

Nation of a Thousand Laughs: Stand-up Comedy, Nigerian Pidgin & the Public Sphere

Rudolf P. Gaudio
Purchase College, State University of New York
rudolf.gaudio@purchase.edu

1.0 Garrett's (2007) typology of creole-language use in public-sphere discourse:

1.1 *Instrumentalization*: making the creole a standardized language of literacy: orthography, expanding lexicon, producing dictionaries and grammars, radio news broadcasts, etc.

"Instrumentalization is in most respects a forward-looking strategy, a matter of rapidly 'modernizing' the language so as to transform it into a vehicle of national development" (Garrett 2007: 139).

> Cf. Teilyano's (2004) advocacy of NP: "Nigerian Pidgin is as much indigenous as (if not more indigenous than) it is foreign... [I]ts use is so widespread cutting across social and tribal boundaries, that Nigerian Pidgin may well be considered one of Nigeria's major languages... [T]here are bright prospects of Nigerian Pidgin getting increasingly standardized as it is used more frequently in literary and journalistic writings" (Teilyano 2004: 242-243).

1.2 *Reappropriation*: using the creole language in popular cultural venues, such as festivals, talk radio programs, and other mass-mediated entertainment.

"Reappropriation involves looking backward as well as forward in time by linking [Saint Lucian] Kwéyòl to... local 'traditions,' including dress, dance, cuisine, architecture, handicrafts... Emphasis is thus placed on the unity and continuity of Kwéyòl and its community of speakers—an imagined community in Anderson's [1991] sense" (Garrett 2007: 139-140).

2.0 Nigerian Stand-up Comedy:

2.1 Naija Pride & Shame / *Nite of a Thousand Laughs, vol. 9* (Obaino Music, 2006)

2.1.1 Klint de Drunk

[4:20] *One thing I don't like about white people is that, when they talk, it's like they're chewing chewing gum ((chewing noises)). If they even want to speak Pidgin English, it saund somhau. If they want to say, Hau yu de? ((chew-talking:)) "Hau-yu-de."*

2.1.2 Basket Mouth

[12:45] *Ai no send. Na oyinbo de hia? Wetin him kom du hia kom du? No bi hosul him kom hosul? Oyinbo hau yu de? ((American/AAVE accent:)) Are you okay? You're good. Where you from? Where you from? What? New York? U.K.! ((British/London accent:)) U.K., how ya doin mate? Cheers, mate. You're good, nice one, baby. ((Nigerian/unmarked accent:)) How long have you been in Nigeria? One year? Serious? Do you have a visa? You don't? An yu de kom autsaid for Nigeria? We are deporting you tonight. Security! Let's- we have a problem. We have a problem. Your visa expired. Yu wan tek of, dem de luk for yu, jos dres up laik wuman komot. I gud abi?*

[14:40] *Naija, wi no send. Yu no wait pipul de- wait pipul de commit suicide for stupid reasons. Yu si wait pikin de haus, de insaid kichen, go luk araun, go kari bred, go kari naif. I open frij, ((vaguely American accent:)) "Oh my god there's no butter, oh god!" ((gestures slitting of throat))*

[18:50] *If white people come back to Africa for another set of slave trade, dem no go porsu os, dem no go faind os. Yu no in doz dez dem porsu den, yu si gaiz de ron. Dist aim wi go de faind dem. Gaiz from Benin, yu jos go dat Port Hartcourt said, yu jos de weit for- yu weit for ship. ((Looks at watch)) Dem se de don sapos tu kom nau, wetin de hapun?*

2.2 Socio-cultural caricatures / **AY Live 2: Lagos Invasion, vol. 4** (Obaino Music, 2008)

2.2.1 Bovi

[19:10] *An wi get chiks we bi se di last taim we de lisen tu nius na 1999. Wan chik tel mi se sins, eva sins di *military granted civilian independent*, ai say, military dey hand ova, bot as di gel bring politics na ai folo am se ehn! ehn! *How do you find the race for president between Obama and Senator Clinton?* Na di gel luk mi se, *“Are they in PDP or AC?”**

2.2.2 Koffi

[50:40] *Abeg, please, mek una clap for di niu governa we dey for Legos, Fashola, di gai de trai, di gai de trai!... But now, something serious the guy really try, even if i rivas you know our road will be better, aksiden go ridius i no go bi laik those days. Imagine in those days yu de on top Third Mainland Bridge na 504 wit classic apala music de go fo express ((few syllables of Yoruba song)). Then somebody hits that Yoruba man’s car from nowhere, gbosa! The first thing the Yoruba man would do is leave the car on this side of the express, cross to the other side. “Ah! Onkul se bi yu sor wen de hit mai ka? Please, don’t go! Ehn! Aunty please, se bi yu sor wen I was trafficking with my left, abi? Ehn! Oyinbo, e de kun! That is Yoruba for you. Yoruba man no de fait i fait, i go kol evribodi we i de araun.*

But if you see Hausa man, same scenario. The car must be a Honda, everything must be Honda and they have their own song too ((few syllables of Hausa song)), but with modern touch, you know. Aladin kom put ((Aladin’s song)), e se gbosa! Hausa man will face you one on one, “Wallahi tallahi ai wan tu tel mi se ai no si? Kai! Mai ka dey kom fi- yor ka dey come fa- fi- fa- fi- fa- all of a sudden kuma gbosa! Wallahi mi an yu go dai hia tude.

But Igbo, Igbo kwanu! Bai di taim ai go finish wit una, una no go kwanu enitin. If una pikchor an Igbo man, na *Jeep high enough to enter with a ladder and na only one song classic i no de for chenj ((few syllables of Igbo song)) gbosa! The first thing the Igbo man check is his car stereo ((few words in Igbo)), then comes down ((few words in Igbo)), “Sixteen years of hard work, hey! Si plet nomba fol daun o! Three years of manual labor, hey! Oga yu don bai market.”*

3.0 Naija nationhood?

“It is also suggested that Nigerian Pidgin be given more serious consideration as an optional and sociolinguistically neutral language for the expression of Nigerian literature.” (Teilanyo 2004: 243)

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