

THE COMMUNICATIVE INFLUENCE OF PIDGIN ENGLISH ON SOCIAL MEDIA WRITING AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN EKITI-STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the communicative influence of Pidgin English on social media writing among undergraduates in four universities in Ekiti State. A descriptive survey research design, was used. The population comprised 52,042 undergraduates, with a sample of 525 students selected through multistage sampling. The Perception of Pidgin English among University Undergraduates Questionnaire (PCSCMUUQ) was employed for data collection. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by scholars. The validity of the instrument was established by Cronbach Alpha method. Analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, t-test, and simple regression. Key findings indicated significant correlations between Pidgin English use and social media writing skills. Recommendations included advising undergraduates to adhere to their chosen language on social media or use quotation marks when intentionally incorporating other codes to demonstrate compliance with syntactic rules.

Keywords: Pidgin English, Writing, Social Media, University Undergraduates

Introduction

Social media can be said to be a private communication between individuals and public communication without any individual boundaries. Social media is an online platform that enables users to present themselves as well as interact, collaborate, share knowledge, and communicate with other users, creating a virtual social network in the process. Therefore, it can be said that social media is a way of interacting with friends or the entire globe by using the internet, as well as a way of communicating and sharing thoughts, opinions, and information (Sari, 2017).

Social media usage has spread internationally. For instance, University undergraduates now employ social media as a platform for students to communicate with their professors, fellow students and researchers around

the world. It may be concluded that modern technologies play a significant role in students' everyday lives and have an impact on their lives based on the characteristics of learners in the twenty-first century. In this regard, the communicative influence of Pidgin English on social media writing cannot be over emphasized. So, students should shun the negative use of social media.

Moreover, university undergraduates should be able to work hard to develop communicative English proficiency. Considering the multilingual and multicultural nature of Nigeria, it became obvious that the only language that can foster the national's development in Ekiti and other parts of the world, is English. Moreover, the rate at which university undergraduates are using social media, seems to be an increase

daily, and many of them rely on it for communication and chit-chatting. One might be tempted to draw the conclusion that university students have incorporated social media into their social lives because it allows them to interact, collaborate, share information, and communicate with other users while it also allow them to represent themselves and create a virtual social network (Sari, 2017). It appears that undergraduate students at Nigerian higher institutions are giving more weight to using social media. Therefore, it is clear that social media has created whole new opportunities for social engagement in the educational field. As a result, it is assumed that the majority of university students utilize English, the nation's official language and the primary business language on social media, to communicate information and opinions on social media.

However, the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) ushered in the sporadic use of digital devices, such as the internet in the 21st century throughout the world and this has given room for criticisms on many writings on social platforms. ICT plays a vital role in all types of technological developments including social media which allow the public to quickly contact, evaluate, share and transfer either data, views, knowledge, data collection, representation, processing and dissemination of political issues, racial subjects, religious issues, books, movies, love affairs and relationship among friends, family members and strangers (Rimmer, 2018).

Similar to this, social media facilitates the free exchange of thoughts, information, and opinions between people and the general public (Meike&Young, 2017). Social media as an online platform is said to be focused on fostering relationships between

individuals who have similar interests, backgrounds, or activities. According to Onifade and Alabi (2012), social media enable individuals to connect online to create a group, a forum, and a community where information may be shared without regard to a person's physical location. Social media are online platform where ideas can be shared in order to build relationship among friends, family and strangers. Therefore, it is believed that majority of university undergraduates share information and views on the social media with the use of English language which is the official language of the country, and the principal language of business on social media.

More so, it is observed that electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, desktops and notebooks on which social media are operated offer their users the option of the language which they prefer to use. However, the dominant business language on social media has been English. The language settings for technological devices and social networking platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Skype are in English. Because of this, it appears that college students who prefer to speak in English rather than their mother tongue while on campus are now using pidgin on socialmedia. The writing skills of university undergraduates on social media are alarmingly weak and substandard. Many students process their thoughts in mother tongues and so produce expressions that have effect on their writing (Ofodu, Olajobi and Adesugba 2019). These weaknesses generally arise in inappropriate use of words, spellings and coinages. These phenomena are noticeable in the writings of undergraduates on social media.

Therefore, to write a sensible sentence on a social platform, the university undergraduates are expected

to think deeply and gather their thoughts together before writing. This is because writing has become more sophisticated that readers want to see writers to effectively make use of spellings, grammar, and punctuations appropriately. Writing has been seen as a core skill that enables writers to think, because a beautiful idea on social platform may be flawed by Pidgin English. Generally, writing has some problems associated with it. Writing problems can be classified into linguistic and psychological problems. Haider (2012) and Rico (2014) attributed writing problems to lack of confidence caused by teaching strategy. One could add that weakness in thinking process, and lack of quick mind mapping could also contribute to the problem of writing among university undergraduates.

Furthermore, many scholars have worked on features of interference in Nigerian English apart from the interference of English language with the students' mother tongues. Another phenomenon produced by this variety pidgin English. These phenomena seem to have left the university undergraduates with no option than to combine Pidgin English with the use of English language on the social media writing. It is now obvious that pidgin grows side by side with English language as soon as university undergraduates gain admission to higher institutions. Pidgin is a substandard version of English among people from different parts of Nigeria who do not share a common language.

Interaction between speakers of various languages leads to the development of pidgin. Pidgin typically develops as a result of the blending of foreign and native languages. According to Crystal (2003), the majority of modern-day Pidgins grew raised around major trade routes, particularly in regions where the

British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch established their empires. As a result, depending on the language the Pidgin is developed from, we speak about Pidgin English, Pidgin French, and so forth. Around sixty million people globally, according to him, speak or understand Pidgin. A Pidgin often develops in colonial settings even if it primarily begins as a trading language (Al-Khairy, 2013).

Although there are many scholarly hypotheses, as regard the genesis of pidgin. According to one theory, 'Pidgin' (particularly in West Africa) developed as a result of interactions between Chinese and European businessmen, who mispronounced the word 'business' (Naro, 1973). According to another theory, the word originated from the Portuguese word 'ocupacio,' which means 'occupation.' The Hebrew word 'pidjom,' which means 'barter,' is considered to be similar to or closely related to pidgin (Rickford, 1998). Pidgin has to do with commerce or business, interaction or migration between two hetero-cultural groups of people, which is particularly interesting to highlight.

The phrase 'Nigerian pidgin' refers to an English-based pidgin that Nigerians utilise to meet their communication demands in specific social situations. Nigerian Pidgin is a contact language that developed through the fusion of indigenous languages and foreign languages, just like any other Pidgin language in other cultural contexts where the language is not native to its users (English). In line with their opinion, Elugbe and Omamor (1991) see pidgin as 'some kind of a fringe language that evolves to fill certain communication demands in well-defined settings.

Morealso, according to the definition given above, Pidgin is a communication tool mostly used by

those who do not speak the same language as each other and is not an official language. In their subsequent writing, Elugbe and Omamor defined two requirements for a language to qualify as Pidgin (Hall, 1966). In their submission, for a language to be Pidgin, 'its grammatical structure and its vocabulary must be sharply reduced; secondly, the resultant language must be native to none of those who use it' (Elugbe and Omamor, 1991). In consonance with the above position, Rickford (1998) said. Pidgin usually combines elements of the native language of its users and is typically simpler than those native languages in so far as it has fewer words, less morphology, and a more restricted range of phonological and syntactic options.

So, University undergraduate, are expected to stock their vocabulary repertoire with standard English before writing on social media because in Nigerian context, the historical event that led to the development of Nigerian Pidgin is colonization. Nigerian Pidgin can be historically linked to the 17th century commerce interactions between the British and locals. Therefore as elites, that have been introduced to English at all levels of education, and considering the value placed on in English as Nigeria's legal Franca; so one will expect University undergraduates to avoid using substandard English on social media platform. In other to disabused the assertion of Illah (2001) that the negative attitude of the European colonial masters, who thought they could not permit their conquered people, the Nigerians, to speak the same language with them, led to the development of Nigerian Pidgin. In other words, Nigerian Pidgin was a result of the conquerors' attitude of inferiority toward their subjects. Due to historical interactions between

Europeans and Africans, the former's language gained popularity among the latter, even though the colonized peoples' attempts to use the English language correctly did not always succeed. Broken English was created as a result of their futile endeavour to keep up with the newly popular language. Broken English, on the other hand, is the kind of speech made by non-native speakers of the language due to their insufficient command of Standard English.

The alternating use of Pidgin English ages in the same discussion is known as code-switching. When a speaker needs to fill a gap with a suitable word that is unknown in the second language (L2), code switch to Pidgin English. Switching occurs on social media, switching can occasionally be seen among various persons, between statements, or even within a single sentence. In other words, code switching could happen across clauses, sentences, or even inside a single sentence. When a single word, phrase, or sentence moves between two languages in university undergraduate writing, this is known as code-switching (Taweel&Btoosh, 2012). According to Adetuyi, Owaniyi, and Adeniran (2017), code flipping is a common occurrence in multilingual communities like Nigeria where speakers utilise their first language, also known as their native language, and their second language, also known as their acquired language, in various contexts.

According to Eldridge (2016), code swapping between speakers of different languages can happen for one of three reasons. When speakers are unable to communicate themselves in a single language, they use other language as a first resort to make up for their lack of writing proficiency. The psychological basis for mixing or switching, when speakers seek to show

support for a specific social group or include other speakers is the second explanation. The ability to switch, on the other hand, can potentially exclude people who do not speak the conversational language. The last socio-psychological aspect is switching, which occurs when speakers want to make a point of expressing their attitudes to the audience.

However, university undergraduates' attitude and interest in combining substandard English with Standard English shows unholy union that has communicative influence on social medial writing. So, considering the factors responsible for mixing and switching to other language in a single conversation as stated by some scholars who have worked on reasons why people use Pidgin English. As a matter of fact, people use pidgin to show emphasis in order to feel more convenient. The use of pidgin seems to be part of the undergraduates' ways of life which may not be easily avoided by them during formal writing including social media writing. This indicates that the undergraduates are virtually addicted to using pidgin because the gap created by colonial masters is no longer visible, as glaring evidence can be seen globally that Nigerians who are product of Universities in Nigeria, are now picking up lecturing job in Europeans Countries which means, they have the potential to speak English as a second language. So, mixing pidgin with Standard English on social medial may have a communicative influence on University undergraduate writing on social medial writing. Although code flipping and code mixing have their uses, as some researchers have noted, it is recommended that undergraduates practice both on social media since it allows them to develop their interpersonal relationships and their ability to adapt to any scenario.

The use of pidgin among university undergraduates appear to have detrimental effects on undergraduates' language proficiency. The excessive use of pidgin is thought to have a detrimental effect on university undergraduate students' writing abilities. According to Roy-Campbell (2011), code mingling among kids in schools caused them to lose interest in studying and improving their proficiency in the English language in the classroom. The usage of pidgin with Standard English on social media by university students may have a negative impact on their writing in formal contexts because virtual learning and interviews are growing more and more common throughout the world, especially in the job market.

Again, Tariq (2012) claims that the use two code on social media writing was observed to have negatively affected students' academic achievement and proficiency in English language up to tertiary institutions. The use of more than one code on Facebook, according to Akram and Albalawi (2016), distracts pupils and their ability to focus and perform well in English language classes. These submissions affirm that the use of pidgin together with English on social media writing by university undergraduates may negatively affect their proficiency in English language. So, as university undergraduates in Ekiti State, they are expected to use quotation marks on social media writing that involves two languages where one is dominant and the other is recessive in order to show to other social media users that it was a deliberate act and not a mark of weakness.

Grammatically, people use insertion to show strong emotion or surprise to gain attention. Therefore, if university undergraduates will use insertion, they are expected to use English insertions under interjections

like 'wao', 'Alas' rather than 'nawa o' on social media platform. In Nigeria universities, both public and private, English language instruction is essentially required of all students who do not major in English. This indicates that English language is being studied by all undergraduates in the country as part of General Studies with the aim of improving on their proficiency in both speaking and writing skills gathered in secondary schools before securing admission to university.

In other words, both public and private universities in the country use English language as the medium of instruction for all courses except for linguistic courses like French, Yoruba or Latin. English is a language of business and instruction in Universities in Nigeria because it is the official language of the country. Therefore, undergraduates are expected to lay much emphasis on writing of English language on social media rather writing in pidgin which has been tagged by scholars as substandard English. The point being raised here is that Pidgin English is very common among Undergraduates in Nigeria and particularly in Ekiti. It appears that the students could not do without writing pidgin with the English language.

Moreover, it is observed that gender of the undergraduates is one of the important factors determining the use of pidgin on social media writing. It appears that pidgin is prevalent among male Undergraduates than their female counterparts. The reason for this may not be too far from the fact that male undergraduates are socially mixed than the female undergraduates, though, both male and female undergraduates have the tendency to combine pidgin with English on social mediawriting. Kennison (2013) opines that male students develop and use more languages than female students. Ishan and Hua (2015) objected to the

observation of Denison as they assert that female students tend to mixcode alot during conversations on social media than male students. However, Rita and Hamad (2012) were of the opinion that both male and female undergraduates mix codes on social media. This suggests that there is no gender difference in use of pidgin on social media writing among undergraduates in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This necessitated its inclusion as a variable in this study.

It is believed that the background of university undergraduates which places as no man's language and rate and rate it as languagethat can be understood by anybody has trigger the use of pidgin on social media writing among university undergraduates. The thrust of this study is to describe the communicative influence of pidgin on social media writing among university undergraduates in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Apparently, there have been records of pidgin on social media writing of university undergraduates as evident on students' writing on Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media platforms. The rate at which university undergraduates in Ekiti mix Pidgin with English on social media writing seems to be at an increase daily. The inability of university undergraduates to write pure English without mixing pidgin on the social media in this virtual world, that examinations and interviews are conducted in the online depicts weakness in their thinking writing ability. The blame has been on their lack of awareness that too much of pidgin can affect them in formal settings, because the language in which they think has effects on their speaking and writing skills. The language they speak also influences what they write

on social media. It shows that the university undergraduates who involve in too much in Pidgin English has deficiency in their thinking even in academic environment. The outcome is seen on social media writing among university undergraduates. Observation has shown that university undergraduates in Ekiti State cannot express themselves completely in a second language on social media writing.

The problem seems unnoticed by university undergraduates that what they write depict their ability because presently there is no formal setting in which they can have more audience than social media. Therefore, the interest in pidgin among university students revealed that they are unaware that they are displaying one of the unfavourable traits that cause code mixing. So, the university undergraduates interest in pidgin appear to have shown that they are not aware that it was due to lack of appropriate grammar in English language to fill the gap with words not know, that led to mixing pidgin with English on social media. . It could also affect university undergraduates in formal setting, most especially in virtual learning and interviews.

In other word, as university undergraduates, they should know that social media writing can be accessed by anybody and that English language is the principal language of social media. Hence, one will expect university undergraduates to carefully select their choice of words before writing on social media.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the communicative influence of Pidgin English writing among university undergraduates on social media in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study is designed to identify the:

1. influence of pidgin English on social media writing.
2. communicative influence that pidgin as substandard English may have on undergraduates that refused planning and organising their thinking before writing on social media.
3. influence of gender on Pidgin English writing on social media among university undergraduates.

Research Questions

The following question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the attitude of university undergraduates towards Pidgin English on social media?

Research Hypotheses; The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant communicative influence of pidgin on University undergraduates on social media writing,
2. There is no significant difference between male and female writing of pidgin among 'university undergraduates' on social media writing.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive research design of survey type. The descriptive research design is relevant to the study because the study describes the communicative influence of Pidgin English on social media writing among university undergraduates in Ekiti State, Nigeria without manipulating any of the variables. The descriptive research design of survey type helped to gather information from large population by

employing the use of samples. Therefore, survey research design was used for this study because it focuses on the entire population of university undergraduates in Ekiti State, Nigeria from where a sample was drawn in order to collect information from the respondents. The finding of the study was used to generalize on the entire population.

Descriptive Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used for the data analysis. The descriptive statistics such as the frequency count percentage was used to answer research question. Hypotheses₃ were tested using t-test while hypothesis₄ was tested, using simple regression. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of undergraduates towards Pidgin English writing on social media?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the attitude of undergraduates towards writing of Pidgin English on social media.

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1.	Pidgin English has become part and parcel of me	240	48.00	260	52.00
2.	I can not write on the social platform without pidgin English	310	62.00	190	38.00
3.	I perceived pidgin as an additted behaviour in our platform	295	59.00	205	41.00
4.	I am not aware that too much of pidgin English could have negative communicative influence on my formal writing	312	62.40	188	37.60
5.	My writing on social media depicts my ability	411	82.20	89	17.80
6.	I see myself as a good thinker as a result of my use of pidgin English	362	72.40	138	27.60
7.	My involvement in pidgin depict my deficiency in thinking	418	83.60	82	16.40

Table shows the attitude of undergraduates towards Pidgin English on social media. 418 (83.60%) respondents said that their involvement in pidgin depict their deficiency in thinking, while 411 (82.20%) of them said that writing on social media depicts their ability. I see myself as a good thinker as a result of my use of pidgin English this was the response of about 362 (72.40%) of the respondents, while about 312 (62.40%) of them said that they are not aware

that too much of pidgin can have influence on their formal writing. About 310(62.00%) of the respondents said that they can hardly write on the social platform without using pidgin to buttress by about 295 (59.00%) of the respondents who see pidgin becoming more popular in their platform. From the above, it could be said that university undergraduates have positive attitude towards pidgin on social media.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}
Pidgin English	500	32.370	13.285	499	5.185*	1.960
Social Media Writing	500	37.042	15.150			

*p < 0.05 (Significant Result)

Table 2 shows that the t_{cal} (5.185) is greater than t_{tab} (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not accepted, this implies that there is a significant difference between the use of English and social media writing by

university undergraduates in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of Pidgin English by university undergraduates on social media skill.

Table 1: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) showing the communicative influence of pidgin among university undergraduates on social media writing.

Source	Type III Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	ρ - value
Corrected Model	11129.990 ^a	52	214.038	.925	.624
Intercept	79332.342	1	79332.342	342.935	.000
English language	203.419	1	203.419	.879	.349
Pidgin English	10442.954	51	204.764	.885	.698
Error	103406.128	447	231.334		
Total	800591.000	500			
Corrected Total	114536.118	499			

a. R-squared = .097 (Adjusted R-squared = -.008)

$p > 0.05$ (Result Not Significant)

Table 2 shows that $F = 342.935$, $p(0.000) < 0.05$ and the coefficient of $(r) = 0.008$. Therefore, there is a significant influence of Pidgin English on university undergraduates on social media writing skill.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female university undergraduates pidgin writing on social media

Table 2: t-test showing gender difference of university undergraduates' social media writing.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}
Male	180	40.100	14.009	498	3.520*	1.960
Female	320	35.322	15.514			

* $p < 0.05$ (Significant Result)

Table 2 shows that the t_{cal} (3.520) is greater than t_{tab} (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not accepted, this implies that there is a significant difference between male and female university undergraduates social media writing.

media writing among university undergraduates in Ekiti State Nigeria. The presentation of the data was carried out in two stages. Stage one involves descriptive analyses while the second stage covers testing of hypothesis earlier postulated. The result shows that the mean and the standard deviation of the level of pidgin English on social media among undergraduates.

Discussion

This study was directed at analysing Pidgin English on social

Similarly, various researchers around the globe have worked on pidgin on social media especially between English and other languages. For example, Hida (2020) in their article uncovered the use of pidgin Keminggris language (speaking and acting like British people) on social media. So, also Harmed (2013) investigated the students' use of social networks in relation to gender. He used questionnaire to sample 120 undergraduates. The result showed that students use social network for social matters than for academics. It also showed that there were no gender differences in the using of social networks between male and female students. Emmanuel et al (2013) in their paper, reveals that the university undergraduates use social media for communication with their friends and sharing information. The researcher's finding reveals that female students use pidgin on social media writing than the male undergraduates. The researcher is of the pinion that too much of pidgin have communicative influence on students in virtual learning. Emmanuel et al (2012) suggest that university undergraduates using social media do not direct their use of social media towards their academic pursuits.

Therefore, the university undergraduates should redirect their mind-set and be more conscious that too much of pidgins could affect them in virtual learning.

Recommendations

The recommendations on the findings were as follow:

1. The undergraduates and language experts should take pain to be more versatile in developing their vocabulary repertoire in order to have enough English vocabulary in stock before writing on social media.

2. The use of Pidgin English should be used alongside with quotation marks to indicate deliberate usage on social media to show compliance with syntactic rule.
3. University undergraduates should stick to the option of language they choose to use on social media since the audience are made up of many tribes, so there is no need of showing identity or solidarity to other social media users. Therefore, Pidgin English could be limited to sending SMS message to family or friends.

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