

# **Nigerian Pidgin and West African Pidgins: A sociolinguistic perspective**

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# Outline

- Introduction
- The study
- Previous studies
- Preliminary findings of the study
- Summary and next steps.

# Introduction

- The emergence of Pidgins and creoles is one of the sociolinguistically significant outcomes of European contact in Africa (Adegbija 2004:14; Echu and Obeng (eds.) 2004:12).
- In West Africa, pidgins and creoles are found from the Gambia in the northwest to Cameroon in the southeast (Holm 1989: 406).
- The term West African Pidgin English (WAPE- refers to varieties of related pidgins 'that range from rudimentary to highly expanded, creole-like varieties' spoken in the coastal countries where English is an official language- the Gambia, Guinea, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon (Holm 1989: 426, Sebba, 1997:126).

# WEST AFRICA



# Previous studies

**NP** - most researched of the three varieties with major works in just about every aspect.

- Most recent sociolinguistic study by Deuber (2006) in the Southwest region (Lagos); focuses NP as spoken by educated speakers.

**GhaP**- Minimal research in general; systematic study of individual sociolinguistic aspects is yet to be done (Huber, 1999).

- Sociolinguistic study of GP: Amoako (1992) dissertation and Huber (1999) are perhaps the most comprehensive studies on GP.
- Focus (including this conference) is mostly on the institutionalised variety i.e. spoken by students etc perhaps informed by considerable spread in those contexts (Huber 1999: 3).
- Most recent sociolinguistic study: Amoako (in press)

**CamPE**- Comparatively minimal sociolinguistic research in CP.

- Detailed study Mbassi-Manga (1973)
- Recent sociolinguistic study Schroder (2003); Wolf (2001, 2007) etc

# The study

Comparative analysis of sociolinguistic factors that have influenced current developments in attitudes, functions, and domains of use.

Varieties spoken in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon constitute the focus of this study by virtue of

1) general consensus in literature with regard to similarities in their emergence from trading contacts between Europeans and indigenous peoples along the coast; Krio influence; and later spread into the interior of the coastal states (Holm, 1989; Huber 2004); and therefore

2) share common origins, socio-historical, sociolinguistic and structural similarities such that they are mutually intelligible to a large extent, but also exhibit sufficient differences to make them distinct varieties (Sebba, 1997, Peter and Wolf, 2007);

3) Being national varieties with substantial numbers of speakers who use them in their expanded forms (Sebba, 1997, Peter and Wolf, 2007);

4) Their linguistic status as expanded pidgins in contrast to creoles like Sierra Leonean Krio

# Mutual intelligibility

## *Examples of structural Differences:*

**GhaP:** Degree of mutual intelligibility due to grammatical differences (Huber, 1999) e.g.

	<b>GhaP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>CamP</b>
Completive marker	--	don	don
Copula	bi	na	na
Plural marker	--	dem	dem

**NP and CamP:** Though more closely related, show differences at grammatical and lexical levels e.g.

	<b>NP</b>	<b>CamP</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular marker	im	yi
<i>mother</i>	mama	mami
<i>troubled</i>	wahala	hambok

## Sociohistorical Factors

Parameters	NP	GhaP	CamP
<b><i>Period of contacts with Europeans</i></b>	Portuguese in the 15 <sup>th</sup> century; British between 17 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> century).		
<b><i>Major participants in the contact situations</i></b>	Indigenous peoples in contact with Portuguese, Dutch, British, Sierra Leoneans and Krumen.		
<b><i>Linguistic context of contact</i></b>	Linguistically diverse		
<b><i>Language Influence</i></b>	Portuguese English Krio on NP	Portuguese English Krio on GhaP and CamP through NP.	Portuguese English NP on development of CamP Krio on GhaP and CamP through NP.

- NP's role in transmitting Krio features and its unidimensional influence on GhaP and CamP.
- May be one of the factors for NP's relatively faster growth and expansion.



## Demographic Factors

	NIGERIA	GHANA	CAMEROON
<b>Population</b>	141,356,000	22,535,000	17,795,000
<b>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	923,768	238,500	475,440
<b>Population density (persons/km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	153	95	37
<b>Number of Languages</b>	514	79	286
<b>Language: Population</b>	1: 275,000	1:285,253	1:68,000
<b>Complexity Index</b>	3.5	0.8	2.3
<b>Official Language(s)</b>	English	English	French and English

- Where population density is high and number of languages is high, the linguistic landscape tends to be more complex .
- Ratio and Complexity index both suggest Nigeria as most complex and Ghana as least complex
- High population density within highly multilingual contexts promotes the spread of lingua francas like pidgins.

# Sociolinguistic Factors

# Sociolinguistic Situation

	<b>NIGERIA</b>	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CAMEROON</b>
Exogenous	English Arabic	English	French English
Indigenous	Nigerian Languages	Ghanaian languages	Cameroonian languages
Lingua Franca	Nigerian Pidgin (Southern region, urban contexts) Hausa (Northern) Igbo (Southeast) Yoruba (Southwest)	Ghanaian Pidgin (Southern towns, Urban centres) Hausa (Northeast) Twi (South)	Cameroonian Pidgin (Northwest, Southwest, Littoral, West) English – West French Fulfude- North Bulu (South) Duala-Douala Ewondo-(Centre/South) Ewondo Populaire (Buea and Maroua) Mungaka-(North-west)

# Development and Use of WAPE varieties

Parameters	NP	GhaP	CamP
Number of Speakers	30,000,000 including L1 and L2 speakers	5,000,000	2,000,000 L2 Speakers (1989 est.)
Language Use	Widespread use in informal and formal contexts e.g. News broadcasts Increasing use of literate users who also write NP	Informal use of two varieties in restricted domains and functions e.g. Increasing use by students	Mostly informal; Used by majority of anglophone and francophone speakers in urban settings; Use by younger population in a wider range of contexts
Language development (Book length publications)	Dictionary and Grammar Bible portions (1957). Bible translation in progress Literacy Primers Naija Language Academy	Grammatical descriptions	Bible Portions (1966) NT (2002)

# *Language functions in education*

Parameters	Nigeria	Ghana	Cameroon
Official National	English Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa	English Twi, Ewe, Dangme, Ga, Nzema, Daagare, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani	French and English Not officially designated Fulfude, Bulu, Duala, Ewondo, Ewondo Populaire , Mungaka
Medium of Instruction	MT/Language of immediate Community in first three years, English	English	French and English
To be taught as Subject	Nigerian languages	Ghanaian Languages	French and English

# *Attitudes*

<i>Degree of Stigmatisation</i>	NP	GhaP	CamP
<i>High</i>		*	
<i>Medium</i>			*
<i>Low</i>	*		

# Domains of Use

Social Domains	NIGERIA			GHANA			CAMEROON		
	SNE	NP	ILs	SGE	GhaP	ILs	SCE/SCF	CamP	ILs
<b>Education (students and staff)</b>									
<b>Formal</b>	***	--	--	***	--	--	***	--	--
<b>Informal</b>	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
<b>Mass Media and Political Campaigns (Radio and TV programmes, advertising)</b>	***	***	***	***	*	*	***	*	*
<b>Administration and work (Government, Parliament, National /State Assemblies)</b>									
<b>Formal</b>	***	--	**	***	--	--	***	--	--
<b>Informal</b>	***	***	***	***	--	***		***	***
<b>Religion</b>	***	**	***	***	--	*	***	**	--
<b>Commerce</b>	**	***	***	***	***	*	***	***	***
<b>Literary works and Entertainment</b>	***	**	**	***	*	--	***	**	--

\*\*\*Predominantly or widely used, \*\* fairly used,\*rarely used, -- not at all or not certain

# Sociolinguistic Factors

- **Functions** of a language play a role in determining **attitudes** towards it...and are unevenly shared in different **domains** (Adegbija 2004, 133).
- Status is in relation to official languages on one hand, and indigenous languages on the other.
- *Functions*  
**NP and CamP:** second to official languages at national level; parallel functions with indigenous languages at local levels.
- Increasing literate populations does not appear to have limited expansion of NP and CamP.
- *Attitudes*
- *Stigmatisation:* Low for NP correlates with increasing functions and high for GhaP correlates with restricted functions and domains and relatively more homogenous contexts.



- *Domains*  
**GhaP:** reflects more of a diglossic situation with Standard Ghanaian English
- **NP and CamP:** Only a few domains are exclusive to Standard English varieties; are not used for purposes distinct from English
- *Development and Use*  
More modernised, elaborated and codified languages attract higher status and functions.
- *Codification and Elaboration:*
- NP and CamP. Though no official recognition nor standard orthography; long history of literary efforts have aided expansion of functions .
- *Modernisation:*
- Adaptation of NP for expanded use relatively more than GhaP and CamP e.g use in formal domains in media (news broadcast), and by literate population in both speaking and writing formats.

# Summary

- This study examined various factors that have affected the development of NP and West African pidgins, GhaP and CamP.
- The continued expansion of the NP variety into more formal domains, in the face of stigmatisation, lack of codification and official recognition, illustrates the power the users possess to overcome these limitations.
- An increase in population of young and educated speakers has been noted for the three varieties, a factor reflecting current developments and an indicator of future spread and expansion.

## Next steps

- Further expansion of NP into more formal domains through the media including social media networks, as is the case with the establishment a Nigerian Pidgin radio station, provides an opportunity to observe the influence of individual usage practices and efforts in the promotion of pidgins.
- The effect of this and other developments on standardisation and codification efforts need to be investigated.

# WAZOBIAfm 95.1

- Nigeria's first and only station dedicated to broadcasts in Nigerian Pidgin
- Established in 2007
- Widely accepted; the opening of 2 other stations in Abuja and Port Harcourt reflect level of acceptance.
- Has moved use of NP into more formal contexts of news broadcasts and social media networks
- Have devised own writing system for NP in the absence of a standard orthography
- Target audience: both literate and non-literate in English
- Literate users of NP post comments on station's facebook

# Sample text (1)

- **Una World News**

We presido Goodluck Jonathan don comot come yan say him don talk am before and e go still talk am again say na for May 29 2015 him go carry waka comot for we presido chair.

# Sample Text (2)

- **WAZOBIA Facebook Discussion Board**
- **TOPIC: BOKO HARAM**
- **Total postings= 16 responses**
- mek dis people come do dat their nonsense bomb bomb here 4 naija delta...we 4 just de catch dem ,,de roast dem,de fry dem.....one by one.....militants and boko haram,,,,,,dem no be mates...militants senior demmm..mek dem relax...
- They cant try it,they no reach. Na only dat their place they go dey try dat nonsense. tnk you broda.

***Thank you.***