

**Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town: exploring speakers' attitudes and  
use in diaspora**

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**DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018

## **Keywords**

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Language planning and policy

Language ideology

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## Abstract

Nigerian Pidgin English is widely spoken in different parts of the country and “has been called the native language of a substantial population of people in the Niger Delta, particularly in the Sapele and Warri areas” (Igboanusi, 2008: 68). According to Balogun (2012: 90), “Nigerian Pidgin English has emerged as the most widely spoken language of inter and intra communication among Nigerians and across diverse ethnic groups that do not share a common language”. The language plays a major role in youth culture and most Nigerians speak the language. There is a general belief by some Nigerians that Nigerian Pidgin English is a colloquial form of English that is mostly spoken by those whose Standard English proficiency has not fully developed (Agheyisi, 1971:30). The government has continued to ignore it “despite the fact that Nigerian Pidgin is in most respects the most logical choice for a national language [and] official attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin remain negative, perpetuating erroneous notions inherited from the colonial period that Nigerian Pidgin is some form of ‘broken English’” (Faraclas 1996: 18). Also, the general attitudes held by Nigerians regarding the language can be described as ambivalent with majority leaning towards the negative attitude more. This project investigated if the Nigerians who find themselves in a different geographical space like Cape Town still hold negative attitudes towards Pidgin English and whether they abstained from speaking the language or speak it freely. The study also sought to establish if those who may have held negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English while in Nigeria now hold a different attitude since being in Cape Town. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods in form of online questionnaires and semi structured interviews involving 38 participants to investigate the uses of and attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English. The findings revealed that the attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English do not show significant difference from that held by Nigerians within Nigeria. The participants in this study held negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains and positive attitudes towards the language in informal domains. These same attitudes were obtainable among Nigerians living in Nigeria. The data analysis revealed that the Nigerians in this study use the language in their daily activities for different purposes. The hegemonic perspective on Pidgins being an informal language that can serve only informal purposes was also present among some of the Nigerians that formed part of this study. Although some thought that the language can go beyond informal domains, the majority thought otherwise. All the participants

use Nigerian Pidgin English mainly to communicate with their friends, family members and other Nigerians they encounter despite living far away from home where other languages exist. Also, the analysis revealed that all the participants considered the language to be an important aspect of their Nigerian identity and togetherness in the diaspora. This indicates a significant difference between those in the diaspora and those in Nigeria, because those in the diaspora appreciate and think there is a greater need for Nigerian Pidgin English outside the country. The data suggested that the reason for this shift in attitude is because speaking the language bridges the gap between home and abroad.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

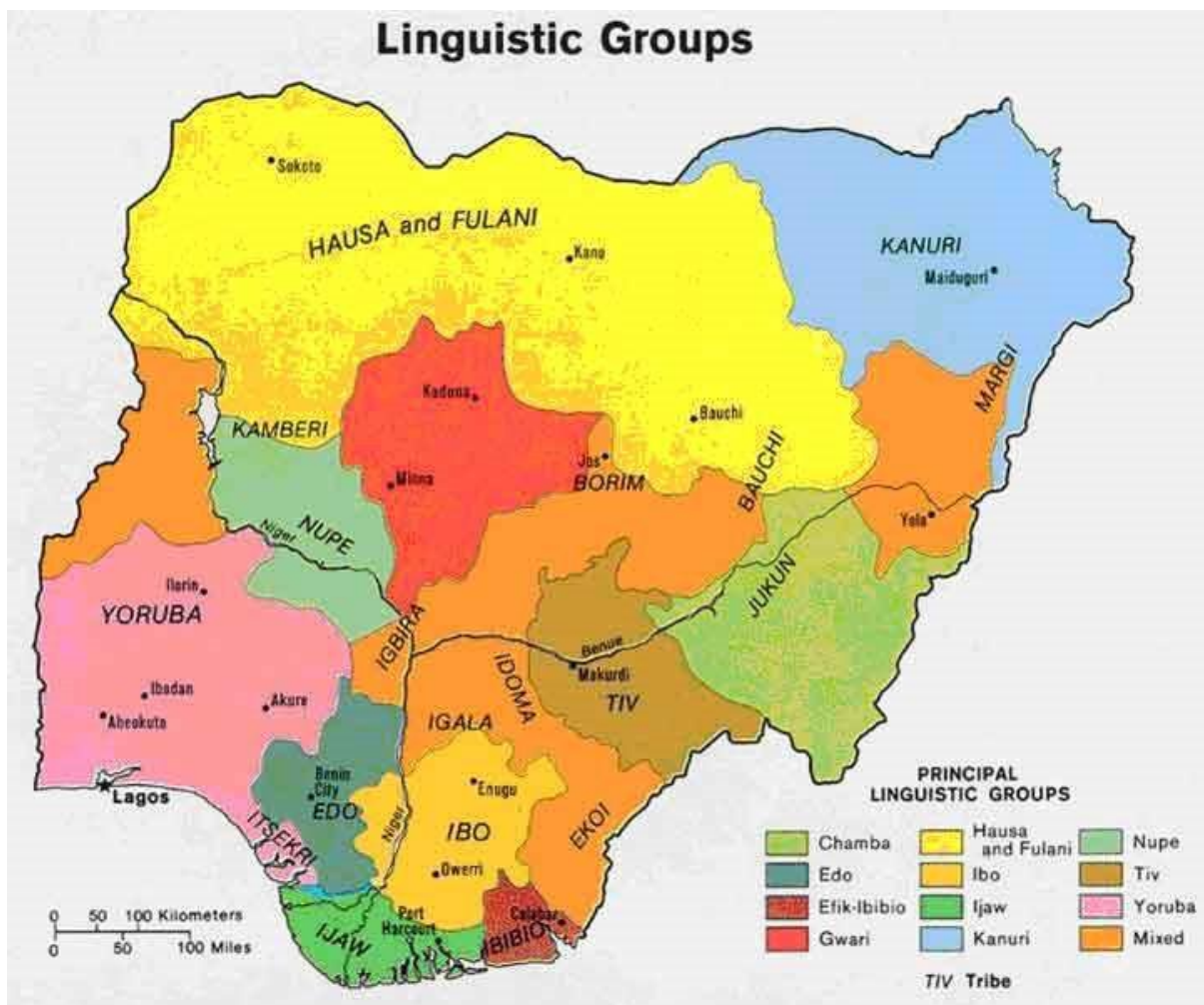
In most countries around the world multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. Even in countries that have been termed monolingual, migration has produced multilingualism as immigrants arrive in these countries carrying their languages along with them. In their host countries, immigrants continue to communicate with their family members and fellow immigrants from the same country in their various languages. Nigeria is one of such multilingual country with the indigenous languages estimated to be over 520 (Ogunmodimu, 2015: 156). Besides the indigenous languages, other languages (e.g. English, French, Arabic, and Chinese) have found their way into the country as a result of colonialism and migration. This implies that the linguistic situation of Nigeria is an especially complex one (Ogunmodimu, 2015: 156). Based on this complexity, Ogunmodimu (2015: 156) groups the languages of Nigeria “into three different groups: exogenous language (English, French and Arabic), indigenous languages (over 520), and neutral<sup>1</sup> language (Nigerian Pidgin English)”. This complexity with the language situation in Nigeria seems to indicate that these indigenous languages need management or planning as the argument has been that a lack of language planning may cause disunity (Owolabi & Dada, 2012: 1678). It is because of such planning that “three of the regional languages have been recognised as the major languages of the country and given national status behind English, which is the official language” (Danladi, 2013: 8). The result of this ideological planning promoted English as the only unifying language at official level. English has thus been selected as the official language of Nigeria while other languages such as Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba which are indigenous languages have been given lesser status as languages that may be used to conduct official businesses where it is practicable to do so (Danladi, 2013: 8). As listed by Owolabi & Dada, (2012: 1677) and Danladi (2013), “the three major languages are Hausa, spoken widely in the Northern region, Yoruba which is largely spoken in the Western region, and Igbo which is mostly spoken in the Eastern region of the country while the rest of the languages are classified under the umbrella

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<sup>1</sup> Ogunmodimu considers Nigerian Pidgin English a neutral language due to the fact that it is not an indigenous or exogenous but a hybrid form used in Nigeria. A more detailed discussion of Nigerian Pidgin English is provided later on in this chapter and chapter 2

of ‘minor’ languages”. What this means is that these major languages have a higher prestige while the minor ones without official status, suffer low prestige.

Although three local languages of Nigeria have been recognized as national languages, English still serves the function of an official language in Nigeria. Although not the native language of Nigerians, English plays such a dominant role within Nigeria that “it is now not only a second language, but also the language of commerce, education, politics, law and administration of the entire country’s affairs, though in different usages and command” (Danladi, 2013: 6). This English hegemony has led to it being viewed as the prerequisite to accessing employment, education, and carries a certain form of prestige within the country. According to Ogunmodimu (2015), “English continues to play important roles in the nation as the language of education, media, religion (especially the Pentecostal Christian faith), and the language of politics, governance and law”. The map below (figure 1) adapted from Danladi (2013: 5) shows the main languages of Nigeria.



**Figure 1: the main languages of Nigeria (Source Danladi 2013: 5)**

A language not found in figure 1, which is popularly used by Nigerians is Nigerian Pidgin English. Nigerian Pidgin English is an essential part of the linguistic repertoire of many Nigerians within and outside Nigeria. It is spoken in Nigeria by several people from different social classes (Balogun, 2012). As Sebba (1997: 14) states, “pidgins often result from the communication strategy of adults who already have a native command of at least one language”. According to Mesthrie (forthcoming), “pidgin Englishes of Africa have exhibited durability, and should not be mistaken as transient forms, associated with incomplete mastery of a target language”. These languages are sophisticated innovations rather than imitation of the target languages. Nigerian Pidgin English is often classified among West African pidgins, that is, a form of pidgin spoken in the western part of Africa. Although these pidgins have been noted to share some common features, this classification though, has been faulted for “its attempt to ‘overstress’ the similarities that exist among different pidgins of West Africa” (Balogun, 2012). While there are some similarities between these languages and its speakers, there are also some differences and these differences need not be overlooked.

Nigerian Pidgin English is a language that continues to be perceived negatively even by the speakers in spite of the different purposes it serves within and outside the largely multilingual country. Recent studies reveal that close to 40 million Nigerians have at least a basic knowledge of this language and some are quite proficient in its uses (Akande & Salami, 2010; Igboanusi, 2008; Balogun, 2012, Faraclass, 2004). However, due to the negative attitudes generally associated with this language, some Nigerians especially the educated ones often prefer not to speak it in some contexts despite their proficiency in the language. For example, they may speak it with people they consider to be in the same social class as them but not speak it with people they consider to be in a higher or lower social class. In the case of lower social class, it may be a form of divergence and in the higher, a form of convergence.

Nigerian Pidgin English is widely spoken in different parts of the country but more popular in the Warri and Sapele region (the southern part of Nigeria). The general attitudes towards the language in this region are largely positive. This could be the possible reason why some linguists refer to it as the native language of the people in this region, that is, the language is said to have creolised (Elugbe & Omamor 1984; Igboanusi, 2008: 68). Although the language can be said to have matured or creolised (a discussion on creoles follows in chapter 2) in this region, Mann (1993: 168) however, seems to have an opposing view on this notion. Mann (1993: 168) insists that he “would be reluctant to agree with those Nigerian linguists who believe that it has “nativized” in these regions, that is, assumed the role and status of ‘mother

tongue' for these indigenes" and "would maintain that it is learned side-by-side with the ethnic mother tongue". The implication of this argument is that Nigerian Pidgin English has not nativised in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Mann's (1993) argument seems a bit contradictory because he says, "it is learned side-by-side with the ethnic mother tongue" but does not qualify as a mother tongue. If it is learned alongside the 'ethnic mother tongue' and spoken from an early age then Nigerian Pidgin English qualifies as a 'mother tongue'.

Furthermore, Balogun (2012: 90) states that "Nigerian Pidgin English has emerged as the most widely spoken language of inter and intra communication among Nigerians and across diverse ethnic groups that do not share a common language". The language seems to be more present in the lives of Nigerians than it is usually given credit for. Faraclas (1997: 17) notes that the "numbers are increasing rapidly, given the popularity of the language among young people, who make up a majority of the national population (currently estimated at 107 million by most international agencies)". The language plays a major role in youth culture and most Nigerian youths take pride in speaking it at most social gatherings where they are in the company of their peers. However, there are others who remain reluctant about speaking it based on their negative attitudes towards the language.

Regarding the history of Nigerian Pidgin English, Mann (1993) and Faraclas (2004), suggest that "the birth and development of Nigerian Pidgin English most likely spans more than five centuries, that is, since the arrival of Portuguese explorers on the southern shores of the Niger Delta region in the 15<sup>th</sup> century". This could be one reason why the language now enjoys a larger presence in the Niger Delta region than other parts of Nigeria, such that it is said to be a native language for some as mentioned above (Agheyisi 1971). Although this does not imply that it is totally absent in other regions, as Nigerian Pidgin English can be found in all parts of Nigeria (Igboanusi, 2008). With regards the origin of Nigerian Pidgin English, there is no proof of the language being a product of contact between the European traders and the locals. Ihimere (2006: 299) argues that "it is impossible to say for certain whether Nigerian Pidgin developed from marketplace contacts between European traders and the various ethnic groups along the coast or from the influence of missionaries from Sierra Leone". It is assumed that these factors may have played a role but should however, not be overemphasised.

Furthermore, while Agheyisi (1971:30) claims that "speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English are typically those of little or no formal educational background", Akande (2008: 37) argues that "the sociolinguistic reality in Nigeria is far from that [as] Nigerian Pidgin English is spoken in

informal situations by university graduates, professors, lawyers and journalists”. The language has also been proven to exist beyond informal settings to include corporate offices and other formal domains (Akande 2008). As Akande (2008: 37) states, “It is an inter-ethnic code available to Nigerians, who have no other common language”. This implies that the language serves the function of a national lingua franca among Nigerians who speak different languages. According to Heugh (2014: 367), “a lingua franca or language of wider communication is a language that is already regarded as a stable standard language and used as a second language for communication by people in linguistically diverse communities”. A lingua franca may be used regionally, nationally or internationally. An example of an international lingua franca would be English and a regional one would be the Ibibio language spoken in Nigeria in the Southern Region. Nigerian Pidgin English qualifies as a national lingua franca.

Although Nigerian Pidgin English is spoken by people from both educated and less educated backgrounds and serves as a national lingua franca, it is still perceived negatively. As highlighted by Akande & Salami (2010: 70), “within Nigerian society, Nigerian Pidgin English seems to have an ambivalent status as some members have embraced and associated themselves with the language only by using it for interactions when the need arises”. For instance, they would use it in the market for trade purposes, with an elderly person from a different tribe or language background, and to interact with a person one considers to be from a lower educational background. While most people have embraced the language, others are still reluctant to do same based on the negative attitudes they hold towards it regardless of their use of the language. It therefore seems to be the case of speaking it not necessarily because it is a prestigious language to speak but because of its many functions.

Also, Akande & Salami (2010: 71) state that “Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) used to be seen generally as the code of the non-literates as well as a ‘corruption’ of English and its use was, therefore, considered a mark of the level of one’s [lack of] proficiency in English.” While Akande & Salami (2010) are right about Nigerian Pidgin English being viewed as the code of non-literates, their use of “used to be seen” implies on going changes in attitudes. However, according to Endong (2015) this view remains the same among Nigerians. Nigerian Pidgin English and other forms of pidgins like Cameroonian Pidgin English are still policed in most academic domains. Its use in formal domains such as education is not encouraged by educators, parents or learners. In some cases, students are discouraged from speaking the language among their peers within the school domain. In some academic spaces as observed in Cameroon, signs clearly prohibiting the use of the language are displayed (see figures 2a and 2b of images below

as observed on a university campus in Cameroon but not peculiar to Cameroon) and some even go as far as punishing the students for using the language (Dyers 2009). Because of the negative connotation that has been associated with Nigerian Pidgin English, “it was outlawed in schools and within government circles” (Mensah, 2011: 212). This has resulted in the language suffering low prestige (Igboanusi 2008: 68). Figures 2a and 2b below show some of the ways that the use of pidgin is policed in Cameroon



Figure 2a



Figure 2b

Source: Tande (2006) from [http://www.dibussi.com/2006/09/ubs\\_antipidgin\\_.htm](http://www.dibussi.com/2006/09/ubs_antipidgin_.htm)

As seen in the images above, English is promoted as a better language with access as opposed to pidgin.

## 1.2. The role of Nigerian Pidgin English within Nigeria

Despite this denigration, Nigerian Pidgin English plays a number of communicative functions in Nigeria. Apart from being a lingua franca, and a social code among youths, it is used in the

media, that is, radio, television, newspapers and in advertisements. In the late 1990s, it was used sparingly, for example, the news segment would be delivered in Nigerian Pidgin English. In the past, “certain radio stations (such as Radio Bendel and Radio Rivers) relay newscasts in ethnic languages of their states, as well as in Nigerian Pidgin English” (Mann 1993: 8). Also, “radio music request programs and discussions of current social and political issues are also presented in Nigerian Pidgin English (for example on Radio Nigeria); Nigerian Television Authority (N.T.A.) Benin also presents newscasts in Nigerian Pidgin English” (Mann 1993: 8). Mann (1993: 8) also adds that the newspapers had articles written in Nigerian Pidgin English but were mostly used for humorous purposes.

However, a shift from this seems to have occurred in recent times as there are now radio and television stations that broadcast solely in Nigerian Pidgin English. Examples of such media houses include Naija FM, Wazobia FM and Wazobia TV (Mensah 2011). Wazobia FM was launched as an all Nigerian Pidgin English radio station in 2007 and since then, has been dedicated to broadcasting all its programs in the language and this includes the news segment and the entertainment segment. Naija FM followed its footsteps around 2011 and broadcasts all its programs only in Nigerian Pidgin English. This has led to other media platforms following suit. For example, although a bit more informal, there are now blogs and online magazines also written either only in Nigerian Pidgin English or a mix of Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian English. The Nigerian public appear to be receptive to this because as Mann (1993) notes, Nigerian Pidgin English has more speakers than the varieties of Nigerian English present in Nigeria. Although most people still view the language as a language of humour.

Another visible area where Nigerian Pidgin English is used is Nigerian music. Past and present Nigerian musicians incorporate Nigerian Pidgin English in their songs. Fela Kuti who gained popularity in the 80s and is now deceased, is an example of a musician who had songs in Nigerian Pidgin English. One of his popular songs titled, “Lady”, was written and performed in Nigerian Pidgin English (Mann 1993). Another example from the contemporary sounds of Nigeria is the duo known as Psquare who entered the Nigerian music industry in the early 2000s and are still relevant today. Psquare and other Nigerian musicians are known to code-switch between Nigerian Pidgin English and the indigenous languages of Nigeria in their songs. As a result of this, Nigerian Pidgin English is gaining popularity outside the shores of Nigeria and even non-Nigerians have become curious about the language and have also shown interest

in learning it. The extracts below show examples of songs performed in Nigerian Pidgin English<sup>2</sup>

Extract 1.1: “E no easy” – Psquare feat. J Martins

Baba God na your handwork yeh yeh yeh yeh

*[Father God it's your handwork yeh yeh yeh yeh]*

No be lie eh

*[It's not a lie eh]*

Na your handwork yeh

*[It's your handwork]*

I say

E no easy eh, oh oh oh oh

*[It's not easy eh oh oh oh]*

To dey sing and dey dance

*[To sing and to dance]*

And the people dey rejoice eh, oh oh

*[And the people are rejoicing eh oh oh]*

Even if you no get money, eh eh eh

*[Even if you don't have money, eh eh eh]*

Dey jolly dey shake body, ah ah ah

*[Be happy and do your part]*

No need to dey tear body

*[No need to be worried]*

Source: <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/P-Square-feat-J-Martins/E-No-Easy>

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<sup>2</sup> My translation in italics and square brackets

Extract 1.2: “Lady” – Fela Kuti

If you call am woman

*[If you call her a woman]*

African woman no go 'gree

*[African woman will not agree]*

She go say, she go say, “I be lady, oh”

*[She will say, she will say, “I am a lady, oh”]*

She go say, “I no be woman”

*[She will say, “I am not a woman”]*

She go say, “Market woman na woman”

*[She will say, “A market woman is a woman”]*

Source: <https://genius.com/Fela-kuti-lady-lyrics>

The two examples above are just a few of the many songs produced in Nigeria today which are performed in Nigerian Pidgin English. Others consist of a blend of Nigerian Pidgin English and some of the indigenous languages of Nigeria. In addition to music, movies and television drama series produced in Nigeria have also featured performances in Nigerian Pidgin English. Examples of such series from the past include, *The Village Headmaster*, *Masquerade*, which were aired on the local stations in Nigeria from late 1950s to late 1980s and more recently, *Do Good*, *Jenifa’s diary*, and *Hustle* which are still currently airing on local stations in Nigeria. This further indicates how popular and widely spoken Nigerian Pidgin English is among Nigerians even though it continues to be viewed negatively by some.

Although the Nigerian government has been reluctant about formally acknowledging Nigerian Pidgin English as a popular and useful language that can function in formal domains, they recognise its usefulness when it comes to political campaign advertisement and exploit it for their benefits. An example of a political campaign advertisement delivered in Nigerian Pidgin English is provided below.

Who no sleep no dey dream. Imagine we country Nigeria where fuel scarcity go dosh commot patapata. Imagine we Nigeria where good road them dey everywhere. Imagine

we country Nigeria where poverty go don vanish commot one time. Imagine Nigeria where people go find work fit see work to do and get plenty money as salary. Imagine we country Nigeria where electric power dey 24/7 e no dey close eye at all at all. Imagine one Nigeria where we all tanda poi as one team kakaraka. Hmmm just think, just imagine Goodluck Jonathan plus Namado Sambo leadership to change we country Nigeria to better place for all of us to enjoy life. Na the United Nigerian group give you this message.

*[Who doesn't sleep doesn't dream. Imagine our country where fuel scarcity will disappear totally. Imagine our country where good roads are everywhere. Imagine our country Nigeria where poverty would have vanished at once. Imagine Nigeria where people will find work and are able to see work to do and get plenty money as salary. Imagine our country Nigeria where electric power will be 24/7 without any interruptions. Imagine one Nigeria where we all stand strong as one team. Hmm just think, just imagine Goodluck Johnathan plus Sambo's Leadership to change our country Nigeria to a better place for all of us to enjoy life. It is the United Nigerian group that gives you this message<sup>3</sup>]*

In the example above, the advertisement uses only Nigerian Pidgin English and the objective may have been to reach a wider audience or reach the 'masses', since there are more speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English than Nigerian English. The implication of this is that the government is aware of the popularity and usefulness of this language; hence the use of it for political campaigns. However, the idea of making it one of the official languages or having a clear language policy that states its role or functions in different domains seems to be farfetched. In describing the national/official language debate situation in Nigeria, Ogunmodimu (2015) mentions three orientations that guide the debate. The first one is the nationalist orientation which relates to adopting one of the indigenous languages as an official language as a way of getting rid of the legacy of colonialism. The second one is the internationalist perspective which favours English as an official language over the indigenous languages. The argument here is that choosing an indigenous language will cause division as those whose languages are not chosen will feel marginalised. Therefore, English is the answer since it does not belong to Nigeria. The third orientation is the neutralist position and here the call is for Nigerian Pidgin English rather than English or any of the indigenous languages, to

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<sup>3</sup> My free translation

be made an official language. The Nigerian government seem to be in favour of the internationalist position which could be a possible explanation as to why Nigerian Pidgin English has not received much attention in formal domains.

In addition, Nigeria does not have a comprehensive language policy that clearly states the role(s) of the different languages and their functions. What is rather available is an education policy which hints on language uses in education (Afolayin, 1977). In sections 55 and 97 of the *1999 Constitution of Nigeria*, a provision is made for three national languages, namely: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. However, “these three languages are to be used along with English in the conduct of official business in the country’s National Assembly” (Owolabi & Dada, 2012: 1678). Section 55 states, “The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefor”. Also, according to section 97, “The business of the House of Assembly shall be conducted in English, but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the State as the House may by resolution approve”. The lack of a national language policy defining the functions of other languages apart from English in Nigeria seems to imply that the government of Nigeria only favours English. Despite its wide use, there is no mention of Nigerian Pidgin English in the Nigerian Constitution. This indicates that the government views Nigerian Pidgin English as a language not capable of performing formal functions. The negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English that exist appear to be spilling from the top (people in power) to the bottom (ordinary Nigerians). This dissertation highlights the continuous use and popularity of Nigerian Pidgin English in diaspora despite its continued marginalization in formal domains.

In view of my hypothesis of the increased use of Nigerian Pidgin English in diaspora, especially by young educated people at tertiary institutions, I raised the question whether an amelioration of Nigerian Pidgin English’s status in Nigeria is possible. Hence the question “Should Nigerian Pidgin English be an official language in Nigeria?” featured in my questionnaire because giving Nigerian Pidgin English an official status may enable the improvement of the current status of the language. To go beyond the opinions and assessments of the interviewees, I also examine the basics of the language planning literature to see whether such amelioration is feasible and practical. I also examine the concept of “linguistic citizenship” (Stroud 2009), which suggests an approach that goes beyond defending the “rights” of any one language, and instead looking at peoples’ full repertoires and how they manage their multilingualism daily. The “linguistic citizenship” concept proposes that this be factored into official planning mechanisms, rather

than seeing languages as entirely separate. So, although one cannot argue for the “rights” of Nigerian Pidgin English on its own, but as part of a multilingual package, I nevertheless propose in this thesis that Nigerian Pidgin English be factored in for future official planning as part of improving the status of the language and enhancing the linguistic citizenship of Nigerians.

### **1.3. Problem statement**

There is a general belief by some Nigerians in Nigeria that Nigerian Pidgin English is a colloquial form of English that is mostly spoken by those whose Standard English proficiency has not fully developed (Agheyisi, 1971:30). Even the government has continued to ignore it “despite the fact that Nigerian Pidgin is in most respects the most logical choice for a national language” and “official attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin remain negative, perpetuating erroneous notions inherited from the colonial period that Nigerian Pidgin is some form of ‘broken English’” (Faraclas 1996: 18). Also, the general attitudes held by Nigerians regarding the language can be described as ambivalent, with the majority leaning towards the negative attitude. As a result of this ideology and attitudes, some people who know how to speak the language sometimes shy away from speaking it because they want to maintain a certain identity or status.

This research project investigated if the Nigerians who live in a different geographical space like Cape Town still hold negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English and abstain from speaking the language or speak it freely. Also, it seeks to ascertain if those who may have held negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English while in Nigeria may have changed their attitudes since being in Cape Town and what could possibly be responsible for this change in attitude. Many studies have been conducted on the attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English but most of these studies have been within the context of Nigeria (e.g. Mann 1993; Akande 2008; Akande & Salami, 2010). Although there are many Nigerians in the diaspora who know and speak Nigerian Pidgin English in the different countries that they live in, there appears to be very little research on the attitudes and uses of Nigerian Pidgin English outside Nigeria. Because of this, our knowledge is limited with respect to the following: how Nigerians in the Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English; their attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English; their preference (if any) of one context over the other for the use of Nigerian Pidgin English.

### **1.4. Research aims and objectives**

The aim of this research is to examine the possible uses and attitudes of Nigerians towards Nigerian Pidgin English in a context such as Cape Town which is different from their home country Nigeria.

The objectives are as follows:

- To determine how Nigerians in Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English;
- To examine their attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English
- To determine if speaking the language in Cape Town is important to Nigerians living in Cape Town.

### **1.5. Research questions:**

The following questions guided the study:

- What various ways do Nigerians in Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English?
- What attitudes do they hold towards Nigerian Pidgin English?
- Is speaking the language in Cape Town important and what could be the reason for this?

### **1.6. Overview of chapters**

Chapter one presents a brief overview of Nigerian Pidgin English in Nigeria and focuses specifically on some ideologies of Nigerian Pidgin English and some challenges that the language continues to experience. It also provides the problem statement of the research, the aim and objectives of the study, and the research questions. Chapter two takes a more detailed approach and presents insight on pidgins and creoles, and Nigerian Pidgin English as presented in various literatures available. It also offers a detailed discussion of the language background of Nigeria, the history of Nigerian Pidgin English, and the debates around it. Chapter three discusses the methodological approach of the study. Chapter four presents an analysis of the data collected for this study, in other words, provides the answers to the research questions that the study set out to answer. Finally, chapter five gives a summary and conclusion to the study.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This literature review chapter is divided into two sections. The first section reviews literature on pidgin and creoles as contact languages. According to (Heugh 2014: 363), “language contact occurs when speakers of different languages interact and their languages influence each other”. The result of this is a pidgin and Nigerian Pidgin English is an example of a contact language (more discussion below). The second section discusses Nigerian Pidgin English and gives a summary of Nigerian Pidgin English grammar. The chapter begins with a discussion of pidgin as a linguistic concept and a linguistic system. It will also discuss the origin of pidgin, the types of pidgin delineated in the literature, and the characteristics of pidgin. The latter part focuses on Nigerian Pidgin English, its history, uses and vocabulary.

### **2.2. Language ideology, attitudes and identity**

How language is spoken has always been a cause for debate among speakers. On the one hand, there are the prescriptivists who are concerned with form and speak of adulterated and unadulterated forms. While on the other hand, there are those who appreciate innovation and are concerned with function more than form. According to Sebba (1997: 8), “some societies, can tolerate variation and indefiniteness, while others demand strict adherence to a norm, condemning deviations as ‘corrupt’, ‘sloppy’ or ‘substandard’”. What is responsible for these opposing views is language ideologies which relate to the different ideas people have about language. Language ideology refers to “shared beliefs of common-sense notions about the nature of language in the world” (Rumsey, 1990: 246). Four major language ideologies have been identified by Weber & Horner (2011:16-22) to be the following: language hierarchy ideology, the standard language ideology, language purism ideology, and one-nation one-language ideology (all four ideologies are summarized below following (Weber & Horner, 2011: 16-22). The language hierarchy ideology relates to how languages are labelled and categorised, with some ‘languages’ enjoying a higher status than others. The standard language ideology is based on the belief that standardisation is necessary in more formal domains of use. As a result, certain varieties are selected for standardisation because of socio-political movements, and not necessarily because they are superior to other varieties.

In addition, the 'one-nation one-language' concept is another type of ideology. This ideology equates language to territory. That is, a language is thought to belong to a certain territory. Recent studies in the field of sociolinguistics have shown that the idea of 'one nation one language' or monolingual nations is somewhat problematic. What is obtainable in reality is multilingualism. Languages make their way to different countries because of various factors such as migration. Closely related to the standard language ideology is the language purism ideology which stipulates what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' language use. The idea that languages can be and should be 'pure' is somewhat problematic and is far from reality. According to Sebba (1997: 4), "purists reject foreign influences on 'their' language and use 'tradition' to justify their demands to preserve it in its 'pure' state". Purists consider "language as 'corrupt' when it deviates too much from the written standard, uses too many foreign words, or involves a mixture of languages" (Sebba 1997: 4). Although the attitudes of purists often appear rigid, "it is important to see these attitudes for what they are: cultural phenomena which can, and do, change with time and which are not invariant from generation to generation or society to society" (Sebba, 1997: 4).

Related to the language purism ideology is the concept of focussing and diffusion. With regards to language, "some societies can tolerate variation while others think of variation as deviating from the correct form" (Sebba 1997: 8). The concepts, "focussing and diffusion, is used to account for these differences" (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985 cited in Sebba 1997: 8). In relation to the first concept, "a language with highly focussed norms is one where the community of speakers puts rather strict limits on what is acceptable [and] they are likely to have clear notions of 'correct' grammar and 'standard' usage and to refer to books such as dictionaries and grammars to back these up" (Sebba 1997: 8). Speakers or users of such a language who do not adhere to these strict rules are likely to suffer the consequences which Sebba (1997) lists as educational failure and low status. Sebba (1997: 8) puts "most modern European countries, with their highly standardised national languages and literary norms upheld by authors, publishers, educators and academics" under this category.

The concept of diffusion on the other hand, relates to languages where the speakers have less strict rules on 'correct' and 'incorrect' forms. Societies with this attitude towards language "value language more for its effectiveness in communicating messages than for whether its pronunciation or grammar meets some 'standard' set by society" (Sebba 1997: 9). In these societies, "particular words and grammatical constructions are not stigmatised or ridiculed and if the language is written down at all, the rules of spelling are not strict" (Sebba 1997: 9).

According to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (cited in Sebba 1997: 8), “a society with this attitude would be said to have diffuse linguistic norms and many pre-industrial societies, and marginal groups within industrial societies”, fall under this category. A society such as this will most likely have positive attitudes towards pidgin.

Closely related to the concept of language ideology is language attitude. In fact, language ideologies influence language attitudes. The ideologies individuals hold towards a language affects their attitudes towards that language. Language attitude is described as unconscious, subjective, and personal responses to languages an individual encounter (Baker, 1992: 12). It consists of “cognitive, affective and readiness for action” components (Baker, 1992:12-13). That is, what people think, how they feel, and finally, how they act or what they are prepared to do about the language. The attitudes held by individuals towards languages affect greatly how they view languages. Language attitudes are often manifested in the way people speak or behave towards a language or speakers of the language. Language attitudes may be expressed overtly (for example making statements about the language like ‘I love speaking English’) or covertly. According to Dyers (1997: 29), “people may hold positive, negative or neutral language attitudes as influenced by ideologies, circumstances or experiences of the language”. It is important to mention that attitudes may change over time. In addition, Dyers (2000) makes the following distinctions about language attitudes:

- Some attitudes have affective roots, that is, they are related to feelings while others have more rational roots (more realistic, objective reasons).
- Attitudes towards languages and people are different. This means that individuals may hold a positive attitude towards a language while holding a negative attitude towards the speakers and vice versa.
- Patterns of language use often contradict language attitudes.
- People have different reasons for their language choices in particular domains. These choices may not necessarily be related to attitudes.

What can be deduced from the above distinctions is that attitudes are complex and may be influenced by domains of language use.

Identity is another concept related to language attitude. It has been theorised and understood differently over the years. Previously, essentialist notions described it as innate, fixed and stable and linked directly to ethnicity (Ferris, Banda & Peck, 2014: 410). On the other end of the continuum, social constructionists argue that it is “an interactional accomplishment

produced and negotiated in discourse” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 13). They rather describe identity as fluid, dynamic and multiple as manifested in social interactions and contexts (Ferris et al, 2014: 412). Relevant to the understanding of identity is the framework created by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) and it relates to the ways identities may be constructed. These include, imposed identities, assumed identities and negotiated identities. Imposed identities relate to the identities that are ascribed to individuals by others based on maybe the languages they speak, their accents, choice of clothing and so on (Ferris et al, 2014: 411). Assumed identities relate to identities that individuals assign to themselves and are projected through various identity acts (Ferris et al, 2014: 411). The final one is the negotiated identities and this relates to those identities that are ascribed to individuals by others but are contested (Ferris et al, 2014: 411). For example, an individual who is thought of as Nigerian by birth may choose to rather identify as Indian and may prefer to signal this through various identity acts such as maybe speaking an Indian language instead of a Nigerian language and dressing like Indians. By doing this, the individual negotiates his identity.

Furthermore, as noted by Pennycook (2010: 125) “identities are not fixed and stable attributes of individuals, but are produced through language (and other) practices”. This implies that language is linked to identity and different language choices can index the different identities of an individual. For example, speaking Ibibio language identifies the speaker as a person from the Ibibio tribe of Nigeria. As highlighted by García (2010: 524) multilingual speakers “...decide who they want to be and choose their language practices accordingly”. For instance, an individual may decide to choose language A in context A and language B in context B and could index different identities in these different contexts. To illustrate, a multilingual speaker who is a lawyer may decide to speak Standard English with his lawyer colleagues at work but speak his native language (Ibibio) with his family members at home. In both contexts, he indexes different identities, with his colleagues, a professional and at home, a friendly parent. Individuals can perform the different identities available in their identity repertoires because identities are fluid and multi-layered. The different layers of identities include, nationality, sex, gender, race, accent, language, and so on.

### **2.3. Language planning and policy**

The multilingual nature of most countries, Nigeria included, seems to indicate that there is a need for languages to be planned and this is often done through language policies. Language planning and policy literature provides various definitions of language planning. Cooper (1989:

45) describes language planning as “the deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes”. According to Shohamy (2006: 45) “it is through language planning that decisions are made with regard to the preferred languages that should be legitimized, used, learned and taught in terms of where, when and in which contexts”. As noted by Cooper (1989), language planning consists of three phases namely: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning.

Status planning is described as “the process of giving status and prestige to a language by extending the functions for which it is being used” (Coluzzi, 2007: 133). Status planning basically defines which languages are to be used in public offices, schools, and so on. Whereas, “corpus planning defines the elaboration of the linguistic code that is the object of language planning, so that it may be suitable for the communicative functions for which it is going to be used” (Coluzzi, 2007: 125). There are three elements of corpus planning and they are identified by Cooper (1989) as standardization, which has to do with “the process of selecting one variety of a language and deciding which grammatical rules apply to it, and which vocabulary items in which form are acceptable” (Coluzzi, 2007: 131). The second one being graphization, relates to “the elaboration of a written code, a writing system for the language which is the object of language planning” (Coluzzi, 2007: 127). In some cases, an existing writing system is changed slightly and maybe new words are created. Lastly, Coluzzi (2007: 132) describes modernization as “the process of elaborating new terminology and styles of language so that the minority language can be used for all purposes and functions, primarily those for which the language has never been used in the past e.g. law, science, economy”. The last element of language planning is acquisition planning. According to Coluzzi (2007: 125), it defines the elaboration of the linguistic code that is the object of language planning, so that it may be suitable for the communicative functions for which it is going to be used.

Language planning often produces language policies. Language policy is described as “the primary mechanism for organizing, managing and manipulating language behaviours as it consists of decisions made about languages and their uses in society” (Shohamy, 2006: 45). What is common between the definition of language policy and language planning is that both concepts are about influencing peoples’ behaviour towards languages. Certain orientations of language may influence the formulation and implementation of language policies. The orientations that people hold towards languages affect their view of multilingualism. Ruiz (1999: 16) speaks of orientation as “a complex of dispositions towards language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society”. Ruiz (1999) names the following as some of

the orientations that people have towards multilingualism; “multilingualism as a problem, a right and a resource”. The orientation of multilingualism as a problem views multilingualism as problematic and some of the explanations for this have been that it is expensive, works against the concept of national unity and so on. These reasons seem flawed because even in multilingual countries with monolingual policies, national unity is still far from attainable. For example, English is the language of business in Nigeria yet the country is far from united as ethnic superiority causes tribalism and regional conflicts from time to time.

Multilingualism as a right is another orientation. It is about people having the right to use their own languages in various domains. In line with this is the notion of linguistic citizenship, that is, the ability to freely speak a language in whatever variety without feeling uncomfortable or conscious that people will think of you or categorise you as uneducated or not exposed to wider society (Stroud 2009). For instance, being able to speak Nigerian Pidgin English freely anywhere without people thinking of you as less educated. Stroud (2009) advocates for participatory citizenship and agency which relates to empowering people to freely speak whatever varieties they are most comfortable with, even in public forums. This ties in well with the orientation of multilingualism as a resource. Multilingualism as a resource relates to the view that multilingualism is a resource that can be exploited for economic reasons. Hornberger (1997) introduced an ecological orientation to language which relates to language policies “taking an ecological, resource view of indigenous, immigrant, ethnic and foreign languages as living and evolving in relation to each other and to their environment”. Language policies are often formulated based on some of these orientations. Multilingualism as a problem seems to be the most popular orientation guiding most language policies in most African countries. Language policies sometimes impose monolingualism on people and ignore the diversity which is the reality of most countries where languages are in constant contact.

## **2.4. Encounters between languages and consequences**

From the above discussion, it has been established that the linguistic reality in most countries is multilingualism. Multilingual societies produce language contact situations which lead to variations in language. As a result, the concept of a language as pure and standard or focussing is unrealistic in today’s societies. As argued by Heller (2007) and Pennycook (2010) languages are in constant contact, and constantly being modified and enriched. According to Sebba (1997: 10), “language boundaries are fuzzy and often ‘imagined’; furthermore, language contact may take place and confuse the boundaries further”. Migration and globalization enables the mixing

and blending of languages especially in urban centres. Today's societies are characterised by what is known as polyglossia, that is, the presence and uses of various languages in a society (Dyers 2000). Drawing on Bhabha's (1996) concept of 'third space' which relates to an in-between condition that exist between one or the other 'social spaces' which questions 'fixity' and produces hybridity, Bhatt (2008) talks about a 'third space' that exists between languages and such circumstances often produces new hybrid forms. In most multilingual societies, as in most African countries, language contact is the norm because the different languages spoken often get mixed. What is obtainable in today's societies is an increasing overlap and not compartmentalization of languages. Deumert (2009) explains that a fusion of languages characterise how people communicate today. This is the reason why the notion of language 'purity' or 'fixity' can be problematic in today's multilingual societies. Also, monolingual languages policies can be problematic since such policies often ignore multilingualism. Contacts between languages often have various consequence and some of these consequences are discussed below.

#### **2.4.1. Consequences of language contact**

Code switching is one of the consequences of language contact. According to Sebba (1997: 12) "code switching, although it may look haphazard and unsystematic, is actually systematic and often purposeful". Code switching is referred to as "a means of communication which involves a speaker alternating between one language and the other in communicating events" (Babalola & Taiwo 2009: 2). In addition, "in code-switching, the speaker (or speakers) switches between two (or more) different language codes during a single stretch of discourse" (Matras 2009: 6). This implies that the speaker is able to switch between different languages that he or she knows during a conversation. Code switching is often a conscious activity carried out by the speaker because "in the mind of the code switcher, one language may be more appropriate than the other for expressing a particular idea; one language may be more intimate and personal than the other; one may show more authority, and the other, more solidarity" (Sebba 1997: 12). In addition, "code switchers construct a potent and finely modulated personal blend of languages each time they speak, and do so almost always without breaking any of the grammatical rules of either language!" (Sebba 1997: 12) Because multilingual speakers have more than one language in their linguistic repertoire, they are able to move from one language to the other at ease. This mixing and blending of languages is related to the notion of languaging, that is, "language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aims" (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011: 169). Code switching and

linguaging captures how multilingual speakers use language and what happens with language in multilingual societies.

Another consequence of language contact is language convergence. This "... involves the languages within a community changing and adjusting their structures so that they all become more similar to each other" (Sebba 1997: 13). Language convergence can be said to be slightly different from code switching because while code switching is "a purposeful thing done by an individual speaker who knows more than one language [,] convergence occurs over time, in a community with a high degree of bilingualism, but the languages retain their separate vocabularies and individual members of the community may or may not be bilingual" (Sebba 1997: 13). In the case of language convergence, the speakers are often not aware of the changes that have occurred and when convergence is completed, the language is transferred to future generations in the converged form (Sebba 1997: 13).

Borrowing is another consequence of language contact. The term borrowing is sometimes criticised for its inaccuracy in capturing what happens in language contact situations. As noted by Matras (2009: 146), 'borrowing' refers "to the *replication*<sup>4</sup> of a linguistic structure, of any kind, in a new, extended set of contexts, understood to be negotiated in a different 'language'". As opposed to the notion of borrowing a physical object from another person which is a temporary phenomenon, 'borrowing' in a linguistic sense, is more permanent. Although the term 'borrowing' can be quite confusing, the technical term should not be confused with the everyday connotations of borrowing. As noted by Sebba (1997: 11), "what actually happens is more akin to 'adoption' or 'naturalisation': after a while, the 'borrowed' item is no longer felt to be strange or 'foreign' and is adapted to the sound and/or grammatical patterns of the new language". 'Borrowing' sometimes occurs in communities that are bi / multilingual (although not always) as the words and structures get adopted into the language (Sebba 1997: 10). For example, we find a lot of words in English with Latin and Greek origin.

Pidginisation is another possible consequence of language contact. In some of the previously discussed phenomena, a high level of bilingualism is required by all or most members of a community, that is, the community or individuals within it must attain a certain level of proficiency in two or more languages (Sebba 1997: 14). However, with pidginization, individuals do not need to speak the same languages. Pidgins often arise in "cases where two groups of adults without a common language come into contact and neither group has the

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<sup>4</sup> Italics from original source

opportunity, or the will, to learn the other's language" (Sebba 1997: 14). The 'pidgin' used here is in a technical sense and not in the negative sense found in dictionaries and among people in societies where the language is spoken (Sebba 1997: 14). It is the communicative strategies of adults who do not speak the same language that produces a pidgin (Mufwene 2007: 12). This implies that pidgins are languages that develop because of negotiation between two adults who do not speak the same language and where circumstances may not allow learning of each other's language. It is often used to bridge an immediate communication gap and because of this, some pidgins have been short-lived. However, some pidgins survive and are adopted as a lingua Franca and some even become native languages, that is, creolise in some societies. An example of such pidgin is the Nigerian Pidgin English which is the focus of this dissertation.

Another possible consequence of language contact is creolisation. This involves a case where a pidgin becomes a native language to its speakers (Sebba 1997: 15). However, Mufwene (2007: 12) argues that "creoles did not evolve from erstwhile pidgins [but] developed independently from pidgins, the former in plantation settlement colonies and the latter in trade colonies". He adds that "both pidgins and creoles developed gradually, from closer approximations of the initial targets to varieties more and more different from them" (Mufwene 2007: 12). Generally, a variety is considered a pidgin if it has no native speakers. Once the language becomes a native language, it is said to have creolised and "creolisation takes place under conditions such as social upheaval or rapid social change (migration from rural to urban centres) or where ethnically diverse groups mix closely together as in a colonial port or garrison" (Sebba 1997: 16). A settled community may develop because of this change and the pidgin then becomes a language of communication which is picked up by the new generation of children (Sebba 1997: 16). The implication of this is that a pidgin arises first before a creole but Mufwene (2007) argues against this. His stance is that the structure of creoles is too sophisticated for children. According to Mufwene (2007: 18), "if children innovated these structures in creoles, then they must have innovated them when they became linguistically adults, and we must wonder why their adult parents would have waited for them (the children) to innovate for the community when they (the parents) could have done so themselves". It is important to highlight that "creolists today acknowledge the considerable overlap between pidgins in extended use and a creole in the sense of an L1" (Mesthrie, forthcoming). This implies that there is no clear boundary between both concepts as they tend to overlap.

## **2.5. How pidgin is defined**

Before discussing pidgin as defined in the field of linguistics, it is necessary to debunk the popular misunderstandings surrounding the term. *The Chambers Dictionary* (1993 cited in Sebba, 1997: 14) defines pidgin as: “any combination and ‘distortion’ of two languages as a means of communication ... and Pidgin English as: any lingua franca consisting of English and another language”. The dictionary definition above describes pidgin as a ‘distortion’ of two languages. This is problematic to the understanding of pidgin and may have contributed to the negative connotations associated with Nigerian Pidgin English and other forms of pidgin. Linguists define pidgin as “... an emergency language, created to facilitate communication between groups of different languages and cultures when they get in contact and establish some relationship” (Vicente, 2007: 1). Another useful definition is that “pidgins are examples of partially targeted or non-targeted second-language learning, developing from simpler to more complex systems as communicative requirements become more demanding. Pidgin languages by definition have no native speakers, they are social rather than individual solutions, and hence are characterised by norms of acceptability” (Muhlhausler, 1986: 5). What is common in both definitions above is that a pidgin is described as a communicative solution that arises when there is a need for groups of people without a common language to communicate. These definitions of pidgin best describe what a pidgin is.

Furthermore, a distinction is made between “the formation of a pidgin and the process of second language acquisition” (Mesthrie, 2009: 272). In second language acquisition, an existing language is targeted and learned whereas in pidgin formation, a new language is formed. For a speech form to be considered a pidgin, it must have certain characteristics. The first one being that it must be relatively stable and have norms of meaning, grammar and pronunciation. Although pidgins draw their vocabulary items from the lexifier, they are not closely like it and the two languages are not mutually intelligible (Mesthrie, 2009: 272). Most pidgins are said to often have the European languages, as the lexifier. However, as highlighted by Sebba (1997: 38), not all pidgins have European languages as the lexifier. For example, “the Papuan language Motu is lexifier of the pidgin, Hiri Motu and the African (Bantu) language Kikongo is the lexifier of the pidgin, Kituba” (Sebba, 1997: 38). In the case of Nigerian Pidgin English, the lexifier is English and the substrate has been said to be some of the local languages in Nigeria depending on the region where it is spoken (Elugbe, 2008). According to Holm (1988: 13), although more of the *pidgin* and *creole* languages arose after European expansion, there is evidence that many existed in earlier times. However, languages have not been recorded in

writing until the last millennia. The “various pidgins and creoles of West Africa similarly seem to have their origins in both seafaring and trade” (Sebba, 1997; Mufwene, 2007).

## **2.6. Some types of Pidgin**

According to Sebba (1997), different types of pidgin have been identified in the literature and some of them as mentioned by Sebba (1997) include, “military and police pidgins”; “seafaring and trade pidgins and creoles”; “plantation pidgins and creoles”; “mine and construction pidgins”; “immigrants’ pidgins”; and “tourist pidgins”. Some of these types of pidgin are discussed below.

The military and the police have been suggested to play a role in the creation of pidgins. Sebba (1997: 27) notes that “the earliest known European pidgin, Sabir or Lingua Franca, seems to have originated during the Crusades, when soldiers from many different places - with Southern Europe predominating- came together”. These soldiers would have spoken different languages and a need to communicate may have led to a pidgin as a form of communication. As stated by Sebba (1997: 27), “probably throughout history there have been ethnically and linguistically mixed armies, and these naturally provide the sort of environment where a pidgin not only may come into being, but also will have immediate functional value”. One example of military pidgin is Juba Arabic. “Juba Arabic, a pidginised form of Arabic which was developed among Sudanese soldiers in the Egyptian army which occupied Southern Sudan in the middle of the nineteenth century, spread from the army bases to the multilingual region around Juba, the major city of the Southern Sudan” (Sebba, 1997: 27). This pidgin is still present in this region today and, apparently, is said to be creolising, that is, has become the native language of some people (Sebba, 1997: 27).

Seafaring and trade pidgin is another type of pidgin identified by Sebba (1997). This type of pidgin comes from the belief that seafarers and traders played a significant role in the creation of pidgins (Reinecke, 1937: 434). According to Sebba (1997: 28), “there are a number of pidgins which have undoubtedly been spread by a combination of seafaring and trading (the two activities often being inseparable)”. Some examples of these pidgins include, “the earliest form of South Seas pidgin, which has evolved into modern Tok Pisin, the Bislama pidgin which is believed to have gotten its name from the edible sea-slug, heche-de-mer, which was the object of trade by English seafarers among the inhabitants of the South Pacific” (Hall, 1966: 10 cited in Sebba 1997: 28). Trading activities are also believed to have contributed to the

spread of languages as traders travelled with their languages and these languages encountered the local languages and the result was a form of pidgin.

Plantation pidgin is another form of pidgin. During the era of colonialism, plantation farming was a frequently employed method that exploited both human and environmental resources (Sebba 1997). This form of farming, unlike the local agricultural farming that the colonised were used to, required more labour due to the large sizes of farms. This implied that the local labourers often refused to work under such poor conditions and therefore, migrant workers from a wide area too provided the labour required on the plantation farms. The implication of this was typically a multilingual plantation farm and “a fertile ground for the growth of new pidgins and the development of existing ones” (Sebba 1997: 30). Sebba (1997: 30) also notes that “the use of indentured plantation labour has been responsible for the origin or spread of pidgins in Hawaii, Samoa, New Guinea and Queensland within the last century or so”. Some of these pidgins have developed to becoming native languages of its speakers, for example, Tok Pisin. Tok Pisin is not just a native language but has become one of the official languages of Papua New Guinea as Sebba (1997) indicates.

## **2.7. Overview of Nigerian Pidgin English**

Having discussed the concept of pidgin as a consequence of language contact above, this section discusses Nigerian Pidgin English as a form of pidgin and also gives a brief overview of Nigerian Pidgin English lexicon. Based on the above definition of pidgin as an emergency language created to facilitate communication between people with a common language, Nigerian Pidgin English fits the description of pidgin. Firstly, its history indicates that it did not have native speakers in the beginning and according to the description of pidgin in the previous section; pidgins do not have native speakers. Nigerian Pidgin English is said to have expanded and has nativised in some regions currently hence the use of ‘did not’. Also, most pidgins have colonizer’s language as the lexifier and indigenous languages as substrates. In the case of Nigerian Pidgin English, English (the colonizer’s language) is the lexifier and some indigenous languages, the substrate. Therefore, based on this, it can be said that Nigerian Pidgin English qualifies as a pidgin.

Nigerian Pidgin English has different varieties that are dependent on which region of Nigeria it is spoken (Elugbe 2008). For example, the variety spoken in Lagos is different from that spoken in Warri or Uyo. Besides these varieties, there are also the more hybrid forms popular among youths in urban centres. This variety incorporates youth language which is uncommon

in the adult variety. For example, *abeg clear me make I find my level* is different from *abeg answer me make I dey go*. Both expressions mean “please attend to me so I can leave” but the first one is the hybrid youth variety while the second one is the variety common among the older people. Again, the varieties used by older people are also dependent on context of use, that is, the region where it is spoken and the different domains of use such as home, work, church, picnics and so on. This research describes the hybrid form popular among youths in Lagos and Warri and not the Port Harcourt variety described by Faraclas (1996).

As highlighted above, Nigerian Pidgin English is a form of pidgin spoken in Nigeria. According to Balogun (2012: 90), “Nigerian Pidgin English is a term used to denote an English based pidgin; a ‘marginal’ language used among Nigerians to facilitate communication needs in certain interaction contexts”. Balogun (2012) refers to it as a ‘marginal’ language because some Nigerians think poorly of it and it is not acceptable in all domains (especially formal domains). Balogun (2012: 91) states that “in the Nigerian context, colonization is a key historical factor responsible for the emergence of Nigerian Pidgin [... and it can] be historically traced to the trade contact between the British and local people in the seventeenth century”. As noted in chapter one, there is no evidence to back this claim of Nigerian Pidgin English being the result of contact between traders and locals. What possibly emerged as a contact language between British and locals has since developed into a language spoken by many Nigerians, and may be termed a Nigerian language.

Also, as noted by Faraclas (1996: 17), “a conservative estimate of the number of people who speak Nigerian Pidgin [English] as a second language would have to exceed 40 million and the number of first language speakers has already surpassed 1 million”. It is important to bear in mind that this estimate was done in 1996 and would have changed by now in 2017. According to Buba, Al-Shujairi & Ya’ u (2016: 233), “in a multilingual country like Nigeria ... with a population of approximately 150 million people (Danladi, 2013), with over 500 indigenous languages (Bamgbose, 1971; Gordon, 2005; Danladi, 2013), Nigerian Pidgin English has developed as the most widely spoken language of interaction among Nigerians and across different ethnic groups who do not share a common language” In spite of this spread and growth of the language, the language is said to be marginalised because it is not acceptable in formal domains.

In addition, “Nigerian Pidgin English is distinguished from the other over 500 Nigerian languages and Standard English by the fact that it is spoken by members of every regional,

ethnolinguistic and religious group in the federation” (Faraclas, 1996: 17). Adding on this point, Ihimere (2006: 296) states that “Nigerian Pidgin English has developed into the native language of about 3 to 5 million of Nigerian population and a second language for at least another 75 million”. Also, regarding the growth and spread of Nigerian Pidgin English, Faraclas (1996) states the following,

Well over half of the 140 million inhabitants of Nigeria are now fluent speakers of the language [NPE], making NigP [NPE] the most widely spoken language in Nigeria, as well as the indigenous African language with the largest number of speakers. Given the rapid spread of NigP [NPE] among younger Nigerians, this proportion should increase to cover over seventy or eighty percent by the time the present generation of children reaches adulthood. There is no creole language worldwide with nearly as many speakers as NigP [NPE].

Again, this estimate was in 1996 the numbers have greatly increased in recent times as highlighted earlier. Despite the wide use of Nigerian Pidgin English as indicated above, the language still suffers negative perceptions by most people including the speakers. Because of the view of Nigerian Pidgin English as a language only fit for the less educated people with less status (Agheyisi, 1971), the elites and educated tend to express misgivings at its use by young people in the home and school domains (Akande & Salami, 2010: 72). This perception affects other peoples’ general attitudes towards the language. A study conducted by Akande & Salami (2010), on the use and attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English among Nigerian students in two universities from two different regions in Nigeria produced varying results. As reported by Akande & Salami (2010), more of the students from the University of Benin held positive attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English than the students in University of Lagos. Their conclusion was that Nigerian Pidgin English is more popular and acceptable in the Benin region than it is in the Lagos region and this may have influenced the students’ attitudes.

Many sociolinguistic studies conducted on Nigerian Pidgin English uses and attitudes towards the language have been carried out within Nigeria but seldom outside Nigeria. As a result, our knowledge of attitudes and use towards the language among Nigerians in the diaspora is limited. One study conducted by Buba et al (2016) reveals a difference in attitude of Nigerians abroad. Buba et al (2016) conducted a study on the use and attitudes of postgraduate Nigerian students in Malaysia towards Nigerian Pidgin English. In this study it was found that the students used the language frequently and held positive attitudes towards it. The study also

revealed that the language served as a marker of identity for them as foreigners in Malaysia. The findings of this study suggest that Nigerian Pidgin English is more acceptable among Nigerians in the diaspora than Nigerians within Nigeria because it serves not just a communicative purpose, but as an identity marker as well. A slightly similar study was conducted by Mbong (2006) on Cameroonian migrants and their Cameroonian identity in Cape Town. Mbong reported that some of the participants in the study viewed maintaining their indigenous languages as an important part of their identities, while others thought integration or convergence was better. This further indicates that some migrants regard their ability to continue to use the languages from their country of origin in the diaspora as important for their identities as opposed to those who live within their country of origin. The following section provides a brief overview of some features of Nigerian Pidgin English lexicon.

## **2.8. Overview of Nigerian Pidgin English lexicon**

In the rest of this chapter, an overview of some aspects of Nigerian Pidgin English lexicon is provided. The focus will be on word formation. For the purpose of space and because this research is not concerned with linguistic structure, the grammatical features are not discussed in detail (See Faraclas, 1996 for a detailed discussion of this). Although the analysis section of this dissertation does not include grammatical features of Nigerian Pidgin English, this section is included for further description of Nigerian Pidgin English as a language different from English. According to Sebba (1997: 37), “the grammars of pidgins are characteristically less complex than the grammars of their source languages”. This indicates that the grammar of Nigerian Pidgin English is expected to be relatively simpler than that of Standard English. However, this does not apply to the emerging expanded pidgin/creole varieties of the language. Nigerian Pidgin English occurs predominantly in spoken form, although many unsuccessful attempts have been made to change this including devising a standard orthography for the language (Mensah, 2011: 212). The writings that are available are informal writings on social media, newspaper features, a bible and a dictionary of pidgin words. A call has been made by most academics for more texts like prose novels, story books and so on to be produced in Nigerian Pidgin English. This call is yet to be heeded.

Many scholars have also advocated for Nigerian Pidgin English to be adopted as one of the official languages in Nigeria (Igboanusi 2008: 68). The reason for this is that it will give its speakers access to participatory citizenship because it is widely spoken by most Nigerians. Others have asked that it be recognised as a national language as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba

because it is popular even though ignored. More importantly, it is a neutral language, that is, does not belong to any ethnic group in Nigeria (Essien 1993, Egbokhare 2003, Emenanjo 1985). Some such as Marchese and Schnukal (1982) have called for it to be recognised as one of the indigenous languages of Nigeria. But the argument against this has been the lack of the language in written form due the fact that it does not have a standard orthography. Others have argued that it lacks grammatical forms but Faraclas (1996) has shown that Nigerian Pidgin English has sophisticated grammatical features. According to Mensah (2011), “its sound system, word formation strategies and sentence structure are not as complex as other Nigerian languages”. However, this does not imply a lack of sophistication and innovation in its grammatical features.

### 2.8.1. Reduplication as a word formation strategy

The first word formation strategy in Nigerian Pidgin English that is discussed is reduplication. Reduplication is “...an affixation process in which some part of a base is repeated either to the left or to the right or occasionally in the middle” (Spencer 1991:13). In Nigerian Pidgin English, “the only category of reduplication found is complete or total reduplication” (Mensah 2011: 219). Some examples of reduplication include the following:

- |    |    |                    |  |
|----|----|--------------------|--|
| 1. | a. | <i>small small</i> | ‘gently’                               |
|    |    | <i>wélu wélu</i>   | ‘very well’                            |
|    |    | <i>kúlú kúlú</i>   | ‘calmly’                               |
|    | b. | <i>mágo mágo</i>   | ‘deceitful’                            |
|    |    | <i>yámá yámá</i>   | ‘disgust’/ ‘refuse’/waste <sup>5</sup> |
|    | c. | <i>chá chá</i>     | ‘gambling’                             |
|    |    | <i>kátá kata</i>   | ‘confusion’                            |

The above examples from Mensah (2011) indicate that adverbs, adjectives and nouns are formed through reduplication. The examples in (1a) are mostly adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. They are basically “products of derivation while (1b) and (1c) are frozen reduplication, which are non-derived reduplication” (Mensah, 2011: 220). Some of the reduplicative constituents do not have meaning on their own as single roots, and need to be combined for meaning to be

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<sup>5</sup> Additional meanings provided by me as present in other varieties.

derived. In Nigerian Pidgin English, reduplication performs various grammatical functions. For example, it is “used in indicating the progressive form of the verb” (Mensah, 2011: 219) as in

2. person wey cry cry      still dey      see road.  
person who cry PROG still PROG see road

‘A person who is crying is still seeing.’

In the above example from Mensah (2011: 220), “the first verb in the series within the predicate phrase is reduplicated to mark the progressive or continuous action while the progressive marker ‘dey’ performs the same function on the second verb”.

Another use of reduplication is to mark emphasis and this involves the reduplication of verbs as in the examples below adapted from Mensah (2011):

3. *talk talk*      ‘quarrelsome’  
*play play*      ‘lively/funny’  
*chóp chóp*<sup>6</sup>      ‘gluttonous’

In the examples above, verbs are combined to form adjectives. According to Mensah (2011), this form of reduplication has pragmatic relevance and in the examples above, its function is to introduce a friendly, personal or affectionate touch in a situation. Reduplication is “used grammatically here to denote duration or length of the action described by the verb and it expresses modal actions” (Mensah 2011: 220). Although many of these forms have meaning as single roots in the lexifier, it is reduplicated in Nigerian Pidgin English to derive a different meaning from the meaning it has in Standard English. For example, *talk* or *play* means the act of speaking or playing respectively but when reduplicated in Nigerian Pidgin English, it changes from the act of just talking to talking too much or being quarrelsome. Words may appear to be like their English counterparts but when used within the context of Nigerian Pidgin English, a different meaning is derived. Also, these forms are used in Nigerian Pidgin English to mean different things based on the context of use. For example, *talk talk* can be used in an affectionate way or critical way depending on the context and the same applies to *chóp chóp*. To elaborate further, a mother who is happy about her young child eating well may say *chóp chóp* in a teasing manner and that is used affectionately. Whereas, when a friend who is perhaps

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<sup>6</sup> *Chóp* means ‘food’ and ‘to eat’ in Nigerian Pidgin English depending on context of use. In this context, it functions as the verb ‘to eat’ and the reduplication translates ‘gluttonous’.

unhappy about sharing his or her food says it to another friend then that would be used in a critical manner.

### 2.8.2 Affixation as a word formation strategy

Affixation is another strategy used for word formation in Nigerian Pidgin English. Words are formed through the uses of suffixes and prefixes but not infixes. For instance, the suffix *-y* is attached to derive nouns from adjectives which brings out contrastive rather than emphatic meaning (Mensah 2011: 220). Some examples include the following:

- |        |              |        |                        |
|--------|--------------|--------|------------------------|
| 4. a.) | <i>short</i> | shorty | ‘a short person’       |
|        | <i>black</i> | blacky | ‘a dark person’        |
|        | <i>left</i>  | lefty  | ‘a left-handed person’ |
|        | <i>long</i>  | longy  | ‘a tall person’        |

In the above examples, the first three items are part of informal international English and Mensah seem to have overlooked this. However, the last item is an innovation in Nigerian Pidgin English.

As stated above, prefixes are also present in Nigerian Pidgin English and some examples of words with prefixes as adapted from Mensah (2011: 221) include the following words:

- b.) *yarn* vs. *mis yarn* ‘communicate/miscommunicate’  
*fire* vs. *mis fire* ‘talk aggressively/say something stupid or irrelevant’

The first example above shows innovation in form and meaning while the second shows innovation in meaning not form. According to Mensah (2011: 221), “the adjectives in (4a), though having animate and inanimate semantic connotations, are all used to refer to animate nouns in Nigerian Pidgin English”.

### 2.8.3. Compounding as a word formation strategy

Another process through which words are formed in Nigerian Pidgin English is compounding. Both “endocentric and exocentric compound structures” can be found in Nigerian Pidgin English (Mensah 2011: 223). Some examples as taken from Mensah (2011) include the following:

- |        |                    |                 |
|--------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 5. a.) | A+N                |                 |
|        | <i>long throat</i> | ‘glutton’       |
|        | <i>bad belle</i>   | ‘jealousy/envy’ |

*strong head* 'stubbornness'

b.) N+N

*God pikin* 'Christian'

*country people* 'the masses'

*house boy* 'male servant'

6. a.) N+N

*basket mouth* 'a talkative'

*yarnsh man* 'homosexual'

*woman wrapper* 'weakling (of a man)'

*coconut head* 'a dunce'

b. N+V

*heart cut* 'shock'

*liver melt* 'surprise'

*head scatter* 'confuse/disorganise'

c. V+N

*make mouth* 'boast'

*make eye* 'wink'

*fear face* 'respect'

d. V+V

*sidon look* 'indifferent'

*fly wákká* 'disappear'

*carry go* 'suit oneself'

Because there is no generally acceptable or specific grammatical rule as to how to write compound words orthographically, what is present in the literature depending on the writers' preference are "compound words either written as separate words, single words or separated by hyphens" (Mensah 2011: 224). Most of the compound words like *houseboy*, *coconut head*, and *strong head* come from Standard English or direct English translation of Nigerian languages. For example, 'strong head' is a direct English translation of the Igbo language

expression, *ísí ike* and ‘coconut head’ from Efik language expression, *ibuot ísíp-mmàkárá*. As seen in the above examples, compounding in Nigerian Pidgin English can have the following combinations, A+N, that is, adjective plus noun; N+N, that is, noun plus noun; N+V, that is, noun plus verb; V+N, that is verb plus noun; and V+V, that is verb plus verb. “The compounds presented in example (6a) and (6b) with the combination, adjective-noun and noun-noun, are endocentric in nature and this indicates that they have heads, which are the dominant constituents and constitute the primary element of meaning” (Mensah 2011: 224). This means that the compounds only have meaning as whole and not as parts. For example, the word ‘basket’ on its own does not mean ‘a talkative’ unless ‘mouth’ is added to it and vice versa.

#### 2.8.4. The multiple functions of *for*

In Standard English, prepositions belong to the category of words known as function words and in Nigerian Pidgin English it serves different functions. Faraclas (1996) notes that the number of functions which may be signalled by *for* is so great that further specification is often necessary. *For* in Nigerian Pidgin English has multiple functions within a clause and signals different meanings with its movement as seen in the following examples taken from Mensah (2011)

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 7. <i>E dey for the table</i>  | ‘It’s on the table.’                    |
| <i>I live for school domot</i> | ‘I live at the school compound.’        |
| <i>No be for mouth</i>         | ‘It’s not by boasting.’                 |
| <i>I put am for your bag</i>   | ‘I put it in/inside your bag.’          |
| <i>E good for you</i>          | ‘It’s good for you.’                    |
| <i>Hú be gofnor for Lagos?</i> | ‘Who is the governor of Lagos (State)?’ |
| <i>Wák for legedis</i>         | ‘Walk with your legs.’                  |

As shown in the examples above, the preposition *for* has multiple functions in Nigerian Pidgin English and “these meanings are not ambiguous in the context of usage” and it may be used to represent other prepositions such as “*at, by, on, in, inside, with*” and so on (Mensah, 2011: 232). Mensah (2011: 232) notes that “the plurifunctionality of *for* in these examples are not original to [Nigerian Pidgin English], but comes from the indigenous pre-colonial languages which have correspondingly vague prepositions (Yoruba *ni* and *si*, Igbo *na*, Efik *ke*, and so on)”. Apart from functioning as a preposition, *for* also functions as an auxiliary and/or perfective aspect as evident in the examples below also taken from Mensah (2011: 232):

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8. <i>I for like come</i> | ‘I would like to come.’ |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|

*You for tell me*                    ‘You would have told me.’

As indicated above, *for* is no longer a preposition but an auxiliary verb. Mensah (2011: 232) points out that “*for* here is undergoing transformation as a morphosyntactic marker in response to the need for creativity and expressiveness”. This indicates that Nigerian Pidgin English grammar is constantly seeing new innovations in the use of words adopted from the lexifier. Mesthrie (2001) reports similar presence of plurifunctionality of *for* in Black South African English of the Western Cape. His study revealed that *for* is used to “denote location, direction and duration and with infinitives and direct objects” and the participants showed a tendency to use *for* as a favoured preposition as indicated in the examples below,

9. *I drive there for taxi*                    ‘I drive a taxi there’  
*I was going for Waterfront*            ‘I was going to the Waterfront’  
*I fall down for ladder*                    ‘I fell from the ladder’

These examples indicate that the multiple uses of *for* is not only common in Nigerian Pidgin English. As in Nigerian Pidgin English, *for* in Black South African English functions as prepositions and even conjunctions as indicated by Mesthrie (2001).

## **2.9. Summary of chapter**

As seen above, this literature review chapter presented an overview of literature concerning the field of pidgins and creoles. It explained the meaning of pidgin as used in the field of linguistics, its origin, types and some pidgins around the world. The later part of the review focused on Nigerian Pidgin English as a form of pidgin spoken in Nigeria. It described the attitudes towards the language and the uses of the language with the country. The literature review chapter ended with a description of some features of the lexicon visible in Nigerian Pidgin English and these features show the innovations present in Nigerian Pidgin English.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

Researcher methodologies used by researchers to collect data can be either quantitative or qualitative methods. In some cases, both methods are used. The quantitative research method relates to “an objective positivist search for singular truths that rely on hypothesis, statistics, it is generally large scale...” (O’Leary, 2010: 105). On the other hand, qualitative research has to do with “human beings: interpersonal relationships, personal values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts and feelings. The researcher attempts to attain rich, real, deep, and valid data and from a rational standpoint, the approach is inductive” (Leedy, 1993:143). The quantitative method is equally important as it ensures generalizability. This chapter presents the methodology that was employed for this research. It begins with an introduction to the research design employed. What follows is a description of data collection techniques, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and the scope and limitations of the study.

In this study of patterns of use and attitudes of Nigerians in Cape Town towards Nigerian Pidgin English, I used quantitative data collection method in form of questionnaires to broaden the study. I also used qualitative method in combination with quantitative method in order to obtain more in-depth data that may not be possible without face to face interaction. Also, qualitative method was used along with quantitative method to obtain a different perspective to further enrich the data and reach more participants. The reason for this was that not all participants were comfortable with filling out questionnaires or sitting for an interview. Therefore, both methods were employed to meet the individual preferences of the participants. The qualitative method was also important since the study involves attitudes or feelings of people about Nigerian Pidgin English.

### **3.2. Source of data**

As stated above, the quantitative method was used mostly to reach more people who were unavailable or unwilling to take part in a physical interview. Whereas, the qualitative part of the study was more for depth and to explore personal feelings and beliefs since the study is mostly concerned with that. For the qualitative method, I interviewed participants and observed what was happening in terms of their language use before, during and after the interview. The

interview was semi-structured even though I had questions which served as a guide and kept me within the research topic. I asked follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. Participants were informed about the interview and that they would be recorded.

Also, not all participants were comfortable with being recorded. In these cases, I took notes of their responses. I also observed Nigerians and their interactions at public places such as Nigerian restaurants and at a barber's shop owned by a Nigerian and patronised by mostly Nigerians over a period of 3 months from March to May 2017. The qualitative research method forms an important part of research because it gives the participants the opportunity to express their views and feelings on the phenomenon under investigation. It also allows the researcher access to their nonverbal reactions. For the quantitative method, I made use of an online survey that required mostly short answers. The participants were given a link which gave them access to the survey which they had to complete voluntarily. Apart from the online survey, I also attempted an offline questionnaire as well but the response was very poor as most participants were unwilling to participate and the ones who were willing, complained of lack of time. Because of this, only three were returned and these three will not be included in the study. A scrutiny of the 3 responses showed very varied responses and it became clear that 3 was too little a number for a valid analysis.

### **3.3. Sample Selection Techniques**

The participants comprised of Nigerians between the ages of 19 to 55, both males and females. The participants were made up of both students and migrant workers living in Cape Town. This was intentional because the aim was to compare the attitudes of both groups towards Nigerian Pidgin English and to see if there is any similarity or difference and what this could possibly indicate. The criteria for selection of participants was that they be Nigerian and have a knowledge of Nigerian Pidgin English. To access the migrant workers, I paid visits to their business places and churches which were around Mowbray, Bellville and Observatory. For the students, I spoke to the Nigerian Association at the University of Cape Town and some of the members volunteered to participate in the study. I contacted the participants from both groups that were interested and scheduled an interview with them at their convenient time. Almost the same process was followed for the quantitative research with the only difference being that I either emailed them the link to the online survey or sent it to them as a text message on their mobile phones.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedures and instruments**

As mention earlier, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and online surveys were employed in this study for data collection. The voluntary consent of all the participants involved was requested before collecting the data. Participant observation notes were also taken as part of the research activity. The recorder on my phone and tablet device was used to record and store the information obtained from the interview. The purpose of this was to store the data in its raw form to avoid missing vital information which could happen with only field notes. The length of the interview was dependent on how much time the participant had to spare, how much information s/he was willing to share and how the conversation turned out. The shortest interview was 8 minutes and the longest was 35 minutes. For the quantitative aspect, an online survey with 16 questions which the participants had to respond to in a comment box was used. It did not have a 'yes' or 'no' tick box but provided a comment box where participants could write out their answers if they had any wish to elaborate on their 'yes' or 'no' responses. For the observation field notes and interviews with those who were uncomfortable with being recorded, a note book and pen was used to record the information obtained.

The following questions were asked in the questionnaire and guided the interview as well. Some of the questions follow Akande & Salami (2010):

1. Gender?
2. Tribe in Nigeria?
3. Occupation, age group, home language?
4. How long have you been living in South Africa?
5. How many Nigerian languages do you know and use in your daily activities?
6. Do you use Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town?
7. Do you use it with only Nigerians who speak a language different from yours and why?
8. Did you use it while you were in Nigeria? Why?
9. Do you read materials in Nigerian Pidgin English and should there be more books/materials in Nigerian Pidgin English?
10. Do you consider Nigerian Pidgin English a language? Why?
11. Do you think it is a variety of English? Do you think it is bad English?
12. Should Nigerian Pidgin English be taught as a language in schools? Should it be used to teach in schools?
13. Should Nigerian Pidgin English be an official language in Nigeria?
14. What category of people do you think speak Nigerian Pidgin English?
15. What is your general opinion of the language?

16. Where and how did you learn to speak the language

The questions below were used for the interview but not the questionnaire:

17. Please tell me more about the purpose Nigerian Pidgin English serves in your daily activities. What do you use it for?

18. When you speak pidgin, is it to keep some people from understanding you or to make them understand you better? Do you use pidgin to exclude or include others?

19. Would you pray in pidgin?

20. Do you speak the language with your children?

21. Does speaking pidgin in Cape Town make you more Nigerian than a Nigerian who cannot or does not speak the language? Please explain why you feel that way?

22. Do you feel that speaking the language bridges the gap between home and a foreign country for you? That is, does it make you feel more at home?

23. Do you think it is important for your kids to know and speak pidgin even if they are outside Nigeria?

24. Would you teach them the language?

Both 'Nigerian Pidgin English' and 'pidgin' was used to refer to Nigerian Pidgin English for accommodative purposes because most Nigerians refer to Nigerian Pidgin English as 'pidgin'. I attempted to keep the questions short and simple yet clear, but elaborated on them at the interview since the circumstance allowed for that to happen. As was earlier stated, these questions only served as a guide and therefore, were not asked in the form or order of occurrence. Questions 1 to 4 was asked for the purpose of getting a sense of the participants' background and question 5 was asked to determine if the duration of their stay in Cape Town could influence their perception and attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in any way. That is, if those who are still relatively new would have positive attitudes based on ties to home and feelings of loneliness in Cape Town. For question 7, the aim was to investigate if they only used it as a lingua franca, that is, when the need arises to communicate with Nigerians who speak a different language or they speak it with those who speak the same language as them too. Question 10 was based on the general perceptions of some Nigerians that Nigerian Pidgin English is not a language and I asked this to get their positions as that would also give a sense of their attitude towards the language. In Nigeria, there seems to be confusion regarding the label of Nigerian Pidgin English which most people consider 'bad' English. It is based on this that question 11 was necessary. The aim was to investigate if the participants understood what a variety of English meant, what label they assigned to Nigerian Pidgin English and what the

label meant to them. Questions 12 and 13 were asked to get an insight on the acceptability of the language beyond informal domains. Also, to investigate if the policing of Nigerian Pidgin English in academic domains had any influence on their perception of the language, if negative. Questions 19 to 24 was asked to investigate the value the language could possibly have on the participants' lives in diaspora. The answers to the questions and the interpretations are discussed in the next chapter. More information on the participants can be found in the next section.

### **3.5. Description of participants**

This section provides a more detailed description of the participants. The participants included males, females, students, migrant workers, young people, older people, and Nigerians from different regions of Nigeria. For the interview, 10 participants were interviewed and out of the 10 interviewed 4 of them were females and 6 males. Four out of the 10 interviewed were migrant workers and the remaining 6 were students of University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape and Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Out of the 4 migrant workers, 3 were males and 1 female. Out of the 6 students interviewed, 3 of them were males and the remaining 3, females. For the online survey, a total of 28 people responded to it. Out of the 28 respondents, only 5 of them were females and the remaining 23 were males. The participants included Nigerians from the western, eastern and southern regions of Nigeria. These happen to be the areas where Nigerian Pidgin English is used and the areas from which people tend to migrate from to Cape Town. A total of 41 Nigerians participated in this study but the responses of 38 derived from the online survey and interviews will be discussed. A possible explanation for the outnumbering of females by males could be because Nigerian males are more present in Cape Town than the females.

### **3.6. Data coding procedure**

Each recorded interview was transcribed and read through to find common themes within the responses obtained. To identify common themes in the responses, I listened to the recording several times before transcription and during transcription. After transcribing the data, I played it repeatedly to compare the transcribed text with the recording. The aim of this was to ensure that I transcribed accurately since the transcribed text would be used for coding. The interview was conducted in both Standard Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English depending on what language the participants preferred. For some participants, the interview was conducted in only Nigerian Pidgin English while for others, either both languages were used or just

Standard Nigerian English was used. Coding was conducted in the following manner: in the transcribed text, I noted common responses found in the transcribed data and the surveys. I also made notes on the data when I believed there were some contradictions regarding the data that was provided. That is, the attitude sometimes did not match the evidence provided by the participant for a certain perception (this will become clearer in the next chapter). A colleague knowledgeable about qualitative research and linguistics research was also involved in the coding process and the aim of this was to ensure my interpretations were not exaggerated. After the qualitative coding, I counted the number of common themes and participants associated with it for the quantitative aspect of the research. I also read through the online questionnaires carefully to identify similar or different responses and the implications of that for the study.

With regards to the first objective of this study (to determine how Nigerians in Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English), I analysed the data to find evidence of ways and the purposes for which the language is used in Cape Town. I specifically looked out for what participants said about their use of Nigerian Pidgin English before arrival in Cape Town to see if there was any difference between before and after their arrival in Cape Town. With regards to objective 2 (to examine their attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin), I employed the same approach but looked out more for evidence that pointed to their feelings and perceptions towards the language. Regarding objective 3 (to determine if Nigerian Pidgin English is important to Nigerians living in Cape Town), my interest was in their use of the language in Cape Town and the purposes it served for them here. I therefore, looked out for evidence suggesting that they used the language in Cape Town more than they did while in Nigeria, the possible reason behind this, and the value they placed on the language in diaspora as opposed to within Nigeria.

### **3.7. Scope and limitations of the data**

The data collection was limited to Nigerians living in the Mowbray, Observatory and Bellville area of Cape Town. There is a possibility that there are thousands of Nigerians currently based in the city of Cape Town or even the above-mentioned areas only but due to time constraints, availability, willingness of participants, and the scope of this study, only 41 one of them participated in the study. I did try to reach more than 41 but my effort was met with the unwillingness of people to participate in a project such as this. Some of those that volunteered to participate were difficult to reach due to their unavailability and as a result, only those who were available took part in the research. There was also the issue of some participants holding on to a lot of information since they were too conscious of being recorded.

### **3.8. Ethical consideration**

When approaching the participants to be part of the research, I provided a detailed explanation on the research, the aims of the research, and why their participation was needed. I also explained that being part of the study was totally voluntary and they did not have to do it if they were uncomfortable. They were assured of their privacy, safety and protection and that their identities would not be revealed and the information they provided would solely be used for this study. They were also assured that the information they provide would not be shared with other parties. They were made aware of their rights to withdraw at any time they felt uncomfortable and their total rights to the information already obtained if they at any point changed their minds and did not wish for it to be used. I also asked for permission to record them and gave them the option to refuse or accept. The preference of those who declined to be recorded was respected. I opted for note taking with their permission. The interview sessions were scheduled based on their convenient time and venue especially for the migrant workers who I had to interview at their business places. I ensured that the session did not interfere with their businesses in any way and no form of coercion was used to obtain the data. They were also given consent forms after all the necessary explanations to sign which they all signed.

### **3.9. Summary of chapter**

This chapter discussed the methodological framework employed in this study. It described the research tools and instruments used in collecting data, the source of data, and how the data was obtained. It discussed the analytical framework of the research and how coding was done and concluded with ethical consideration. The next chapter discusses the analysis of the findings.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse and discuss the data from the standpoint of each of the questions raised in chapter one. The findings section will therefore be divided into three, namely, uses of Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town, attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town, and the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English to Nigerians living in Cape Town. Evidence of these three themes will be extracted from the data for discussion. The chapter begins with a description of the data and then an analysis/interpretation of the data discussion will follow.

### 4.2. Findings and discussion

The questions asked in the survey produced varying responses. Findings from the quantitative data are provided in the table below:

Table 1: Summary of quantitative data

Questions	Yes	No	Maybe
Do you speak NPE?	28	0	0
Do you speak NPE in CPT?	28	0	0
Do you speak it only with Nigerians who speak a different L1 from you?	3	25	0
Did you speak NPE while in Nigeria?	28	0	0
Do you read books written in NPE?	22	6	0
Would you like to read books in NPE?	19	2	7
Would you like to see more books written in NPE?	19	8	1
Do you consider NPE a language?	20	8	0
Do you consider NPE a variety of English?	13	11	4
Do you think NPE is bad English?	3	21	4
Should NPE be used as LoLT?	11	13	4

Should NPE be made an official language in Nigeria?	11	15	2
Do you think every category of people speak NPE?	22	5	1
Total	196	117	23

The table above says a lot about perceptions and attitudes of Nigerians in Cape Town towards Nigerian Pidgin English.

The qualitative data collection took the form of a semi structured interview involving 10 participants as stated in chapter three. They all claimed that in their experience, every Nigerian born in Nigeria speaks Nigerian Pidgin English. They also all claimed that the language does not require any form of teaching as it is naturally acquired in the environment through social interaction. They all said they speak Nigerian Pidgin English, however, one said although she speaks it, is ashamed of speaking it (to be discussed further in the analysis section). In relation to Nigerian Pidgin English being a language, some strongly believed it is not a language while it was the opposite for some. The same thing was visible with the issue of Nigerian Pidgin English in education or as an official language. All the participants interviewed had varying perspectives towards Nigerian Pidgin English and felt differently towards the language although there were some similarities regarding the response to some questions. The next section will provide a more detailed discussion and interpretation of the data.

#### **4.2.1. Patterns of use of Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town**

Language is used in different ways and for different purposes by speakers. This research was interested in determining the different ways and for what purpose/s Nigerians in Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English. To probe this, the participants were asked if they speak Nigerian Pidgin English with only Nigerians who speak a different L1 from them. They were also asked of places where they speak Nigerian Pidgin English and their reasons for speaking it. In response to these questions, the common theme in the participants' responses was that the language is a means of communication and they use Nigerian Pidgin English to communicate with others. Some of the reasons they gave for this response include that it is "generally understood", "it eases communication", "it makes communication simpler", "it is the most common language understood by most Nigerians", "it is a convenient way of interaction", "it is an important means of communication", and "it is widely spoken and understood by a large group of people...." What is evident in the responses above is that the participants recognise the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in the facilitation of meaningful and easily

understood communication. The aim of speakers in a communicative situation is to understand and be understood. Sometimes, language may be a barrier to such understanding or effective communication. Therefore, a language that does not cause such a barrier proves useful. To Nigerians in Cape Town, Nigerian Pidgin English serves such function as it easier to communicate in the language. Besides making communication easier, it also bridges the gap between people who speak different languages. In a country with over 520 indigenous languages with rural and urban migration of people within the country, there is a need for a common language. Nigerian Pidgin English has come to serve such a function. It is the only neutral language that most Nigerians from different ethnic groups share. It is also the first language of communication between strangers. It serves as a lingua franca as highlighted in the response above. Furthermore, in a context like Cape Town, there is a greater need for such a common language as there is not much to signal ethnic identities and possible indigenous language here as opposed to within Nigeria where territory signals ethnic identity and possible indigenous language. What this means is that the first contact for Nigerians in diaspora is Nigerian Pidgin English as they may not be able to tell by physical appearance of an individual if they share the same L1.

Other responses indicate that Nigerian Pidgin English apart from serving as a lingua franca serves as a social language too. When asked if they use the language with those who only speak a different language from them, some of the participants responded with a 'no'. "I use it with Nigerians who speak both my language and a different language" was how one participant responded. Other responses were, "I use it irrespective of what language they speak", and "I use it with every Nigerian irrespective of tribe". The foregoing responses indicate that Nigerian Pidgin English is not just an emergency lingua franca but a language that has become a functional part of the linguistic repertoire of these participants. Multilingual speakers are often able to draw on the languages that they have in their repertoire and can choose which one to speak depending on the interlocutors and context. Regarding the interlocutors, they claim that they use the language when 'discussing with friends' or at social gatherings.

A possible reason for Nigerian Pidgin English being a simple form of communication for most of the participants could be related to the fact that there are fewer prescriptive prejudices to the grammatical rules of Nigerian Pidgin English. One participant highlighted this by saying that when he speaks Nigerian Pidgin English, he does not have to worry about being correct because speakers usually do not judge one another on correct form. They are rather concerned with understanding one another. Although Nigerian Pidgin English has grammatical rules, the

speakers do not have a ‘purist’ perception about it but are mainly concerned with communication and are open to innovations. The participants also named the different domains where they use Nigerian Pidgin English. Boxer (2002: 4) refers to domain as “a sphere of life in which verbal and non-verbal interactions occur, e.g. work, family, school, circle of friends and wider communication”. In some of the examples provided above, the participants said they use Nigerian Pidgin English when with their friends, on a bus, in the market, and at home. For one participant, Nigerian Pidgin English is important for communicating with his family at home, and for socialising with his friends when they have their social gatherings at the pub. According to him, he speaks mostly Nigerian Pidgin English when he encounters his Nigerian friends. The language is used to include or exclude others depending on the context. The language also serves as a language of prayer. This is evident from the following response:

Researcher: So would you pray in Pidgin? Is it that close to your heart?

Participant: *OH YEAH it is. It’s easy. (Prays in pidgin) God wey dey for heaven, na you be this abeg na, this tin wey dey worry me, you wan make e kill me? Abeg na commot am, my heard wan burst oh. (Laughs)*

‘OH YEAH it is. It’s easy. (Prays in pidgin) God in heaven, is this you? Please, this thing that is bothering me, do you want it to kill me? Please remove it, my heard wants to burst or I am losing my mind’.

In the extract above, the participant can be seen praying in Nigerian Pidgin English. This indicates that the language plays a significant role in his life. This is not just a special language of prayer like Latin is in some religions but a prayer that he is able to create himself on the spot. Nigerian Pidgin English is an everyday language for this participant and his state of origin in Nigeria may also be a possible explanation for this. The data revealed that he is from Edo State, that is, the Niger Delta region. As brought out in the previous chapter, Nigerian Pidgin English is said to have creolised in this region. This could be the possible reason why he is able to pray in Nigerian Pidgin English and use it for many other purposes too. The example of this participant’s creative use of Nigerian Pidgin English also suggests that the language is used extensively and better thought of as an extended pidgin/creole. From the discussion above, it can be deduced that Nigerian Pidgin English is more prominent in informal domains than formal domains; the language is used as a lingua franca, to facilitate effective communication, and to include or exclude others. The discussion above also shows similarities in the way the language is used in Cape Town and within Nigeria. The only difference is that there is a greater

need for such lingua franca in Cape Town than in Nigeria. Also, both the students and the migrant workers use the language in the same ways with the only difference being that the students in this study said they could not pray in the language. The above discussion therefore addresses the first research question (What various ways do Nigerians in Cape Town use Nigerian Pidgin English?)

#### **4.2.2. Attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English**

Language attitudes relate to how people respond to the languages they encounter. As mentioned in chapter 2, Baker (1992) refers to language attitude as unconscious, subjective, and personal responses to languages an individual encounter. Furthermore, as Dyers (2000) notes, language attitudes may either be positive, negative or neutral. Language ideologies and orientations shape language attitudes. The different attitudes held by the participants in this study can be deduced from their responses to the attitudinal questions asked. One such question was whether they think there should be more books in Nigerian Pidgin English. The participants had varying responses. As seen in table 1, 19 of the participants responded with a “yes” while 8 said “no” and one participant’s response was a “maybe”. The qualitative data also showed similar variation in responses. Three of the participants responded with a “no” and 7 with a “yes”. One reason they gave for a “no” response was because they thought the language was an informal language and a ‘bad’ form of English. One participant expressed his feeling more strongly with “I don’t subscribe to books and materials in pidgin because as far as I know, it isn’t proper English”. This example highlights a purist ideology on language which prescribes only one ‘correct’ or ‘proper’ form of language use. It also indicates that this participant and other 10 of the participant think of pidgin as English, not a different language. As a result, based on this purist ideology, they consider Nigerian Pidgin English as a ‘corrupt’ version of English. Therefore, Nigerian Pidgin English as a language should not have a place in formal domains like education.

Not all the participants’ responses were “no”. There were more “yes” responses. In total, 68% of the participants said they would like to see more books in Nigerian Pidgin English. The reasons they gave for this was because of the popularity and wide uses of the language. One participant had the following to say, *Na im be the one language wey everybody understand from Hausa to Igbo. E go be like Nigerian thing* ‘it is the only language that everybody understands even the Hausas and Igbos. It will be like a Nigerian thing’. In this response the participant describes books in Nigerian Pidgin English as an attribute of Nigerians. This

highlights the link between language and identity, in this case, Nigerian Pidgin English and national identity.

Based on these responses, it can be concluded that 68% of the participants who responded with a “yes”, hold positive attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English while 31% who responded with a “no” hold a negative attitude and 1% whose response was a “maybe”, a neutral attitude. Eleven of the responses indicate a strong negative attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains (e.g. books). The participant in the example above cannot consider the thought of books being written in Nigerian Pidgin English and does not ‘subscribe’ to it. In addition, his statement above reveals that his attitude towards English is a positive one. The other participants who hold negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English also hold positive attitudes towards Standard English. This may be linked to factors such as the dominance of English in Nigeria since it is the official language, globalization, classism (English in Nigeria is associated with high social class), and western education.

Some other attitudinal questions used to determine the participants’ attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English were whether it should be made one of the official languages of Nigeria and if it should be used in schools as LoLT. Responses to these questions also revealed both positive and negative attitudes. In relation to the first question, 11 of the participants said “yes”, 15 said “no” and 2 were indifferent. In the qualitative data set, 3 said “yes” and 7 said “no”. This indicates that a total of 14 participants who took part in the study hold positive attitudes, 22 hold negative attitudes, and 2 hold neutral attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English based on this question. In response to the second question, 14 said “yes”, 20 said “no” and 4 were indifferent. This implies that 14 participants hold positive attitudes, 20 negative and 4 neutral attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in the domain of education as evident in the responses. For those who wanted Nigerian Pidgin English recognised as one of the official languages of Nigeria, some of the reasons they gave was because it is a neutral language and the language of the masses in Nigeria.

In addition, one participant said it was a Nigerian language as opposed to Standard English which he described as a foreign language. He refers to Standard English as a foreign language even though he speaks it, and distances himself from it. This is evident in his statement, ‘English is not our language’. Although English is spoken in Nigeria, this participant considers it a foreign language because it is a residue of colonialism and not one of the indigenous languages of Nigeria. Ebam (1990 cited in Mustapha, 2010: 65) notes “that the choice of

English as a national language in Nigeria is ill-advised because, for one, it is a foreign language spoken by only ten per cent of the population”. Standard English here refers to the variety of English spoken in Nigeria. Mesthrie & Bhatt (2008) note that there are different varieties of English and for this reason, it is important to offer some clarity regarding the use of ‘Standard English’ in this dissertation. Standard English in the Nigerian context is used to refer to not the standard British English which in itself is complex as Mesthrie & Bhatt (2008) state, but to the variety of English spoken in formal domains in Nigeria, mostly as an L2.

Another participant responded in the following way,

Participant: it must be... it must be recognised! It must be accorded national status as a national language because of the population of people speaking the language. You cannot say it's not a language. Exactly! So *o*<sup>7</sup> it must be accorded that status of a national language. And I'm also contemplating that it must be inculcated into the school curriculum, you understand? So *o* it makes it easier for people to understand. When we have easier ways of understanding things why make it difficult?

This participant wants attention to be accorded the language. This may be related to the fact that Nigerian Pidgin English does not receive much attention in formal domains. He seems to belong to the school of thought that wants Nigerian Pidgin English to be accorded national status. When languages are given the status of a national language, the prestige of such languages increases and the attitudes towards it are likely to change as well. The above example indicates a strong positive attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains. While it is true that Nigeria has over 520 indigenous languages and making all of them “languages of the nation” is far from feasible, it is also true that three languages of Nigeria already have this status. A national language is defined as “a language generally developed and used as a symbol of national unity and it is often regarded as a symbol of nationhood” (Holmes 1992:105). A national language is in most cases, the indigenous language of the nation.

In addition, an official language is similar to a national language in the sense that both may enjoy official backing (Mustapha, 2010). Three criteria for selecting a language as a national language have been suggested by Nida and Wonderly (1977 cited in Mustapha 2010: 63). Firstly, “a national language has to be politically neutral (no political bias as it must not unduly favour any of the linguistic communities against the other communities in the same state)”. The

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<sup>7</sup> Filler used in Nigerian

second criterion is that “the language of choice should be linguistically related to other indigenous languages as this will aid its learning by non-native speakers within the country”. The third is that “the language should be spoken as a mother tongue by a substantial community of speakers who can serve as satisfactory models” (all three criteria follow Nida and Wonderly, 1997 cited in Mustapha, 2010: 63). Based on these criteria, Nigerian Pidgin English fits as a national language because it is politically neutral as highlighted in the previous chapters. It is also linguistically related to other indigenous languages because it derives its substrate from some of the indigenous languages. Finally, as noted before, it is an L1 to over 3 million Nigerians.

Regarding the use of Nigerian Pidgin English in education as LoLT, the participants whose responses were “yes” thought it would enable better learning since the language is easier to understand than English and most Nigerians acquire it alongside their indigenous languages in their natural environments. According to one participant, “since the pidgin is used effectively for communication in the whole of Nigeria, it must be promoted and inculcated in the school curriculum to help students to understand better”. Note the use of the expression ‘must be’ by this participant. This indicates that he considers Nigerian Pidgin English use in education as necessary if better learning is to occur. From the response above, it can be deduced that this participant holds a strong positive attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains such as education. Studies have shown that the language of learning and teaching may enable or disable better learning (see Webb 2004; Pluddemann, 2010; Bambgose, 1991; Baker 2006). The National Policy on Education in Nigeria recognises this need and provides that “the medium of instruction be initially the MT or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English”. However, most educational institutions do not implement this but have a straight English policy. Nigerian Pidgin English qualifies as both an L1 and language of the wider community in this case and should be used in schools. Webb (2004: 148) argues that “the languages used for learning and teaching is crucial for learners’ acquisition of knowledge and understanding and the development of their skills ....” The language of learning and teaching should include the language that the learners know best.

The participants who gave a “no’ response to both questions also had reasons for their positions. For the first question regarding Nigerian Pidgin English as an official language, they said it was too informal and they preferred it to remain as an informal language. One participant responded with, “no, government should not do anything. Official ke? It cannot be made an official language. No, we already have English Standard English”. This participant’s response

indicates a lack of interest in engaging with the idea of Nigerian Pidgin English being an official language in Nigeria. The reason for this is that she considers English as sufficient. She added in her response that “there are other things government needs to take care of than Pidgin English”. This response indicates that the case of Nigerian Pidgin English being made an official language in Nigeria is trivial as opposed to the many other problems that the nation faces. Factors such as political instability, corruption, an under development in the country may have influenced this position. Therefore, if making Nigerian Pidgin English an official language should be put side by side with these other issues; it is not much of a problem as opposed to other issues that she considers bigger and more urgent. This participant holds a negative attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin English in this domain.

Regarding the question of the language being used as LoLT, the reasons the participants gave for saying “no” was also because it is an informal language, and it is not well developed. Arguing against its feasibility in this domain, one participant asked, “What’s an atom in Pidgin English?” Her question suggests strongly that for her, Nigerian Pidgin English should not be used in education because it lacks the technical terms required for scientific concepts. She suggested it be taught as a subject instead. It is true that Nigerian Pidgin English is mainly in oral form and incorporating it in formal domains will require it be developed but an attempt at developing the language needs to be made by the relevant parties concerned. The “no” responses to this question reveals that these participants hold negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in the domain of education as LoLT.

Another attitudinal question used to probe the participants’ attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English was if they would transfer the language to their children. In relation to this question, all participants said “yes”. One participant had the following to say, *Even if na as a dey Southie here a born pikin, if e learn him mama Afrikaans whatever, ah e go learn him daddy pidgin na. ‘E go learn ah ah! ‘My children must learn pidgin ‘Even if it is as I am in Southie<sup>8</sup> here and I have a child, if he learns his mother’s Afrikaans, whatever, ah he will learn his daddy’s pidgin too. He will learn ah ah! My children must learn pidgin’.* From the above statement, it is evident this participant is quite passionate about Nigerian Pidgin English and considers it important for his children, in spite of being outside Nigeria, to be able to speak it. He emphasized, *A serious o, a no go fit born pikin wey no know pidgin even if we grow for America ... even if I commot Southie here now say I go America go settle ‘I’m serious o, I can’t have a child that does not*

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<sup>8</sup> Slang term used by Nigerians to refer to South Africa just like Naija for Nigeria

know pidgin even if we grow up in America ... even if I leave South Africa here now and say I am going to America to settle'. The emphasis indicates a strong affirmation of the identity attached to Nigerian Pidgin English. It also highlights the importance of language maintenance (a language is maintained when it is transferred from an older to a younger generation). Transferring Nigerian Pidgin English to their children implies that the participants will be contributing to maintaining the language. This response indicates a strong positive attitude towards Nigerian Pidgin English in the family domain. Based on the responses above, it can be concluded that all the participants hold positive attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in the family domain.

Lastly, the participants were asked if they thought Nigerian Pidgin English slows down Standard English development. Only the participants in the qualitative data were asked this question. In response, 7 of the participants were of the opinion that Nigerian Pidgin English slows down Standard English development while 3 thought otherwise. Adamant that Nigerian Pidgin English does not have any negative effect on Standard English development, one participant had the following to say:

*Participant: I swear! I failed maths. Even when I did my education program for college and maths na wahala for me, English, people dey bribe lecturer make them near me. A no fit lie for you now. Them dey pay make them near me make we write English together. Them dey craze? If them no near me them go fail!*

'I swear! I failed maths. Even when I did my education program at the college and maths was a problem for me, English people were bribing the lecturer for them to stay close to me. I can't lie to you now. They paid to be close to me so we could write together. Are they crazy? If they don't stay close to me they will fail!

*Researcher: so all these things wey them talk na lie? So all these things that people say are not true?*

*Participant: na lie! Pikin wey e go know English go know English whether e begin dey speak pidgin from primary one o. When them don teach am the English, e go know am. Pidgin no go distract am from English because pidgin na different language; English also na different language. Say a dey speak Eka language no mean say Igbo go spoil my Eka language.*

'It's a lie! A child that will know English will know English whether he started speaking it from primary one (first year of primary school in Nigeria). When they teach him the English, he will know it. Pidgin does not distract him from English because pidgin is a different language; English also is a different language. Because I speak Eka language does not mean that Igbo language will spoil my Eka language'

In the extract above, the participant is seen code-switching between Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin English. This indicates a close co-existence of the two codes socially and psycholinguistically. Stroud (2001: 350) states that “African speakers move into, between, and across many different semiotic practices, exhibiting multiple and varied practices of language use, such as language crossing and mixed registers”. Thus, this movement is observed in the extract above. Other participants in the study also moved between Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard English during the interview. As noted by Canagarajah & Wurr (2011: 165), “for multilinguals, languages are not necessarily at war with each other; they complement each other in communication. Therefore, we have to reconsider the dominant understanding that one language negatively —interferes in the use of another. The traces of one language on the other are creative, enabling, and offer possibilities for voice”. Therefore, Nigerian Pidgin English complements and enables the development of Standard English rather than distort it as pointed out by the participant in the extract above. From his analogy of his indigenous languages Eka and Igbo, it is evident that he understands language interference. He also strongly refutes the claim that Nigerian Pidgin English interferes or slows down Standard English development citing his development in both languages as evidence against this. The discussion above indicates that 7 participants hold negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English based on the idea that it interferes with English development. The remaining 3 hold positive attitudes and think it enables rather than disable development in both languages.

The above discussion reveals varying attitudes based on contexts. For example, there is a change in attitude when the participants are asked about transferring or encouraging their children to speak the language as opposed to the case of making Nigerian Pidgin English an official language. Regarding the former, their responses reveal that all the participants hold positive attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English. Whereas, the latter reveals that majority of the participants from the same data set who previously held positive attitudes now hold negative attitudes. This data analysis reveals that attitudes of individuals are context-specific. Rickford & Traugott (forthcoming) speak of duality in attitudes towards pidgin and creoles where individuals may hold one attitude in one context but another in a different context. This can be observed in this research as individuals tend to show a change in attitudes based on questions they are asked.

Furthermore, all the participants said they speak Nigerian Pidgin English and this indicates a positive attitude towards the language. Whereas, when asked about the use of the language in formal domains such as education, and government institutions, their responses reveal negative

attitudes by some and positive attitudes by others. On the one hand, they view Nigerian Pidgin English as a language that eases communication but on the other, some of them cannot consider the thought of it as LoLT or one of the official languages of Nigeria. In other words, some of the participants think Nigerian Pidgin English is fit for informal purposes but not for formal purposes. Also, as highlighted by Dyers (2000) in the previous chapter, language attitudes often contradict patterns of language use. This is evident in the foregoing discussion as some of the participants, although hold negative attitudes towards the language, still use it for communicative purposes. The data does not show significant difference between the attitudes of the students and migrant workers towards Nigerian Pidgin English. Both groups of participants hold similar attitudes towards the language in informal domains. However, in relation to attitude towards the language in formal domains, the migrant workers were more open to the language and held positive attitudes while some of the students were more adamant and held negative attitudes towards the language in formal domains. This could be linked to the hegemonic idea about Nigerian Pidgin English being associated with the less educated and Standard English indexes educational status. Therefore, to address my second research question, (what attitudes do Nigerians in Cape Town hold towards Nigerian Pidgin English?) the data analysis reveals that attitudes are not clear cut as they vary based on context of use.

#### **4.2.3. The importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town**

This section focuses on the importance of speaking Nigerian Pidgin English to Nigerians in Cape Town. This relates to why they use the language and why it is important to use it even though they live in a city far removed from Nigeria. Thus, it was mainly to investigate why they still choose to speak the language as opposed to speaking Afrikaans or isiXhosa which are some of the languages of Cape Town. To probe this, the participants were asked if they speak Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town and they all said “yes”. The reasons they gave for this were because it aids communication. One participant said speaking the language makes him feel at home and reminds him of home. Another said it gives him a sense of belonging, that is, as part of the Nigerian community and not alone in a foreign place. And for others, speaking the language makes them feel less as foreigners while for others, it is an identity marker and it is important for their identities as Nigerians. Commenting on the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town, one participant had this to say, ‘in fact, I regret that I did not learn it earlier, because I am still not fluent and I see the use of it now that I am in Cape Town’. When asked why she felt the language is more useful now that she is in Cape Town, her reason was that it helps one identify as a Nigerian to other Nigerians. She added that it aids communication

with other Nigerians and not knowing how to speak it deprives one of this. The implication of this is that the language plays a greater role in the diaspora as it offers access to in-group membership with other Nigerians. Blommaert (2007: 5) speaks of the notion of scales which suggests that “processes of distribution and flow are accompanied by processes of hierarchical ordering, in which different phenomena are not juxtaposed, but layered and distinguished as to the scale on which they operate and have value and validity”. In relation to Nigerian Pidgin English, the study reveals that it is more valuable in the diaspora and this indicates an upscaling from lower scale.

Another participant had the following to say regarding the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town,

Participant: I feel at home. I feel home nicely. You feel this aura... this feeling of home (describes emotionally)

Researcher: So when you find Nigerians and you speak pidgin with them, do you use it as a form of identity marker, in group?

Participant: It's a form of identity marker and while we are speaking it, I don't see myself as a South African, I see myself in Nigeria you know

It feels like I'm just breathing the fresh air from home. I feel at home. My brain will just relax; my nerves will relax when using that language and then remember. At times maybe you are talking about the food at home, or you are talking about what is going on at home, or a particular location at home then ahhhh yeah the nostalgic feeling is quite high. It transports me from South Africa to Nigeria.

The ability to retain his language becomes important and for this participant, speaking Nigerian Pidgin English is that one thing that he needs for Cape Town to become home. He got emotional while describing this feeling during the interview and this indicates that he feels strongly about the language and the language plays an important role in his life. Also speaking the language transports this participant symbolically to Nigeria. It bridges the distance between being in Nigeria and abroad. Echoing his sentiments, another participant said speaking the language offers him a sense of belonging and makes him miss home. This implies that speaking Nigerian Pidgin English in Cape Town fills the void that being away from home may have left in their lives as immigrants. Some immigrants often feel displaced in other countries because of being away from home. However, the ability to speak Nigerian Pidgin English in diaspora offers a sense of placement to this participant or makes the sense of displacement bearable.

In the diaspora, Nigerian Pidgin English seems to serve as an identifier for Nigerians. They use the language to identify themselves as seen in the data presented below:

Participant 1: Like there was a day I was ... I was here on my bed and I heard someone downstairs say, "*Dino Melaye don enter wahala*" Dino Malaye is in trouble. So he was speaking with someone, another Nigerian that I know but I didn't know him that he was a Nigerian. Immediately I heard it, I RUSHED (emphasis) outside and I rushed downstairs to meet him and we actually had a long discussion you know with Mr Patrick that I know before. The thing is, you don't really get to meet a lot of Nigerians all the time like right?

Participant 2: And this thing is, you know if you go outside Nigeria? No! No! No! I went for a short training one time outside the country and what distinguishes us is the pidgin. I was just going on the street you know I just heard the pidgin. Two people talking and the pidgin, this is a place that maybe I've not seen even Nigerians for like a month, quickly I knew... yeah and I quickly said ah *bro how far na?* 'Bro how are you?' And he quickly responded, *ah omo, you dey here too?* 'Ah friend, are you here too?' *so na so we just greet and everybody happy* 'so that was how we greeted and everybody was happy'.

In the extracts above, the participants are able to identify other Nigerians and identify themselves to other Nigerians as a result of Nigerian Pidgin English. As mentioned previously, Nigerian Pidgin English serves as an identity marker for Nigerians and this is evident in the extracts above. If the strangers were not speaking Nigerian Pidgin English and were Nigerian, it would not have been so easy to identify them. These two examples indicate that knowing the language and speaking it in the diaspora is important for identification purposes. As pointed out by Appel & Muysken (1990:23), "...the identity imposed by one's group membership is a crucial factor for language choice". This implies that group membership is revealed through language choices as language plays an important role in indexing one's identity. "I think it's a language that is underrated by Nigerians but when you go outside the shores of Nigeria you see the uses of the language. It's unique; it's a common form of identity" is how one participant describes the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in the diaspora. For Nigerians who find themselves abroad, the first point of contact is Nigerian Pidgin English. However, if during the interaction, they discover that they share the same ethnic language, then the switch to ethnic language may occur. Otherwise Nigerian Pidgin English proves useful in the diaspora.

The data analysis therefore reveals that Nigerian Pidgin English is important to Nigerians in Cape Town because it bridges the distance between home and abroad and serves as an identity marker. In fact, another participant commenting on people who do not speak Nigerian Pidgin English says, *If una no blow am o na im be say una two dey deceive unaselves. Na im be say*

*una two no know una nationality* ‘if you people do not speak the language that is to say two of you are deceiving yourselves. That is to say two of you don’t know your nationality’. This participant recognises the link between language and identity and sees speaking the language as an important aspect of national identity. For this reason, he believes the people who do not speak it are in a sense, not self-aware or in denial. This implies that knowing your nationality in diaspora is linked to your ability to speak Nigerian Pidgin English. This is not to say that other Nigerian languages like Igbo and Yoruba which are common in Cape Town are not important because they are when it comes to ethnic identity. However, when it comes to national identity, Nigerian Pidgin English is important. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) point out, identities are multi-layered and are signalled by different elements. Nigerian Pidgin English and home languages like Igbo and Yorua are some of these elements that signal ethnic and national identities. In summary all the participants in this study agree that Nigerian Pidgin English is linked to the Nigerian national identity and speaking the language is important in the diaspora because it identifies them as Nigerians especially when they encounter other Nigerians either as the identifier or the identified. The migrant workers and students did not show any difference in this area too as both groups shared similar sentiments about the role of the language in their lives as immigrants in Cape Town. This therefore addresses the third research question, is speaking the language in Cape Town important and can the reason for this be explained?

### **4.3. Summary of chapter**

The data analysis chapter discussed the data collected from the standpoint of the three research questions. The discussion revealed that Nigerians in Cape Town speak Nigerian Pidgin English and use the language for different purposes such as socializing with their friends, speaking with family members and negotiating their identity as Nigerians. The main purpose of using the language is to ease communication between people who speak a different language from them, that is, it serves as a lingua franca. The analysis also revealed that they use the language in different domains such as, church, home, school, pubs, public transports, and markets. Apart from ways in which they use the language, the data analysis chapter further discussed their attitudes towards the language and concluded that their attitudes were not clear cut. It highlighted the duality of attitudes as influenced by context of use. Some participants held negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in some domains and positive in other domains. Their attitudes were noted to be influenced by their language ideologies as well. Some of them perceived Nigerian Pidgin English as ‘bad’, ‘broken’, ‘disorganised’ and ‘improper’

English. They viewed it as an imperfect imitation of English. Others who held positive attitudes expressed it strongly by calling for it to be used in education and recognised as one of the official or national languages of Nigeria. Finally, the data analysis discussed the importance of Nigerian Pidgin English in the diaspora and concluded that it is an important identity marker and gives the speakers of the language a feeling of being at home when they speak it.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Nigerian Pidgin English although popularly used by most Nigerians living in and outside Nigeria continues to be overlooked by some of the speakers who consider it a language of considerably lower prestige than English. Studies conducted on the language (Faraclas, 1996; Akande & Salami, 2010; Agheyisi 1971) have shown that it is widely used and it has even gained popularity in recent years as the Nigerian entertainment industry now uses it in popular songs and television programs. As highlighted above, the introduction of Nigerian Pidgin English only radio and television stations has further increased the popularity of the language. Politicians have even exploited the popularity of this language in their political campaigns as well. Despite this, the language remains mostly in spoken form and is seen as an informal language. This research project set out to investigate if the attitudes towards the language in the diaspora show any difference from the attitudes present within Nigeria. The aim was to investigate the uses of the language, attitudes towards the language and the importance of the language in the diaspora.

To investigate this, 38 Nigerians living in Cape Town were studied. They interviewed and observed in public places such as bars and barbers' shop over a three-month period. The findings reveal that the attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English do not show significant difference from that held by Nigerians within Nigeria. The participants in this study held negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains and positive attitudes towards the language in informal domains. These same attitudes are obtainable among Nigerians living in Nigeria. The data analysis reveals that the Nigerians in this study use the language in their daily activities for different purposes. The hegemonic perspective on pidgins being an informal language that can serve only informal purposes is also present among some of the Nigerians that formed part of this study. Although some thought the language was capable of going beyond informal domains, the majority thought otherwise. All the participants use Nigerian Pidgin English mainly to communicate with their friends, family members and other Nigerians they encounter in spite of living far away from home where other languages exist. Also, the analysis revealed that all the participants considered the language to be an important aspect of their Nigerian identity and togetherness in the diaspora. This indicates a significant difference between those in the diaspora and those in Nigeria because those in the diaspora appreciate and think there is a greater need for Nigerian Pidgin English outside the

country. The reason for this shift in attitude as the data reveals is because speaking the language bridges the gap between home and abroad.

The study further revealed that almost all the participants who took part in this study speak the language, enjoy speaking the language, thought of the language as a useful form of communication. However, some still consider it an ‘improper’ form of English. Others could not see its feasibility in education and could not think of it in written form. What is clear from this study is that they appreciate the usefulness of the language even more so, in Cape Town but are unable to see it beyond an informal language. This is possibly related to their need for a lingua franca in the diaspora. The participants appreciate the language more in the diaspora because it offers them a sense of community with other Nigerians and in a way, bridge the gap between home and abroad.

In a similar study conducted by Mbong (2006) on Cameroonians in Cape Town, it was also revealed that some of the participants who maintained their Cameroonian languages saw it as important for their identities, even though others thought otherwise. This indicates that most immigrants see their home languages as an important aspect of their national identities. Mbong’s study also revealed that most of the participants held negative attitudes towards Cameroonian Pidgin English, a pidgin spoken in Cameroon. She reports that the reason for the participants’ attitudes was because they blame Cameroonian Pidgin English for their slow Standard English or French development the same way some of the Nigerian participants in this study do. Mbong (2006) suggests that the campaigns against Cameroonian Pidgin English in Cameroon could have possibly shaped the ideas and thoughts of those participants. This could also be a possible reason in the case of Nigerians because the country has also seen campaigns against Nigerian Pidgin English especially in formal spaces like schools. Some parents also prevent their children from speaking the language as was evident in one of the interviews in this study.

This study further revealed that most of the participants’ attitudes were dependent on context of use. For instance, they favoured the language in informal domains but not formal domains. Despite proficiency and daily uses of the language, some participants held negative attitudes towards the language even in informal domains. As Mensah (2011) points out, due to official neglect, Nigerian Pidgin English is solely an unwritten language, and as a result, it is unable to enjoy the benefits of a written language. The effect of this is Nigerian Pidgin English not having any role to play in the promotion of literacy. It can be concluded that it is based on the

hegemonic perception of the Nigerian Pidgin English as an informal language that some of the participants in this study base their attitudes.

Furthermore, some of the reasons given by the participants for the continued view of Nigerian Pidgin English as a language that should not leave the playground were that it lacked grammar, ruins the development of Standard English and is not generally accepted by the society as proper language. However, studies have shown otherwise and data from this study reveals that these two languages are different languages, learned differently and one has little to do with the other. Some Nigerians in this study said their knowledge of Nigerian Pidgin English did not affect their knowledge of Standard English. While it may be true that second language learners often tend to transfer their knowledge of their first language to the new language, that is, tend to speak the new language the way they speak the first language, it is also true that this does not necessarily prevent them from being successful in the second language. This is evident from this study as some participants claimed that they successfully acquired both languages simultaneously. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, languages complement each other and the traces of one language on the other are creative, enabling, and offer possibilities for voice (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011). This therefore questions the claims by some Nigerians that Nigerian Pidgin English prevents proficiency or development of Standard English. Multilingualism studies have also shown that one can learn and speak more than one language successfully. Also, in relation to the argument about Nigerian Pidgin English lacking grammar, Faraclas (1996) and other scholars extensively describe Nigerian Pidgin English grammar and this dissertation provides a brief overview of its features in chapter 2. This indicates that the language does not lack grammar. Lastly, the issue of Nigerian English not being viewed as proper language is related to the fact that some people view it as an imitation of English not a language in its own right but pidgin and creoles studies have indicated otherwise.

In addition, the attitudes of the speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains need to be shifted from negative to positive. One possible reason why the negative attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains continue to exist is because there is no mention of the function of Nigerian Pidgin English in any official document of Nigeria. Recall that it was mentioned earlier on that Nigeria does not have an actual language policy but hints on functions of languages in the constitution and the education policy document. Even in these documents, there is no mention of Nigerian Pidgin English. This implies that Nigerian Pidgin English has no official recognition and is without any policy statement (Igboanusi, 2011: 69). As a result of this, it suffers from low prestige. As noted by Batibo (2005), when language policies ignore

certain languages, these languages are not accorded any public function or specific use. Batibo (2005) adds that “the result of this is the speakers of such languages devalue them or develop negative attitudes towards them as they consider it not important to their socio-economic activities”. This is evident in the attitudes of some of the Nigerians in this study as they devalue Nigerian Pidgin English and cannot think of it beyond informal contexts. They also do not consider the language as a language that has socio-economic value.

The first point of call for Nigeria is to formulate a concise language policy that includes the function of Nigerian Pidgin English in Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin English has been proposed as a possible choice for national language in place of indigenous languages (Egbokhare, 2001; Azu, 2007 cited in Mustapha, 2010: 69). The reason for this proposal is because “it is the language of trade, a lingua franca, and the first language of some southerners in Nigeria” (Mustapha, 2010: 69). Therefore, it appears it may be worthy to consider assigning a function such as national language to Nigerian Pidgin English. However, one impediment to this is that although Nigerian Pidgin English meets the criteria for national language as outlined in the previous chapter, it falls short when it comes to the development. Firstly, the language does not have a standard orthography. This implies that it lacks codification. A lot still needs to be done to develop the language because presently, it is mostly a spoken language. The language needs to also be seen in written form for it to be taken more seriously by the speakers. Another impediment is that the general attitudes of people towards the language in formal domains are largely negative. Based on these impediments, it may seem like changing the status of Nigerian Pidgin English is almost impossible. But the cases of Swahili in Tanzania and Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea offers hope that developing Nigerian Pidgin English is possible. Swahili and Tok Pisin are not only lingua francae in these countries but the official languages too (Rickford & Traugott forthcoming; Bamgbose, 2000). As a result of this, the attitudes towards these languages in all domains are mostly positive. The implication of this is that the development of Nigerian Pidgin English could lead to a change of attitude towards the language.

Also, evidence as provided in this dissertation proves that Nigerian Pidgin English has gained more popularity in recent times than previously. It is spoken widely by many people; it is used as a language of broadcast in mainstream media and used in songs. The popularity of the language within and outside the country has even raised curiosity in many non-Nigerians who seem to have developed interest in learning the language. For example, in my experience, simply telling people in Cape Town that I am Nigerian triggers the attempt to speak the

'broken' version of Nigerian Pidgin English which they may have learned from Nollywood movies or Nigerian music. This indicates that the language will only gain more popularity and widespread speakers than become extinct. Therefore, developing the language can only benefit the Nigerian government and the implication of this for democracy is that it will enable more Nigerians to actively participate in the affairs of the state as the language will give them access to a better understanding of information that English probably previously did not.

In conclusion, this dissertation has shown that Nigerian Pidgin English in the diaspora has interpersonal value as the lingua franca and marker of identity. It also shows that regardless of this, the attitudes towards the language in formal domains are negative. It suggests that one way these negative attitudes can be shifted is by changing the status of the language. This it suggests can be done through the promotion and inclusion of Nigerian Pidgin English in the language policy statement of Nigeria as a national language. This suggestion does not in any way imply that Nigerian Pidgin English should be the only national language or that Nigeria should do away with English as the language of business. It is rather suggesting a co-existence between the language and other languages because the previous chapter has indicated that this co-existence is possible. This dissertation also recognises that Nigeria is a multilingual country and views this as a resource that can be useful if utilised properly. It follows Stroud's notion of linguistic citizenship and suggests the language be given more attention and considered in future language planning since it is widely used by most Nigerians. Doing this will enhance the linguistic citizenship of young Nigerians who consider the language an active part of their linguistic repertoire.

Finally, Nigerian Pidgin English is an important language in Nigeria and its uses in formal domains will give most Nigerians access to resources that they most likely do not have access to now because of English disadvantaging them. English currently disadvantages a large percentage of Nigerians because they are not fully proficient in the language and as a result, do not fully understand certain things expressed in the language. This could subsequently lead to them not being able to express themselves freely too. According to Bamgbose (cited in Batibo, 2005: 47), "since languages may be considered a means by which participation is facilitated or prevented, it holds the key to the establishment of a true democracy and equality in a country". The use of Nigerian Pidgin English in formal domains will give more Nigerians an opportunity to actively participate in the affairs of the state. More Nigerians especially in influential positions need to view Nigerian Pidgin English as not a bad form or imitation of English but as a language different from English. Policy makers need to consider developing a Nigerian

language policy which clearly states the functions of different languages in Nigeria. They also need to consider the popularity of Nigerian Pidgin English within the country and attempt to promote it to the same status as English.

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