

Reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin: A Versatile Communication Tool?

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Abstract: This study focuses on the various reduplication strategies employed to enrich the vocabulary of the Nigerian Pidgin (NP) given the limited internal resourcefulness of the language which cannot precisely and adequately capture certain terms, concepts, ideas and notions. The focus of this paper therefore is on the various reduplicative techniques that have been used to form verbal categories and lexical items in the language. The basic assumption is that in a multilingual/multi pluralistic society such as Nigeria with diverse languages, there is need to have a deliberate interventionist policy to encourage the growth of a language that serves as a common denominator in a multilingual Nigeria.

Key words: Reduplication, Nigerian pidgin, verbal categories, lexical items, multilingual, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most densely populated country in West Africa and one of the most multilingual having approximately 400 indigenous languages (Todd, 1984). Today this figure is highly questionable as recent developments of minority languages has increased this figure to a possible estimated 500. As in other parts of West Africa, there are no statistics for the number of people who speak pidgin English but as the population is a young one and as more become urbanized, Todd (1984) projects at least 5 million users of pidgin English in Nigeria. With the growth of Nigeria's population and rapid urbanization one can project a much higher figure. Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is widely used in certain states where minority languages abound and no particular language is deemed as the major language. State creation however, gave rise to the status of the various local minority languages in such states. Such states where NP is viewed as a language in its own right by virtue of constant usage and growth include the South-South geo-political states of Edo, Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa and Cross river and to a lesser extent Akwa Ibom. Akwa Ibom is a fairly homogenous state and so, strictly speaking does not fall under this category. A pidgin is a communication system that develops among people who do not share a common language. Linguists claim that a language is an arbitrary set of signs by which members of a speech community communicate and cooperate (Fromkin and Rodman, 1989). Pidgins are auxiliary languages which can be characterized as either restricted or extended. An extended pidgin is one which although,

it may not become a Mother Tongue (MT/L1) but proves virtually important in a multilingual nation like Nigeria where pidgin is used beyond the original limited functions. The restricted pidgin is used for minimal trading and tends to die out as soon as the contact which gave rise to it is withdrawn. In the Koreas for example, the Korean Bamboo English used widely during the Korean war when the Americans were present has since petered out.

THEORIES OF PIDGIN

Several theories have been propagated for the existence of pidgin from the baby-talk hypothesis, the polygenetic and monogenetic hypothesis to the African Root theory.

Jespersen as cited in Todd (1984) sees pidgin as a child's imperfect mastery of a language. The polygenetic hypothesis attributes the pidgin to many sources. This was later amended to pidgins resulting from a mixture of two or more inter languages. The mono-genetic hypothesis on the other hand claims that the pidgins underlying structural similarity (irrespective of location) is traceable to one common European source.

The African root theory posits that the origin of pidgin can be traced to the slave trade as a common language emerging from so many languages. Reinecke as cited in Todd (1984) also postulates the nautical jargon theory which says that sea farers, ocean travellers and navigators had of necessity developed the pidgin. Other theories postulated include the relexification theory which suggests that most if not all pidgins and creoles were

derived from a Portuguese based reconnaissance language in the 15th century which was specifically designed to train Africans as interpreters. The theory of Linguistic universals is based on contradictory theories put forward by various linguists including and the tendency now is to look for the common denominators underlying all the varieties of language and to argue that pidgins and creoles are like any other language.

The Nigerian Pidgin (NP): It is a known fact that pidgin, the world over, developed from contact situations especially where the groups in contact have no common means of communication. Todd (1984) defines pidgin as a marginal language that arises to fulfill certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language. In other words, when a language is used as a means of contact or communication between persons having no other language in common and when this particular language is native to none of these people using it, it is called a pidgin. Todd (1984) says that a pidgin is a common language that has a fixed word order and is syntactically simpler than any other mother tongue variety of English. The Nigerian pidgin is particularly influenced not just by English but by local languages too. Egbokhare (2001) observes that NP thrives in a linguistically heterogeneous environment like Nigeria with a total of about 436 indigenous languages. In the same vein, Bamgbose (1991) accepts the wide use of NP as a means of communication in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is a language of wide communication in the face of the multiplicity of languages in the country. Pidgin has no standard grammar or model, no noun-verb agreement endings. NP is therefore not standardized as it varies in depth and usage from region to region (Ugot, 2009). However, Abdullahi notes that using the word pidgin to describe the speech pattern or its written version commonly referred to as broken English in days gone by or stylishly named rotten English by Ken Saro-Wiwa in his novel, *Sozaboy* is no longer fashionable nor accurate. The structure of the NP includes an absence of grammatical categories like gender, case, person, number, mood and voice. There are no inflections for plural possessive or derivational types. Pronouns often precede nouns:

Im book-his/her book

There is semantic extension or expansion with pidgin lexical items having a greater range of meaning. Reduplications are used as intensifiers.

I don do am bad bad-I have done it very badly

Count nouns are also reduplicated. Most loan words are borrowed from English and other Nigerian Languages. The NP reflects features of the native language of the area. The NP has high rate of borrowing from base languages like English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Krio and a mixture of local languages and dialects.

Word	Meaning	Origin
Palava	Unnecessary talk and trouble	Spanish/English
Sabi	Know	Portuguese
Pikin	Child	Portuguese/Krio
Oga	Boss, husband	Yoruba
Kpotokpoto	Mud	Ijaw
Ewo!	Exclamation for surprise, sadness, I	Gbo
Doh!	A greeting	Bini
Oya'	Lets go, come on and get ready	Yoruba
Haba	Really	Hausa
Boku	Plenty	French

NP lacks the copula is in equative constructions or sentences. There is no subject-verb agreement. NP is a tone language of high and low, like most Nigerian languages. Calquing, the utilization of English loan words in combination according to the patterns of compounds in Nigerian languages is very common in NP:

- Strong-head-Stubborn
- Suffahead-Poor man

NP therefore has its own syntactic pattern which is a reduced form of inflections and derivations that differ from the English language.

Mafeni (1971) explains that NP is to some extent, complex and shows some variety in form and function from one speech community to another. Though these varieties may be mutually intelligible, they differ with respect to the indigenous languages which influence their phonological, lexical and syntactic peculiarities. The resourcefulness of NP can best be seen in this excerpt of a preacher and his NP interpreter in Delta state of the south-south geo-political zone:

- Preacher: as the boat was sailing there was a great storm
- Interpreter: as de canoe dey remove na im yawa come gas
- Preacher: the disciples became so afraid and they shouted master! master
- Interpreter: na im liver drop him palles dem begin hala bros eh! bros eh
- Preacher: jesus got up and calmed down the wind
- Interpreter: na im Jesus rise up come arrange the yawa

In Nigeria, the vocabulary of pidgin grows every day. One only has to listen to the growing Nigerian popular music, comedy sketches and the film industry (Nollywood) to pick up on new vocabulary as these sectors thrive on the use of NP (Ugot, 2009). There are new nonce formations which can be defined as new complex and coined word by a speaker/writer on the spur of the moment to cover some immediate need. It ceases to be a nonce formation when accepted by speakers as a term they have heard before (Bauer, 1983). Such expressions include:

How far?	How are you? What's going on? How are things?
Na wa-o	A versatile expression that denotes
Na wa for you	Disdain, shock, annoyance, teasing, disbelief, depending very much on the situation at hand

Other coinages or neologisms result from cultural contact and are initially peculiar to a particular genre such as that of music (Ugot, 2009).

Yahooze	Internet fraudster
Tear body	Stress oneself
Shayo	An alcoholic drink
Sengemenge	Smoothly
Yori yori	An endearment, soft heart beat
Kolomental	A mental case

Such coined words gain currency with the passage of time. Xerox and kleenex for example were invented trade names which are now recent additions to the English language. The South African vuvuzela has also recently been admitted into the English dictionary as a plastic horn (BBC World Service, 2010).

Code-switching and code-mixing are inherent in Nigeria's multilingual society. The NP is one of the languages used commonly in code-mixing and code-switching in particular because it is often used in situational code-switching where the situation demands a change in language to accommodate a third party who may not be fluent in the language used by the original speakers. The basic sentence structure in NP as in other varieties of English include (subject) predicate (object) (complement) where bracketed elements are optional (Todd, 1984). Todd (1984) also observes that pidgin Englishes are simpler than Standard English (SE) in that they are more systematic and thus easier to learn. They have jettisoned morphological and syntactic irregularities but they have not sacrificed the ability to communicate precisely and unambiguously the linguistic needs of their speakers. It is to be noted that because pidgin and by extension the NP is acquired as an auxiliary language it does not need to fill as many roles as a unique mother tongue. In addition, it is perfectly adequate to the

linguistic roles in which it is used and can be expanded as the communicative need of its users increase. Thirdly, although, a pidgin's vocabulary is less extensive than that of SE, it can convey similar types of information with fewer words often expressing abstractions by means of metaphorical extensions of basic vocabulary items like belly, eye and hand:

Get belle	Be pregnant
Sharp eye	Be observant
Shine your eye	Be vigilant
Tai han	Tight-fisted

THE STATUS OF THE NP

Essien (2003) proposes a new language policy for Nigeria which includes a translation of a foreign language for international communication into actual Nigerian languages and allocation of functions. The NP is one of these proposed languages and its introduction is to be done in phases. NP is a language accepted and recognized by Nigerians at all levels of education and class as a language that is effective for communication (Bangbose, 1991; Elugbe and Omamor, 1991; Jibril, 1995; Okon, 1997; Essien, 1998; Egbokhare, 2001). As Egbokhare (2001) states Pidgin thrives in a linguistically heterogeneous environment where contact is marginal.

It is a language spoken by both the elite and the masses in Nigeria. In a study, Okon effectively proves the usefulness of NP in Cross river state in particular where it was established that both male population and in the female population in the state use NP in communication. NP is used in the state in disseminating information on health, economic, political and cultural issues through the media. NP is also used in broadcasting the news and is very versatile in advertisements. The repeated call by Okon (1997) for the use of NP as a national language buttresses, Essien (1990a, b) recommendation for the introduction of the NP with specific roles and functions assigned to it. Furthermore, he proposed new language policies which include the gradual implementation of the NP as a national language.

The use of the NP has an extensive scope, for as Jibril (1995) observes, the functions of NP have become more all-inclusive. Furthermore, he says news broadcasts current affairs discussions, programmes, news bulletins are some of the programmes that tend to favour NP.... as the language of the masses in certain states such as Rivers, Delta and Cross river etc. Gani-Ikhlama (1990) recognizes the fact that NP has become so wide spread in Nigeria that it is practically the mother tongue or Lingua Franca of some Nigerians notably in the South-South

geopolitical zone. It has become creolized and could be used orally as a medium of instruction in the initial years of primary school if education is to be meaningful to our pidgin speaking children. Okon (1997) joins a growing number of linguists who have called for growth and corpus planning/status planning for NP in order to assign specific roles and functions to it which in the long run would introduce a new language policy for the gradual implementation of the NP as a national language.

At a conference of language scholars at the Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique (IFRA) held at the University of Ibadan in 2009, Abdullahi observes that scholars rose with the firm resolution that the NP is presently well developed enough in terms of widespread usage, identifiable orthography and communication propensity to shed the derogatory connotation of the term pidgin and wear a new respectable toga known as *Naija langwej* with a new standard orthography as written by *Naija Langwej Akedemi (NLA)*.

REDUPLICATION IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN

Reduplication is a process by which a category or constituent of a sentence can be doubled (Essien, 1990b). Crystal (2003) describes reduplication as a process of repetition whereby the form of a prefix/suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root. Crystal (2003) again observes that reduplication is a morphological process whereby a process of repetition occurs. The NP exhibits several word formulation processes including borrowing, coinage or neologism and blending reduplication. Borrowing is done through loan words or loan translations, a loan word being a recipient language has lifted from a foreign language to mean the same object and practices to which it originally referred in the donor language. Nigeria is a multilingual country whose history of borrowing pre-dates her independence (Olaoye, 2007). Contact with the outside world during the Trans Saharan trade in the Moores, the slave trade era and more recently the contact with the west have had a far reaching linguistic impact on Nigerian languages and by extension Nigeria pidgin. We shall look at word formation processes for reduplication expression for prolonged activity, adjectives, intensificate and emphasis, duplicity, plurality, nominalization, onomatopaeic expressions and even nick-naming. Pidgin speakers enlarge the functional power of a limited vocabulary through the use of reduplicated forms. Reduplication occurs in many languages including English:

Goody-goody, never-never, so-so, fifty-fifty

In NP, reduplication is a borrowed form from the mother tongue or L1 of the speakers as it is a common phenomenon in many Nigerian Languages. Olaoye (2007) says that when a foreign word is borrowed into another language it may or may not retain its original pronunciation. Most speakers will pronounce the borrowed word according to the sound system of their own language particularly if the phonemic sounds of the borrowed language do not exist in the borrowing language, the offending phoneme will be replaced by the nearest equivalent native sound in the borrowing language. Essien observes that reduplication of nouns and adjectives can be used to perform adverbial functions. In the case of verbs, Essien (1990a) explains that reduplication leads to the modification of the root phonologically in one way or another. With the CVC roots, the final root is deleted as the example below shows in *Ibibio*, a Lower Cross language in *Akwa Ibom* state:

- Dep-buy it
- Dee dep-buy it (instead of asking for a free one)

In *Leggbo*, an Upper Cross language, Udoh (2004) notes that reduplication is a very productive morphological process. All word classes are prone to reduplication with both total and partial reduplication. Total reduplication is used to mark grammatical categories such as plurality:

Lettolggwene ggwene-white heads

In *Agwagune*, another Upper Cross language in Cross river language, reduplication is common in short negative sentences in the imperative (Udoh, 2003):

- Wa-go
- Gewawa-do not go

In *Efik*, a Lower Cross Language in Cross River state, Mensah (2004) observes the formation of adverbs from nouns by reduplication:

- Itiat-stone
- Itiatitiat-stony

Pidgin speakers enlarge the functional power of a limited vocabulary through the use of reduplicated forms. Reduplication in NP is used to express different grammatical and lexical functions. It is used to express continuous or prolonged activity:

- Luk-look
- Luk luk-stare
- Luku luku-someone who stares or gapes

There is a long list of such adjectives.

Sik	Sick
Sikisiki	Someone who is always sickly
Play	Play
Playplay	Someone who is very playful
Pis	Urinate
Pispis	Someone who wets the bed frequently
Talk	Talk
Talk talk	Prolonged chatter
Waka	Walk
Waka waka	Someone who is always out and about
Lai	Lie
Lai lai	Someone who tells a lot of lies
Krai	Cry
Krai Krai	Someone who is constantly crying used to describe fretful children
Chop	Eat, food
Chop chop	Someone who eats a lot; always eating

Reduplication intensifies or modifies the meaning of a simple form.

Fain pikin	Lovely child
Fain fain pikin	A really lovely child
Ben	Bend
Ben ben	Crooked
Na so	That's how
Na so so	It's only
Now	Now
Now now	Immediately
Chook	Pierce
Chookuchooku	Thorns

Reduplication can be used to imply a repeated or protracted action:

- Di pikin de krai-The child is crying
- Di pikin de soso krai krai-The child is always crying

Reduplication can be used to express the equivalent of one by one and one each:

- Di people bin enta wanwan-The people entered one by one
- Gif dem tutu-Give them two each

Reduplication as a device is systematically exploited for emphasis through derivational morphemes:

E fain	It is lovely
E fain well well	It is very lovely
E big	It is big
E big well well	It is very big
E skata	It is scattered
E skata skata	It is very scattered
Come today today	Come today (not another day)

Reduplication can be used for nick naming:

- Mama talk talk Mrs loquacious
- Oga tif tif s Mr. can't keep his hands to himself (Mr thief)

Reduplication can be used to indicate plurality:

- Na so so stone stone full di bucket -only stones are in the bucket
- Na so so kapet kapet dey-it is only carpets everywhere

Reduplication is used to suggest duplicity:

Holi holi	Santimonious
Ton ton	Make excuses
Kona kona	Trickily

Reduplication is used to express adverbs:

Nyafu nyafu	Plenty
Magu magu	Trickily
Wuru wuru	Dubiously
Kpata kpata	Completely
Wata wata	Watery
Sam sam	Completely
Kia kia	Quickly
Sofri sofri	Easy
Wan day wan day	Soon
Today today	Immediately

Reduplication is also common in adjectival formations:

Jaga jaga	Scattered
Shine shine	Smart
Shine shine bobo	A smart looking man
Korokoro	Plain
Korokoro eye	Naked eye
Suffa suffa	Hardship
Suffa suffa person	Someone going through hard times

There are many nouns in NP that are reduplicative in form:

Kpoto kpoto	Mud
Kpete kpete	Rotten food
Nyama nyama	Soft, slimy, rubbish
Kabukabu	Private car, used as taxi
Boi-boi	A house-boy or male/ female house keeper
Jigi jigi	A shiver, a tremble
Kata kata	Trouble, chaos
Kata kata don come	There is trouble, brewing
Mutu mutu	Sand fly

Reduplication is also used in creating abstract nouns:

Sabi sabi Omniscience (All-knowing)

Reduplication in NP can also be found in onomatopaeic expressions:

Gbam gbam	Heavy sound
Kong kong	Tin
Kring kring	Doorbell
Yori yori	Soft heartbeat
Piom piom	Whistle

Pioneer writers in Nigerian pidgin include Aig Imoukhuede's Pidgin stew and sufferhead in 1982, Ken Saro-Wiwa's long pidgin poem Dis Nigeria self in his collection songs in a time of war in 1985, Mamman Jiya Vatsa's Tori for Geti Bowleg, Ezenwa Ohaeto's I wan bi president in 1998 and If to say I be soja in 1998. In Onwundijo's De wahala for Wazobia in 2007 the writer makes extensive use of reduplicative expressions in his pidgin poems. For Instance:

In Everything get k-leg for wazobia, we have
.... Make kata kata no burst out gwragadam
where kata kata is a noun trouble

In I find them reach Baga (where Lake Chad de vex de Die)

.... Both papa and mama and picin dem
De kill kill dem
Up and down de lake
No look back

Where kill kill denotes plurality killings Again in I find dem reach Baga

.... Water de dry de go, de dry de go....

Water is described as drying up with the NP expressing continuous prolonged activity.

In I go de sing my song for pidgin
.... Wey been dey like sand sand for dis water
Sand sand is used as an adverb meaning plenty
In Quota system don break my jaws
.... Dem get plenty plenty doctor
A case of intensification many

CONCLUSION

The NP is a versatile language that meets the demand for a growing number of Nigerians who need to communicate. The morphological process of reduplication has been found to be one of full reduplication which has been very useful in this endeavour as it enlarges and enriches the vocabulary and verbal categories of the language. The NP is a language of necessity in a multilingual and pluralistic society such as Nigeria. An enhancement of its status through effective corpus planning would go a long way in further uniting the country through a future Naija langwej.

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