

Nigerian Pidgin as a National Tool for Communication

Abstract

The research hinges on the national adverts created with the use of Nigerian Pidgin. Nigerian pidgin has always been a language frowned at, mostly when used among the literates or in an official occasion. However presently, it has become a language used for national adverts in order to disseminate information that is meant for all, both the literates and illiterates. Random sampling was utilized to find the advertisements for this study on YouTube. The ultimate goal of this project is to depict national advertisements that employ Nigerian pidgin to inform the public about the current difficulties that the country is facing. The Nigerian lexical stocks seen on advertisements that used Nigerian pidgin rather than Pidgin English are also investigated. From the findings, in order to communicate effectively to the people due to the multi-ethnicity of Nigeria, Nigerian pidgin has been used in adverts for various purposes. These include an advert on family planning which aims to educate people on how to checkmate over-population which exposes youths to various vices, an advert on registration for voters card in the bid to curbing electoral malpractices, an advert on educating people on the safety measures to prevent contracting of Corona Virus and an advert on how to help government in protecting the lives and properties of the people by reporting anything that is unusual within the community. As a result, individuals would be able to take the appropriate action since they comprehend the message if they utilize Nigerian pidgin. Furthermore, the above Nigerian Pidgin advertisements show some of the Nigerian languages' lexical stocks in Nigerian pidgin, which contradicts the term 'Pidgin English.' Finally, because Nigerian pidgin is growing popularity in the country, it is suggested that several linguistic issues be investigated in order to make it a more functional and acceptable language for everybody.

Keywords: Nigerian Pidgin, Communication and language contact

Introduction

The patterns and results of bilingualism interaction in a society are investigated intensively in language contact. It cuts across some branches of linguistics like sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, and psycholinguistics. It also extends to micro- linguistic investigations like phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Language contact is also a major factor in language change. Across frontiers perhaps as a result of migration, lingual interaction is common. Different speech patterns, grammar forms, and lexicon can develop from contact with various tongues and phonemic variants of one language. In the discipline of sociolinguistics, continuous language interaction produces the following offspring: bilingualism or multilingualism, code switching, code mixing, pidgins, and language death, among others. However, this work concentrates on one of these offsprings which is pidgin as it relates to national communication through visual adverts.

The word pidgin was first reported in English in 1807, when English was accepted as Canton's (Guangzhou's) industry and commerce language. Business English was commonly

written as pigeon English at the time, a spelling that reflected the local sound. The need for communication in order for English and Cantonese to trade effectively led to the formation of Chinese Pidgin English. As commerce grew, it became clear that translators were in short supply among local Cantonese businessmen and their European counterparts. Many local traders put what little English they had learnt from their brief interactions with others who spoke English more fluently to good use. This brought about various varieties of Standard English in Canton. As it relates to Nigeria, the trade contact between the British and the local people led to the advent of Nigerian Pidgin in the seventeenth century.

However, Nigerian Pidgin has lately been labeled as an urbanization process, and it is now widely used for communication in urban areas by the literate and illiterate, as well as individuals of many ethnic groups. "A reduced language that arises through extended interaction between groups of individuals who have no language in common," according to Holm [1]. Pidgin is also sometimes thought of as a simplified version of a standard language [2]. In Nigeria, for example, English functions as a lingua franca, and many speakers of other Nigerian languages, particularly illiterates, have found it difficult to accept this alien language. As a result, they utilize Nigerian Pidgin to find a soft landing while communicating with individuals from all ethnicities and ways of life. Nigerian Pidgin is a hybrid of indigenous languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, and Edo, as well as English. Unlike other full-fledged languages, Pidgin constructs can be organized or unstructured. This simply implies that pidgin utterances are not governed by any rigorous restrictions.

Because other languages, in addition to English, contributed to the lexical pool, the name Nigerian Pidgin, rather than Pidgin English, is now frequently used and accepted. As a result, insisting on the adjective English after Pidgin will be unjust to the other donor languages. Nigerian Pidgin has evolved into a common language of communication for people of all ages, young and old. It is also a common way of communication among most Nigerians since it is a language that bridges the gap between the educated and the illiterate. It has recently infiltrated Nigerian society to the point that it is now being utilized in national advertisements. The usage of Nigerian Pidgin by people from all walks of life in search of communication has become a typical occurrence. In a varied society like Nigeria, it is the most often used language for inter-ethnic communication.

Human survival and existence are dependent on the ability to communicate. It is a method of generating and disseminating ideas, information, points of view, facts, and sentiments among

people in order to establish a shared understanding. If the recipient(s) of the message do not grasp the message's substance, communication has not occurred. The meeting of individuals from different cultures resulted in language contact, and the need to communicate led to the development of pidgin, which is one of the results of language contact. Furthermore, we have literates and illiterates among these individuals of various cultures and languages; thus, while conveying information that is relevant to all types of people, one must choose a language that will appeal to everyone. As a result, this work depicts national communication through advertisements written in Nigerian Pidgin, as well as the lexical stocks of Nigerian languages apparent in each advert's Nigerian pidgin. Due to the length of this project, it was not possible to use every accessible advertisement, thus random sampling was employed to choose those that were included.

Review of Concepts

The study of language contact centres on different individuals that alternate two or more languages and this alternation of languages gave birth to the Nigeria Pidgin. Therefore, this section takes a look at various views of language contact and pidgins. Language is an expression of human activity. People use language in everyday conversations, like in transacting business, vacations, debating, politics and so many others. This leads us to Clark [3] view on language and communication which says, "All speech, written or spoken is a dead language until it finds a willing and prepared hearer". It is impossible to talk about language without communication because language and communication play a vital role in the society. Language is seen as either a facilitator or hindrance to communication, but when it is used appropriately, it can exert powerful control over people's thoughts and actions to make them desire to have what they do not have and do things they would ordinarily not think of doing [4]. This is where the need for pidgin as an appropriate language for national communication comes in due to the multi-ethnicity of Nigeria in order to reach out to people of all walks of life.

The coming together of these people of different languages brings about language contact. Language interaction, according to Holm [5], is nearly as old as language itself. He supports this theory by pointing out that in ancient Egypt, a pidgin-like trading language emerged among multiple Hamito-Semitic languages in touch in the Nile Valley. A pidgin, also known as a pidgin language, is a reduced form of a language that emerges as a method of communication between two or more groups that do not share a common language. It's most

typically used in circumstances like trade or when both parties speak languages other than the one spoken in the nation where they live. Furthermore, pidgin language is defined as a hybrid of two or more existent languages formed via the process of 'pidginization.' When people who speak different original languages need to communicate, they might blend their languages to form a new pidgin language. This language is then passed down the generations by word of mouth, and it becomes the accepted means of communication among the many linguistic populations.

Winford [5] looked at several sorts of linguistic engagement and claimed that different social settings produce varied outcomes. To put it another way, language interaction is concerned with the circumstances in which they were established. Language maintenance, language shift, and language creation are the many contact outcomes stated in the study. As a result of the above, it is clear that varied conditions and levels of contact intensity produce minor variances in linguistic outcomes within these basic outcomes, of which pidgin is inclusive and may be categorized as language formation. Furthermore, Thomason [6] defined language contact as "the simultaneous use of many languages in the same location." More specifically, the most typical outcome of linguistic interaction is a shift in languages that affects the other.

In essence, she believes that languages in touch result in a hierarchy of language classification that begins with contact-induced language change and progresses to severe language mixing (represented by pidgin, Creole, and bilingual mixed languages) and language death. The three probable outcomes of language encounter are depicted by Fishman [7]. The "intrusive" language is the one spoken by the immigrants, whereas the "indigenous" language is spoken by the hosts. As a result, if they collide, the following outcomes are possible. The first scenario is that the intruding language becomes extinct when it comes into touch with the indigenous language. When an indigenous language interacts with an invading language, the indigenous language is lost; this is the second alternative or resolution. The third point to consider is that when an indigenous language collides with an invading language, both are retained. This last conclusion serves as the theoretical underpinning for the research, which shows how the indigenous language (Syriac) has coexisted with invasive languages, namely the present dominant language (Arabic), throughout its lengthy history.

Diverse people saw pidgin from various viewpoints in the study of pidgin. Pidgin is an interaction language that is sometimes known as a "makeshift," "marginal language," or

"mixed language" [8]. The sources for the name pidgin were enumerated by Malmkjaer and Anderson [9]. According to some of these sources, it is a Chinese transliteration of the English term "business." On the other hand, it might be derived from the two Chinese characters Pei and tsin, which imply "paying money," or from the Yago language in South America, where the term for people is 'Pidian.' "...a variant of a language (English) that arose for some practical reason, such as commerce among a group of individuals who had a lot of interaction but did not know each other's language," according to the dictionary [10]. He also mentioned that "a pidgin is regarded as a Creole when it goes beyond its role as a commerce language and becomes the first language of a social community.". Pidgin may also be thought of as a "marginal language" that emerges to meet specific communicative demands among persons who do not speak the same language." This indicates that pidgins are rudimentary forms of language that are routinely used for limited communication between individuals who do not speak the same language, and that pidgins are the consequence of any language contact scenario.

In terms of practice, Kperogi [11] examines the link between Pidgin, "broken English," and "Nigerian English." He claims that Broken English is a derogatory term used by native English speakers to describe non-native English speakers' often hysterical infringements of basic English syntax, whereas Pidgin is a technical term in linguistics that refers to a "contact" or "trade" language that arises from the blending of different languages and indigenous dialects. Pidgin, according to Akande [12], can serve as a sign of identification and unity. It's an inter-ethnic code that Nigerians who don't speak English can use. It's also a mash-up of world languages utilized for things like trade, empires of migration, and historical mobility. In addition to the foregoing, pidgin is occasionally used as a lingua franca, or a simplified bridge language that has evolved as a result of extensive contact between languages. It is made up of a variety of languages and influences. Pidgin is a broad word that refers to a variety of regional hybrids that have emerged as a result of historical events such as empire expansion, colonization, migration, and international commerce.

The origins of pidgin in Nigeria may be traced back to seventeenth-century trading contacts between the British and locals. It is one of a larger group of English pidgins and Creoles spoken in West African nations such as Cameroon, Ghana, the Benin Republic, Sierra Leone, and others. In the past, pidgin was associated with non-educated people in Nigeria; that is, individuals who spoke pidgin were either ignorant or thought to be uneducated. However, in

recent years, the usage of Nigerian pidgin has become increasingly widespread; even the country's educated citizens use it to communicate, and it is used by individuals of many ethnic groups; the majority are found in Nigeria's southern regions. Nigerian pidgin, according to Shaibu [13], is a mix of local languages and English. It consists primarily of English words interspersed with Yoruba, Benin, or Igbo syntax. Nigerian pidgin was once thought to be primarily a code for the illiterate and a bastardization of English; as a result, it was regarded as a sign of academic ineptitude in English.

However, according to Akande [12], the social linguistic reality in Nigeria now is such that university graduates, professors, attorneys, and journalists all speak Nigerian pidgin. According to Akande and Salami [14], the urban characteristics of university contexts have a significant impact on students' use and attitudes toward Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). That is, in addition to their education, students who live in university towns are more likely to participate in urban networks that are often composed of multilingual and multicultural material. On this point, a substantial number of Nigerian pidgin users may be found in university communities. In general, it might be said that Nigerian pidgin serves as a unifier among its users, since it is the language of both educated and uneducated Nigerians, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.

The origin of pidgin language dates far back into history. Holm [15] states that the earliest pidgins that have a direct record are those which European crusaders and traders spoke in the eastern end of the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages. Another linguist, Valkhoff [16] observes that in the Middle Ages, commercial relations between the Romantic traders or seamen, Turks and Arabs in the eastern and southern Mediterranean gave rise to a kind of auxiliary or emergency language. Elugbe and Omamor [17] explain that “The one fact about pidgin languages all over the world is that they arise from contact situations. In particular, such contact situations must be those in which the groups in contact have no common means of communication”. Denham and Lobeck [18] opine that pidgin occurs when speakers of different languages come into contact and need to communicate. However, these speakers maintain their native languages but use the pidgin language to communicate. They are of the view that pidgins generally have no native speakers; that it is as a result of contact between two or more languages, have simple grammatical system of its own with small vocabularies borrowed from the contributing languages and are not mutually intelligible with the contributing languages.

According to Fromkin et al. [19], most of the lexical items of the pidgin come from the language of the dominant group. The dominant language is called the superstrate or lexifier while the other languages are called substrate. Furthermore, Fromkin et al [19] echoed Denham and Lobeck [18] view that pidgin has no native speakers; however, if it continues to exist and become more functional, a much more complex of it evolves and becomes what is sometimes called a stabilized pidgin. In the light of this, it is used more effectively in a variety of situations like adverts. Further development of it results to creole which contradict the idea that pidgin has no native speaker. Hudson [20] states that “since the reason for wanting to communicate with members of other communities is often trade, a pidgin may be what is called a trade language”. In contrast that not all pidgins are restricted to being used as a trade language, she further state that “pidgin is a variety specially created for the purpose of communicating with other groups, and not used by any community for communication among themselves”.

Holmes [15] opines that “pidgin languages are created form the combined efforts of people who speak different languages”. In the formation of pidgin, languages involved contribute sounds, vocabularies and grammatical construction to a certain extent. Therefore, the convergence of people from different linguistic environments result to language contact and the quest for language for communication leads to the birth of pidgin in which this study is based on. Therefore, this study portrays some of the national adverts created with Nigerian pidgin for effective communication that will cut across people of all walks of life as well as people from various linguistic background.

Nigeria Pidgin for National Advert

Nigerian pidgin has been receiving greater attention lately because of the socioeconomic benefits it offers to both the literate and the illiterate in the country. There is a growing data that give evidence to the increasingly important role which users have accorded Nigerian pidgin in social interactions in which advertisement is inclusive. Intrinsicly, adverts consist of persuasive words and images used to convey messages to target audiences. For this reason, there is need for a language that will be suitable for every advert meant for a particular audience in order to achieve its goal. National advert is not group specific; therefore, the choice of language becomes paramount.

Nigerian pidgin plays an important role in uniting people of various linguistic backgrounds; it is a language for communication. It makes communication in the environment easy as both the literate and illiterate are able to use it to interact with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Also, when there is need for communication among individuals of different backgrounds, a simplified language from two or more languages may arise and such resultant language is called a pidgin. Therefore, pidgin is a simplified language made up of parts of two or more languages, like Nigerian pidgin used as a communication tool between speakers who do not have a common language and this helps to sustain interaction in a community. In spite of the negative attitude towards Nigerian pidgin, it still flourishes, even in national advertisement as a way to communicate to the masses of all walks of life. However in this section, we are going to concentrate on the adverts concerning family planning, prevention of corona virus, insecurity and how to checkmate election malpractices, as well as highlighting the Nigerian indigenous language(s) visible in each advert.

Advert on Family Planning

Nigeria at some point became over-populated with a huge mass of poor people, albeit, it has not improved lately. Also, not minding the poor economic challenges Nigeria is facing, you will still find some parents that are economically handicapped giving birth to a number of children they cannot manage, which in turn results to exposing these children to so many vices like robbery, prostitution, internet frauds, and so on. The incessant abortion and child birth among the youth has become the order of the day too. Therefore, in order to checkmate these ordeals that the country is experiencing, the government created an advert on family planning using Nigerian pidgin as shown in Fig. 1 in order to educate people on various ways unwanted pregnancy can be prevented.



Fig. 1: Advert on Family Planning

Mi people, una get to sabi de main de main tin wey dey for family planning. Na differen differen metod na I dey:

Speaker one- Me be hairdresser and I don already get two pikin but I won wait small before I go bon anoda one.

Na correct method, I dey for u.

Speaker two- We jus marry and we wan settle down well well before we go start family Correct metod, I dey for una.

Speaker 3- I neva marry, I wan face my fashion design and until I do my freedom. Correct metod dey for you sef

Speaker 4- As you dey see me so, baba God don bless me wit plenty pikin and I no wan born anoda one.

Correct metod dey for you sef

Eh! So where una come dey go now?

We dey go do family planning oo!

If you won do family planning or na infomat wey you wan, waka go any clinic wey get de blue, yellow an orange logo wey dem dey call 'Get it together'. Na Edo ministry of health bring una dis 'Get it together' campaign.

Advert on Registration of Voters Card

Beta don land for our country.

Time don reach wey we go do correct election wey no get magomago at all.

One man, one vote

One vote only

Na im make INEC call on men and women wey don reach 18 years and above make dem go regista for dis voter's registration wey dey come on de 15th January reach 29th January, 2011.

The one way don regista befo, make I jus tell you, I no mean anytin na de place wey you go vote na de place wey you go regista oo

If you notice magomago anywhere, INEC don get special number wey you go jus send message. De number na 4632.

Wetin I call am?

4632

Na na I do finish. I talk am before, I no dey take time. Dis na my card. If you no hold am, you no go fit vote, so for me, I go keep am well well.

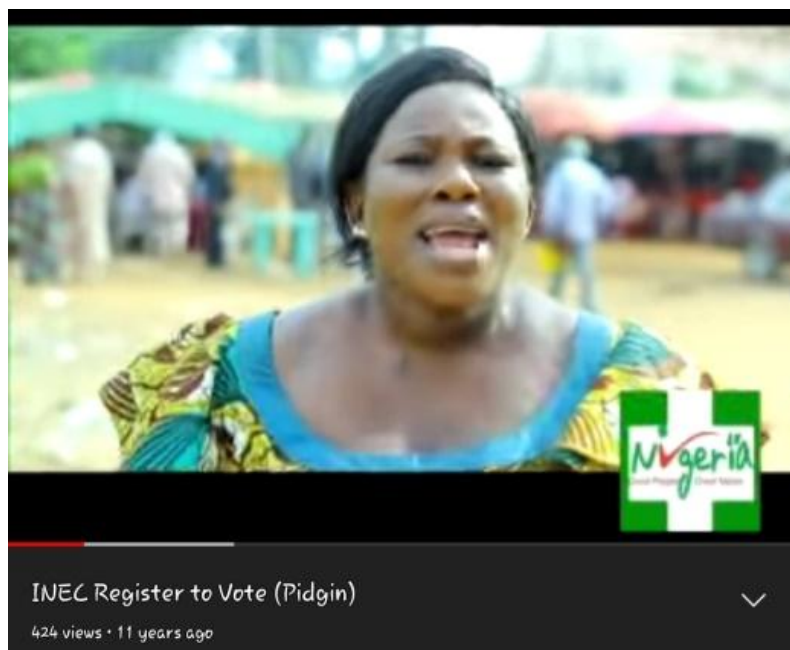


Fig. 2: Advert on Registration of Voters Card

The advert in Fig. 2 is meant for national consumption because during election period, you hear some people complaining of being disenfranchised, unable to vote due to loss of voter's card, not having a voter's card at all or due to relocation from the area where the voter's card was obtained as an excuse for their candidate's loss in an election or the election not being justified. Therefore, the advert is to inform the masses on the available opportunity through which they can carry out their civic duties and enlighten them too on how to checkmate all kinds of electoral fraud in the country, as well as the authority they can report to in case the need arises. This advert was also created using language for all which is the Nigerian pidgin.

Safety Measures on Corona Virus

Mi people, una don hear about dis new deadly disease wey dem dey call Corona virus?

Wetin go shele wen person don catch am?

Corona virus fit spread from everytin wey we fit touch; weda na table, weda na door, money or anytin at all. De virus dey follow spread pesin wey get am touch you or you use your hand touch your eye, nose, mouth or even your ears join. The symptoms wey corona virus dey take waka na dry cough, fever and wen I dey hard for you to breath. De people wey get corona virus, dey fit dey alright but if na old pesin or somebody wey get sickness before for body, I fit die.

Corona virus dey dangerous pas cough and catarrh. Only one pesin fit spread de virus fiam reach plenty people one time. Corona virus no get cure as we dey so. As we dey so, we suppose arrange ourself make sure we no get and we no share am give people. I dey very important to make sure say you use soap and water wash your hand well well. Wash like say you touch hand with pepper. Anoda tin wey you fit do na beta marking from anybody wey don get am or wey dey sick.

No shake anybody

No hug anybody

Hold your sef

If you fit dey for house, dey

Make people wey sabi wetin to do help us find solution. Mi people, de solution dey our hands so. Make we respect ourself do de right tin. If you get any of de symptoms, fever, dry cough and wen I dey hard for you to breath, abeg call this number so.

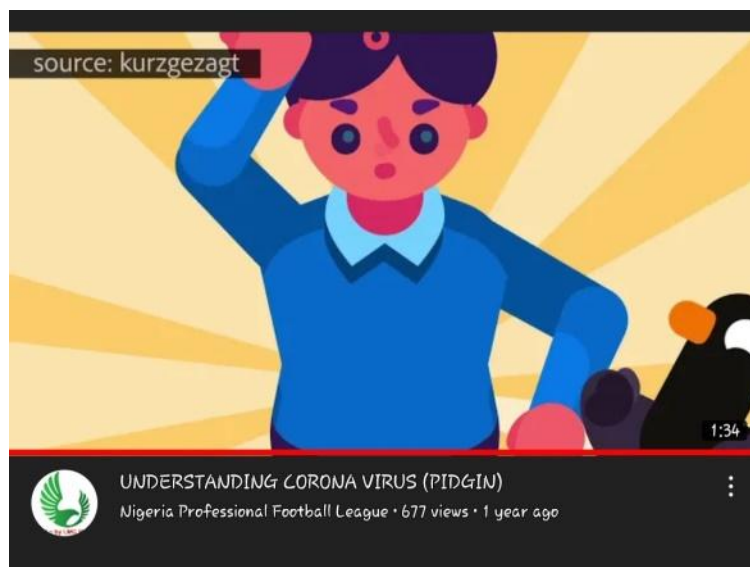


Fig. 3: Safety Measures on Corona Virus

Dated back late last year, the whole world started experiencing a pandemic known as Corona virus or Covid-19 which has handicapped all. Various adverts were put up to educate the masses on how to manage the ugly situation that is ravaging the world. Definitely, the advert in Fig. 3 has to be fashioned in such a way that the audience will understand the message and the main tool for disseminating the message is language. This message is meant for all; therefore the use of pidgin is to be able to communication to both the literate and the illiterate in order to enlighten them on how to avoid this deadly virus and the steps to take if it is accidentally contracted.

Advertisement on Security



Fig. 4: Advertisement on Security

Nigerians, una sabi wetin be Improvised Explosive Device wey dem dey call (IED)? IED dey come for different size dem. Dey fit hide am inside bag dem, box or different kinds of container dem. Dey fit put IED for inside mineral bottle and de big IED fit dey inside boot for moto.

IED dem dey dangerous oo!

IED dem fit dey anywhere anytime!

Make una look ground wello for package or moto wey dey pack leave for road or anywhere wey dey one kind. So therefore, shine your eyes, no play with your security at all at all o. Report anywhere you suspect or object or konkere movement to police or oda security agents dem. De security of our nation na for all of us o, plus including me and you. Nigeria make we unite against terrorism.

Na federal ministry for information and culture bring you dis message.

Nigeria has been facing the challenge of insecurity from time immemorial but it has reached its climax recently due to the careless detonation of bombs here and there, claiming as many lives as it did during the Biafran war. In the quest to curb this incessant killing of the masses, an advert such as in Fig 4. was created in order to educate people on how to help the government in securing lives and properties. This is another instance of national advert that involves all masses both the literate and the illiterate. Therefore, the use of language which will aid in achieving the goal of the advert is needed, and that is the Nigerian pidgin.

Nigeria Indigenous Languages Visible in the Nigerian Pidgin used in the above Adverts.

The reason for the change of the term 'Pidgin English' to 'Nigerian pidgin' in Nigeria is that it consists of some of Nigerian indigenous languages. Below are some of the lexical stock of Nigerian languages that are present in the translated adverts.

Advert on Family Planning

Pikin 'child' (Yoruba)

Una 'you all' (Igbo)

Baba 'father' (Yoruba)

Waka 'trek/movement/walk' (Hausa)

Wey 'that' (Yoruba)

Advert on Registration of Voters Card

Wey 'that' (Yoruba)

Magomago 'corruption'

Na 'that' (Igbo)

Na 'is' (Igbo)

Wetin 'what' (Yoruba)

Advert on Safety Measures on Corona Virus

Shele 'happen' (Yoruba)

Waka 'trek/movement/walk' (Hausa)

Na 'is' (Igbo)

Fiam 'swiftly' (Igbo)

Wetin 'what' (Yoruba)

Advertisement on Security

Una 'you all' (Igbo)

Wetin 'what' (Yoruba)

Konkere 'suspicious'

Na 'is' (Igbo)

Conclusion

Language is used for the purpose of communication between individuals. When a common language is lacking, communication becomes a problem. Language is seen as either a facilitator or hindrance to communication, but when it is used appropriately, it can exert powerful control over people's thought and actions to make them desire to have what they do not have and do things they would ordinarily not think of doing. This work hinges on the above statement. Careless births from both the married and unmarried people have resulted to many of the challenges Nigeria is facing today. The advent of Corona Virus has adversely affected the economy of the world at large. Insecurity has become the order of the day. Elections in the country have often been marred by all kinds of electoral malpractices. Therefore, the above adverts showcased on the Nigerian television, as well as the internet via YouTube are to aid in checkmating these challenges. Above all, the choice of language capped it all because the use of the appropriate language that suits both the literate and illiterate which is Nigerian pidgin will not just educate people on the above mentioned challenges but also urge them to live it out because they understand the content of the message.

Furthermore, the term Nigerian Pidgin and not Pidgin English is now widely used and acceptable because other languages alongside English language contributed to the lexical stock. This is because, Nigerian pidgin is a combination of indigenous languages and English. It basically uses English words mixed into Yoruba, Benin or Igbo grammar. This can be seen in the expressions like *fiam* 'swiftly' (Igbo), *waka* 'go' (Hausa), *pikin* 'child' (Yoruba) and so on. Initially, the use of Nigerian pidgin was attributed to illiterate people and perceived by the educated ones with negative attitude; but due to the social-interactive function of the Nigerian pidgin, it is now considered as a lingua franca for many and as a mother tongue for some families in certain areas like Lagos and Edo. Simply put, it has become a common phenomenon to people in various walks of life in the quest to gain a common ground in communication because Nigeria is a heterogeneous society.

Finally, the use of Nigerian pidgin in communicating vital information to the masses shows how valid it is becoming in the society because in communication, the sender uses a tool, in this context, language that is effective as well as catches people's interest. So recently, the use of Nigerian pidgin has cut across both literate and illiterate people and now seems more

Nigerian than the full-fledged English. Indeed, using Nigerian pidgin is increasingly popular now among young and old people, many writers, politicians, actors, musicians, students, lecturers and in Nigeria adverts on which this work is based. The fact that it is not attached to any ethnic group may likely be one of the reasons why it is widely spreading. In addition, because of its simplicity and absence of sophisticated English terminologies, an illiterate can easily understand the information the advert is trying to portray; thereby, achieving the stated goals for the advert.

Recommendation

Nigeria is a country comprising people from different ethnic groups with different languages for communication. It is on this ground that Nigerian pidgin emanated from because communication must take place for various activities. Since Nigerian pidgin is fast gaining ground in order to communicate with the masses over certain issues that will be of benefit to individuals and community at large, proper measures are recommended for proper structure of this fast gaining language, Nigerian Pidgin. For instance, there is the need for consistency of lexical items and definite markers for plural words and tenses.

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Authors Contributions

Amaka Yvonne Okafor: conceptualization, methodology, writing- original draft preparation, writing- reviewing and editing.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that she has no conflict of interest

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