

PIDGINS AS NATIONAL LANGUAGES IN SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES: THE HURDLES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The debates on the suitability, or otherwise, of Pidgins as national languages in some African countries are robust and on-going. The advocates and critics of Pidgin as national language are inundating the literature with information, views and suggestions. This paper aimed at lending more weight to the efforts of the Pidgin positivists. The study reflected on the language situation in Africa, revisited the concepts of lingua franca, Pidgin and Creole, and paid attention to the use of Pidgin in Nigeria and Ghana as models of its briefs. The study further reviewed some hurdles peddled against the adoption of Pidgin, such as, the issues of stigmatization, attitudes, cultural base, indigenous status and low-level development in terms of corpus and status planning. However, this article contends that with the widespread use of Pidgin at the grassroots level, the increasing functions and domains of its use in many sectors of the society, the gradual and positive attitude being garnered, especially among the literate populations, all the hurdles are surmountable. The paper concluded by calling upon national governments in the respective African countries to officially recognize Pidgin and plan for its corpus and status development in order to enhance its official use. It also called upon all the positivists and other stake holders to mount up aggressive awareness, conferences and programmes in all the concerned African nations for the purpose of sensitising governments and the literate populations on the need to develop Pidgin.

Key words: National language, Pidgins, Lingua franca, Language situation, African countries

1. Introduction

The controversy trailing any discourse on Pidgin as lingua franca in Nigeria or in some other heterolinguistic African countries is better imagined than real. A launch to the net on this controversy is vivid. See some of the people's views, especially in Nigeria, from the web site of the Nairaland Forum:

Comment 1: What are the short comings of Pidgin English as a common language in Nigeria? Already, it is the unofficial lingo... why are we deceiving ourselves with queens English that is only well spoken by (a) few?

Comment 2: The language is a way of life. It is an integral part of our culture and heritage. Thus, removing it will amount to deleting some part of history.

Wetin we go come tell our children say happen to the language that we once used to express ourselves, chase our women and generally mess around with. "The choice medium of expression for most of our up and coming musical star and even our dear and beloved president 'Uncle Sege'

"Weting una dey yarn sef? Make una no try am oo. Still dey hail."

Comment 3: Pidgin is a caricature of the original English, so, I don't see it as our invention or making. It is neither our original tongue before we were colonized, we had our own language and dialect and it wasn't this Pidgin.

If we had been colonised by France, we would have been speaking French.

If we believe we don't want to copy anymore, let's drop all we copied including democracy. Pidgin, to me, is degrading and abuse of English"

It is not our original tongue. We only bastardise the one we copy.

Comment 4: Not true friend, Pidgin English is pure (queen's) English in broken down version. So, please do not look at it that way. It is something that has come to stay and there is absolutely nothing anyone least of you can do about it.

Comment 5: We should restructure our educational system around Pidgin English, a language spoken and understood by the majority, in place of Queen's English. Should we just improve (upon) the quality of English Language Education? Will it be a step in the right direction or a terribly misguided step?

Comment 6: Simply, Pidgin means adulteration of the original. We have Pidgin in every form of language – French, Yoruba (modern day Yorubá with so many English words). Every society have (has) an unofficial lingo. The widespread of it does not replace the original. Otherwise, maybe we replace classical Yoruba and other Nigerian language with modern Yoruba which is a mixture of Yoruba, English, and whatever you can imagine.

Few comments are provided above to reflect the debates surrounding the candidature of Pidgin as an official language in Nigeria. In Ghana, the story is similar. Mauler (2002) opines that though educated English-speaking Ghanaians frown upon Pidgin, believing it to be an inferior” form of “true” or “educated” language, it survives in mix-tribe schools and among lower-class people who have less access to formal English training, because Ghana is homes to several tribes with mutually unintelligible languages, and at times, Pidgin is the only way to communicate with someone.

In this study, Nigeria and Ghana, and in some cases, Cameroon are used as case studies in Africa because these countries are quite representative of the African linguistic situation in many respects. First, most African countries are multilingual in such a way that the carving out of countries, sequel to colonialism, created the merging together of many tribes and tongues for political administration by the colonialists. In West, East, North and South Africa, regions

were merged together for ease of administration and this phenomenon triggered the introduction of colonial languages. Secondly, imperatives of exploration and trade have caused populations to come into contact with each other. Thirdly, the languages changed in these African countries to reflect such interactions, and sometimes ethnic groups in contact develop lingua franca and Pidgin, thus accounting for why Hudson (1990:62) stresses that “each Pidgin is, of course, specially constructed to suit the need of its users, which means that it has to have the terminology and constructions needed in whatever kinds [sic] of context”.

The foregoing has been put forth as issues underscoring the increasingly embedded nature of Pidgins in some African countries. Africa as a continent, with a few countries in exception, is faced with the albatross of the lack of an indigenous official language with which the affairs of their nations can be articulated (Bodomo, 1996; Adegbija, 1994). With the multilingual status of most African countries, the search for lingua franca has been met with complacency, especially with the popular use of colonial languages. However, this paper intends to discuss the need for lingua franca for African countries, and the consideration of Pidgin as a viable option in most of these countries, as well as the challenges of developing them to meet the exigencies of corpus and status planning. Many works have been done, and are still on-going on the suitability of Pidgin as lingua franca in some African countries (Mauler, 2002; Ihimere, 2006; Ofolue, 2011; Ginsberg, 2012). This paper is aimed at consolidating the views of positivists on Pidgins, and at sensitizing all the relevant agencies to be more aware that Pidgin has not only come to stay, but needs to be developed to meet the linguistic needs of the Africans.

2. Language Situation in Africa

For the purpose of this study, Lodhi's (1993) discourse on language situation in Africa seems far-reaching. According to him, all African languages compete with metropolitan/colonial languages, as well as with Pidgins and Creoles. It is true that today's

national boundaries of African countries, which were drawn in Europe by the colonial powers at the turn of the century, did not pay any regard to the cultural, linguistic or historical affinity of the Africans. This is against the background that African boundaries were carved out at the whims and caprices of the colonialists. Lodhi divides the linguistic map of Africa into Anglophone, Francophone, Luzophone, Amabiphone and Swahiphone. He gives the statistics of African countries per the kind of official language in use as follows:

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| English: | 19 countries |
| French: | 22 „ |
| Portuguese: | 5 countries |
| Arabic: | 7 „ |
| Spanish: | 1 country |

Countries with an African language as the first or second language are Ethiopia (Amharic) East Africa (Swahili), Somalia (Somali) and Malawi (Chichewa).

In another way, Abdulaziz (Lodhi, 1993) describes the typology of language situation in Africa in four groups. The first group refers to countries that have African languages spoken by the vast majority of the population. This group sub-divides into two. The first sub-division is characterized by those countries that have one African language as their mother tongue. They are Botswana (Setswana), Burundi (Kirundi), Lesotho (Sesotho), Rwandan (Kinyarwanda), Somalia (Somali) and Swaziland (SiSwati).

The second sub-groups is depicted by countries that have one African language as their lingua franca. They are Central African Republic (Sango), Kenya and Tanzania (Swahili), Mali (Bambina), Senegal (Wolof).

The countries that have one predominant African language constitute the second group. They are Dahomi (Gee), Malawi (Chichewa), Niger (Hausa), Burkina Faso (Mossy) and Zimbabwe (Shone). The third group is reflected by countries that have several dominant indigenous African languages competing with one another. They are Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and others).Ghana (Akan, Twi), Sierra Leone (Mende, Temme), Zaire (Chilubd, Kikonso). The last group is consisted of African countries with no predominant African language. They are Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Mozambique.

The language situation described above has led to the use of metro-languages, as well as the adoption of both endoglossic and exoglossic language policies for the continent. The countries with an endoglossic language policy which promotes one language are Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Somalia, while those with an exoglossic language policy are Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mocambique and Liberia. The exoglossic countries which promote more than one indigenous language are Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Zaire. However other exoglossic countries with endoglossic tendencies are Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland and Uganda. From the foregoing, the choice of a suitable lingua franca poses no problem among the countries in group 1, but countries in groups 2, 3 and 4 are faced with rivalry among various language groups. Even in group 2 where there are predominant African languages, the minority languages are contending with the dominance of the prominent languages.

However, the dominance of metro-languages in most African countries is believed to be detrimental to the overall development of Africa and Africans. According to Lodhi (1993: 4):

The dominance of the metro-languages deprives the majority of Africans (the) access to knowledge, and hinders them from participating in national politics and the decision-making process. It slows down national integration and development of a nation-state with a national culture, creates insecurity and (the) feeling of inferiority among those who have to operate in the foreign language of the ruling class. This has led to ethnic unrest, political instability and rural violence from time to time in several parts of Africa, where the main political problems are not really ideological but rather ethnolinguistic.

The heterogeneous language situation in Africa is suggestive of the reason for lack of lingua francas in many African countries. This albatross has been linked with development problems in Africa. Bodomo (1996) stresses that if development is seen as the sustainable socio-cultural, economic and technological transformation of a society, then language becomes an important variable in the development process. He argues that language has a symbolic function which contains and processes the indigenous beliefs structure in terms of socio-cultural, political, economic and technological system native to the people. According to him, new belief systems are immediately related to these existing systems in developing community initiative indigenous knowledge, and popular participation. By implication, a relevant conceptualization and implementation of societal transformation can be achieved through the use of mother tongues or languages indigenous to the society.

3. The Terms ‘Lingua Franca’, ‘Pidgin’ and ‘Creole’ and the Theories of Origin.

These key concepts need to be explained in examining the issues characterizing any discourse on solutions to the linguistic heterogeneity in Africa, especially where it has become difficult to arrive at a common or acceptable language that is native to users for official or national purposes. Briney (2012) describes a lingua franca as a language used by different populations to communicate when they do not share a common language. Economic, social and political activities have made populations or different people come in contact with one another. Communication would definitely be difficult since these people are of different cultures, languages and nationalities. As products of necessity, lingua francas, pidgins and creoles evolved as natural solutions to language barriers.

Briney claims that the term ‘lingua franca’ was first used during the Middle Ages when crusaders and tradesmen in Mediterranean came into contact for business, and official interaction. According to him, Arabic, Italian, French, Portuguese, Malay etc. were early lingua francas, while English, French, Russian and Spanish were United Nations’ official languages. Today, English is a world lingua franca because of its use in commerce, internet and other spheres of life.

In today’s Africa, many languages compete with metropolitan colonial languages, as well as with Pidgin and Creoles. According to Lodhi (1993), the organization of African Unity (otherwise known as African Union) has recommended 50 languages to be supported by Arabic and Swahili as the only native African working languages. However, in this paper, African countries using non-African languages as official /national languages are regarded as having no lingua franca, with the exception of the Arabic language users. For such countries, the consideration of Pidgin as their lingua franca becomes the concern of this discourse.

According to Adegbija (1994), the emergence of Pidgins and Creoles is one of the sociolinguistically significant outcomes of European contact in Africa. Briney (2012) opines that although, the first lingua franca that developed during the Middle Ages was first considered a Pidgin, the term developed originally out of contact between Europeans and people in the countries they visited in association with trade, plantation agriculture and mining. Mufwene (2002) asserts that some Pidgins have expanded into regular languages, especially in urban settings, and are called ‘expanded Pidgins’. Examples include *Bislama* and *Tok Pisin* in Melanesia, Pidgin English in Nigeria and Cameroon.

In the view of Mufwene (2001), Creoles and Pidgins developed in separate places in which Europeans and non-Europeans interacted differently, i.e. sporadically in trade colonies which produced Pidgins, but regularly in the initial stages of settlement colonies where Creoles developed. The term ‘Pidgin’ was coined in 1807, about two years after the term ‘Creole’ was used in reference to a language variety (Akhimien, 2004). Creole was originally coined in Iberian colonies, apparently in the 16th century, in reference to non-indigenous people born in the American colonies. It was adopted in metropolitan Spanish, then in French and later in English by the early 17th century. By the second half of the same century, it was generalized to descendants of African or Europeans born in Romance colonies (Ihimere, 2006). This, perhaps, accounts for the description of Creole as nativised Pidgin which descendants of Pidgin speakers have as first language.

Among the various theories put forth on the origin of Pidgin are the following:

(1) The baby – talk theory which discussed the China coast Pidgin English as having many similarities with the speech of children such as the following features:

(a) high percentage of content words with a corresponding low number of function words;

(b) little morphological marking;

(c) word classes more flexible than in adult language (free conversion);

(d) contrasts in area of pronouns greatly reduced;

(e) number of inflections minimised.

However, Bloomfield (1933) maintains that the characteristics of Pidgins result from incompetence in English mastery by imperfect learning methods.

(2) Independent parallel development theory which emphasized that similarities between world’s Pidgin and creoles arose from independent and parallel lines due to the fact that they all derived from languages of Indo-European stock.

(3) Nautical paragon theory which spotted the possible influence of nautical jargons on Pidgins, resulting from voyages of the developing world’s discovery. Many nationalities were often represented among the crews of the ships.

(3) Monogenetic/relexification theory which stressed that a single proto-Pidgin of the 15th century Portuguese Pidgin probably relics of the medieval lingua franca, which was also known as ‘Sabir’ from the Portuguese word ‘know’. Sabir was the common means of communication among the crusaders and traders in the Mediterranean area.

(4) Universalist theory which maintained that the origin of Pidgins has elements in common with the other theories. The distinguishing mark of this theory is that it sees the

similarities as due to universal tendencies among humans to create languages of a similar type, i.e. an analytic language with simple phonology, an SVO syntax with little or no subordination or other sentence complexities, and with a lexicon which makes maximum use of polysemy, and devices such as reduplication, operating from a limited core vocabulary.

4. Developmental Stages of Pidgins and Creoles

The developmental process of Pidgins and Creoles are reported as possessing some stages Mufwene (2012). Pidgins are generally characterized as restricted and extended. Pidgins are, at first, used in marginal contact as restricted language variety for minimal trading purposes. From this original modest outset, a Pidgin may develop into an extended type. This implies the extension of the social functions of a Pidgin. A recent social situation of Pidgin development is in West-Africa where it is used as a means of communication, not just among the black and white speakers, but among the native speakers themselves who, however, have very different native languages. In West Africa, the function of Pidgin is that of a lingua franca because it is a common means of communication between speakers who do not understand their respective native languages.

In many African countries where lingua franca is in place, the process of pidginisation to creolisation is a possibility. Creoles develop on two basic situations: (i) where speakers of Pidgins are put in a situation in which they cannot use their respective mother tongues. This arose during the era of slave trade, especially in the Caribbean and the Southern United States, where speakers were deliberately kept in separate groups to avoid their plotting rebellion. They were then forced to maintain the Pidgin which they had developed up to then. They passed it on to future generations as their mother tongue, thus, forming the transition from a Pidgin to Creole.

(ii) Where a Pidgin is regarded by a social group as a higher language variety and deliberately cultivated. This is the kind of situation which obtained in Cameroon and which does still to some extent on Papua New Guinea. The outcome of this kind of situation is that the children of such speakers which use Pidgin for prestige reasons may end up using the Pidgin as a first language, thus rendering it a Creole language with the attendant relinquishing of the native language of their parents, as well as the expansion of all the linguistic levels for the new Creole language to act as fully-fledged language. If Pidgins are given the opportunity to thrive as official languages in the concerned African countries, their creolisation is then an inevitability for the on-coming generations.

We are quick to add that though some elites have expressed their prejudice on Pidgin as a possible lingua franca in Nigeria in particular, and in some African countries in general, arriving at a common choice of any indigenous language as lingua franca in these exoglossic nations remains a mirage. As earlier mentioned, the ‘attack’ on the candidature of Pidgin as a national language in some African countries, especially among the literate community is still severe. For instance, this researcher has witnessed seminars, workshops and symposia where some academics frowned at Pidgin as a possible solution to the lingering lingua franca search in Africa. However, this paper believes that with focused works by the positivists, coupled with its continuous use in the society, the attitudinal attack on it will fizzle out.

5. The use of Pidgin in Nigeria and Ghana

Space and time make it impossible to give a detailed study of Pidgin situation in each African country. Hence, we wish to do the case studies of Pidgin situation in Nigeria and Ghana, and in some cases, Cameroon. These countries fully well serve as points of reflection for other similar African countries. A few among such African countries are the Republic of Benin, Malawi, Niger, Togo, Burkina Faso, Zaire and Ivory Coast.

According to *Wikipedia* (2012) Nigerian Pidgin is an English-based Pidgin and Creole language spoken as lingua franca or general language across Nigeria. It is often referred to as “Pidgin”, “Broken” or “Naija”. The term “Naija” was adopted in one of the conferences held on Pidgin in Nigeria. The use of the term “Creole” for Nigerian Pidgin is provisional because it has not been nativised, though some Nigerian children learn it early in life. Nigerian Pidgin with its variants attracts a large number of speakers. Ihimere (2006) claims that about three to five million people speak Pidgin as their first language, while about seventy-five million used it as second language.

Obiechina (1984) recognizes five variants of Nigerian Pidgin: Port-Harcourt, Calabar, Bendel, Lagos and Kano/Maiduguri. This suggests popularity along the North, West and South zones of Nigeria. It should be noted, however, that the use of Nigerian Pidgin is also prominent in Aba, Owerri, Enugu, Onitsha and in other Eastern cities of Nigeria. Based on register, context and purpose of communication, Idiagbon (2007) describes and classifies the Nigerian Pidgin into three:

- (i) ordinary Nigerian Pidgin spoken by the vast majority of Nigerian people.
- (ii) wafy-ranky special variety which is popular among the Nigerian students and some Nigerian musicians; and

- (iii) hooligans' version popularly associated with the "area boys" or hoodlums in Nigeria.

On the variations of the Nigerian Pidgin, *Wikipedia* (2012) reports that each of the Nigerian ethnic groups converse in this language, but with the additional words of their own. *Wikipedia* gave the example of Yoruba users that often add *Sé* or *Àbí* as intonated sentence or question when speaking Pidgin. For example, "You are coming, right?" becomes *Sé you de come?* Or, *You de come àbí?* An Igbo example was also given with *Nna* added at the beginning of some sentences to show camaraderie. A sentence like 'Man, that test was hard' becomes *Nna, that test hard no be small.*

Based on the use of Pidgin in Nigeria, Jowiff, in *Nigerian English Usage: an Introduction* (1991) opines that Nigerian Pidgin has attained the feat of dignity, not only among the illiterates, but also the literate members of the society. Also, in his work, *The Candidature of Nigerian Pidgin as a National Language* (1994), Adegbija sees the Nigerian Pidgin as a possible national language because of its widespread use at the grassroots level, its cultural neutrality and ease of acquisition. However, he believes that the problems militating against its adoption as a national language are precarious. Among the problems enumerated by Adegbija are stigmatisation, lack of cultural base, some doubts about its indigenous status, threat to the use and mastery of standard English and low language development status. Some of these issues will be revisited later in this paper.

Nonetheless, Ofulue (2011) in her work on the use of the Nigerian and West African Pidgins, discussed from a sociolinguistic perspective, vehemently puts to flight the skepticism of some scholars on the workability of Pidgin as a national language in Nigeria and in some other African countries. According to her, the demographic factors surrounding the Nigerian linguistic background reveal that Nigeria has about 514 languages. With the population of about 141,356,000 people, population of an area per square kilometre is 923,768, and the population density of persons per square kilometre is 153, while the language-population ratio is 1:275,000, and the complexity index is put at 3.5. Ofulue gives the implication of the findings above on the Nigerian language terrain as follows:

- (i) that the population density in Nigeria is high, and the number of languages is high, hence the linguistic landscape is complex;
- (ii) the ratio and complexity index in Nigeria show that Nigeria is complex and highly multilingual; and
- (iii) high population density within multilingual contexts promotes the spread of lingua franca like Pidgin.

- (iv) the linguistic situation in Nigeria favours the adoption of lingua franca like Pidgin.

She claims further that the Pidgin speakers in Nigeria stand at 30 million including L1 and L2, while the language has a widespread use in informal and formal settings with increase in use by literate speakers and writers, and that Pidgin also features in news broadcasts. In terms of book length publications, there are dictionaries, grammar books and Bible portions with the Bible translation in progress. Also available are literacy primers, Naija language academy and online teachings.

Ofulue further reports that the domains of Pidgin use in Nigeria are high. For instance, the Nigerian Pidgin is used in an informal education setting by students and staff. The case is similar in mass media, political campaigns, radio and TV programmes, including advertisements – promos, jingles and bill boards. The Nigerian Pidgin is active in informal aspects of administrations, national, state and local government assemblies. The language also makes impact on users in the domains of religion, commerce, literary works and entertainments. With increasing functions for the Nigerian Pidgin, positive attitudes towards it are growing fast with the stigmatization rate declining. Though there is no official recognition or standard orthography yet for Pidgin, its long history of literary efforts has aided general adoption of some writing formats with its functions expanding. According to Ofulue, the Nigerian Pidgin is undergoing expanded use in formal domains of the media (news broadcast and production programmes), while its use by the literate population in both speaking and writing formats is on the increase. We need to add that the use of Nigerian Pidgin commands high popularity in military and para-military domains. It has become one of the major spoken or oral medium of expression among the army, air force, navy, police, customs, prisons, immigration, civil defence and road safety corps, national youth service orientation camps, and so on.

At this juncture, a look at the use of Ghanaian Pidgin English is essential. *Wikipedia* (2012) states that Ghanaian Pidgin English (GhPE) is a variety of West African Pidgin English spoken in Ghana, predominantly in the Southern towns and the capital, Accra. According to Mauler (2002), GhPE evolved from the trade language which was developed by West African merchants in the 17th and 18th centuries in order to communicate with each other and with English slaves, ivory and gold traders. Mauler further observes that nowadays, educated English-speaking Ghanaians frown upon Pidgin believing it to be an “inferior” form of “true” or “educated” English. In Ghana, children are often forbidden from speaking Pidgin, and teachers usually try to uproot it out of their students. In spite of this ‘brutality’ on Pidgin, it

survives in mixed-tribe schools and among lower-class people who have less access to formal English training. This, according to Mauler, is because Ghana is a home to several different tribes with mutually unintelligible languages. In this situation, Pidgin is the common way to communicate with someone.

Wikipedia (2012) divides GhPE into two varieties: the ‘uneducated’ variant and the ‘educated’ Pidgin which emerged from student classes. It further states that although other languages are available to them, students, particularly males, use Pidgin as a means of expressing solidarity and intimacy. Ginsburg (2012) in his own reports states that on Ghana university campuses, most of the males speak Pidgin. According to him, the Pidgin language changes according to different regions visited. The Pidgin spoken in the university campus is different from the type spoken in the North. He further stresses that in Legon, the Pidgin spoken includes some Ga. For instance some Ga words include *gbekeh* (night) *hia* (need), and some Twi words like *joras* (at all). Other words like *ebola* (big) *barb* (understand) *chop* (eat) stem from no language but Pidgin. Ginsburg gives a few illustrations of GhPE structure and rules. Take a look at some of them.

Tenses:

Present: *dey* (to be)

Examples: I dey chop (I am eating)

I dey go baf (I am going to shower)

Future: *_go* (will)

I go call you (I will call you)

We go jam at party (We’re going to meet at the party)

Commands:

Make I come plus you? (Can I come with you?)

Make we link up (Let’s meet up)

Make we go mall (Let’s go to the mall).

On the Ghana’s geographic and demographic information, Ofulue (2011) reports that with a population of about 22,353,000, the population area per square kilometre is 238,500, while the population density, i.e. persons per square kilometre stands at 95. With 79 languages in all, the ratio of language per population is 1:285,253, while the complexity index is 0.8. Though the ratio and complexity index in Ghana is less than those of Nigeria, the population density vis-à-vis the multilingual complexity in Ghana also promotes the spread of lingua franca like Pidgin.

The number of Pidgin speakers in Ghana is put at 5,000,000, and though the two varieties of Pidgin in use were restricted in domains and functions, their use among the students, and their development in term of grammatical description are on the increase. But the two varieties were rarely used in mass media, political campaigns, literary works and entertainment. However, their use in commerce is prominent, thereby reflecting more of a diaglossic situation with standard Ghana English

4. The Hurdles and the Ways Forward

This work kicked off with the comments for, and against the status of Pidgin as a national language in Nigeria and Ghana. No doubt, the “educated” or the elites regard Pidgin as ‘impure’, ‘bastard’, ‘inferior’, ‘dangerous’ and threatening to the good mastery of English language. Adebija (1994) sees no reason why Pidgin cannot be chosen on linguistic grounds as a national language in Nigeria, but he expresses a strong reservation on its adoptability due to ‘gargantuan’ and ‘bedeviling’ hurdles. At this point, we want to revisit the hurdles, as well as consider the ways forward.

4.1 Stigmatisation and Negative Attitude

Stigmatisation, as one of the issues arising on the status and attitudes towards Pidgin, has been highly contended in view of its functions and domains of use in some African countries. This status of Pidgin in relation to official languages, on the one hand, and indigenous languages on the other has improved. According to Ofulue (2011), Pidgin now functions second to official languages at national level, while it is in parallel function with indigenous languages at local levels in Nigeria and Cameroon. For instance, Pidgin’s domains of use in Nigeria spans mass media, political campaigns, Radio and TV programmes, advertising, religion, commerce and entertainment. This trend is similar in Cameroon, but not in Ghana. Ofulue opines further that the level of stigmatization is now low for Nigerian Pidgin because of its increasing functions, but still high in Ghana. It is our belief that massive efforts at sensitizing the populace in Nigeria Ghana, Cameroon and other concerned African countries by all stake holders on the need to give Pidgin more prominence in official circles will promote and boost positive attitudes towards it, as well as minimize the stigmatization syndrome.

4.2 Cultural Base and Bonafide Indigenous Status

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that the cultural base of Pidgin, and its command of linguistic loyalty have been doubted in some quarters. However, Idiagbon (2007) opines that Pidgin language accommodates substrate language's contributions to its form and meaning. For instance, it is clear that the cultural bases of Pidgin speakers in Nigeria are demonstrated according to regions as reflected in the Benin/Delta, Calabar, Lagos, Port-Harcourt and Kano/Maiduguri classifications (Idiagbon, 2007: 205-207). In other words the regional accents of Pidgin speakers mark off their cultural base, not just only in Nigeria, but in all other African countries. For instance, A Yoruba Pidgin speaker is distinguished from, say, an Igbo or Hausa speaker of the same Pidgin due to the influence of the regional accent. Hence, the cultural neutrality of Pidgin is seriously doubted.

Another issue is the doubt of its bonafide indigenous status. This belief is probably anchored on the doubt of its command of any ethnic loyalty. But the fact that it has a widespread use at the grassroots level readily renders this factor unimportant. In some parts of Nigeria, for example, some children acquire Pidgin as L1. This trend is bound to increase in Nigeria and in other countries as its spread continues in the society. In the words of Ofulue (2011:9):-

The continued expansion of the (Pidgin) into more formal domains, in the face of stigmatisation, lack of codification and official recognition, illustrates the power the users possesses to overcome these limitations. An increase in population of young and educated speakers has been noted for (Pidgin), a factor reflecting current developments, and an indicator of future spread and expansion.

4.3 Threat to the Mastery of Standard Official Language

As stated earlier, 'broken' language or Pidgin is a product of necessity based on the indispensability of the needs for communication among interlocutors whose languages of communication are not mutually intelligible. The perfect mastery of any adopted official language is a delusion to any nation, and the strife for competence by second language users is a matter of degrees in a continuum of usage and learning. In multilingual settings like we have in many African countries, Pidgin can only be a threat to the mastery of 'imported' languages for the shallow conclusion that the indigenous languages are also a threat to the so-called standard official languages. Put differently, if languages that are indigenous to Africans are not

threats to the mastery of ‘imported’ languages, Pidgin should not be. In our own opinion, if Pidgin is accorded recognition and eventual adoption, mastery of standard official languages become less relevant.

4.4 Low Language Development Status

Ofulue (2011), in her analysis of the sociolinguistic factors influencing current developments in the attitudes, functions and domains of use of Pidgin, observes that the Pidgin varieties spoken in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon are undergoing different stages of corpus developments that portends favourable future for the emergence of Pidgin as national language in those countries. Right now, only a few domains are exclusive to standard English varieties in Nigeria and Cameroon, and though, there is no official recognition or standard orthography, more literary efforts are aiding the expansion of its status and functions. For instance, dictionary, grammar publications and Bible portions are available in Pidgin in Nigeria and Cameroon. More expansive works are on-going on Nigerian Pidgin in grammar, serial verbs, quotes, insults, phrases and English sayings. Wazobia FM 95.1, established in Nigeria in 2007, is boosting the status and functions of the Nigerian Pidgin. Greeted with wide acceptability, two other radio stations have been established in Abuja and Port Harcourt. This development has moved the use of Nigerian Pidgin into more formal contexts of news broadcasts and social media networks. Also, a writing system has been devised for Nigerian Pidgin with both literate and non-literate as target audience. In fact, the literate users post a lot of comments on the net. The opening comments of this work attest to this fact.

Furthermore, far-reaching strides are on-going to promote the study and development of Pidgin, especially in Nigeria, through the conference of the West African Language Congress that took place in July 2013 at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. At this conference, several papers bordering on Nigerian Pidgin development in terms of emerging orthographic practices, corpus development, tones, standardization, codification and communicative competence were presented. Besides, a Nigerian Pidgin panel was set up to work on the strategies and means of promoting the use and study of the Nigerian Pidgin, as well as the sensitization of governments and the societies at large on Pidgin. All these are positive developments in not just raising its status, but in making Nigerian Pidgin a language of study like English or any other language.

The stereotypical representations of Africa, Africans and Asians in Western Modernity led to the creation of other important stereotypes: the white woman being the embodiment of beauty, desire, preciousness and purity, there had to be an opposite to those values, which were

dear to the West and a feeling of insecurity and danger had to be created around the traits of the Western woman in order to justify her qualities, and the black man was the exact character who could play that role. Previously portrayed as a docile and innocent child, the black man is finally stereotyped in modern writings as the dangerous one, who was always longing for the virginity of the white woman. The black man therefore becomes a phallic symbol, as Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin White Masks*.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has added weight to the on-going debate on the viability or suitability of Pidgin as the national language for some African nations. The widespread use of Pidgins at the grassroots level, the increasing functions and domains of their use, the increasing literate populations and the positive attitudes being garnered are ensigns of brighter future for the qualification of Pidgins as official languages in some African countries.

The so-called stigmatization and the negative attitude towards Pidgin should not be perceived as permanent features. This is against the background that Pidgin has been discovered to be the most suitable bridge for intra- and inter-ethnic communication gap among interlocutors of differing political, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. After all, some languages that are now celebrated as world languages once suffered from stigmatization, low-language development status and from negative attitudes from the then literate segment of the speakers. But all these hurdles were overcome as unfolding events began to favour their use and development.

Another considerable edge that Pidgin has over some other languages is the ease of acquiring it. This makes Pidgin amenable to rapid expansion in the number of speakers, and thus, boosts its indigenization status among the users. We see indigenization process, in this paper, as a way of making a language native and adaptable to the need and use of its speakers. Pidgin is the most suitable in this regard due to its sporadic emergence feature. Even, English language has been regarded as being indigenized or “domesticated” in Nigeria because of the emergence of the Nigerian English (Adegbija, 1994, Bamigbose, 1998). Why then is the query on the status of Pidgin as a bonafide indigenous language? We now have the Nigerian Pidgin (NP), the Ghanaian (GhP), the Cameroon Pidgin (CamP) and so on, which are more native to the people than the Nigerian English (NE), Ghanaian English (GhE), Cameroon English (CamE) or Togo French (TogF).

However massive challenges lie ahead in order for Pidgin to see the light of lingua recognition in some African countries. I wish to state that Pidgin scholars, positivists and advocates should stop at nothing to get governments and stakeholders in concerned African countries see the light at the end of Pidgin's tunnel. Much needs to be done for elaborate works on Pidgin to emerge. A lot of works need to be done for the development of general systematic study of Pidgin. In Nigeria, the three varieties of Pidgin have benefited from the structural and socio-linguistic research. But the same cannot be said of Pidgin in Gambia, Guinea, Sierra-Leone, Ghana, Cameroon and a host of other African countries. Even in Nigeria, no official recognition has been accorded to Pidgin. Again, no standard orthography has been devised, but elaborated, codified and modernized Pidgin is highly desired in order for it to attract higher status and functions.

Governments at national and regional levels should give Pidgin serious recognition by encouraging the use and teaching of Pidgin in schools. The school curriculum should be revised to include Pidgin language. Before this, however, a high powered committee should be set up to devise standard orthographies for Pidgin in the affected African countries in such a way that its teaching can be facilitated. We are aware that the issue of language cannot be handled with the military fiat because of the social implications involved. But with the dimensions of popularity the Pidgin language is assuming, efforts of governments in this direction will meet with accession. The current Pidgin Development Committee set up at WALC 2013 conference should not die with the end of the conference. It should be funded, functional, undaunting, stable and steady.

More significantly, Pidgin materials need to be produced and made available. It is obvious, that, even in Nigeria, where a little effort has been made to bring Pidgin up shore, published materials are difficult to come by. Pidgin positivists, researchers and scholars need to converge, brainstorm and work assiduously for the production of Pidgin materials for pedagogical, legislative and societal needs. These materials should include texts, primers, manuals, dictionaries, audio and visual aids on pronunciation, lexicon, grammar, reading and writing comprehension. Also, the media should include Pidgin as part of their education programmes as it is being done now at WAZOBIA Fm 95.1. Pidgin, as a language of broadcast, should be introduced in radio and television stations. Newspapers should devote columns and pages to the Pidgin language. The task is quite enormous, but "where there is will, there is a way", goes the popular saying.

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