NIGERIAN PIDGIN: A CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE FOR ENTERTAINMENT, ADVERTISEMENT AND PUBLIC ENLIGHTENMENT CAMPAIGN IN NIGERIA

Ohwonohwo, Titus Rukaye

Abstract
Nigerian Pidgin (NP), is salient to many Nigerians especially in the Niger Delta region, where it is mostly used. Nigerian Pidgin is presently employed to tackle linguistic problems where we have gargantuan uneducated people. Pidgin is a language for all. It does not require one going to school to study it before one can actually speak it. The pidgin language that has been frowned at decades ago is now a contemporary tool for communication used by different people and for different purposes. This paper, therefore, focuses on three domains: entertainment advertisement and public enlightenment campaign, where the Nigerian pidgin plays a dominant role than English language in Nigeria. The paper asserts that in the absence of the pidgin language, disseminating messages via entertainment, advertisement and public enlightenment campaign, will not get to the actual target.

Introduction
Pidgin language (PL), is cardinal to many Nigerians most especially in the Niger Delta area. Nigerian pidgin, currently, is effectively used to substitute for the official language (English Language) in Nigeria. This is because of the high degree of illiteracy. It is language for all irrespective of one’s profession or discipline.

The pidgin language, which, until lately, has been frowned at, both in its oral and written form, has become a modern instrument of communication employed for entertainment, advertisement and public enlightenment campaign in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines the three domains: entertainment, advertisement and public enlightenment campaign, where the Nigeria pidgin plays a dominant role.

In Entertainment
Pidgin, as the language refers, is usually a contact vernacular which is not the native language of any of its user. It is a language which everybody speaks in Nigeria irrespective of his/her educational background.

Entertainment means giving somebody happiness to enable him see life as worth getting. It comprises listening to music/songs, watching movie/drama; listening to radio drama, jokes, request programmes and discussion programmes.

The entertainment world currently, has taken a new and different dimension in Nigeria. The entertainment industries have come to realize that, the only way their services (entertainments) can cut across every nook and cranny and be more profitable in Nigeria, is the introduction of pidgin language into their services. This advent has promoted the entertainment world in no small measure. The English language alone could not have increase the demand of the services of the entertainment world. The Nigerian pidgin is valuable to the lives of good numbers of Nigerians and to remove it from entertainment, can be of serious consequences to the entertainment industries. Nigerian people are drawn from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Faced with this situation, the entertainment world has no other option than to cleave to the use of pidgin language in public entertainment.

In contemporary Nigeria, the usage of the Nigerian pidgin has become extensive. It is now often used in Nigeria movies, especially in comedies and jokes. Notable public entertainers/jesters/comedians include: John Okafor, Julius Agwu, Klint, I-go-die, Ali Baba, and host of others. The significance of this usage is that, a viewing audience which comprises more of illiterates, will not find it difficult to comprehend what the movie or joke is all about.

Nigerian pidgin programmes feature both in audio and audio-visual mode. The former was pioneered by Radio River FM station, Port Harcourt, in 1984. Since then, other stations emulated. One of the programmes relay through television include: Night of a Thousand laughs, across NTA stations in Nigeria currently, while programmes relay through radio include: radio drama (One Thing at a Time by Kola Ogunjobi, Jolly Junction, etc. featured in Delta Broadcasting Service, Asaba and
Music is a significant aspect of the entertainment world. These days, Nigerian musicians have resort to the use of pidgin language in their songs. This is a clear indication that, in the entertainment world, pidgin language top rank among the multifarious languages in Nigeria. The recent influx of musicians in Nigeria fine-tuning their music in the Nigerian pidgin, shows the era of English music in Nigeria, is fast fading out. Musicians from the different geographical zones in Nigeria, disseminate their messages (music) in pidgin language. Notably among them are: African shina, Sample Ekwe, Daddy Shoky, Baba Fryo Saly Young, Victor Angel, etc.

Below are extracts from some Nigerian musicians who rendered their music in pidgin language:

1. **If no bi God** by Victor Angel
   If no bi God oo I for
don die oo If no bi God
   o o
   I for don kpeme o o . . .
   If not God
   I would have been dead . . .

2. **Idepain** by Sample Ekwe
   I de pain ni mi o o I de
   pain ni mi Weli weli o o
   . . .
   I feel the pain
   I feel the pain so serious . . .

3. **Crisis** by African Shina
   Some tin hapun For in
   said Mile 12 We kon
   mek Evribodi Kom
   intafe . . .
   A terrible thing
   Happened in mile 12
   That made everybody
   To interfere . . .

The above analyses show that, the new generation musicians, have no other language than the famous pidgin language to communicate in. no wonder Munzali Jibril (1995:233), posits that, “Nigerian pidgin is the language of the masses.”

In Advertisement

Advertisement, according to Wells et al (2000), “is any technologically displayed, printed, written and spoken idea, openly sponsored by the Advertiser, and at his or her expense, for the purpose of influencing votes, sales . . .

Arens (1990), also posits that, “advertisement is a paid non-personal communication of ideas, about goods and services . . . through the channels of communications technology such as: Internet, Electronic billboards, Television, Radio and video cassettes; to persuade, influence and stimulate the consumer buying behaviour”.

The-Nigerian pidgin (NP), is a latest medium employed for the disseminating of advertising messages as regards goods and services available in any firm, to a mass audience.
media and billboards are some conduits through which the Nigerian pidgin is fully in use for advertisements. For any production-firm or service-rendering firm to market its goods, the firm must first think of advertisement and how to do it. A good advertising campaign will increase the sales of any firm’s products/goods/services. Due to the heterogeneous population of Nigeria, most firms or industries have, apart from the English language, resort to advertising their goods and services to the general consumers, in Nigerian pidgin. This alone, has gone a long way in selling their products before they get to the market.

The uneducated trader will find it difficult to comprehend the advertising message written or spoken in the Standard English. But when it is advertise orally in pidgin language, the uneducated market woman will definitely decode the message. See below, an extract of an advertisement of Elephant Detergent, in pidgin language:

People de ask Me se e
   e We tin de Mek mi
   shine e e?
Na mi bi
Madam fine-skirt
Before before ...
Na wen Elephant Gold Detergent Don
enta my life . . .

People are asking me
What is the secret behind my attractiveness?
I am
Madam fine-skirt
Before now . . .
Is when Elephant Gold Detergent Came
into my life . . .

Finally, and most importantly, in a country such as Nigeria where pidgin language and English co-exist, it is felt that the former is more in use in the pubic and by the Nigerian populace and making the latter not too relevant to the different advertisers.

In Public Enlightenment Campaign

Public enlightenment campaign is the process of making known to the general public, the need to acquire something good, prevent scourge of disease, and the resultant effect: good or bad of something being embraced by all.

A government of a country that does not enlighten her citizens, is doing harm to her administration and the lives of the citizenry. The citizenry of any country need to be given enlightenment on how to prevent or how to go about something that is rampant and about resulting epidemic, etc in the society.

In the present day Nigeria, government has spent much money on enlightenment campaigns and does not restrict the enlightenment campaign to English language as a medium of communication in disseminating whatever message it intended, but rather, is extremely extended to the pidgin language as an easy medium of communication. This is attributed to the high level of illiteracy and the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian citizenry.

The enlightenment campaign on the need for every Nigerian to avoid casual sexual intercourse is being disseminated in English language and Nigerian pidgin, side-by-side. The former is very suitable for the elite class and not the uneducated class. On the other hand, the latter gets to everybody both the elite and the illiterates. But when the government decides to go by English language as a way of enlightening the general public, the message will only be transmitted almost half way or to a very low percentage of the populace. So, the only way the message gets to everybody (its destination): both the elite and the uneducated, is when the information is communicated in pidgin language.
A good percentage of the enlightenment campaign carried out by the government of Nigeria, is done in Nigerian pidgin. Some Examples encompass: enlightenment campaigns on HIV/AIDS, child trafficking, birdflu, mass-literacy, polio immunization, etc. These multifarious enlightenment campaigns are transmitted through the electronic and the print media, although, more of it is transmitted to the general public through the radio. What accounts for the latter is that, a Nigerian who cannot afford a television set, no matter how poor he is, can procure a small size transistor radio. Below are three different texts on different subjects, by the Federal Government of Nigeria:

1. **So na yu de sel the medicine We**
   government se mek mama Dem
   we de breast-feed pikin Tek . . .
   I go report yu giv NAFDAC

   So you are the person selling medicine
   Brought by the government for breast
   Feeding mothers . . .
   I will report you to NAFDAC

2. **HIV na real. Hi no no enibodi Hi**
   no no mama, hi no no papa,
   Hi no no pastor . . . HIV no de sho For fes.

   HIV is real. It recognizes nobody.
   It does not recognize mother, father,
   Pastor . . . HIV does not show in One’s
   face.

3. **Declare your assets No do mago**
   mago Nigeria don beta
   No do mago mago . . .

   Declare your assets.
   Do not be fraudulent Nigeria is
   now better a place.
   Do not be fraudulent . . .

Sequel to the above analyses, it is very clear that the rise of Nigerian pidgin is at its increase. English language as a medium of communication, is being threatened and dominated by the increasing recognition of the Nigerian pidgin especially in the areas of entertainment, advertisement and public enlightenment campaign.

**Recommendations**

Indeed, the pidgin language is a language that cuts across every ethnic group in Nigeria in terms of usage. The language is easily comprehended by everybody irrespective of his/her educational background. Based on these, the researcher therefore, recommends that both government (the three tiers) sector and the private sector should always use the pidgin language alongside English language in disseminating their messages to the general public. Those in the entertainment industries already using the pidgin language during entertainment, should preach to other entertainers to use this medium (pidgin language) in entertaining their audience.

**Conclusion**

It has been very interesting studying the role of pidgin language in the areas of: entertainment, advertisement and public enlightenment campaign. In this study, we now know that the pidgin language is a necessary apparatus of communication in place of disseminating of information/message in a country such as Nigeria that is heterogeneous.

**References**


Appendix Sample Texts

1. If no bi God by Victor Angel I for don die o o If no bi God o o I for don kpeme o o . . .

   If not God I would have been dead . . .

2. Radio advertisement by lever Brothers PEC. on Elephant Detergent Na mi be madam fine-skirt Before before . . . Na wen Elephant Gold Detergent Don enta mai laif . . .

   I am madam Fine-Skirl Before now . . . Is when Elephant Gold Detergent Came into my life . . .

3. a. Public enlightenment campaign:

   So na yu de sel the medicine We government se mek mama dem We de breast-feed pikin tek . . .
   I go report yu giv NAFDAC

   So you are the person selling medicine Brought by the government for breast-feeding mothers . . .
   I will report to NAFDAC.

b. HIV na real. Hi no no enibodi

   Hi no no mama, hi no no papa, hi no no Pastor . . . HIV no de sho for fes,
   HIV is real. It recognizes nobody. It does not recognize mother, father, pastor . . .
   HIV does not show in one's face

c. Declare your assets no do mago

   mago Nigeria don beta
   No do mago mago . . .

   Declare your assets Do not be fraudulent Nigeria is now a better place Do not be fraudulent . . .