

of Nigeria, the areas around Warri and Sapele, Nigerian pidgin is more

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of a Creole. Creole is a mixture of an European language with a local language and is spoken as a first language.

Some view it as a variety of English, while others see it as a distinct language. A look at the structure of Nigerian pidgin (NP) portrays that it has structures and patterns of behaviour of its own. Though at its initial stage, NP was considered the language of those who could not speak good English, but many know better now. It is therefore, no wonder that it is not only used by undergraduates in Nigerian universities during conversation with the uneducated public, but it has become a fascinating medium of casual exchange among students themselves. Fisherman (1997) asserts that; "no language considered inferior is aptly logical". This is because where two or more speech communities come in contact, a lingua franca or common language of communication emerges. He further points out that it is the social situation use popularly known as context that affects the morpho-syntactic pattern of a language. Since pidginisation, according to Hymes (1971:84), is a "complex process of Sociolinguistics", we shall now consider the use of Nigerian Pidgin English among students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

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1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The term pidgin is used to refer to a language which develops in a situation where speakers of different languages have a need to communicate but do not share a common language. Once a pidgin has emerged, it is generally learned as a second language and used for communication among people who speak different languages.

Language is the most creative and unlimited instrument for social communication and it helps us to understand the deep seated social relevance, culture involvement and the human relatedness of language. Having said this, we can therefore agree that pidgin is a language of its own and not just a supplementary tongue as some people see it, since it serves as an unlimited instrument of social communication especially in a multilingual society like Nigeria.

Linton (1982) states that "the culture of a society is the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation". These cultures, ideas and habits can only be transmitted from generation to generation through language. In Linguistics, every language is considered adequate to represent the communicative needs of its people as such should not be made to suffer any biases.

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This cannot be said of Nigerian Pidgin - even though it is a language because various attempts have been made by different factions to eradicate the use of Nigerian Pidgin English. These attempts have however been unsuccessful because of the significant value the language has to its users. It is a language that has brought people together in spite of their differences in ancestral culture and language by creating a local

culture for itself which blends ideas from different cultures.

Moreover, this use of Pidgin as a lingua Franca affects many Nigerians in academic careers, especially, those students that come from the environments where it is spoken.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is very pertinent to note that what actually started as an "emergency language" between the white merchants, to ease communication with the natives has now become "an elitist campus language" spoken among the teeming population of the Nigerian students in higher institutions of learning, thereby overlapping the standard English to such an extent that the students' competence is impaired.

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1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This Study is important because its results can go a long way in finding out the causes of students' competence. This work will in no doubt contribute to one's knowledge, especially in the Department of English, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto as it will highlight some issues in relation to written English. It will be a guide for the effective educational system.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research is carried out to examine the effect of Pidgin English on students' competence. It is a fact that students deviate from the norms of codified English in most of their essays and communications.

The following are the set of objectives to be achieved

- a. To show the impact of Nigerian Pidgin in a University Community; using 300 level students of MELL
- b. To assess the extent of its popularity and the communicative situation within which it is used.

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- c. To show who uses Pidgin and for what purpose?

1.5 JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

Prior to this time, a lot of works and research have been done on NP as a language of wider communication in Nigeria. However, its impact on the students is worth investigating. This work will attempt to reveal the fact that the Nigerian pidgin which was initially used as a medium of communication by particular group of people and for specific purpose has gradually come to be used in institutions of higher learning

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research work will attempt to investigate the impact of Pidgin English on the University community, though it focuses on the Students of UDU, Sokoto (300level MELL) with a view to providing detailed information on the impact of NP on the performance of the students

THE IMPACT OF PIDGIN ENGLISH ON STUDENTS COMPETENCE IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITY

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