

ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ

LANGUAGE STUDIES

DOI: 10.12731/2077-1770-2019-4-14-26

UDC 81'282.8

PIDGIN ENGLISH FUNCTIONING IN NIGERIA

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The purpose of the article is to reveal the main features of Pidgin English used on the territory of Nigeria. The author analyses the main historical factors, which made the huge influence on the process of formation and origin of Nigerian Pidgin English. The key to Nigeria's ethnic structure is the fact that Nigeria's ethnic groups are spatially localized entities; the North-West, South-West and South-East of the country are the areas of residence of the main ethnic groups which speak the main languages of the country, i.e., Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo. Therefore, according to the research, historically formed ethnic, cultural affinity with neighboring nations, similarity of economic and social systems of these ethnic groups needed to have the unique language substance combining phonetics, vocabulary, grammar basic elements of structures corresponding needs of all main ethnic groups, which in practice turned out to be Nigerian Pidgin. Nigeria Pidgin English is a hybrid language, which is used as the intercultural language uniting many ethnic groups of Nigeria. It is the means of communication presenting historical, cultural, linguistic dependent system, which was formed on the basis on European languages and main indigenous language groups of Nigeria, such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo.

Purpose. *The aim of the work is to study the theoretical and practical issues related to the functioning of NP. The purpose of the study identified the range of its research tasks: to identify the main historical and cultural features of NP in the process of its development; to establish a link between NP, the English language of Nigeria and major interethnic language groups specialties functioning on the territory of modern Nigeria; to determine some linguistic features of NP.*

Methods. *During the research, the author used both empirical and theoretical methods. At the empirical level, the objects are analyzed by external relations and manifestations. The main purpose for this level is the factual activity of PE functioning in modern Nigeria. The theoretical level is associated with the predominance of mental activity, the understanding of empirical material, its processing, and reveals in internal structure and patterns of development of systems and phenomena.*

Results. *The results of the work are seen in the author's theoretical and practical investigations of historical, linguistic and cultural features development of Nigerian Pidgin functioning on the territory of Nigeria and revealing its main characteristics.*

Practical implications. *The results of the study can be applied in the field of contact linguistics and language variations functioning on the territory of West Africa.*

Keywords: *Pidgin English; Nigerian English; language contacts; Hausa English; Yoruba English; Igbo English; hybrid language.*

ОСОБЕННОСТИ ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЯ НИГЕРИЙСКОГО ПИДЖИНА

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Цель. *В статье выявляются особенности функционирования пиджина английского языка, распространенного на территории Нигерии. Автор анализирует ключевые исторические факторы, оказавшие влияние на процесс формирования и развития Нигерийского пиджина. Согласно исследованию, исторически сложившаяся этническая, культурная близость с соседними народами, схожесть экономических и социальных систем основных этнических групп, Хауса, Йоруба, Игбо, оказали влияние на образование уникальной гибридной языковой системы – Нигерийского пиджина (НП), сочетающего в себе лингвистические особенности и черты европейских языков и фонетику, лексику, грамматику основных языков коренных народов Нигерии.*

***Метод или методология проведения работы.** В ходе работы автор использует эмпирические методы, где происходит анализ внешних взаимоотношений одних объектов с другими и выявляются общие и различные свойства, и теоретические методы, при которых происходит процесс обработки информации.*

***Результаты.** Результаты работы отражены в теоретических и практических исследованиях автора по изучению исторических, лингвистических и культурных особенностей функционирования НП в Нигерии и выявлению его основных характеристик.*

***Область применения результатов.** Результаты исследования могут быть применимы в разделах контактной лингвистике, языковой вариативности, исследованиях, посвященных теоретическим вопросам языков Западной Африки.*

***Ключевые слова:** пиджин английского языка; нигерийский английский язык; языковые контакты; язык науса; язык йоруба; язык игбо; гибридный язык.*

Considering the social and linguistic situation of modern Nigeria, it can be noted the coexistence of many languages is the key point to the diversity of language variations. This fact is explained by the multilingual ethnicity of the country. In addition to English, which is the official language, there are three main interethnic languages in Nigeria, i.e., Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, along with many other languages, which are less popular [1, p. 4]. A special place among the languages used in the framework of social and linguistic situation of the country belongs also to Nigerian Pidgin (NP) or Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), which is used among all peoples of Nigeria. Despite its wide usage throughout Nigeria, it has no official status. NP is different from the standard Nigerian English – an official Nigeria language - therefore, there is a special need for careful analysis of NP features as the mean of inter-ethnic communication on the territory of Nigeria; this fact determines the relevance of the study.

English has been so prominent in Nigeria since the beginning of the colonization period that its dominance has hampered the growth (and even led to the disappearance of some) of the 529 indigenous languages

of Nigeria [3, p. 81]. Even stressing the fact that most of Nigeria's ethnic groups prefer to communicate using their own languages, English, as an official language, is widely used for education, business transactions and official purposes. English as the first language, however, remains the exclusive preserve of a minority of the country's urban elite, with little spoken in some rural areas. Nevertheless, in most rural Nigeria areas, local people prefer to use NP as a means of communication, it still remains the most widespread nonofficial language, combining features of Nigerian English and main ethnical language groups.

English spread on the territory of West Africa by the end of the XVI century, and around this time, the first mentioning of the role of English as a language of international communication is fixed. By the early 19th century, the increase in trade and the intensification of the fight against the slave trade led to the spread of English throughout the West African coast. In the context of hundreds of local languages and dialects, the West African region has been characterized by the use of different versions of English, that is, English Pidgin and Creole dialects, which originated from English and existed in parallel with its main varieties, which were spoken by representatives of the colonial administration, missionaries, military and traders [9, p. 98–101]. Various new variations of the English language are widespread in West Africa. Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe have given official status to English, with NPE being considered as means of inter-ethnic communication in each of the above countries. Pidgin English is a mixed language used by native speakers of various languages in their communication with Europeans. Pidgin is a systemically structured autonomous hybrid form of language, this form is a socially and historically conditioned formation, which was formed as a result of ethno-cultural, trade-economic and military-political interactions of representatives of originally unrelated cultures [10, p. 92–98]. Such a hybrid form of language is characterized by specific structural phonetic innovations, rather simplified grammar system, which leads to the maximum analysis of the language, isolation and partly agglutination. It should be noted that the hybrid form of language promotes the use of a limited system of lexical

vocabulary, its own sociolinguistic norm and sufficient communication ability, which contributes to mutual understanding in limited areas of interethnic communication.

Any structural, lexical, morphological, semantic, syntactic, phonetic element of pidgin is called pidginization process or pidginism, while the process of pidgin formation is called pidginization [4, p. 78]. In the process of pidginization it is decided to allocate three stages: 1) pidgin-jargonization, that is, education jargon – existential non-Autonomous hybrid linguistic forms and their elements of pidginization jargon; 2) prepidginization, this stage is characterized by the formation of prepidginization, that is semi-autonomous existential hybrid linguistic forms and their elements – prepidginisms; 3) the actual pidginization – formation of pidgins and pidginized [4, p. 78–81]. Stabilized pidgin languages are auxiliary languages that have a well-established, but very limited vocabulary, such languages do not have their own ethnic or social base.

In relation to vocabulary, Pidgins are often based on any language, but their grammatical structure is different from the original language; the degree of mutual understanding between pidgin and original language has little in common. Structural features which are characteristics for all pidgins having in common are: the simplicity of the phonetic composition of the speech poorly expressed, the morphology and shallow syntax. Apparently, there are universal extensions of the semantics, if pidginization happens, for example, it lost the juxtaposition of the verb in *series* ‘watch’ – ‘to see’, ‘to tell’ – ‘say’. Similar lexical “poverty” can be saved and at a later stage of development of the contact language that goes on to other linguistic tools. For example, the English verb *say—tell—speak* in Pidgin English has variants *tok* and *spik* only. Another universal feature of the pidgins vocabulary is the origin in Creole languages of the formation of antonymous adjectives with the help of negation. For example, ‘bad’ – *nogut* – literally *bad*; ‘stupid’ – *nosap* – literally *not smart* [2, p. 11–28].

There is a reason to believe that the stabilization of Pidgin largely depends on the social and demographic situation of the average carrier.

As for Pidgin in Nigeria, it is spoken today along the coast of West Africa and the African diaspora across the Atlantic. Among these 'related' varieties, the closest form to NP includes Cameroonian Pidgin, unlike, for example, Sierra Leonean and Jamaican Pidgin. However, all these Pidgins and Creoles have a significant number of semantic, grammatical and phonological features and structures. The question of the origin of NP is still controversial. It is impossible to determine whether NP has developed through market contacts between European traders and various ethnic groups along the coast or under the influence of missionaries from Sierra Leone. It is reasonable to assume that both of these factors have played a role in the development and spread of NP, however, some Nigerian scholars argue that care should be taken not to overestimate the role of merchants or missionaries in the evolution of NP. In the search for origins, Creole language specialists tend to ignore the fact that, at every stage of its history, NP has been used primarily as a means of communication between Nigerians rather than between Nigerians and traders, missionaries or other foreigners. More and more evidence suggests, it is impossible to formulate any plausible scenario for the origin and development of NP, which does not attribute much to the influence of the language models with which southern Nigerians have always been most familiar: structures that are typical of the languages of southern Nigeria.

Several studies have been carried out on the various sub-systems of the Nigerian Pigeon's phonology and Grammar, which are reflected in the works of A.C. Agonsi (1983), N. Faraclas (1985), L. Oyegbami (1985), M. Vatsa (1985) and others. According to conservative estimates, the number of people speaking NP as a second language today exceeds 50 million, and the number of speakers of the first language has already exceeded 2 million. It should be noted that these data are subject to constant changes, and the number of people speaking Pidgin language is growing rapidly, this is largely due to the popularity of the language among young people, which is a large part of the population [6, p. 52–58].

NP differs from other approximately 400 Nigerian languages in that it is spoken by representatives of all regional, ethno linguistic and religious groups of the Federation. NP differs from Nigerian Standard English in

that it is spoken by representatives of all socio-economic groups, while only those who have received higher education for several years can qualify for a standard English at any level. Although NP is in most cases the most logical choice for a national language, it has received little recognition from those responsible for language policy in Nigeria. Attitudes towards NP as an official language remain negative, one reason being the notion that Nigerian Pidgin is a form of 'non-pure English'. NP can now be described as the most widely spoken indigenous language in Nigeria. NP is common not only spoken in the largest metropolitan areas such as Lagos, Kano and port Harcourt, but it is also spoken by Nigerians in slums such as Aegunle and Mushin. Recently, NP has been widely used in the Media to broadcast news, all kinds of advertising to reach large masses of Nigeria, for which it is either the first, second or third language [11, p. 42].

The use of NP is widespread throughout Nigeria, especially in informal situations. It was noted that all classes of Nigerians used NP in both formal and informal conversations. For example, in the area of the Niger Delta, NP is increasingly used in most formal situations, e.g. in teaching both at primary and secondary levels of education. Similarly, in most higher education institutions, NP is widely used by students to present oral responses as well as informal communication. That is why this language is often called the Nigerian unofficial national lingua franca. Some Nigerian scholars such as B. Eluigbe, N. Faraclas, N. Akinnaso repeatedly suggested making a decision in favor of Nigerian Pidgin as an official language of Nigeria because of its ethnic neutrality, on the one hand, and widespread character among the inhabitants of the country on the other side [9, p. 22–28].

It should be noted that NP is characterized by territorial variation: there is Pidgin in Benin City, Lagos, Ibadan, Onitsha where, according to some scientists, it is gradually becoming the lingua franca. Over the past two decades, the linguistic diversity of Nigeria has changed, and today Nigeria has seen an increase in the role of NP, a language spoken by more than 2/3 of the country's population. NP is the most common means of inter-ethnic communication. The attitude towards Nigerian

Pidgin, which was previously perceived as the language of illiterate and uneducated people, has begun to change, and today NP more often penetrates into various spheres of society. Various radio programmes are available in NP. In Nigeria, there is a special radio station WAZOBIA, which broadcasts in NP, and the name of this company is interpreted as a combination of three main languages of Nigeria: WA – Yoruba, ZO – Hausa and BIA – Igbo, ETA. The language of a lot of Nigeria TV channels, print ads, billboards and posters is NP today [8, p. 14].

Among the leading Nigerian linguists NP still continues to be the object of study, which can be seen in the works of S. Manbi (1986), J. Melrose (1995), N. Fairclough (2001), J. Collins, R. Hollo (2010), where the analysis is subjected to phonetic, morphological, syntactic features of NP and reveals the main similarities and differences of NP and Pidgins of other countries. The trend of an unprecedented rise in the use of NP and its growing popularity, status and development among Nigerians of all classes is now reflected in the use of NP, along with the three main Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, in areas such as politics, education, advertising and media promotion [10, p. 78–82].

One of the most important features of the indigenous peoples of Nigeria in the formation of NP is its mixing with the English language, resulting in the formation of lexical units by semantic Association, for example: *úbók gum (NE) – hand/gum (NP) – a mean or selfish person (meaning), áí monkey (NE) – roamy monkey (NP) – a thief (meaning)* [5, p. 12–14].

For NP it is also typical to have characteristics by the so-called comparison of the elements of the two lexical formations (clippings) to create a new word. These words are mainly used to create aesthetic and comic effects, for example,

***fantabullous (NP)** – is a mixture of two adjectives – **fantastic** and **fabulous**; **overgasted (NP)** – combines two adjectives – **overwhelmed** and **flabbergasted**; **flabberwhelmed** – is the blending of **flabbergasted** and **overwhelmed**; **carnibration** – is an adjective which is based in two adjectives, such as **carnival** and **celebration**; **edutainment** – connects two adjectives as **education** and **entertainment**; **terrubious** – is a combination of adjectives **terrible** and **dubious** [5, p. 14–28].*

This type of lexical formation is widely used among young people in Nigeria, and in particular in the group of social networks *keggite*, which consists mainly of students. An interesting feature of the NP is that it gradually acquires affixes and thus develops a complex morphological system, for example, words such as *misyarn – misfire*, *blacky – pencil*, *shorty – shortly*, which function in the language in order to identify contrasting and expressive meaning [7, p. 36].

However, mostly they are used to create humor and achieve maximum comic effect. Thus, B. Elugbe and A. Omamor (1991) describe such creations as a poor-quality attempt of illiterate Nigerians to manipulate the English language. A distinctive feature of NP is the fact this language is not able to distinguish homonyms, for example, words like *thing – thing*, *thin – thin*, *tin – can* all pronounced like [tin]. Such forms as *sight – glance*, *look – site*, *place – land*, *cite – to quote*, *to mention the source* will be pronounced as [sait]; while *write – write*, *right – right*, *right – rite* pronounced as [rait] [2, p. 37–86].

The reason for this discrepancy lies in the fact that the connection between sound and spelling in NP is more stable than in English. Phonological reduction and neutralization of phonemes lead to a greater number of homophones in NP than in British English. Although no variety of languages distinguishes homophones phonetically, the sounds of the NP correspond to the letters in direct correspondence one to one. It should be noted that there are no generally accepted spelling rules in NP, hence every writer prefers a writing system that is a true reflection of a sound. The only way to distinguish homophones in NP is to use super-segmental outlines on writing, such as tone and intonation. As for non-linguistic features, such features as gestures and facial expressions, as well as the context of discourse can also contribute to understanding the speaker's plan, for examples,

– *Pàlè no gree me come – (My) father didn't allow me to come,*
– *Chelsea bin waya Arsenal well – Chelsea defeated Arsenal glaringly* [5, p. 24–28].

Homophones *pàlè-father* in the first example and *waya – defeat* in the second example can only be distinguished contextually. They are

phonetically and orthographically identical, and both pairs can be used in the lexical solution problem for the study of word recognition.

NP is becoming increasingly popular in modern Nigeria, this language continues to enrich its vocabulary by borrowing from the indigenous languages of Nigeria, primarily from the largest languages of Nigeria-Igbo and Yoruba. Thus, in the Igbo language native speakers use '*Nna*' at the beginning of some sentences to enhance the meaning, for example:

'That test was hard' – 'Nna men, dat test hard no be small' [5, p. 22].

In the Yoruba language, the lexemes '*Se*' and '*Abi*' in their version of NP were found to be used typically, which are usually used at the beginning or in the end of a sentence or question, for example:

'You are coming, right?' – 'Se you dey come?' or 'You dey come abi?'

For NP it is also typical to borrow words from European languages, primarily English, French and Portuguese, for example:

1) from the Portuguese language: *sabi – know, pickin – child, palava – problem, dash – to make a gift for a person;*

2) from French: *boku – plenty-several, rundevu – reckless spending;*

3) from English language: *go slow – hold up, to pause, machine – new car; houseboy – male servant-waiter* [5, p. 11–28].

For NP, a characteristic feature at the lexical level is the extreme limitation of vocabulary, at the morphosyntactic level the key points goes to the absence of temporal forms in verbs – a marker of progressiveness in this case is '*dey*', for example: *I am coming – I day come; He is coming – we dey come; We are coming – we dey come* [5, p. 18].

One must stress, the absence of articles, prepositions, possessive pronouns is also typical for the structure of NP; for example, the form of the pronoun *him* will be the general form for *his/her*.

At the phonetic level, NP is characterized by palatalization of the consonant at the beginning of the word before '*a*' – *ka, ga, kja, gja*. From productive ways of word formation, it is necessary to allocate reduplication process thanks to which adjectives, adverbs and nouns are formed in NP, for example: *mago mago – deceitful, yama yama – disgusting, welu welu – very well, kata kata – confusion* [5, p. 16–22].

Taking into consideration the fact that most of Nigeria's ethnic groups prefer to communicate using their own languages, English, as an official language, is widely used for education, business transactions and official purposes. English as the first language, however, remains the exclusive preserve of a minority of the country's urban elite, with little spoken in some rural areas. In most rural Nigeria, local languages remain the medium of communication. Taking into consideration the fact of ethnicity, which plays the key role in cultural identity of African people, the language of international communication today, i.e., the language of the majority of people simultaneously used at once in the process of communication, is NP. This language was able to combine all the features of local languages at all levels: grammatical, phonetic, lexical. These unique characteristics provide the ability to adapt to the needs of all linguistic majorities and minorities.

Conclusion

To sum it all, NP is a language that is widely spread on the territory on Nigeria, though it has no official status. NP combines the features of European languages and its main ethnic language characteristics. Due to the increase in trade and the intensification of the fight against the slave trade, the spreading of European languages, English in particular, was the process that happened throughout the West African coast. In the context of hundreds of local languages and dialects, the West African region has been characterized by the use of different versions of English, i.e., Pidgin English and Creole dialects, which originated from English and existed in parallel with its main varieties, which were spoken by representatives of the colonial administration, missionaries, military and traders.

Various new variations of the English language are widespread in West Africa today, some of them have been given the official status. NPE is considered a means of inter-ethnic language of Nigeria today; it presents a mixed language structure used by native speakers of various languages in their communication with Europeans. Pidgin is a systemically structured autonomous hybrid form of a language. This form is a social-

ly and historically conditioned formation, which was formed as a result of ethno-cultural, trade-economic and military-political interactions of representatives of originally unrelated cultures. NPE is a hybrid form of a language, which is characterized by specific structural phonetic innovations, rather simplified grammar system, which leads to the maximum analysis of the language, isolation and partly agglutination. It should be noted, NPE is the hybrid form of a language, which promotes the use of a limited system of lexical vocabulary, its own sociolinguistic norms and sufficient communication abilities, which contributes to mutual understanding in limited areas of interethnic communication of Nigeria.

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