Pidgin English as the Language of Entertainment in Nigeria

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Abstract

This research studies the use of Pidgin English as a language of entertainment in Nigeria. Pidgin is a variety of language which developed for practical purposes such as trading between people of different first languages. It is a language of communication in a multilingual setting like Nigeria. Hence, the need for its use in the entertainment world. This work is anchored on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, which is concerned with the contextualized practical uses of language. The researchers analyzed different data in the entertainment industry, emphasizing the characteristics of Nigerian Pidgin found in the data. The researchers conclude that the need for Pidgin English in the entertainment industry in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized due to the multilingual nature of the country and also in order to be profitable and understood by all despite their social classes. The researchers recommend that the government as well as the entertainment industry should encourage the use of Pidgin English in the Nigerian entertainment as it captures Nigeria's colour and makes them unique at the international level.

Introduction

Language is the core and one of the major means of communication amongst humans. Crystals (1992), conceptualizes it as having perhaps a magical mystical and unique role in contouring the breadth of human thoughts and endeavours. This means a person's thought is actively expressed with his language.

Language is a potent vehicle for transmitting cultures, values, norms and beliefs from one generation to another. It remains a central factor in determining the status or nature of any nation. Language plays a powerful role and is indeed used in all aspects and spheres of human communication.

According to Akwanya (2010), language has often been identified as the most unique attribute of man and without language, there is no society. Language does not only bring meanings to the world, it also shapes one's cognitive process, such as perception, interpretation and judgment.

Pidgin is a variety of language which developed for practical purposes such as trading between people with different first languages. According to O' Donnel and Todd (1991), pidgin is an auxiliary language which arises to fulfill certain limited communication needs among people who have no common language. It is a contact variety restricted in form and function and native to no one.

According to Tamunobelema (2018), "a pidgin is considered a form of jargon, a hybrid of usually two languages which developed for some practical purposes, such as trading among groups of people who had a lot of contacts, but who could not understand one another".

The Nigerian Pidgin has metamorphosed through different linguistic stages. It started initially as a language of trade between the early Europeans and Africans. At this stage, the language was restricted to trade and only used in the coastal areas of the country. The next stage involved the expansion of the Nigerian Pidgin as a language used by the heterogeneous communities in the coastal regions of the country. At this point, it gave the coastal communities a lingua franca that aided communication in a great way. The next stage involved the expansion of the Nigerian Pidgin beyond the coastal lines and areas. It is a language used in churches for sermons (especially in coastal cities like Warri, Port Harcourt and others). It is dominating some fields of human endeavours in the country such as entertainment.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar.

Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar was developed by J. R. Firth in the 1930s and modified by Halliday in 1960s. One of its cardinal concerns is the study of language based on function of context. Halliday sees language as a part of social semiotic and holds that language is used in the society to perform different functions. The different functions language performs in the society inform different choices people make as they use language.

What is Pidgin?

Ofoegbu (2014) defines pidgins as "language operating between the members of different language communities who do not have a mother tongue in common and it is also not native to any of its speakers". It is a language believed to have arisen from contact situation, particularly where in such contact situation, the groups involved have no common linguistic means of communication.

Olaoye (2007) sees a pidgin as "one language which has a drastically reduced or limited grammatical structure and vocabulary and is spoken as a native language of no one". Similarly, Crystal (2008) opines that pidgin is a term used to refer to a language with markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon and stylistic range, compared to other languages, and which is the native language of no one".

The Pidgin English as a language of Entertainment

Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and some other African countries were colonized by the British. These countries all use the Whiteman's language (English) as the medium of communication among its different tribes. Unfortunately, the English language has limited number of speakers and so does not cover a wider range of the population especially in Nigeria. Music, jokes and comedies rendered in English alone always have limited listeners leading to limited patronage. This necessitated the use of Pidgin English (NP), a language of the masses, a language that cuts across ethnic and religious barriers in the entertainment industry. The musicians and comedians compete with millions of others on every level

especially from their lyrics in terms of content. It is obvious that most popular music and jokes in the world are rendered in English language whether they are produced by English native speakers or not. This makes for lack of originality because when a Nigerian is singing or making a joke from his local environment in English, the content looses the local flavour which may have been captured by Nigerian Pidgin (NP).

Recently, with the growing and popularization of Nigeria's entertainment industry, many unemployed youths are smiling to the banks because of their music and jokes rendered in NP. These youths before joining the industry were jobless, some of them involved themselves in immoral acts and such ungainful acts set back their different communities. But with their new found job, they not only cater for themselves but train and employ other unemployed to their music or joke industry or other businesses they owned. This progress would not have been possible if not for the viability of NP as the medium of music and joke in Nigeria's entertainment industry. People like Tuface Idibia, P-Square, Timaya, Flavour, Wizkid, Olamide, Chidimma, Femi Kuti, Frank Edward, Mercy Chinwo, Samsong, Sam Okposo to mention a few are all celebrities courtesy their use of NP in their music.

Among the humorists, we have people like Gordon, Ali Baba, Klint de Drunk, Basket Mouth, I go dye, AY and host of others who are presently celebrities courtesy their use of NP in their jokes. Of the over four hundred indigenous languages spoken by Nigerians, only NP enjoys the privilege of being spoken by people from all walks of life and social strata. This offers it the wide coverage it has in essence leading to more patronage of music and jokes rendered in it.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives Latin and French origins for the word "entertain", including *inter* (among) + *tenir* (to hold) as derivations, giving translations of "to hold mutually" or "to hold intertwined" and "to engage, keep occupied, the attention, thoughts or time (of a person)". It also provides words like "merry-making", "pleasure", "delight", as well as "to receive as a guest and show hospitality to".

Entertainment means giving somebody happiness to enable him/her see life as worth living. According to The Oxford English Dictionary, entertainment is a form of activity that holds the attention and interest of an audience or gives pleasure and delight. It comprises listening to music/songs, watching movies/drama, listening to radio drama, jokes, request programmes and discussion programmes. The entertainment industry is the fastest growing and biggest industry in the world. It encompasses music, art (painting, drawing) films and plays, literature (poetry, drama, and prose), wrestling, football, talent shows, fashion, among others. In fact, anything that entertains belongs to the entertainment industry. This industry can also be described as one of the richest industries as billions of dollars is credited to the entertainment world. Artistes are often regarded as gods amongst youths and worshipped through the internet. They are often viewed as a standard or measurement of what is good or bad. Football is described as the sport that is capable of uniting people from all walks of life. It knows no colour or race. In contemporary Nigeria, the use of the Nigerian Pidgin has become extensive. It is now often used in Nigerian movies, especially in comedies, and jokes. Notable public entertainers/jesters/comedians include: Basket Mouth, Davido, I-go-die, Wizkid, Omah Lay, Gordon, AY, Akpororo, Davido, Ada, Mercy Chinwo, Chioma Jesus, etc.

Music is a significant aspect of the entertainment world. These days, Nigerian musicians have resorted to the use of pidgin language in their songs. This is a clear indication that, in the entertainment world, pidgin language top ranks among the multifarious languages in Nigeria. The recent influx of musicians in Nigeria fine tuning their music in the Nigerian Pidgin shows that the era of English music in Nigeria is fast fading out. Musicians from the different geographical zones in Nigeria disseminate their messages (music) in Pidgin Language.

Below are some extracts from some Nigerian musicians who rendered their music in the Pidgin English.

Data presentation and Analysis

***"If no bi God"* by Victor Angel**

If no bi God oo I fọ dọn die oo
I fọ dọn kpeme oo
If not God

I would have been dead…

"Authentic God" by Mercy Chinwo
Athen-authentic God oh (oh na-na-na)
Oh na-na-na
Na yu de reign o (Na yu de reign o)
Jehovah na yu de reign o
From the east to the west
I have searched all over and I've found nobody like You Lord
Na yu de reign oh (na yu de reign oh)
Na yu de reign oh (na yu de reign oh)

"Yu *tu de bles mi" by Frank Edward*
Na wetin I du
Wey mek yu lov mi soo
Wetin I du wey mek yu lov mi soo

Yu tu de bles mi oo eh eh eh
Na so yu lov mi oh eh eh eh
Yu tu de bles mi oo eh eh eh
Na so yu lov mi ooh eh eh eh

Samsong: *"Turn Me Around"*
Baba God
Yu tu de du fọ mi
Na wetin I go du
Tu mek yọ hat jọli
I giv yu mai moni
Yu seyu no wan mai moni
Chai omalicha chi
Bia were mkpuru obim
Goodness of the Lord de tọn mi around
Mek mi wana dans
Even though I no wan dans
Bodi go de muv mi

Turn me around
Mek mi wana dance
Goodness of the Lord de make me shout

Sample Ekwe: "*I de pain me*"
I de pen ni mi oo
I de pen ni mi weli weli oo

Flavour: "*Ada Ada*"
Everybody de wait
Puta kene n' ogbo
Ife dim ma amaka
Better soup na moni kil am oo

Chidimma (featured by Flavour): "*Ololufe*"
Iwo ni mo fe the lover of my life
Nobody compares to you
Na yu be mai life o
I go bi your wife o
Baby, I go die fọ you
Obinmo, oko mi… (Yoruba)

"Ojuelegba" by Wizkid
Ni ojuelegba
They know my story
From holdup studio
I bi hustle to work ee
Ni ojuelegba o
Me and CD
From holdup studio
We been hustle to work ee
Ni ojuelegba o
My people de there
My people suffer

"Na Gode" by Yemi Alade (featuring Selebobo)
Baba I thank you, Oluwa Na Gode o
Chineke Na Gode o
Person wey hustle suppose chop
E supposed to pop, e suppose to chill ebelebe
Person wey work suppose to dance…

"Amaka" by 2Face (Tuface)
I like woman, I dey straight forward o
I like youth and I dey rock run o
I don't know what you want to do
But let me know, if you go show up eh…

"Gentleman" by Fela Kuti
I no be gentleman at all
I no be gentleman at all
I no be gentleman at all o
I no be gentleman at, at all

"Shakara" by Fela Kuti
We get the shakara man
We get the shakara woman
Shakara man, him go say
"I go beat you, I go nearly kill you"
Na shakara
"I go beat you, go be like you get accident"
Na shakara
"You no know me"?

"**Trouble Sleep yanga wake am" by Fela Kuti**

When trouble sleep	When trouble is asleep
Yanga go wake am	Yanga (problem) goes to wake him
Wetin im dey find	What is he looking for
Palava, im dey find	Palava (trouble) he is looking for
Palava, im get oo	Palava (trouble) he will get.

Comedies/jokes

Some comedians in the Nigerian entertainment industry that use Pidgin English are: Akpororo, Basket Mouth, Gordons, AY, Warri Pikin, among others. Below are some extracts from some of the comedians.

Akpororo

Yu dọn bọn tiri (You have three children)
Yu stil de wia nika (you still wear shorts)
I dọn tel yu se de mọ I de ge moni (I have told you that the more I am wealthy)
De mọ I de misbihev (the more I misbehave)
Dis cuntri yu no fit nomal ge moni (in this country, you cannot be wealthy if you are normal)
Yu mọst craz (you must be crazy)

AY

I respet Port Harcourt dai (I respect people in Port Harcourt)
A beg mek ụna klap fọ ụna sef, ụna du wel (please clap for yourselves)
I ge wan mata we wi wan yan (there is an issue we want to discuss)
Awa presidenti im wia wan trouser we jump up (our president wore an under-size trouser)
I hia se na pitakwa we de bia am com (I heard it was bought in Port Harcourt)
I hia se na Wike pe tailor we mek am (I heard Wike hired the tailor that sewed it)
As yawa gas, Wike se (when it caused conflict, Wike said)
As I de pen dem, I de swit ọs (one man's meat is another's poison)

Gordons

Port Harcourt ụna dọn si mi finish abi? (Port Harcourt you are too familiar with me right?)
Mek ụna no le mi vex oo (do not provoke me)
Wok no de fọ dis pitakwa (there is no employment in Port Harcourt)
Fọ dis pitakwa gels de giv spiritual husband infections (in Port Harcourt spiritual husbands are infected by girls)

Radio comedy titled "Old School" by Chief Zebrudaya Alias 4:30

Fotografa: madam, madam, yu dey fọ haus? A beg na mi oo, I bring ya foto oo.
Ovularia: Ewoo, tank yu, im fain o. Zebii, de fotografa don bring de foto o, mek yu Si am na.
Zebrudaya: wich foto? Heeyi, who authoricate yu to took foto witout no Knowledge approval of mi?
Are you marrying madness? Wich foto are it are?
Ovularia: Na de fotografa kọm hia kọm tel mi se im wan tek mi foto, den I glad na
Den as rọb smọl pawda, im kọm tek mi foto
Luk am na, mek yu si am.
Zebrudaya: mmmh, chai, Chineke god I rest maisef on you
How much moni are you pay de fotografa?
Ovularia: Noo, n aim bi de tin na, de no man charge mi any moni,
Even wan kobo sef im no charge mi
Zebrudaya: Hia you are, he does not charge any moni,
Do not de wori, you will bi pay him for dat foto, some haw some dey
Ovularia : ah ah, but na de man tek im maut tọk se mek I no mind to pay
Why you kọm de tọk naa se I go pay some haw some dey? Mi I no Understand you abeg.
Zebrudaya: Anyway, le mi bi look at de foto
Mai Jehova Magada, Ovularia, who are dis?
Fiakwa, God forbid bad tin.

From the above data it can be said that the entertainment industry in Nigeria has no other language than the famous Pidgin language to communicate their thoughts. No wonder Jibril (1995) says that "Nigerian Pidgin is the language of the masses". We can see that Nigerian entertainment industry employs code-mixing and code-switching which is one of the characteristics of the pidgin language. Some of the songs above are presented in such ways that Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) mingles with the indigenous languages to add flavour and colour to the songs. Victor Angel in "If no be God" says 'I fọ dọn kpeme', 'kpeme' an Igbo language which means 'die' shows the extent of God's faithfulness on man. Samsong in his song 'Turn me around' calls God 'omalicha chi', he mixes pidgin and Igbo to add more flavour to the song.

2Face in "Amaka" mixes Pidgin English with Ibibio language – one of the minority indigenous languages spoken by the Ibibio people of Akwa –Ibom state of Nigeria. The code switching is inter-sentential one. The Ibibio and Pidgin are used interchangeably to promote trust and discourage unfaithfulness in relationships.
In Yemi Alade's song 'Na Gode', he uses intra sentential code switching occurring among the three major indigenous languages in Nigeria- Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba alongside (NPE). The artist carefully mixes the afore mentioned indigenous languages to foster unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria singing and enjoying songs rendered in the three major indigenous languages. From this angle therefore, the song "Na Gode" serves as a unifying factor in the nation's linguistic and cultural diversity. This is evidently exemplified in this line: Baba I thank you (daalu), Chineke, Na Gode.

Wizkid in "Ojuelegba" mixes the Standard English with an indigenous language (Yoruba), which is a feature of Pidgin language, to tell the story of his childhood.
Also, the entertainment industry uses the Pidgin English which cuts across every societal stratum to give information. In Fela Kuti's song "Trouble de Sleep Yanga Wake am" informs his audience/listeners using Pidgin English, a language peculiar to them, that what you give is what you will take; what you sow is what you will reap.

On the other hand, the comedians use the Pidgin English to get the interest of their listeners/audience. It is observed that if these jokes were rendered in the Standard English, it would not attract the attention of audience in Nigeria. The Pidgin English adds humour and flavour to the jokes.

Finally, Zebrudaya and Ovularia in their comedy titled "Old School" made use of the Pidgin English and the Standard English to arouse laughter in their listeners and also sustain their interest till the end. The use of Pidgin English makes the Nigerian entertainment industry very popular and relevant because it is a language understood by all irrespective of their social status.

Some characteristics of Nigerian Pidgin English

There are some characteristics of Nigerian Pidgin English as used in the entertainment industry, they are as follows:

1. Reflexive pronouns are formed by attaching 'sef' to the pronouns instead of 'self' e.g., in AY's comedy/joke 'mek ụna klap fọ ụna sef'.

Maisef	myself	awasef	ourselves
yọsef	yourself	ụnasef	youselves
imsef	himself	demsef	themselves

2. Interrogative Pronouns used to ask questions that require identity are:
   Wetin what/why
   Hu who
   Wich which/when
   Haw how
3. Stative verbs are assumed to be non-past in reference, unless marked otherwise by an auxiliary verb or context. E.g.,
   Jon sabi im papa (John knows his father).
   Jon bin sabi im papa (John knew his father).
   Jon dọn de ste fọ dis ples (John lives here).
   Jon bin dọn de ste fọ dis ples (John lived here).
4. Personal pronouns

	Singular	plural
First person:	ai/ mi/mai/mi oon	wee/ọs/awa/wee oon
	I/me/my/mine	we/us/our/ours
Second person:	yu/yọ/yọ oon	ụna/ụna/ụna oon
	You/your/yours	you/your/yours
Third person:	im /am/im oon	dem/dem/dem/dem oon
	He/him/his	they/them/their/theirs

The Noun Phrase

Count nouns (singular or plural) can occur without a determiner. A bare noun without an article is interpreted as indefinite. The definite article in Nigerian Pidgin is 'de' (the). E.g.,

Na Wike bai de trauza fọ im

It's Wike that bought the trouser for him.

Nominal Modifiers

Most nominal modifiers in Nigerian Pidgin occur to the left of the head noun. They are of two types, peripheral and central nominal modifiers.

The central nominal modifier is the adjective. They are usually used in sentences where there are no overt copula verbs. For instance, in Wizkid's song titled "Ojuelegba"

Dem de pray fọ blesin

They are praying for blessing.

Peripheral nominal modifiers are articles, demonstratives, numerals, possessives.

Numerals

Nigerian Pidgin has cardinal numerals as in English, for instance: wan, tu, tiri, fọọ, faif, among others. Cardinal numbers occur before the head nouns in Nigerian Pidgin, noun heads are morphologically invariable no matter the cardinal numbers with which they occur. E.g., wan boy –one boy, tu boy-two boys.

Demonstratives

There are two demonstratives in Nigerian Pidgin English, they are: dis (proximate) and dat (non-proximate). 'Dis' can occur in noun phrase expressing singularity or plurality. While 'dat' can only occur in noun phrase expressing singularity. E.g.,

Dis pipul dọn ge moni

This people have made money

Dis pipul dem dọn ge moni

These people have made money

Dat boy dọn chọp

That boy has eaten

The basic word order in Nigerian Pidgin is SVO. E .g,.

S	V	O	
God	bles	mi	God blessed me
Pọl	bai	fish	Paul bought some fish

The word order is used to form declarative (affirmative) sentences. Patterns which deviate from the basic word order are used for specialized functions such as to ask questions, indicate what the sentence is about, place emphasis on a particular part of the sentence. E.g,.

Pọl chọp wetin?
Paul eat what? (echo question)
Paul ate what?
Na wetin Pọl eat?
What did Paul eat?

Possessives

Possessive adjectives

Mai God	my God
Awa/we God	our God
Dem God	their God
yọ God	your (sing.) God
ụna God	your (pl.) God
im God	his/her God

Nigerian Pidgin is not an inflectional language. It has a number of auxiliary verbs to express temporal, aspectual, and modal notions.

De incompletive marker
Pọl de kọm
Bin anteriority marker
Pọl bin sabi mai nem.
Dọn completive marker
Pọl dọn chọp kanda.

Conclusion

In conclusion, language remains a central factor in determining the status or nature of any nation. It plays powerful roles and used in all aspects of human communication.

Pidgin is an auxiliary language which arises to fulfill certain limited communication needs among people who have no common language. It does not require one going to school to study it before one can speak it. It is a language for all irrespective of one's profession or discipline. Nigeria is a multilingual nation; the English language alone could not have increased the demand of the services of the entertainment world. Faced with this situation, the entertainment industry

has no option than to cleave to the use of Pidgin English in public entertainment. Pidgin English detribalizes the user and serves as a bridge between social isolation of the elite and social inferiority of the less privileged. The above qualities of Pidgin English make it the best medium for any art that targets mass audience.

Recommendations

The government as well as members of the entertainment industry should encourage more usage of the Pidgin English in their services as it detribalizes the user and gives them International recognition.

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