

Code Switching among the Nigerian Pidgin Speakers in Masaka Market Area of Nasarawa State

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Abstract

This study examined code switching among Nigerian Pidgin speakers in Masaka market area of Nasarawa State. The study was based on the use of the instruments of observation that involved recording, question and interaction sought to discover and account for the nature of code switching among Nigerian Pidgin speakers in Masaka market of Nasarawa State. The population of the study was drawn from traders and buyers who patronised the Masaka Market. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants randomly in Masaka market. The data was generated through two (2) audio-tape recording and oral note (personal observation). The study was anchored on the anthropological approach of Dell Hyme's Ethnography of Communication with the application of both description and qualitative analysis as methods in the analysis. The findings showed both buyers and sellers irrespective of gender, age and educational backgrounds use Nigerian Pidgin in Masaka Market to establish effective communication in the market. The findings further revealed that the Nigerian Pidgin speakers communicate in Nigerian Pidgin by code-switching to achieve the goal of business transactions and social interaction. The study concluded that Nigerian Pidgin is the most popular and the widely spoken language in Masaka Market, it serves as effective language of communication between people of different ethnic groups, increases sales, breaks language barrier and bridges the gap of inferiority complex for those who could not communicate in English. The study recommended that Nigerian Pidgin should be standardised to exhibit regional and social variance in the country.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Indigenous Languages, Native Speakers, Nigerian Pidgin.

Introduction

Language use in a multilingual society takes a unique style as people choose a particular code to establish effective communication, given that multilingualism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that arises as a result of the existence of many languages in a society. Thus, as a society is multilingual, it does mean that it is equally multiethnic and multicultural which yields to a heterogeneous coexistence between people culminating into diverse interactions among the languages in the society. Thus, such multilingual situation can only mean the opportunity for speakers to be either bilingual or multilingual, and the effect of such could come in terms of code switching or code mixing. Again, the incidence of multilingualism can enable society like Nigeria finding a neutral language as a means of social interaction or communication that is born out of circumstantial necessity.

Nigerian Pidgin (NP), therefore, is an indispensable language that has the potential to mediate cultural diversities in the multilingual society in Nigeria. The use of Nigerian Pidgin

is gradually gaining acceptance and popularity among Nigerians as people use it in their day to day interaction. About three to five million Nigerians have been estimated as average users on a day to day interaction basis. This calls "for the development of Nigerian Pidgin to the status of an official language in Nigeria given its multi-functional relevance in every facet of the country's socio-economic life as the practice is elsewhere" (Mensah, 2011). Nigerian Pidgin has continued to fill the gap in communication created by Standard English among Nigerians of diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds.

The use of Nigerian Pidgin is prevalent in educational institutions, religious settings, media houses, social media platforms, commercial and economic institutions, among others. The Nigerian government has begun to gain its recognition as it serves to disseminate information to the public by the use of jingles, posters, stickers, to mention but a few (Ifechelobi and Ifechelobi, 2015). However, the use Nigerian Pidgin has not been accepted as official language despite its role in uniting cultural diversities in the country.

The motivation for this study rose as a result to the prevalent use of Nigerian Pidgin by native speakers and non-indigenous languages by code-mixing and code-switching as they communicate in Masaka market, Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State to establish business transactions and social interactions. In Masaka Market, it is paramount to note that Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin and other indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Gbagi and Nyankpa serve as possible languages that the populace employ as a means of communication by both sellers and buyers to reach a mutual business transaction.

Due to cultural diversities at Masaka Market most sellers and buyers use Nigerian Pidgin as neutral language. This underscores the fact that Nigerian Pidgin is considered as a language of trade. Therefore, the use of Nigerian Pidgin has become imperative because different people of different linguistic backgrounds use it to patronise the Masaka Market as they code-mix and code-switch to increase and enhance business transaction in Masaka Market. Code switching takes place in the multilingual society when individuals frequently switch between different languages throughout a discourse. This switching process is thought to be driven from a variety of factors, including grammatical constraints, or even to evoke a specific perception of the speaker's identity. In a common social situation, many of these factors are in play, yet we often do not have an idea of how they interact (Ndubuisi-Obi et al, 2021).

Masaka is uniquely and divinely positioned as a district in Karu Local Government Areas, Nasarawa State. It is located at 9° 0"18N of Karu and 7° 40"22 E. Masaka as a district is surrounded by the districts such as Maraba, New Nyanya, New Karu and Kurunduma (Rikko et al. 20). Also, Masaka is one of the major towns in Karu L.G.A of Nasarawa state, north central Nigeria. It is among the district in the local government and is part of the settlements that form the strip of several township along Abuja- Keffi express-way. Such as Nasarawa, Ado, New Nyanya. It is made up of several neighbourhood like Anguwan Gwari, Anguwan Hausawa (Anguwan Sakkwatawa), River Side, Anguwan Jaba, Anguwan Soja, Tudun Wada and absorbed villages like Jewu, Jankanwa, Luvu among others (NUDB .16).

Nigerian Pidgin is mostly used especially by traders to facilitate or promote their business transactions in Masaka Market. The value of Nigerian Pidgin as a sociolinguistic variable it seems to be of great importance among buyers and sellers to promote business transactions in the market places in the country. It is on this sound premise that Nigerian Pidgin receives great attention in recent times because of the socio-economic benefits it offers to contemporary Nigerian populace.

It is striking to note that despite the nonchalant attitude of Nigerian Pidgin by educational institutions and among the elites, it still flourishes in several informal social and commercial activities in the midst of cultural diversities for the purpose of social interactions and business transactions. This reveals the relevance of Nigerian Pidgin as it contributes immensely to contemporary Nigerian business world in the market places. This study therefore, seeks to examine how native speakers and non-indigenous language code-mix and code-switch with Nigerian Pidgin in Masaka Market to achieve business transactions and social interactions.

The use of Nigerian Pidgin in society especially in market places in the country is on increase. The literates and non literates, the rich and poor, old and young employ the use Nigerian Pidgin in the market place. The researcher observed that many traders and buyers in Masaka Market employed Nigerian Pidgin by code-mixing and code-switching in other indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Gbagi, Igbo, Nyankpa among others as a medium of communication to reach a mutual business transaction. However, it is quite surprising that there are no deliberate efforts by linguists to dive into investigating the role and usefulness how native speakers and non-indigenous languages code-mix and code-switch with Nigerian Pidgin to facilitating business transactions in market places in Masaka Market of Karu LGA, Nasarawa State.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the extent to which buyers and sellers make use of Nigerian Pidgin by native speakers and non-native speakers, as well as to ascertain significance impact of switching and mixing codes with Nigerian Pidgin to reach mutual commercial transactions in Masaka Market. Thus, the study is poised to know the nature of code switching among the sellers and buyers in Masala market in Karu, Nasarawa State. Thus, the objective of the study is to investigate the by sociolinguistic analysis of how native speakers of indigenous and non indigenous languages communicate by code switching, as well as the nature in Masaka Market, Karu using Nigerian Pidgin.

Literature Review

From the survey of literature, the Nigerian Pidgin has been influenced mostly by the advent of Portuguese and British who came to the Niger Delta for commercial purposes. The first interactional encounter of the Portuguese and the natives of the Niger Delta took place about 1469AD. This led for the Portuguese to discover the Gold Coast (Esizimotor, 2002). Historically, many of people who had lived in that region were as distinct and separate ethno-linguistic groups. Pidgin was initiated as a commercial language which also serves as

contact language to them. As a contact language "it has creolised in some part of the country, its functions have surpassed the functions of a pidgin and the term 'pidgin' has helped to encourage derogatory connotations associated with it" (Ofulue, 2012).

Nigerian Pidgin emerged as a result to the contact between the English language and the indigenous languages in Nigeria. It is viewed as a superstrate language that its lexicon is massively affected by the English language. Nigerian Pidgin is English-based which is based on incomplete mastery of the English language. It has a unique linguistic structure and identity like other languages in the world (Ifechelobi and Ifechelobi, 2015). Dagmar Deuber (2005) argues that Nigerian Pidgin is in relation to the other languages as a triglossic language situation that has a 'broad diglossic' relationship with English that is distinct from the indigenous languages in the country. The term Nigerian Pidgin can be understood as the co-habitation of the English language and the indigenous languages that produced an emergent language.

There are concrete evidences that show Nigerian Pidgin is gaining its position to contribute to national development in the country despite its refutation. Scholars have contended that the Nigerian literates have perceived Nigerian Pidgin as a deviant form of Standard English (Akande and Salani, 2000; Elugbe and Omamer, 1991; Obi, 2014; Omoniyi, 2016). Ofulue (2012) maintains that Nigerian Pidgin is gradually finding its way in formal domains of use. This includes development of literacy primers and a Bible translation that is in progress.

Nigerian Pidgin has continued to serve "as a marker of identity and solidarity. It is an inter-ethnic code available to Nigerians who have no other common language" (Akande, 2008). As a common language, in the face of multilingualism it removes all the cultural diversities and tribalism which create disunity and distrust among Nigerians. Caron and Egbokhare (2017) argue that Nigerian Pidgin provides "a basis for unity and nationalistic sentiments, cultural and behavioural convergence as well as a philosophical and ideological rallying point" (26). The role that Nigerian Pidgin has continued to play had made some scholars in languages to call for adaptation of Nigerian Pidgin as national language. This suggestion was based on its elements of popularity and neutrality (Popoola,).

It is true that the socio-linguistic situation in Nigeria has made it very difficult for an indigenous language to emerge as the national language. This is because "the choice of any of the major indigenous languages would arouse discontent in other areas not covered by that language" (Elugbe, 1991). This contributes immensely for the flourishing of Nigerian Pidgin in the contemporary Nigerian society.

Nigerian Pidgin performs several functions in achieving effective communication in midst of cultural diversities. It serves as a lingua franca for Nigerian heterogeneous tribes; this means it plays a role as linking language. It is used by workers in their places of work, mostly by factory workers, tailors, mechanics, shoemakers, painters, builders and so many other individuals belonging to different sections of the work force. Nigerian Pidgin serves as an efficient means of communication among the army and the police force especially in Nigeria. This gives them a sense of belonging and also serves as a tool with which to function. It serves as a language of identity to an individual in the society. It functions as

language of socialization that helps people to socialize and be acceptable in a group. Nigerian Pidgin performs the function of a status marker despite its rejection (Gani-Ikilama, 1989). Deducing from the above six functions of Nigerian Pidgin it is obvious that it serves as neutral language in the country. It is widely used among educated and illiterates, rich and poor, in an informal setting. Joseph Babasola Osoba argues that "in the mass media (television, radio, magazines and newspapers) hospitals, police stations, schools, higher institutions of learning, government offices, etc., Nigerian Pidgin is widely used". The Nigerian politicians use it present their manifestos in political campaign rallies. It is a common understanding that about stresses that political parties switch from Standard English to Nigerian Pidgin and sometimes vernacular in their campaigns, depending on the audience they are addressing". Akinluyi (1977) stresses that "Pidgin English is the workers' language in west Africa's industrial towns where labour is drawn from various tribal groups". It is imperative to note that Nigerian Pidgin has provided numerous opportunities to the Nigerian populace as a tool for achieving growth and development in all ramifications. Indeed, "NP is not just an ordinary language but a tool for enlarging people's freedom, opportunities and improving their well-being" (Motanya, 2017).

The term 'code' is a system that is used by people to communicate with each other. To achieve a communication purpose among individuals, choosing a particular code to express feeling and thought is paramount to establish an effective communication. This explains the essence of a code in the speech community. A code therefore, is "a symbol of nationalism that is used by people to speak or communicate in a particular language, or dialect, or register, or accent, or style on different occasions and for different purposes" (Stockwell). According to Wardaugh (2006) code is defined as "a system used for communication between two or more parties used on any occasions". This implies that people choose a code to switch from one code to another or to mix codes, sometimes in very short utterances. This style of communication is usually common in multilingual society like Nigeria.

Code-switching is viewed as a situation whereby a speaker switches from one code to the other. The concept is considered when individuals use different varieties of language in different situations. Code-switching is defined as "the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation" (Milroy, 2004 and Muysken, 2000). This is done in conscious manner when an individual deliberately made a choice of language as opposed to another having taken into consideration relevant factors. It is on this perspective that Shana Poplack defines code-switching as "the juxtaposition of sentences or sentence fragments, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optimally, phonological) rules of the languages of its provenance".

In the multilingual society like Nigeria, code switching is observed when individuals "switch from their roles as neighbours to their roles as bureaucrat and member of the public. In other words, they switch from a personal interaction to a more formal transaction" (Holmes, 2001). Three types of Code-switching have been identified, these include

metaphorical code-switching, conversational code-switching and situational code-switching (Hudson, 1996; Wardhaugh, 2006).

Metaphorical code-switching occurs where an individual only uses one kind of variety in a situation (Hudson, 1996). Therefore, metaphoric change which occurs in language used in communication allowed for transfer of registers and automatic change in situation or event. It shows how speakers employ languages to convey information that goes beyond their actual words specially to define a social situation. In similar line of argument, metaphorical code switching occurs within a single situation but adding some meaning to such components. Janet Holmes (2001) stresses that code-switching is aimed at drawing rhetorical reasons which are drawn on the associations of both codes. These codes represent or symbolises a set of social meanings, and the speaker draws on the associations of each, just as people use metaphors to represent complex meanings. The essence is to enrich the communication.

Wardhaugh (2006) stresses that situational code switching occurs when the languages used is changed based on the situation in which the conversant find themselves, they speak one language in one situation and another in a different one. Holmes (2001) argues that situational switching takes place "When people switch from one code to another for reasons which can be clearly identified". In the market place which is the concern of this discourse, people do not only use the language they used at home in the market place especially in the multilingual society

Empirical Review

Considering some empirical studies, Justina Ifeanyi Uwaechia (2015) studied "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Use of Nigerian Pidgin for Interactions in Zaria Markets". The study sought to ascertain whether there is any significant impact of switching and mixing codes and Nigerian Pidgin for interactions in the Samaru and Sabon Gari markets. The population of the study was drawn from traders and buyers who patronise the markets. The methodology used to collect data for this study includes audio-tape recording and questionnaire. The findings revealed that the native speakers of Hausa and other local Nigerian language speakers communicate in Nigerian Pidgin by code-switching and code-mixing.

Rajeev K. Doley (2013) investigated "Code-Switching at the market place: The Trader's Tool". The study examines the medium of communication commonly used by the traders, particularly, of the makeshift evening and weekly markets of middle Assam, India. The data of the study was generated through participatory observations as well as non-participatory observations which have been translated into English and discussed in the light of the Markedness Model to arrive at the findings. The findings of the study suggest that many of the traders of temporary and mobile markets in Assam use different languages to fulfil their various intentions in their attempt to promote business.

These empirical reviews show how common is the tendency of speakers to adopt or rely on a simplified means of communication in order that they succeed in their transactional

needs. It should be borne in mind that the need to have mutual understanding and the need to create the convenience of being friendly, as it is a common tenet of business whether buying or selling, makes for a speech form that is friendly which Pidgin provides, since it does not bring with any need for formality; the atmosphere in a market area is usually quite socially informal.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of Ethnography of Communication championed by Dell Hymes in 1974. Hymes in his book entitled *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* presents societal rules and constraints that reveals that language choice determines the use of one code rather than another in various situations. The theory, which is deterministic in provisions, is about how language choice is used to reveal values that are fundamental to speaking in the context of social relationship even within the framework of the market places. One may add that this theory is possibly inspired by the Sapir-Whorf theory (see Wardhaugh, 2006).

Hymes argues that the use of language in an environment should be conformed to the norms of that environment and societal appropriateness than placing more importance to grammatical correctness. For Hymes (1974) pidgins and creoles are preferred languages used for communication in the market. This underscores why societal appropriateness in the use of Nigerian Pidgin as language in the market is more important to grammatical correctness to achieve the goal of effective communication in business transactions. Ethnography of Communication is useful for the description and explanation of the distribution of the means of communication especially at the market place. This theory is suitable in sociolinguistic analysis in market place because it helps to show how the basis for business transactions that involves both educated and uneducated, who engage in buying and selling use Pidgin as a code that is mutually intelligible for purpose of communication. The theory reveals how code is used in the environment such as the market place to conform to the norms of that environment. This aims at to determining the use, context and advantage of Pidgin in buying and selling in business transactions in the market.

Consequently, this study sets out to critically examine the extent to which Nigerian Pidgin is spoken in Masaka market. This enables understanding of the choice and use language at the level of face-face verbal interactions in market. There is no doubt that choice and use of language in an environment such as the market conforms to the norms of that environment as imply here as market place (Masaka market) how buyer and seller use language to achieve the purpose of business transactions. It is important to note that sociolinguistic terms such as code-switching, Code-mixing, sex, occupation, and code are examined. This reveals the relevance of how speakers are able to use pidgin, Standard English, Hausa, Gbagi, Nyankpa and other indigenous languages by code-mixing and code-switching for effective communication in the Masaka market in achieving the exchange of goods and services. Because of the multilingual society that exist in the Masaka market it warrants

code choice as speaker's code mix and code switch especially when a speaker has to meet up to the target language. The essence of speakers' mix codes is to demonstrate a personality of mixed identity and to achieve egoistic effect to achieve a mutual communication in buying and selling in the market place.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive type of qualitative approach. The population of the study was drawn from traders who owned business shops or stores in Masaka Market as well as buyers who patronise the market. From physical observation, more than one hundred thousand persons patronise the market on daily basis, these people include children, youth and adult with different religious, social and educational backgrounds.

The study was conducted at Masaka Market in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. The sample for the study was generated from two audio-tape recording dialogues of sellers and buyers that patronise Masaka Market. The audio-tape recording was done without the knowledge of respondents who were selected for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the area of study and interecants which were randomly selected from the market.

The study adopted the primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary data was generated data from recordings oral note taking and assistant researcher from both traders and buyers who patronise Masaka Market. The secondary data was obtained from published sources such as books, journals, electronic sources such as the internet (World Wide Web) and from unpublished sources such as seminar papers, thesis, dissertation and workshop materials. The raw data collected were subjected to meaningful interpretation and qualitative analysis on each of the study objectives.

Analysis

Communication in Masaka Market is carried out amongst Nigerians of all works of life and linguistic backgrounds who in one way or the other find means to communicate, and especially in this case, in most cases with the use of the Nigerian Pidgin (at times, with broken English). The use of these languages in the market is to achieve social interaction and business transactions in the midst of cultural diversities. Hausa, Yoruba, Gbagi, Igbo and Nyankpa are popular and widely spoken Nigerian languages used in Masaka Market along with Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English. The study has identified Gbagi and Nyankpa as most common languages of the native speakers of the indigenes in Masaka Market while Hausa is considered as widely spoken language that these indigenes use. The study identified Yoruba and Igbo languages as non-indigenous languages in Masaka, but found to be used also among persons who transact businesses in in the market.

It is interesting to note that the native speakers and non-native speakers communicate mostly in Nigerian Pidgin in Masaka Market to increase sales and social interactions. This is done irrespective of gender, social class, age and educational backgrounds.

Against above background, the following analysis relies on the data collected through the methods earlier accounted to explicate how speakers at the Masaka market interact on different terms of business bargains through the use of Nigerian Pidgin, but with the employment of code switching.

DATUM ONE

Seller: Mo wuna kom buy o, mo wuna kom buy o. Mama araha don come, mo wuna comr buy, I wan go house.

Buyer: customer how much garri?

Seller: You say? customer wetin you talk? come buy now.

Buyer: Garri how much.

Seller: Garri 3 hundred mudu.

Buyer: Hey haba customer e reach like dis?

Seller: Tebu che memladediki zemi tendi tedir kostoma, wallahi, even this one I wan just sell am ne because I just wan go house.

Buyer: Hey customer, reduce for me now, haba haba haba customer.

Seller: Kai! Nigeria mehn toh, make I reduce 50 naira for you. You know say na 3 hundred den dey sell am.

Buyer: Customer how I go do put am like that.

Seller: Ok, how many mudu?

Buyer: 10 mudu.

Seller: Ok.

The first datum was a recorded audio of a seller, who was heard advertising and calling attention for buyers to patronise her goods. Notice how the seller employs code mixing, another version of code switching to advertise her wares:

Mo wuna com buy o... Mama araha... as can be seen, the second sentence contains the Hausa word *araha* which means cheap. What is striking though is how the seller uses such word to drive home the sales of her wares, as the entire expression by the seller is in Nigerian Pidgin but in terms of stating the ease with which one can obtain what the seller is selling, the seller switched to or mixed with Hausa in order that the potential buyer knows the cost of what they intend to buy as being more economical or cost effective (otherwise, cheap).

The buyer enquires the price of the good. They continue bargaining to reach an agreed price for a smooth transaction. The buyer code mixes saying "haba" which might mean 'please'. It can be used in most Nigerian languages to depict an exclamation. The seller also code switches by saying "Tebu che memladediki zemi tendi tedir" which mean (This woman doesn't know things are expensive now) in Mada language, one of many languages in Nasarawa State.

The buyer continues persuading for a reduction in price from the seller. They agreed on a price of 250 per measure.

Native Speakers Communication in Nigerian Pidgin in Masaka Market

In multilingual society, native speakers and other indigenous languages communicate by code-switching and code-mixing in market places to establish effective communication. This is not an exemption in Masaka market. Switching and mixing codes and the use of Nigerian Pidgin for interactions in Masaka market have played an important role in buying and selling among native speakers and non native speakers of other languages. Following is the data accounting for such.

DATUM TWO

Seller: Mama oyoyo mama oyoyo buy your sweet oranges hundred hundred naira.

Buyer: Give me 2 for one fifty.

Seller: Haba I no fit sell am like dat.e sweet well well buy like dat I go put jara.

Buyer: Ok.Put am.

Seller: Yauwa.

The above data was recorded by note taking. The dialogue ensued between a male orange seller, and a female buyer. In the first, third and last sentences, the seller and buyer code mixes to Hausa and Yoruba. "mama oyoyo" in Hausa, meaning (welcome mummy) and "yauwa" which means (ok). The "jara" is a Yoruba word to mean (extra).

Different approaches of code mix and switch take place in Masaka market in a unique way among those who patronise the market. It is obvious that both sellers and buyers code mix or switch using sometimes native Nigerian languages with Nigerian Pidgin in the market to establish effective business transactions. The dialogue above has underscored the essence of code mixing and switching in Masaka Market. The first dialogue has one hundred and fifty seven (157) words. Six (6) words were spoken in native language (Mada) while ninety-eight (98) words were spoken in Nigerian pidgin. It was recorded on 29th November, 2022.

Findings

Based on the analyses, it is true that Nigerian pidgin is a common and widely spoken language in Masaka market; that the native speakers and non native speakers code mix and code switch to establish business transactions and social interaction in the market.

The second data which was a note taking of a dialogue between a male orange seller and a woman. It consists of forty words (40). Four words were spoken in native language (Hausa), one in non native language (Yoruba). while thirty five (35) words were spoken in Nigerian Pidgin. it was taken on 25th December, 2022. Based on this analysis, it shows that buyers and sellers use Nigerian Pidgin to code-mix and code-switch with Nigerian languages to achieve business transactions and social interaction in Masaka market. This shows that the speaker deliberately chooses Nigerian Pidgin to communicate as they code-mix and code-switch with Nigerian languages in Masaka market area of Nasarawa State.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is recognised in this paper that Nigerian Pidgin is the most popular and the widely spoken language at the Masaka market in Karu Local Government Area, of Nasarawa State. Given that Nigerians of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds patronise the Masaka market, it is seen that the market like the area in which it is located is densely populated and hugely diverse which make it easier for the Nigerian Pidgin to be a virtual spoken in the market.

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