). The presence of Pidgin has however made it possible for people to communicate without the deployment of the Standard English or the use of any of the native languages of Nigeria.

The use of NP in recent times is no longer limited to trades and businesses; its usage has transcended to political jingles, drama, comedy, religious discourse among others. One of the areas of communication the use of Nigerian Pidgin English is relevant is the cartoon. The use of cartooned images to express ideas illustrates the wider range of use of Pidgin. Cartoons either animated or static offer a multimodal aspect of discourse; a symbolic and sign-related style of communication. Cartoons provide pictorial and imagery signalling system – a communication process whereby the animated object describes the language and the situation of discourse. Most cartoons use verbal communication while a lot of others have descriptive or labelled words. Some cartoons are hilarious especially when laced with pidgin lexicons, majority of them are quite offensive and intended to ridicule or attack public figures especially politicians. Mohammed (2014, p.33) asserts that "cartoons have over the years become a major feature of Newspaper and Magazine contents in Nigeria". He further states that a panoramic observation would reveal that most daily newspapers and weekly magazines publish various cartoons and comic strips. The use of cartoon appeals to emotions.

Its paintings and drawings could be pleasant or mockery as well as satirical if it targets social ills. Indeed, cartoons are popularly used in newspapers especially in editorial columns to express criticisms against social and political activities without harming the personality of the person mimicked. Most cartoons are commercial and educative; there are cartoons for kids, used for the mental advancement of the children and enhance their morals. There are a few cartoons designed with Pidgin English in local and international newspapers and a lot of animated cartoons with pidgin language in YouTube videos. These cartoons relate and explain salient social, political and religious issues and of cause most of them are made for entertainment like the splendid, Mama bomboy, Ajebo carton videos to mention but a few.

### **The Nigerian Pidgin English**

Pidgin English has been accorded the respect of being one of the varieties of English (Osaba, 2014, P.27). The language developed as a trade contact language and has become an alternative language amidst the Standard English. Pidgin according to Todd “is a language that arises to fulfil certain restricted communication needs among people who do not have common language” (quoted in Olugbe, 2015, p.429). For Ofoegbu, Pidgin is “a language operating between the numbers of different language communities who do not have a mother tongue in common and it is also not native to any of its speakers” (quoted in Ofoegbu, 2017, p.14). Similarly, Akintayo, (2004, p.15) points that pidgin has been defined “as language with reduced vocabulary and structure which arose in contact situation between speakers who had no language in common and must reach an understanding”. The definitions of Todd, Ofoegbu and Akintayo point to the fact that Pidgin is a language used by a people without a unified language form. The definition of Akintayo adds the concepts of vocabulary and structure. It accuses Pidgin of not having vocabulary and structure and that means pidgin does not have independent orthography, lexicons and registers and its grammaticality depends on the properties of other languages (mainly English, and Nigeria Local languages) which are in contact with it. Rickford contends that:

“A Pidgin usually combines elements of the native language of its users and is typically simpler than those native languages in so far as it has fewer words, less

morphology and a more restricted range of phonological and syntactic options” (quoted in Balogun, 2014, p.91).

The problem of Pidgin has been the issues of restricted or reduced phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical structures. The lack of these grammatical structures or elements disqualifies the language from global acceptability and recognition as a useful language. The structural predicament of Pidgin as noted above has also been earlier established by Hall, (1966) when he rendered that “for a language to be qualified as a Pidgin there must be two conditions which are: (1) the grammatical structure and the vocabulary of such language must be sharply reduced and (2) the resultant language must be native to none of those who use it (Akintayo, 2014). It is however expedient to note that Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) does not have nativity and no speakers across the regions of the country can claim ownership of the language. The inception of Pidgin English in Nigeria as a language of necessity ushered in several variations across the geo-political zones of the country, regions and states. Today, there are Port Harcourt, Warri, Calabar, Akwa-Ibom and Lagos Pidgin varieties among others. One can also differentiate between Northern Pidgin from the Pidgin spoken in the South. This is as a result of a simultaneous occurrence of the Pidgin as it developed in the earliest period and the cross-transmission of same in the regions of the country. The Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) like every other varieties of Pidgin across West African sub—regions and beyond, is a product of language contact between the languages of foreign merchants and the native languages of Nigerian people. In a further description of Nigerian Pidgin, Balogun notes that: ‘Nigerian Pidgin as a contact language is currently witnessing ambivalent shift in statuses. He also stressed that “as a result of diachronic development over the years, the use of Nigerian Pidgin is becoming popular among many speakers than before” (2014, p.90). Over the years, Nigerian Pidgin English has received a debased recognition; a kind of derogatory attention especially by those who hold the standard English at a higher esteem. As the time progressed, till the recent time, the language has undergone a tremendous expansion and modifications to the extent that its lexicons can have extended meanings. The Nigerian pidgin is a deformed structure of the Standard English of which, learning does not pose much problem even to the non-literate class of people in the society. The language has made many progresses in the area of communication – closing the gap of the Standard English. As rightly put by

Balogun, “Nigerian Pidgin English is a term used to denote an English – based Pidgin; a marginal language used among Nigerians to facilitate communication needs in certain interaction context” (2014, p.91). Regarding Pidgin English as a marginal language might not be entirely true because there are those who use the language as the only language in their disposal to communicate and interact. The rapid growth of pidgin and its wide transcendence in almost every facet of the social activities has esteemed it as not an informal language but as a language at all contexts and commonly shared by all people. Indeed, Nigerian Pidgin English is used in the contemporary times to address large crowd in political rally, advertisement of product, in the media to broadcast events, hold meetings that involve people from diverse language backgrounds as well as give evidences in the law court by those who do not speak the Standard English.

Balogun quoting Akande, (2008) argues that “the sociolinguistic reality of Nigeria today reveals that Nigerian Pidgin is not used only in informal settings, but also in other formal settings”. The enormous bias against Nigerian Pidgin and its attendant derogatory recognition, as a kind of ‘bastardized English’, ‘broken language’ and ‘bad English’ does not impede its relevance in the linguistic clime of Nigeria. Nigerians across the nation and regions find it useful to speak Pidgin in order to get along with everybody. Inasmuch as the Nigerian ethno-linguistic environment is concerned, there is no speech community that does not have Pidgin as an alternative or backup language. NPE draws its grammatical constituents from the English language. Aziza holds that “Nigerian Pidgin derives the bulk of its vocabulary from English, its superstrate language, while its structure and function are closely affiliated to Nigeria’s indigenous languages, its substrate languages’ (2015 p.11). The semantic configuration in the structure of Nigerian Pidgin has its background from the native languages of Nigeria where it emanates. The general view of a linguistic interpretation of meaning is that meanings of utterances must be drawn up from the socio-cultural background of the speakers. The lexicons of the Nigerian Pidgin are totally English though with a reasonable shift from the universal recognizable orthography of the English. The distorted shapes of the Pidgin words do not discredit it from being a useful medium of communication. In fact the wide growth of Pidgin among students and graduates in most of the cities of Nigeria poses threat to the Standard English as well as the indigenous languages (Aziza, 2015, p.15). The most astonishing part of

the use of Pidgin is that it is highly spoken by educated elites even some of the English language professors within the language departments and university communities at large.

Nigerian Pidgin English does not require a formal process of acquisition. It is like a road side product which is a give away to anyone that comes by it. The acquisition of the language does not require a systematic process; no special coaching from language expert and no one can claim a higher proficiency in its use. The use of Pidgin English puts every interlocutor at an equal communication line. Hudson, (2001, p.61) notes that “a pidgin is itself a language, with a community of speakers who pass it on from one generation to the next, and consequently with its own history”. Since the origin of pidgin during the Portuguese-Chinese trade contact in sixteenth century (Hudson, 2001), down to the Nigerian experience in the West African Coastal regions, pidgin English has been making a resounding history throughout generations. A child who is born today can comfortably speak pidgin as a mother tongue and by that we can say pidgin is undergoing a process of creolization. Montayo confirms that recently “Pidgin has developed into full language in most nations where they are used as a medium of communication” (2017, p.184). Nigerian Pidgin English has come to stay as a medium of communication and a tool for national cohesion.

### **Cartoon Communication**

Cartooning is a pictorial form of communication in which ideas and views are illustrated in the painted images. The image painted in the picture reflects social realities and expresses hidden intent with a little or no verbal or lexical indication. Cartoons are parts of newspaper and magazine editorial works put up to lampoon inordinate social actions. Mohammed (2014) quoting Encyclopedia Britanica, sees cartoon, “as a pictorial parody or initiation, which by the devices of caricature, analogy as well as ludicrous juxtaposition, sharpens the public view of a contemporary or topical issue, event, political or social trends. Apart from the devices of caricature in which cartoons convey, they also interact with readers or viewers and by so doing, they deeply explain bulks of non-linguistic ideas. It is a fact that people are attracted by what they see. However, pictures or artefacts drawn on newspapers or those that are animated- a kind of motioned pictures provide attraction to the readers. Cartoons are the reflections of the ‘original’ character of which the readers are familiar with in a larger social context

(Mohammed, 2014, p.34). The prominence of cartoons in communication and media publications is not only based on the static or motionless pictures, the electronic media provides animated cartoons with verbal attributes interacting with human in a talk and response situation. These kinds of cartoons are prevalent in comic strips such as the ones we have in Tom and Jerry, Ajebo, Superman, Side Chick short plays and many others. Mohammed further asserts that “in the print media, cartoons assist in providing a clear mental picture, speedy understanding, help memory and provide a shared experience” (2014, p.36).

Newspaper columns and some pages of magazines provide cartoons for business advertisements. The funny pictures on the paper serve as a discourse attracting and interacting with the readers. Aziza, (2014) notes that, “in any linguistic enterprise, effective communication depends to a large extent, on the shared knowledge or values that exists or prevail contextually among interlocutors” (p.29). The shared value or knowledge as found in the view above prevails in the use of cartoons. Once a picture of a popular politician or a public figure is drawn on a newspaper, the readers already know the context in which the writer or cartoonist is referring to. This shared value becomes a fact that explains itself without the columnist implicating or indicting himself in words. Cartoons relate salient social, religions, political and cultural issues. The cartoonist is seen as someone who is cajoling or satirizing and thereby communicating societal ideologies in the painted pictures. Indeed, the prevalent use of cartoons is not only centered on newspapers and magazines, it has extended to the comedy and music industry. The uses of cartoons especially the animated ones in comedy are enormous. These cartoons however, hide the face of the comedian in satirizing the ills of a public figure. Cartoons have the power to make situations big and powerful or into something small and manageable. It helps to communicate something people find scary and unpleasant. Akakwandu (2014, p.2) opines that “most cartoons are satirical and critical; they interpret and represent issues humorously and usually have human interest focus”. Cartoons are diagrammatical representation of linguistic or grammatical repertoires of any piece of information. The use of cartoons in comic videos or newspaper and magazine editorials informs the fact that communication is not only carried out verbally or linguistically. Image, allusions, irony, metaphor, apostrophe and many such forms of literary figures can be expressed, explained and understood by the

use of cartoons. Amongst many usefulness of cartoons in any medium of communication especially those that have to do with public interest, is the protection of the cartoonist be it newspaper editors or comedians from legal indictment such as sedition and deferment (Akakwandu, 2014).

In most comic strips cartoons, the cartoonist downgrades a targeted figure while hiding under the guise of the cartoon such that the animation does the work of the comedian. Cartoons in Nigerian Pidgin English, the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in cartoons is gradually assuming the place of the Standard English in the creation of verbal and visual images in communication. English language as a colonial language has over the years served a communication function especially in cartoon creation as an editorial column in most newspaper and in comic stripes (Omotunde, 2019, p. 100). The emergence of Nigerian Pidgin English as a contact language and the language of necessity has sought new ways of promoting its growth. It is not surprising however that the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in cartoons is an avenue through which the language could get to the people. Indeed, the contemporary African comedians and the Nigerian comedy makers to be precise find it worthwhile to deploy Pidgin language in making comedy strips. In newspaper and magazine columns, funny images laced with pidgin phrases and captions captivate the interest of readers and viewers alike. Cartoons created with Pidgin language evokes emotions and provokes the minds of the readers to comic relief, laughter, criticism, and brings same close to the socio-cultural reality from where the artefact of the cartoons take its imitation (Omotunde, 2019 & Sani, 2014). The reason behind the considerable and popular use of Nigerian Pidgin in cartoons remains the fact that Nigerian Pidgin is a language of all people. It does not discriminate age, sex, education, regions, intellectuality, and religion and as a bastardized language it evokes laughter when used in comedy and promotes easy and quick understanding when spoken. It is a fact that most newspaper columnists and social cartoonists are gaining popularity as a result of the use of Pidgin English in creating reality from the images (Mohammed, 2014, Montanye, 2017 and Osoba 2014). Cartoons are metaphorical; its use reflects and enacts the socio-cultural and political realities of the society. As a metaphor, it encodes implied meaning. This meaning implicates and describes the real image it projects. In a way, Pidgin is a language of everybody. Using Nigerian Pidgin in most cartoons draws the attention of a mass population of consumers. The prevailing use of Pidgin in



cartoons reflects its (Pidgin) relevance in the sociolinguistic arena of the Nigerian society.

The meaning conveyed in Pidgin has socio-cultural undertones and underpins the social reality of the people. The structure and meaning of Nigerian Pidgin is context bound; its usage emanates from the native or indigenous language structure of Nigerians. So the language has traditional colouration. This is why any cartoon used either in newspaper columns or comedy must have a shared cultural context between the cartoonist and the readers or viewers (Mohammed, 2014). Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that Nigerian Pidgin has a playful imagery. This 'playful imagery' makes its usage in cartoons very likeable and interesting. Everything about Nigerian Pidgin in cartoons is funny and hilarious. It is mostly in Nigerian Pidgin that any discourse of deflection of character of a personality and downgrading of a public figure can richly be manifested. It is a fact that the Standard English appears too 'serious' and 'uncompromising' in usage, but the Nigerian pidgin accommodates loosed forms and broken structures to richly address social issues that bother on the demands of the people. Nigerian Pidgin is tentatively operating as a Nigerian Lingua Franca-serving as a bridge between social and ethnic boundaries as well as educational levels. In reality, public announcements, political jingles, business adverts and broadcast are executed in pidgin. The reason behind this is that the language can easily reach to a wider range of people at a time without difficulty in meaning placement. So the cartoons provide stoke in trade where the pidgin is freely used without linguistically, legally and socially indicting the producer or handler of the cartoon (Mohammed, 2014). Most cartoons are produced in the Standard English. The main area of cartooning is the political arena conveyed mostly in newspapers and magazines. Cartoons produced in Pidgin English do not only induce laughter it expresses the intent of the producer. The main target is to ridicule or satirized with the sole aim of correcting societal ills. This study will however analysis Nigerian Pidgin in verbal, visual and audio-visual cartoons using a Multimodal Discourse Analysis as a guide.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical base for this study is Multimodal Discourse Analysis. MDA takes a lead from Systemic Functional Linguistic theory of M. K. Halliday and has a

theoretical relatedness with Mediated Discourse Analysis (Chiluwa 2015, O'Hallora, 2007 and Van Leeuwan, 2005). Multimodal Discourse Analysis is the analysis of language based on social semiotic system. It is premised on the notion that discourse is not only text, but the whole bodies of discourses (different modes) that make up the discursive event. This approach to language study underlies the analysis of signs, images, symbols, graphics, cartoons and other language factors such as context, norms, gestures and social events. Chiluwa upholds the view that MDA views discourse as semiotic forms, which include signs and symbols, colours, pictures, cartoons and that the concept is based on the fact that all objects and actions are meaningful and that their meaning is a product of historically specific systems of rules (2015, p.223). According to O'Halloran, (2007, p.2), "the semiotic multimodal social semiotic approach draws upon Michael Halliday's systemic functional theory to provide frameworks for conceptualizing the complex arrays of semiotic resources which are used to create meaning such as language, visual imagery, gestures, sound, music etc, and detailed practices for analyzing the meaning arising from the integrated use of those resources in communication artefacts".

O'Halloran further quoted Van Leeuwan, (2005) for saying that "social semiotics is concerned with the way people use semiotic resources both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them in the context of specific social situations and practices". O'Halloran, however considers using the theoretical concept of Systemic Functional- Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) in the analysis of language. The social semiotic system of Halliday contained in his systemic functional linguistic approach provides a model or parameter for analyzing social practices that embody the use of language. Halliday opines that "by text we understand a continuous process of semantic device" (1971, 137). The systematic functional approach considers language as a socio semiotic system. It is a semiotic system in the sense that signs and symbols have relationship with what they represent in the society. Matthiessen and Halliday argue that:

"a text is the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems and that systemic theory gets its name from the fact that the grammar of a language

is represented in the form of system networks not as an inventory of structure" (2004., P.23).

The Hallidayan theory disregards the sole administration of textual structure as the only host of discourse analysis but in part, does regard other constituent elements of discourse (images cartoons, gestures) as involved in the analysis. The SF-MDA lends itself the model for investigating the semantic orientation of image-text relations as they construe discursive artefacts, Martine and Salway, (2005) view the systemic functional semiotic as "the one theoretical framework whose followers have concerned themselves with intersemiotic relations between images and texts". The major concern of MDA is images, artefacts, including cartoons with texts. The texts provide an explanatory element of an image while the image itself is descriptive. The image cannot explain itself rather the text brings the semantic encoding of an image to a limelight. The text and image are social semiotic systems –they have shared background knowledge with the context, culture and the people. Furthermore, Pirini, (2017) states that "culture and society are produced through interaction between people and language users.

### **Methodology**

The data for presentation and analysis of this work are generated from a cartoon section in Vanguard Newspaper dated, July, 13, 2020 and a video comedy strip of Splendid Cartoon shot by Splendid Television downloaded from YouTube application. To avoid complexity in the analysis, only one video strip is used and the speeches of the participant cartoons recorded. The researcher could only find two pidgin utterances in the Vanguard Newspaper cartoon section. The choice for the comedy video strip in Nigerian Pidgin is to estimate the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in cartoons. The analysis is taken up from lexicality and grammaticality of the Pidgin English, using a Multimodal Discourse Analysis theory as a guide.

### **Analysis/Discussion**

#### **Data from Vanguard Newspaper (July 13, 2020)**

The data in this section of analysis contain a talk and response in Nigerian Pidgin English between a supposed kidnapper and a woman abducted. The cartoon is produced to make a ridicule of kidnappers and the travail their victims pass through in their captivity. In the newspaper we see the picture of the woman

suspected to be in the entanglement of the abductor shouting “help” “help”. She further shouted, “people, help me o...” The abductor feeling so perturbed by the shouting of the woman exclaimed, “chai! See Wahala! I go kill dis woman. o!” The utterance of the woman, “people help me o” is a sentence with the traditional SVO structure of the English. The addition of the “o” suffix assigns the utterance a native language colouration. In the sentence, ‘people’ (noun), ‘help’ (verb), and ‘Me’ (object) are all the lexical troupes of the Standard English. The ‘o’ informs how frustrating the woman is in the den of the abductor.

The use of ‘people’ as the subject of the sentence credits the sentence as a pidgin language. In the Standard English, the sentence could instead be read as ‘someone help me!’ where ‘people’ replaces ‘someone’ in the text. Again, the response of the kidnapper, ‘chai’ see wahala! I go kill this woman.o!” shows that most kidnappers in Nigeria use Pidgin in the transaction with their victims. The word, ‘Wahala’ is a nativised form of Hausa language which denotes trouble or problem. “Wahala plays a nominal role in Nigerian pidgin and could be used in nominative case or objective case. The exclamatory sentence, “chai”! See Wahala has the combination of variables from the Standard English and those for the local language. The way and manner the verb, ‘see’ is used in the sentence gives the utterance a ‘Pidginated’ structure.

The sentence could have been “gush! Look at trouble or problem” or “have you seen trouble?” to express a disapproved action of someone and to show that there is danger. Furthermore, the sentence “I go kill this woman” has the traditional structure of English but a deviation in the use of ‘go’ a lexical verb as an auxiliary verb to help the verb, ‘kill’. In the Standard English, the verbs ‘go’ and ‘kill’ are main or lexical verbs. They are not used as modal auxiliary verbs. The use of ‘go’ instead of ‘will’ to help the verb, ‘kill’ accounts for the use of Nigerian Pidgin. The sentence would have read as “I will kill this woman”. The Nigerian Pidgin English uses ‘the verb, ‘go’ as a modal auxiliary verb with another main verb. The Standard English does not permit such construction except in a fewer or untraditional constructions like “I will go get the money”, which sounds somewhat clumsy, though with the obligatory use of the ‘will’ modal.

### Data 2: Splendid Cartoon Video Strip from YouTube

The cartoons in this video imitate an encounter between a woman whose husband is incarcerated in prison for an alleged armed robbery. The language used in the video strip by the woman, her husband and the prison warden is Nigerian Pidgin English. The video is a satirical presentation of the attitude of Nigerian prison wardens to the victims of crime and their relations. The female carton (representing the woman) on her way to the prison, in a bus alerts the driver of her bus stop by saying, "Driver drop me for Abawa o: A beg no go pass my bus stop o". The grammatical structure of first sentence, 'driver drop me for Abawa o' is similar to that of the Standard English but with a deviation in the use of the preposition 'for' and the verb 'drop' instead of 'at' and 'stop' to show a particular point of departure. The sentence would have however, be read as 'driver, stop me at Abawa'. To further re-inform the driver the woman pleads, "a beg no go pass my bus stop o". The lexical structures of the words are driven from the Standard English but their structural arrangement makes the sentence a Pidgin English. In the sentence, 'a beg' takes the place of "please" "no go" takes the place of don't verb. The sentence would have been read as, "please don't exceed my bus stop". The Nigerian Pidgin English usually makes use of the negative particle 'no' with a lexical verb to express the don't verb. In the sentence, the negative particle, 'no' precedes the main verb, 'go' but in Standard English, the primary auxiliary verb, 'do' precedes the negative verb modifier, 'not' functioning as adverb in most sentences. At the prison yard, the woman and the warden are engaged in the following conversation.

Woman: I wan see my husband.

Warden: Madam, if you no drop something you no go fit see your husband o.

Woman: A beg de moni we dey my hand na my transport, we go use go back house, notin dey my hand.

Warden: eeh! Na him be say you go go back house, no moni, no seeing.

Woman: na five hundred kuzura dey my hand wey we go pay go back house. For my pikin sake mek him see him papa.

Warden: Na stori you dey yan oo. If I listen to all dis kind of stori I for don die for hunger. Zua government no dey gree pay moni dem dey owe us. Bring 200 kuzura mek I go bring your husband. Bring the 500 kuzura, I get change.

The Prisoner: Baba, we dey hungry, we neva chop.

Warden: Shie today na visitation day. Why you no tell your piple mek dem feed una.

The Prisoner: Oga we don dey tell una say persin don die for here. Una just draw the body inside here. Oga na thief I thief, I no kill persin oo.

The woman: dem don talk wen dem go fix det for de trial.

The Prisoner: dem been say na in 3 months time but now, dem don shift am go front dem say mek I wait in 8 months.

The woman: eeh! de sem det wey dem don dey push go front since 3 years now wey you com here. God go punish dat man wey accuse you say na you rub am for nite.

The woman: Oya! oya! your time don finish oo wen you give me 200 kuzura, you no no say your time to finish.

From the dialogue between the woman and the prison warden, we notice the use of words and sentence structures that depict Nigerian Pidgin. Their conversation shows that a typical public servant uses pidgin in executing bribery and corrupt. The prison warden demands for a bribe from the woman as the only condition necessary for her to see her husband. "If you no drop something, you no go fit see your husband". "Drop something" in the above sentence means "bring money (bribe) and "you no go fit see your husband" means "you cannot see your husband", where "no go fit" suggests, "cannot". The lexical verb, 'go' functions as a modal auxiliary assisting the other main verb, 'fit' to convey the modality of inability. The sentence, "na stori you de yan" means "it is story you are telling" in Standard English "na" represents "it is" and functions as neutral gender in prepositional group. Going further in the conversation, we can place the expression, 'I get change' in the same structural array with a Standard English where one could say "I have change". "Get" in the above text represents the modal auxiliary verb, 'have' where however, the verb, may be functioning as a lexical verb, without the presence of another auxiliary to indicate ownership or state of being.

Furthermore, the orthographic representation of some nouns in 'pidgin' is quite different from the Standard English form. For instance, the pidgin has 'pikin' as a general name for 'a child' without a gender differentiation "papa" represents

“father”, “piple” as “people”, “Una” represents the second person plural pronoun, ‘you”, “chop” means “eaten” – without the indication of verbal aspect of verb tense, “chop” could mean ‘eat” “ate” or “eaten” or “dey chop” – eating in progressive aspect. The use of “Oga” as a nomenclature for a boss or head of a organization suggests the deployment of native words in the description of the prison warden. “Oga” is used in pidgin and in some Nigerian English speakers to express respect for someone superior to the speaker in a discursive field.

There is also a repetitive use of certain phrases in the text. For instance, the phrase, “oga na thief I thief, I no kill persin”, suggests the repetition of the word, “thief”. The phrase, “na thief I thief” means “I only stole” in Standard English. The word, ‘thief’ in pidgin does not have a past or aspectual inflection. So, one cannot determine its past form. In Pidgin English spoken in Nigeria, the negative particle, ‘no’ is used as the verb, “know as well as ‘don’t’. That is why the sentence, “you no no say your time go finish” could be read as “you don’t know that your time will elapse”. Here, ‘say’ is used as a demonstrative adjective or pronoun, ‘that’ to link the second clause. Moreover, the lexical variable, ‘oya’ is used in the grammar of Nigerian Pidgin English to express a hesitant action. It is a way of getting someone hurried up. It is used as an exclamatory word. When a Pidgin uses ‘oya’, there is an indication of seriousness in the face of the speaker.

### **Conclusion**

The use of Nigerian Pidgin English in cartoons provides a deeper application and utilization of the language in the sociolinguistic communication in Nigerian environment. Apart from the historical recognition of Nigerian Pidgin as a contact or trade language, it has grown recently as a language of artistic production, music, comedy, news broadcast, political jingles and adverts and as well, language of cartoon production. Cartoons provide symbolic and metaphoric description of a social, religious and political occurrence of a given society. Though, cartoons do not solely provide a better understanding without a lace of language – words and other linguistic attachments. The linguistic relevance of cartoons of which Pidgin English is a part enhances reader to writer interface in decoding meaning. For the fact that Nigerian Pidgin English has local language variables and the variables of the Standard English as its lexifiers, meaning represented in the cartoons must be taken up from the cultural context from where the meaning of codes is embedded.

In part, the reason why most cartoon producers make use of Nigerian pidgin to describe Nigerian social environment is because the language provides an ample opportunity for everyone to understanding what is communicated. The Nigerian Pidgin English does not discriminate any class of individuals, be it literate or non-literate, old or young; it is simple for all.

Lastly, most comedians who may or may not possess a higher proficiency in the use of the Standard English resort to the use of Pidgin in creating their comedy cartoons. This is because a large mass of the people enjoy Pidgin comedy. Most newspaper cartoons in Pidgin also save the editor from the danger of legal action by those the cartoons suspiciously downgrade. The study though does not engage in the analysis of the shapes and colours of the cartoons but focused on the language of its communication and production.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

The study contributes to scholarly research on the growth and development of Nigerian Pidgin English by engaging in a multimodal analysis of language of cartoon communication and production.

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