Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin, Which is the Language of the People? A Study of Nigeria Police Force Posts on Social Media

By

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Abstract

The study deals with analysis Nigeria Police Force posts on social media, which demonstrates preference between Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin by the people of Nigeria. Nigeria still struggles with underdevelopment in various sectors especially in security of life and property. Language choice and usage have important roles to play in national development and English has served in official situations for as long as one can remember. It is time to evaluate the potentials of Nigerian pidgin to national development. This work uses data from official X handle of the Nigeria Police Force which serve as its public relation channel of communication. This official handle is used for press releases, creation of awareness, feedbacks, reports ad response to questions. English language is used by the handers for all these activities but English are sometimes used. The replies to these posts were used for analysis it was found that many Nigerians are dissatisfied with the Nigeria police force and they tend to distance more when English is used for the posts on the social media while the use of pidgin appears to draw people closer to Nigeria Police Force. Also, there is active and meaningful engagement of the people when pidgin is used as opposed to banters and curses on the police when English is used. The study recommends that Nigerian Pidgin should be used as

complementary to English language by Nigeria police force. Both online and offline interactions should be carried out in Nigerian Pidgin when situation calls for it. This restores confidence in the people and encourages active engagement and feedback from the people. Nigerian Pidgin should be promoted and adopted by all government agencies for their public relations.

Keywords: Nigerian English, Nigeria Pidgin, Language, Nigeria Police Force

Introduction

Nigerian English and Pidgin coexist in Nigeria and complement one another. Speakers switch from English to pidgin and vice versa when and where necessary. These tools of expression have dominated Nigeria's language space. There is a glaring competition between Nigeria Pidgin and English language. This can be easily identified in the social media space where both formal and informal organisations have adopted for public relations. More so, Nigerians have no rule as to the choice of language in the social media. Users are made up of competent and incompetent speakers of both English and Pidgin. Therefore, there is no form of evaluation with regard to language usage in the social media.

The level of freedom people have to speak equals the level of choice they have in using pidgin and English language. However, the liberty to choice what language to use is gradually revealing people's preference on English and pidgin. No doubt, the people's choice of language, which is not influenced by levels by rules and conditions has a great deal with their actions and decisions. In other words, people's level of competence to instructions, followership, and responses to important matters might be influenced by language choice and its style of usage.

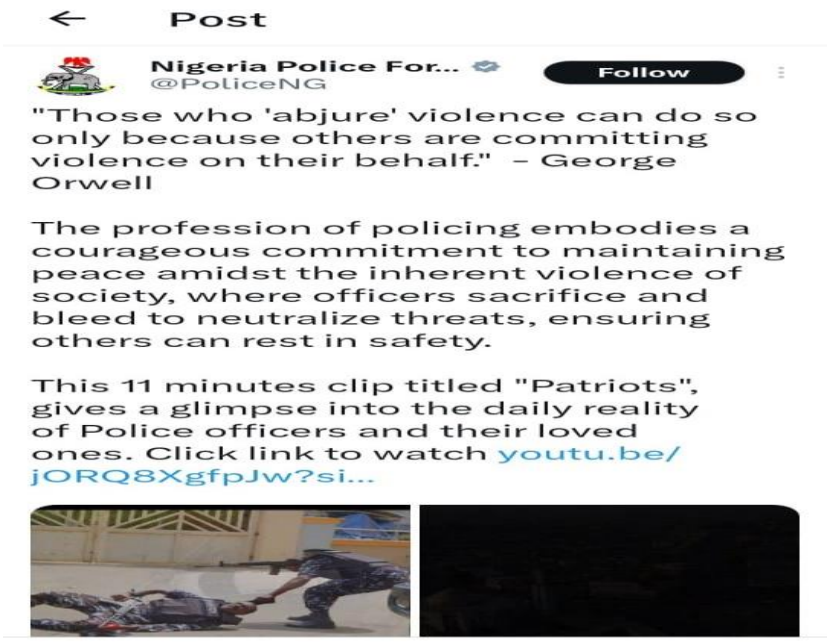
Nigerian society is very linguistically complex. English has been imposed on Nigerians by the British colonial system while relegating Nigerian languages (Adegbija, 2004, Mufwene, 2005).

This agrees with Yule-Ifode (2001) who opined that every generation comes into existence to find a readymade language for its community. Pidgin has served tremendous purposes despite neglect. Nigerians seem to have started showing preference to pidgin ahead of English language. One can clearly notice the naturalness in Nigerians when they speak pidgin, not only for comforts in its usage rather, people's responses and participation in discussions where pidgin is used. This work shall review the response of Nigerians in press releases of the Nigeria Police Force in both Pidgin and English language.

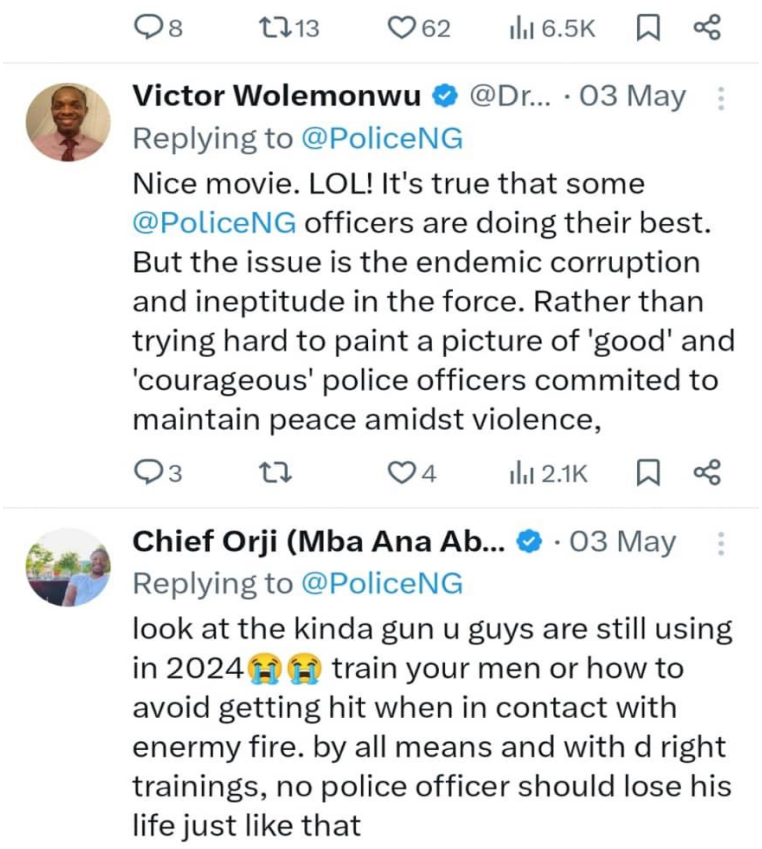
Nigerian police force (NPF)

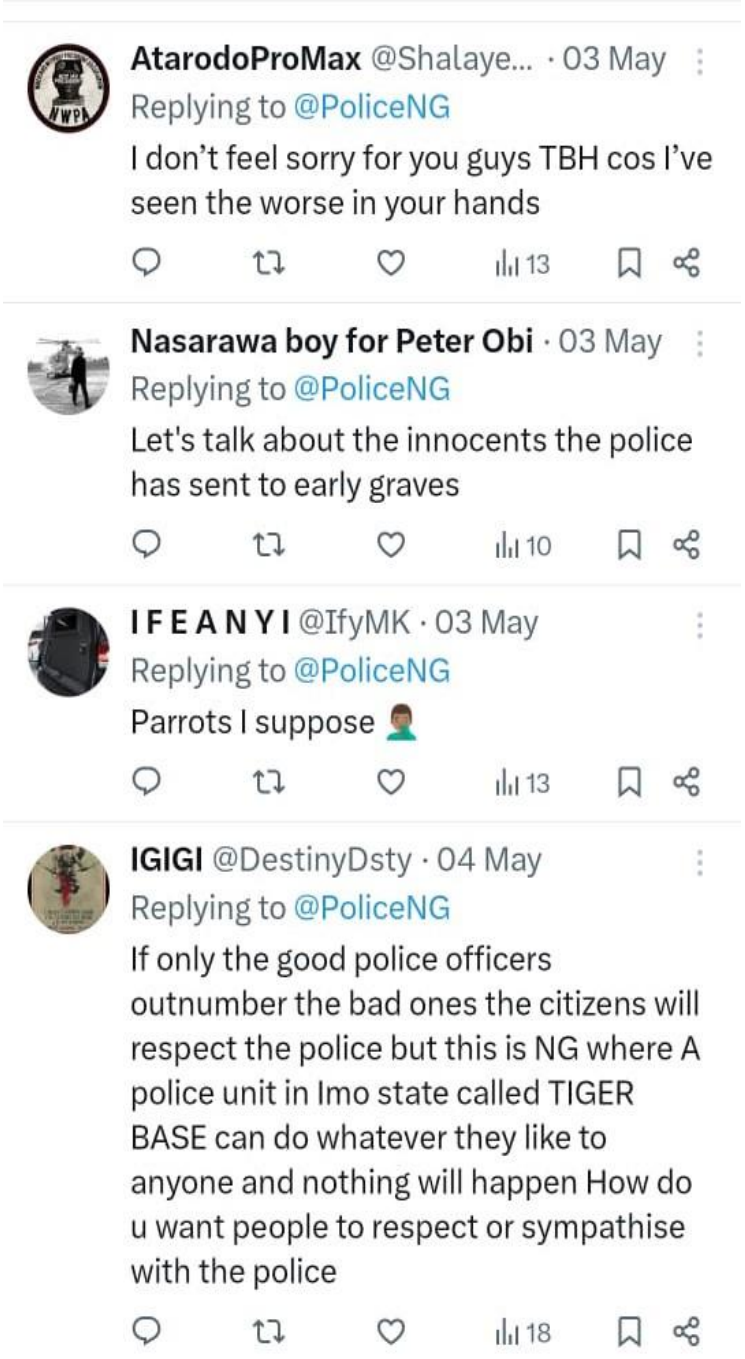
This is an important institution in the executive arm of government saddled with the responsibility to maintain peace and order in the country. The police guides the society by releasing information relating to safety and also issuing warning to the citizens on what to avoid. There are units in the public relations in Nigerian police force that relates to the members of the public. They receive questions, reports and respond appropriately even in cases of emergency. This unit has also incorporated social media for efficient and quick responses. On X (formally known as Twitter), the handle of the Nigeria Police Force for is named as "Nigeria Police Force". Every day, it releases statements to the public and responds to peoples' quarries. Officially, English language is used in their press releases but Nigerians mostly respond using Pidgin. At random, the handler uses pidgin for public announcement and warnings. Research has shown that many media organizations now adopt pidgin (Ekiye, 2020). This work makes analysis on the responses of Nigerians, which extensively demonstrates whether English or pidgin is the language of the people and the implications to Nigeria's National development. The analysis will be based on raw data which will be collected from the X handle of Nigeria Police Force. The responses will also be presented for analysis.

Post on English language by NPF



The post above presents the self- sacrificing nature of security personnel. The members of Nigerian police force put their lives of the line to secure the rest of Nigerian people. The post is accompanied with an image of a wounded officer who might have been caught by bullet while his colleagues struggles to rescue him. He pulls him and equally continues to fight the supposed criminals. This post and the image should evoke pity and heartfelt appreciation to the armed forces. Many of these peace keepers have died in active service, some have become disabled or suffering chronic ailments as a result of this job. Despite the risk attached to this profession, these fearless men continue to protect the society as patriots giving less attention to their families and personal welfare. The responses of the people shows a high level of dissatisfaction on the activities of the Nigerian Police Force. The following shoes few of the responses from the public.


8
13
62
6.5K
Victor Wolemonwu @Dr... · 03 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
Nice movie. LOL! It's true that some @PoliceNG officers are doing their best. But the issue is the endemic corruption and ineptitude in the force. Rather than trying hard to paint a picture of 'good' and 'courageous' police officers commited to maintain peace amidst violence,
3
4
2.1K
Chief Orji (Mba Ana Ab... · 03 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
look at the kinda gun u guys are still using in 2024😭😭 train your men or how to avoid getting hit when in contact with enermy fire. by all means and with d right trainings, no police officer should lose his life just like that


AtarodoProMax @Shalaye... · 03 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
I don't feel sorry for you guys TBH cos I've seen the worse in your hands
13
Nasarawa boy for Peter Obi · 03 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
Let's talk about the innocents the police has sent to early graves
10
IFEANYI @IfyMK · 03 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
Parrots I suppose
13
IGIGI @DestinyDsty · 04 May
Replying to @PoliceNG
If only the good police officers outnumber the bad ones the citizens will respect the police but this is NG where A police unit in Imo state called TIGER BASE can do whatever they like to anyone and nothing will happen How do u want people to respect or sympathise with the police
18

The replies above show an immeasurable hatred for the Nigerian police force. The rejection of these men is indescribable. The public perception as seen in the replies is a negative one most people do not accord any respect for the Nigerian police men. They are seen as enemies. Despite the fact that police men die trying to protect the public, these replies shows that the police men are blamed for any attack on them. In fact, the replies show that some people are happy if any police officer falls victim of the criminals these clear disconnection cannot be dissociated with activities of some members of the Nigerian police force. They have been accused to engage in robbery, killing of innocent people, blackmailing, detention and torture of innocent people and so much more. The image of the Nigerian police force ruined more in October 2020, when Nigerian's youths where allegedly massacred in Lagos for protecting against the disbanded unit known as special Ant Robbery Squad (SARS). Many investigations and reports showed that members of the Nigerian police force in this unit killed many innocent people, and branded them criminals. Some of them have been linked to organ trafficking, illicit drug businesses and robbery.

There are also cases where they simply move into a street and arrest any young person, search their phones and force them to make transfers but secure their release. If anyone does not have money for his release, he is either unlawfully detained or killed. Truly, because of few bad eggs in the Nigerian police force, people have lost confidence in them. Instead of being the friends with the people, they have been regarded as enemies working for the political class and the rich. Those who not able to pay for their services stay far away from them. Because of all these, people mock them when they are killed while on duty.

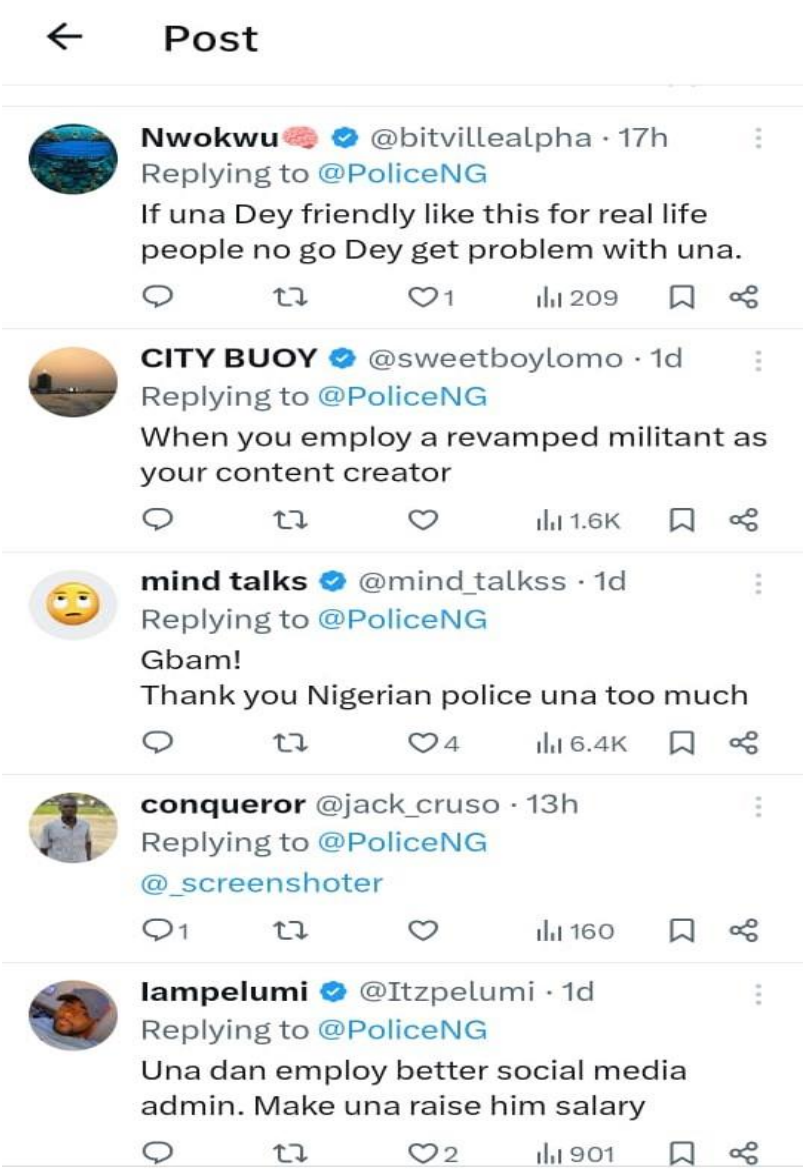
While the common people distance themselves from the police and wish they could become better, the police continue to do their best in maintaining peace and order in the society. They seem not to be discouraged by people with negative perception as shown in the replies. The post that led to the replies above was made using English language. The next post to be presented is made in English Pidgin.

Post in Nigerian Pidgin



The post above is also a form of public relations activity. It urges the members of the public to be late abiding and reminding them to call on the police for quick response in any case of emergency. Here are the replies from the public below:


Post
60
18.2K
Potential President @pot... · 1d
Replying to @PoliceNG
Our prestigious police are getting better everyday
Wishing you more success
30
10.2K
JEJE OF LAGOS @jejeoflagos · 1d
Replying to @PoliceNG
At your big age you guys cannot have a national hotline for emergencies. Shior.
1
5
5.5K
ÓLÀdeyforyou @trendwithola · 1d
Replying to @PoliceNG
It will be nice to see you active like this in real life as you dey active for social media. A lot for you to fight in the society. Roll up your sleeves.
5
1.4K



Critically looking at the replies above, we see a sense of friendship with the people. Has the police change overnight? What about the corruption, robbery, killing and all allegations against them? One can clearly see the role of language and its usage. When a speaker employs the language of the people, the effect on the emotional, psychological, affective domains of listeners is different. Instead of wishing them

evil and blaming them for the ills of the society, they seem to be happy and are ready to comply with instructive, orders from the police. It seems he or she has forgotten the atrocities of the police. @bitrillealpha wishes to have this kind of conversation in real life situation. This is to say that language choice and usage has a way of restoring people's confidence, creates synergy between the people and makes it easier to solve problems.@ potential president says that the police is getting better. These renewed interest is coming from just a post made with pidgin by the same police.

Implication for National Development

Nigeria lags behind in many indices of measuring National development. The health sector, educational, Agricultural and others have not developed their full potentials. The stakeholders have adopted measures to achieve national development. It is time to shift attention to the role of language in national development. English has not achieved the desired national development. So pidgin which is closer to the people and culture might play a better role. As demonstrated in the post and replies, the masses relates well with pidgin instead of English. There is positive engagement with pidgin Nigeria. Even though English is the official language, pidgin can successfully complement or even substitute English language in official situations. Police should adopt every strategy including effective communication to engage the members of the public in maintaining peace and order. The activities on the social media handle show that meaningful engagement is necessary to achieve peace and security in Nigeria. People should be encouraged to use pidgin if they want to report crime, give feedback and information to the security personnel. The handler scan be trained and allowed to use pidgin online and office to interact with the people. That might reduce tension, restore confidence, create friendly environment for the people. For example some replies indicate that people can contribute to security through the flow of communication. The following replies shows how pidgin can encourage people to participate in security.



The first reply has actually suggested a review or perhaps an investigation of collection of money for bills, which is supposed to be free. Second reply shows change of attitude towards the security officers and readiness to work with them while the third reply expresses happiness with the Nigerian police

Conclusion

The choice of language in Nigeria is more sensitive than one can imagine (Akinnaso, 1991). Language in Nigeria has the ability to destroy or build this nation. Pidgin is preferred by the majority of Nigeria people and has the potential

to accelerate our national development because it relates to the culture and realities in Nigeria than English. It allow free communication between the rich and the poor. The official statements and press releases of the Nigerian Police Force can fully utilise pidgin for its public relations. Pidgin is the language of the people of Nigeria (Rukaye & Chiedu, (2021). Nigerians are comfortable with it.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. The study recommends that Nigerian Pidgin should be used as complementary to English language by Nigeria Police Force. Both online and offline interactions should be carried out in Nigerian Pidgin when situation calls for it. This restores confidence in the people and encourages active engagement and feedback from the people.

2. Nigerian Pidgin should be promoted and adopted by all government agencies for their public relations. This will allow both the educated and non-educated Nigerians to participate in any form of national development.

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