

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Age variation in the use of Nigerian Pidgin (NP): A case of Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria

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Nigeria is a multilingual nation with over 450 indigenous languages, the English language and Nigerian English-based Pidgin competing over the linguistic space. Many of the indigenous languages have gone into extinction for lack of users of such languages; English is the second language, occupying official status and Pidgin is widely used especially in the South- South region of Nigeria as the language of their immediate environment that satisfies their communication need, and also used for trade. At the era where some people are still undermining the Nigerian Pidgin (NP), it is seriously evolving with all the characteristics of every human language. It varies from one speech community to the other and across age, gender and socioeconomic status in Nigeria. The crux of this study is to establish within the framework of social variation the age variation in the use of Pidgin in Sapele, Nigeria. The study compared the youthful use of Pidgin with the ways elders use Pidgin in Sapele. The aim of this research is to advance studies in Nigerian Pidgin – who knows, it could evolve as the National language over time.

**Key words:** Social variations, age variation, pidgin, English-based pidgin, Language variance.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Language and Nigeria's linguistic landscape

No language could have been without its users. The relationship between both is bi-directional, as they influence each other. People in a given society cannot be defined without a language, as it reflects their belief, culture, identity and ideology.

Language is an instrument, a tool for defining, classifying and creating a particular people in a specific place over a given period of time. People have so much influence over language. People's characteristics and

entire lifestyle have bearing on the language they use; they are transmitted into their language. People determine the behaviour, composition and function of language. Hence, it can be said that the survival, growth and development of a language are determined by its users.

Language takes different shapes, assumes or displays different behaviours in different environment. This gives birth to language variations. Nigeria's linguistic landscape is a very complex one. Over and above all languages in Nigeria is the English Language – a creation of British

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colonialism that survived because of Nigeria's multilingual and multi-ethnic nature. It is Nigeria's official language performing such functions as the language of communication, legislature, commerce, government and international relationship.

Nigeria has extreme multilingualism accounted for by Ethnologue ([www.ethnologue.org](http://www.ethnologue.org)) that stated that there are over 500 languages spoken in Nigeria. For Emenanjo (1985), Nigeria has more than 450 indigenous languages which according to him "are at varying stages of development from purely 'local' oral languages to 'regional', 'national' and written languages with varying corpora of written literatures and of texts transcribed from orature". Thirdly is the Nigerian Pidgin spoken by all but used as a lingua franca mostly in South-South region of Nigeria. This paper studied age variation in the use of Pidgin in Sapele, Nigeria.

### Statement of problem

The issue is that while the English language is promoted, seen as the global language and language of greater prestige in Nigeria, many of the indigenous languages are going into extinction and Pidgin is still seen by some, especially educated Nigerians as a debased and marginalized language that is spoken by the locales. Having not been fully appreciated, its interesting aspects have been undermined. Other languages, like English, French etc. have been studied extensively including their varieties. The acceptability of pidgin is an issue in the first place in the Nigerian linguistic context, and thus has not received much attention in respect to studying its varieties and the factors responsible for it.

Many studies done in Nigeria on Pidgin looked at the origin and linguistic features of Pidgin that characterize it as a language on its own merit but not much has been done on variations of Pidgin used in different regions in Nigeria. It is well-known all over that pidgin is deeply rooted in Sapele but of what worth is it if the beauty of this language is not appreciated by studying it, and if time is not taken to look critically into the various forms of pidgin and the factors behind them? When these are studied the users would be glad. The crux of this study is to attempt a study of a single variety of pidgin based on age.

### Research question

One research question guided this study:

1. To what extent does age affect pidgin varieties used in Sapele, Nigeria?

### Aim and objectives of study

This study aims to look at the influence and impact age of

users has on pidgin used in Sapele, Nigeria. This work is conducted specifically with the following objectives in mind:

1. to ascertain the characteristics of Pidgin used by youths in Sapele;
2. to ascertain the characteristics of Pidgin used by adults in Sapele;
3. to discover the vocabulary and stylistic differences in the use of Pidgin by youths and adults in Sapele, Nigeria;
4. to ascertain other manifestations in the use of Pidgin by youths and adults in Sapele.

### Significance of study

The significance of this study is underscored by the fact that pidgin has deep and profound functions in communities in Nigeria, manifesting in different forms as a result of social and regional variations. The language can only be advanced when more studies are done on it.

### Scope of the study

Though Pidgin is used in different parts of Nigeria and the world over, this work concentrated on only age variations in the English based pidgin used in Sapele, a city in Delta State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Social variation

Language is a social phenomenon that is subject to change since it is influenced by elements that change as well. Language varies from region to region within a nation and from one speech community to the other within a region. It may also differ across age group, ethnic groups, gender and socioeconomic boundaries. That is to say, the speech characteristics of an individual may distinguish him as middle class, working class, educated or non-educated hence referred to as social variations in language use.

Luhr (2002) defined social variation as variation in language due to social factor. Social variation is responsible for the varieties of language use according to class, education, occupation, age, gender, etc. Finegan (2008) opined that "the characteristic linguistic practices of ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, and gender and age groups also constitute dialects". According to him, a person's dialect is the characteristics of his or her nationality, region, gender, ... and constitutes a person's persona.

This means that the wide range of social differences between speakers which relate to variation in their language is what social variation is all about. It accounts

for the reason why two speakers cannot speak alike; why people speak differently based on their social background and status. Labov (1966) who established social stratification in his New York study argued that different social factors are relevant to different linguistics variables. Social variation is triggered by some social factors (sex, age, education and social background, race etc.).

To this end, it is not out of place to say that social variation is the link or connection that exists between language and social factors. It is the correlation or agreement that exists between social factors and language. In light of this, Yule (2006) defined social dialect as a variety used by groups defined according to class, gender, age and a number of other parameters. This means a group of people with common social characteristics, goals and are identified by the kind of language they use. People outside of these groups are labelled differently. This is supported by Umera-Okeke (2013) definition that refers to sociolect or social dialect as a situation, where a particular variety of language is associated with a particular group. People of the same class have their own peculiar language that marks them off from the rest of the world. In all, social variation shows how language is governed, ruled or controlled by social factors.

The onus of this study is to establish that Nigerian Pidgin as a full-fledged language has social variations. The study will explore variance according to age in Sapele, Nigeria where it is quite obvious that there are differences in the speech of the elderly and young people.

### **Language variance due to age**

Variance due to age is a non-negotiable phenomenon. This is notable in the variation that exists in the language used by adults (old and elderly) and young people (children and youths. Every society is divided into three subcultures: children, adult and youth subcultures. In Sapele, the study area, we have the adult subculture, youth subculture as well as children subculture.

Subculture is a segment of society, which shares a distinctive pattern of mores, folkways and values different from the pattern of the larger society (Schaeffer and Lamm, 1995). Groups functioning under a dominant and larger culture operating in an environment are subcultures or co-cultures. Lie et al. (2011) defined a subculture as the smaller, coherent collective groups that exist within a larger dominant culture and which are often distinctive because of race, social class, gender etc. They also posited that subcultures may also be delimited by age (for example, youth culture, Generation Z), appearance (for example, dress, body piercings), behaviour (geeks, nerds), language (use of slang, terminology, code-mixing), non-verbal actions (use of certain gestures), physical disability (deaf culture), profession (for example, legal culture, business culture), technology (for example,

online/digital culture) and many other attributes.

Every culture, subculture and group has specific rules and norms that guide its appropriate behavior. Every member of a group must keep to these rules and norms in order for them to achieve their goals. Members of each subculture are graded by age, that is, they belong to the same age group. And these groups are united by the language they use and it is what defines them. Sociologists emphasize that language and symbols offer a powerful way for a subculture to maintain its identity (Schaffer, 1995). Supporting this view, Halliday (1978) said that the particular argot of a given subculture provides a feeling of cohesion for members and contributes to the development of a given identity.

Youth subculture exists and it is totally different from that of the adult in all respect. It is seen by most adults as a deviant group, that operates in the way that seems best without considering the societal general mores and norms. This is what Yinger (1960) referred to as counter-culture, which he defined as, "a subculture that rejects societal norms, values, and seeks alternative lifestyles. And this is manifested in the language they use. Their behavioural pattern and communication system and style differ a great deal from that of the adults. They have preference for certain musicals and dance forms, clothing style and also their choice of language. The language is used for describing their own experiences, naming of persons and objects in their own peculiar way. Argot allows the members of a subculture to understand words with special meaning. It brings about forms of communication, which cannot be understood by non-members of that particular group.

Youths are active and vibrant; very energetic and restive. As a result, they are very innovative and creative in all things, including language. It is very amazing to imagine how new words are being innovated, coined and created by the youths of the study area on a daily basis, with such ease and speed. The pidgin they use is inherent in them; their linguistic repertoire or store house is limitless and ever-evolving. They make up their own vocabulary to reflect their own world.

Two major factors that influence youths' language are fads and fashions, which are movement toward the acceptance of some lifestyle or particular taste in clothing, music or recreation (Aguirre, 1974). Youths crave for new things that are usually in vogue and pattern, and then build their lives around these. Fads are patterns of behavior that spring up immediately and then die off immediately.

Fashions, on the other hand, are behavioral patterns that stay longer than fads. These patterns make the language of youths to be subject to change. Youths consider the language of the adults as archaic, ancient; a variety that is too typical of them. Being that they are young and lively, they invent their own variety for the pleasure of novelty, for the craze over fresh or racy terms. Androustopoulos (1998) shows that age affects the

phonological and morphosyntactic features of language, and argued that the way they are used, including the slang and argot all function as social markers of 'youth'.

The younger populations are carefree in the language they use. They are not courteous in their speech due to their age and lack of experience in life. Adults tend to be mild and gentle in their speech. They use less of vulgar and uncultured words. This is supported by Chambers and Trudgill (1998) who discovered that adolescent speakers from all social classes in a wide range of urban communities use a significantly higher number of variants that are socially stigmatized than do speakers of other ages. However, Downes (1998) showed that the less prestigious variants are used more frequently by younger speakers, and also by older speakers, with the prestige variants are used relatively more frequently by middle-aged speakers. But in a general sense adults are more keen to using more polished variety than younger population.

### **Pidgin: A brief literature**

Pidgin is a language used for exigency between people of diverse tongues, who lack mutual intelligibility of their languages. Such people often time find themselves converged together in a particular place for an urgent purpose, which could be business, missionary activities and so on.

Hence to Hudson (2001), 'pidgin is a variety created for practical and immediate purpose of communication between people who otherwise would have no common language whatsoever, and learned by one person from another within the communities concerned as the accepted way of communicating with members of the other community'. Akmajian et al. (2008) opined that a Pidgin typically arises in colonial situations though it primarily starts as a trade language. These definitions underscore the various views about the emergence of Pidgin. Pidgin was classified as restricted and extended (McArthur, 1996; Todd, 1974). A restricted Pidgin is one used for minimal trades that later dies of, but extended Pidgin enjoys a greater life span, especially because of its role in a multi-lingual setting.

In the formation of pidgin, the vocabulary of the dominant group, those with economic and political power (the superstrate language) form the bulk of the language, with the indigenous or substrate languages trudging behind. The dominant or superstrate language belongs to the Europeans (for example, English, Spanish and Portuguese), who are the colonial masters; while the substrate languages belong to the weak and dominated groups, the Africans who were under the colonial masters. Thus, in the formation of pidgin, there is an amalgamation of the superstrate and substrate languages. This is why most Pidgins are derived or based on different European languages like English, Portuguese and Spanish.

According to McArthur (1996), the basic Pidgin English vocabulary had Malay, Chinese and Portuguese elements.

Pidgin has limited vocabularies, grammatical structures and seems to lack rules that govern its usage; anything goes when it comes to its usage. Sentences and expressions in pidgin can be fragmented and full of errors. This is one of the reasons it is regarded by some people as a bastardized, gibberish language. McArthur (1995A) said:

"a pidgin is characterized by a small vocabulary (a few hundred or thousand words) drawn largely from the superstrate language (that is, the language of the socially dominant group), together with a reduction of many grammatical features, such as inflectional morphology...".

Pidgin is the property of the users, and a part of them. It is used readily by its users to express themselves proficiently and conveniently in all their daily ventures. People of the study area, Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria use pidgin in all facets of their lives and everywhere, including offices, parks, schools, streets, churches etc.

### **The Nigerian Pidgin (NP)**

It is assumed that the NP first started from business activities that occurred in the market place between European traders in 1469, and the various ethnic groups of Nigeria along the coast of Niger-Delta (Egbokhare, 2000; Obiechina, 1984; Elugbe, 1995), and this meeting gave birth to the language, pidgin. The pidgin that developed along this coast was an admixture of the Portuguese language and the Niger-Delta languages, which was strictly used for business purpose.

Another account of the emergence of pidgin was that which attributed it to the encounter of Nigerians with the British colonial masters. At the onset, Nigerians could not use English, just as the colonizers could not understand the indigenous languages. The only solution to this situation was to create an emergency language, which both parties could understand and use to meet their communication needs. This pidgin comprises the English language, as the superstrate with Nigeria's indigenous languages as the substrate. Thus, Nigerian Pidgin is an English-based pidgin.

Illah (2001) has it that Nigerian Pidgin developed because the colonial masters felt Nigerians were too inferior to use their language and would not want to speak it with them. This led to the creation of pidgin, a no man's language.

However, with time, this pidgin crept into every nook and cranny of Nigeria with many speakers of it emerging. For Ihimere (2006), Nigerian pidgin has become the native language of approximately 3 to 5 million people and a second language for at least another 75 million. There is no Nigerian that does not understand pidgin- the

educated, stark illiterates, the rich as well as the poor can switch to the use of Pidgin depending on the social context. Jowitt (1990) supported this view by stating that Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) has taken a vital place of honour not only among the illiterates but also the literate members of the society. He noted that the use of pidgin signals proximity and informality and, that it is good for cracking jokes.

A lot of authors have also acknowledged the existence of varieties in NP ranging from region of use (for example, Bendel, Calabar, Lagos, Kano/Maiduguri and Port Harcourt variants (Obiechina 1984)) to speakers' varieties such as "Broken, Patois; playground" variants (Odumah (1998)). For some, the variance is according to place of use – in formal school education or in markets (Brosnahan, 1958; Akere, 1981). The crux of this study is only to examine variations according to age in Sapele, Nigeria.

From the brief historical development of NP earlier stated, pidgin is a wonderful language that has cut across the entire nation; it is evolving and still has room for expansion, to the extent it has various forms used by different people. Contrary to the 'bastardized' name given to it, it is shown in this work that it is upheld by this group of people, having different forms and variants based on the context and socio-cultural variations of the users.

The kind of pidgin used by the people of the study area is so fascinating, and worth studying. It is totally different from the type used in other parts of Nigeria. Its expressions and mode of its vocabulary formation, especially by the youths are mind blowing, and have drawn the attention of scholars to its study. Its usage and vocabulary as well as grammar is not restricted here, as it serves the multi-purpose needs of its users. This work advocates for the appreciation of pidgin that is marginalized, looked down on by most educated Nigerians.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

This is a descriptive research aimed at finding out age variations in the use of Pidgin in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. To obtain evidences sort for the researchers employed a cross-sectional survey. A subset of the population of the study area was observed for a short period of time in respect to the types of pidgin they use. The data gathered were then analyzed.

### Study area

Sapele, is a city in Delta State, South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Sapele, like all other cities, has urban and rural dwellers, and like other places in Nigeria, it is a multilingual city. It is occupied by its natives, the Okpes and Urhobos and by non-natives such as the Itsekiris, Yorubas, Hausas and Igbos. The aged and elderly natives speak Urhobo and Okpe among themselves, but not to their children, the younger population, consisting predominately of youths. Thus, this population does not understand or use their L1 at all. The

very day a child is born, he or she is introduced to the language of the environment, which is Pidgin. Having no knowledge of their own language, they use pidgin proficiently. If the older generations of this region are not careful, their languages would go into extinction, making Pidgin their L1 (that is, a creolized pidgin). The non-natives of Sapele (both adults and youths), apart from speaking Pidgin, still stick to the use of their various languages. They use pidgin to communicate to people outside their speech community, and revert to their L1 in their internal communication. Generally, the entire town is Pidgin-infested, because every Tom, Dick and Harry understand it; it is the common tongue of all, both the young and old; rich and poor and educated and non-educated.

### Population and sampling

The population of the study comprises the youths and adults of Sapele. The researchers classified youths to be all males and females between 18 to 30 years old; while the adults were also males and females above forty. The actual names of the participants were not given since the researchers did not interview or seek their consent to tape-record their conversations. Their names were represented as Speakers. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants of the study whose speeches were recorded and analyzed. The targeted groups were listened to on the streets, restaurants, markets, barbing salons, offices, etc. in their casual conversations.

### Data collection and analysis

Participant observation method was used for data collection in this work. During the data collection, the researchers did not pre-inform the participants of the study, that is, their consent was not sought for. The researchers went into each scene unnoticed by the participants, and used a tape recorder to record their speeches. This is to make the conversation real and to flow naturally, as the participants were not aware that their conversations were being recorded. The speeches of the study participants were described and analyzed through content analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Youths' Pidgin characteristics in Sapele

The study findings were purely based on answering the single research question posited for this study which is "to what extent does age affect pidgin varieties in Sapele, Nigeria"? We will replicate dialogues and conversations recorded and then comment on them.

**Conversation 1:** The dialogue below was between two youths (male and female).

Speaker A: Bro, you go show the background on Sunday?

Speaker B: for where?

Speaker A: TM hotel, for Ireto Road.

Speaker B: No leyle

The aforementioned is a typical youths' way of speaking pidgin in Sapele. The use of 'bro' to refer to someone is age restricted; adults use the full form – 'brother' or call

the person by name. For Sapele youth, it is stylish to abbreviate words or they term deviants “legbere, mogu, muluetc” meaning ‘old fashioned’ or one who is not trendy.

Also from what was earlier mentioned, and as will be seen subsequently, anyone outside of the group or this subculture will never have an understanding of the conversation. An outsider will be totally lost in the conversation, even though some of the pidgin words are English-based. The English lexemes are used totally out of the English context. This is the most amazing of all. Their meanings are totally far-fetched from those of English. For instance, the word, ‘background’ as used above is totally different from the way it is used in English. ‘Background’ in English could be an environment, a setting, but here, it means ‘a party’. In other instances, they use it to refer to someone appearing in any scene or area to cause crisis or create any good effect for the amusement of people. Adults will simply use the word ‘party’

The whole conversation is simply Speaker A inviting Speaker B to a party in TM hotel. Now, Speaker B’s response, ‘no leyla’ is his consent to attend. An adult would rather say, “no wahala”, which, to the youths, is archaic.

### Conversation 2

Speaker A: Baby girl, I be wan clear you one matter

Speaker B: unto wetin?

Speaker A: ses, your blood de hot

Speaker B: you know ev...ri now. Make we rub mind together. Give me the flow now before I kpuf you.

Speaker A: na unto Paulinkos matter. Ground no level for the guy now. Nothing pure for im end, everywhere dry.

Speaker B: shou, chick, leave o! na only him. The whole town cast. The street rough o. Abi, u wan make I open my own chapter for u. The whole Nigeria de red o. The town purple anyhow

Speaker A: e de bristlo

Speaker B: but what about that im level

Speaker A: abegi, the thing flop. You think say na teeth, no be kite o.

Speaker B: the life now na G.O.D. or else everybody go delete.

From this, there is no distortion in the general flow of the conversation. As one speaker speaks, the other just follows, without thinking or scathing for words to use. This is because they understand what they are saying. This conversation is on the financial status of a guy named Paul.

First and foremost, they stylishly call him Paulinkos, a nickname coined by them. They use their own unique, ‘coded’ linguistics items to describe his financial crisis: ‘ground no level; things no pure, matter’. These are used to refer to finance and money. Other words as used above referring to money and the bad economy of the

town or their own situations are: ‘cast, purple, bristlo, na teeth, no be kite, red.’ In comparison to the adults’ language, they would rather say in pidgin “everywhere tight, money no de, money palaver too much, money no de anywhere now, things hard for the country now etc.’

Also, in trying to relay the information to Speaker B, Speaker A says, ‘I get one matter wey I wan clear you’, instead of saying ‘tell you’, which is used by the adult. Another way of saying it is, ‘rub mind together’; that is, ‘to discuss, or inform.’ Then, ‘give me the flow’, to inform. They have their own funny and very amusing way of saying things and general expression. Other ways of passing information include, ‘make I yarn you’; ‘give me the lenris’, ‘the yarnings’, ‘langua me’, involve me for the matter’. Still in the same conversation, another third party speaker intruded as in Conversation 3

### Conversation 3

Speaker C: that na una own. I say men de vex for the street; everywhere de tear. Una de here they vomit rubbish.

Speaker B: As in how?

Speaker C: Niggies nor get joy. Dem de pick things through yahoo. I see Richie de collect westie yesterday for bank. But the niggie knock, form not knowing.

Speaker B: My girle, I weak like dodo. I just de here de rust throw way. Be like say I go soon de press lappi o.

Speaker C: before nko, na im win am na. All dem lakpa-lakpa Danny K don hammer. If I no join soon, make I faint. That means na me lose.

From this, one can see that youthful Pidgin is very forceful, energetic and lively. They use exaggerations a lot to create effect and emphasis and they are also metaphorical. The expressions, ‘men de vex for the street, everywhere don tear, no joy’ are used to show the extent and degree at which people are now making money in the town through a dubious means, known as ‘yahoo’.

The word, ‘lakpa-lakpa’ is a word coined from one of the indigenous languages referring to skin rash disease found on the head of mostly children. Calling someone ‘lakpa-lakpa’ means the person is weak, incapable of making success. It is used here to create the effect that if lazy and weak Daniel can make it, they too can equally make it. It is highly figurative. Also, the use of the simile ‘weak like dodo’ is used to stress and emphasize the state at which they are angry at their situation. Another figurative word above is, ‘rust throwway’. That is used for emphasis to show that they are getting nothing or making no headway in life.

The expression, ‘make I faint’ is an exaggeration used here to show the extent they are willing to go to any length to make money. They also used the word, ‘die’ a lot for emphasis. For instance, ‘I die stand; make I die; make I naked’ The words, ‘pick, westie, hammer’ refer to money. The word, ‘niggie’ is a stylish word for a man, boy. The expression, ‘knock, form mot knowing’ means to snob

someone.

Everything mentioned above is in sharp contrast to the adults' Pidgin. Adults do not exaggerate; they go straight to the point, and their expressions and words are very mild and conventional. They hardly invent words and are less figurative in their use. They do not know the meaning of 'westie, pick things, hammer'. They refer to them all as simply 'money'.

Another interesting feature of the youths' pidgin in the study area is it sounds very provoking, insulting and annoying, especially to an out group member. They are very loose, carefree in their conversation, mannerless, yet they do not see them that way. They can never get angry with each other on words used, rather, they see every word as fun and exciting. The following conversation took place between two girls in a business centre at Okpe Road, Sapele.

#### Conversation 4

Speaker A: u you de craze, see as u fine ly' winch

Speaker B: na me na (smiling). Base on who I be

Speaker A: Chick, you fine ly church rat. Na who elp you package dis your hair. You go fear packaging

Speaker B: Na my hobby na. You tink say I be ly you. Comon fly!

Speaker A: Seriously sha, you take shape. Na wa. Una no go kill person for dis tan

In a bid to praise her friend for her beautiful hairdo, she first insulted her, 'you de craze, see as u fine ly' winch ... like church rat' which Speaker B took as normal. To the interlocutors, something will be missing in the conversation, if the curse words have been omitted. Of course, they would not speak to the adults the same way. Vulgarity and use of obscene words are part of their identity, their acceptable conversational norm.

The use of similes and hyperboles - 'fine like witch, like church rat' are meant to show the degree of the girl's beauty. Now, the alarming question is, 'Is a church rat beautiful or a witch beautiful?' It was expected that Speaker B would have gotten angry and fired back but she only smiled. In a normal conversation, she is supposed to say, 'thank you' when being praised. Her response was another form of mild insult, 'na me na', sounding like she is bragging, and being arrogant. As is expected of them, she insulted her in turn in style, 'common fly'.

Sapele youths often flout all conversation principles in their use of pidgin but the irony is that this is the only way most of them know how to converse with others. Another conversation given below is taken from an office setting at Crudas road:

#### Conversation 5

Speaker A: dem say una get meeting

Speaker B: who tell you?

Speaker A: Na Edoja

Speaker B: Edoja de hide smoke?

The question, 'Édoja de hide smoke' can result in a big disagreement in other settings. But, it is not so in this setting. Instead of saying, 'I no know' (I don't know), as an adult speaker would say, they always prefer to use derogatory words.

Other rather insulting expressions to an outsider Sapele youths use without any feeling offended include: 'you de craze', 'make I slap you'? 'So you be legbere like this', 'I de craze to do anything with you', 'guy, abeg e you be mogu', 'Go sleep, I say you no reach', 'you be person, heavy animal, wayrana u be', 'your head no get oil', etc.' The list is inexhaustible. As they speak, they shout, gesticulate, sometimes touching the chest and shoulder of the other, all in the bid to drive their points home.

Again, the youths are so fond of answering questions with questions, though this is typical of most Nigerians and not Pidgin specific. The following is a conversation between two girls:

#### Conversation 6

Speaker A: Egunon, you go fit dash me this your gown

Speaker B: I kiss craze?

The aforementioned is so intriguing and sounds so funny. One would expect an answer of, 'no, I no go fit. I like the gown.' The above response is also highly idiomatic. It shows that the speaker does not intend under any condition to give out the gown. The response implies the only condition to give out the dress is if she kisses a mad person or is insane herself which she is not currently and is not likely to be. Conversation 7 is that of a girl who was watching a friend's picture who lives in Canada on Facebook. She called out to her friend in the same room with her.

#### Conversation 7

Speaker A: Oboh, come see Ese pix for Canada; she and her husband

Speaker B: ehn, make I die?

The second speaker's response shows she is not interested in watching the pictures, perhaps she is envious or does not want to go home and think about her own life. So to avoid all that, she produced a rude answer in the form of a rhetorical question 'make I die?' Sapele youths, generally speaking, like to shorten words, perhaps to make the conversation fast and sweet. For example, they would say, 'pc' for police, 'lappi' for laptop, 'bro or bros' for brother.

They also use very sweet coinages to refer to their peers, 'girle' for girl, 'brotherle' for brother, 'chicki' for girl,

'babe' for girl, 'babygirl' for girl, 'ómo' for either girl or boy, 'bob' for general expression; 'niggie' for guys. This is most evident when they want to call names, 'Chiomalize, Ufuomski, Paulinkose, Jojo'.

Consciously and unconsciously, most of their words have exclamations: 'shou, o, o boy, abegi, etc.

It was also observed that Pidgin lexical items do not have uniformity. One word can assume uncountable meanings in different settings, for instance, the word, 'matter' has many meanings in different context. As seen earlier on, it is used to refer to money. But in the conversation below, it means 'a baby'

### Conversation 8

Speaker A: Wen my brother girlfriend get belle, my mom say make she flush am

Speaker B: leave o, who get belle, make im born im matter

'Matter' can also mean 'a top secret'.

The word, 'hammer' also means money, to impregnate, to have sexual intercourse and to insult.

### Characteristics of Adults' Pidgin in Sapele

Now let us examine some characteristics of adults' Pidgin variety. Conversation 9 took place at Ajogodo, Sapele between a woman of 45 years and her aged mother

### Conversation 9

Speaker A: where una de wey Kelvin de shook stick for Mofe eye?

Speaker B: I no know whether Kelvin injure Mofe o. I be commot.

Speaker A: where the Kelvin na

Speaker B: he don go church

Speaker A: make he come first, I go wound am today

The afoementioned conversation is very simple and can be understood clearly by anyone, even people living outside Sapele. The adults' pidgin is so mild, and adults tend to talk politely; they do not use foul or vulgar language. In fact, they mince their words. Conversation 10 took place in an office setting between two adults (male and female).

### Conversation 10

Speaker A: Good evening.

Speaker B: Evening

Speaker A: How the family?

Speaker B: Fine

Speaker A: I be wan con show your office people one business

Speaker B: which kine one? Na networking?

Speaker A: no-o but im be like am

Speaker B: no just worry yourself. Dem no go gree

Speaker A: why

Speaker B: money no de inside. Dem don do am before. Dem de even de complain

Speaker A: this one difference de. Dem go gain am well-well

Speaker B: ok, come try. Come tomorrow by one during our break

Speaker A: ok thank you.

In the aforementioned conversation, there is this tone of politeness and calmness. First and foremost, they exchange some pleasantries, greeted each other. They are very cordial, straight to the point; no hard or harsh words or expressions. They are not being sarcastic, by using question to answer question. All the questions are answered accurately with the right words and manner. Another outstanding difference in the varieties of pidgin used by both groups is in their vocabularies (Table 1).

### DISCUSSION

The kind of pidgin used by the youths in Sapele is a whole lot quite different from that of the adult. It consists of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people. Their own pidgin has style, is trendy and termed 'funky' by them. Most of the lexemes sound so pleasant to the ears, amusing and very interesting, unlike that of the adult.

One striking thing about the youths here is that they have a shared understanding of the language they use. This is what Longe (1995) referred to as the rule of sharing. There is spontaneous and natural flow among the speakers in their conversation. When Sapele youths use Pidgin, things are taking out of context and understanding them when you do not belong to their circle is problematic. This is the reason Pidgin is so unique and peculiar only to the youths. They speak the words as they come to their minds without reasoning or questioning the implications on the hearers. To them anything goes; it is just a form of communication used to express themselves in their own way.

As said earlier on, youths are very innovative; they move with the tide. They are very apt at creating new words rapidly, leaving the old to struggle for their survival. In fact, they coin new ones on a daily basis out of the blues to the detriment of the old. If you are caught using old terms, they see you as lagging behind, and can humiliate you. It is highly offensive for them to see a fellow youth not flowing with the linguistic tide. The youths are agents of language change in Sapele. Certain words have been replaced such as the word, 'peg' (death)



**Table 1.** Other varieties of pidgin used by both groups are in their vocabularies.

<b>Words in English</b>	<b>Youths' usage</b>	<b>Adults' usage</b>
Die	Delete, fall	die
Sleep	crash	sleep
Eat	lem	Chop
trouble	Gbaga	wahala
sex	Strafe, lash, zize	fuck
house	Cabal, crip	house
thief	omila	oleh
Girl	cherkens	girl
madness	Ment, kolo	crase
money	Bar, mola, pepper	money
woo	Chike, toast, razzle	spin
move	roll	waka
defecate	kaka	shit
A child	smallie	pikin
relax	kpomkpi	sufree
go	remove	commit
Indian hemp	Monkey tail, kmop	igbo
Mother	Mile, momsi	mama
father	Popsman, pale, popsi, fatherly	papa

is now obsolete. It has been replaced with 'delete, kpuf, fall'; 'vamose' (move) has been replaced with, 'fallout, fall in, movit, peel out, cut out,; ágro' (hungry or hardship) is replaced with 'h, cast, red, purple, pepperless'.

Adults' Pidgin variety is mild, simple, easy to understand and usually literal and straight to the point. They do not exaggerate like the youths since they have limited linguistic reserve and lack creativity and innovation capability.

## Conclusion

This has been an interesting study to the researchers. It has shown that Pidgin, like other languages is arbitrary and dynamic evolving depending on the context of use and other social factors. Age variation has been studied and these researchers have avoided making any judgmental statements as to their preference for the youth or adult's use of Pidgin in Sapele, Nigeria. The paper has discovered that adults and youths vary in the kind of pidgin they use. While youths can be said to use slang pidgin, which is trendy, innovative and thought provoking, the adults use ordinary pidgin that is plain, simple and archaic. It has been discovered that Sapele Pidgin characteristics is dependent on the age bracket that uses them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, the following

recommendations are given:

1. No doubt, the various pidgins used in the study area are so amusing and interesting, especially that of the youths. It is recommended that scholars should endeavor to do more studies on other social and regional varieties of Pidgin. Its study and even usage should be encouraged among scholars and graduates.
2. There is need to evolve a standard Pidgin in Nigeria as NPE exhibits regional and social variance. For mutual intelligibility, cross-regional studies must be done and standards made.
3. Linguists should look towards adopting a standard pidgin as Nigeria's national language. It has been observed that in the multilingual Nigeria, Pidgin serves as a cohesion language as everyone understands it. This stance will eliminate the fear of political and social dominance of any of the indigenous languages on the other. Pidgin belongs to all.
4. The study also recommends that Pidgin should be included in our educational curriculum because of the role it plays in Nigeria as language of communication that gets down to the lowest members of every society.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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