Nigerian Pidgin and West African Pidgins: A sociolinguistic perspective

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic factors play a significant role in the emergence and development of pidgins and creoles, and their role in the development of West African Pidgin English based (WAPE) varieties is not an exception. Nigerian Pidgin (NP) along with Ghanaian Pidgin (GP) and Cameroon Pidgin (CP) form a continuum of mutually intelligible WAPE varieties spoken as lingua francas along the West African coast. While previous studies provide sociolinguistic descriptions of the individual varieties, there is no comprehensive comparative study of the WAPE varieties. This study aims to fill the gap by providing a comparative analysis of similarities and differences in current domains of use, functions, and attitudes that have shaped their current status in the context of their socio-historical inter-relatedness. The study shows that while the WAPE varieties share similarities in their demographic and sociolinguistic contexts, they differ in status. It observes a more rapid development and expansion in NP. The findings of this study contribute to a holistic understanding of the role of sociolinguistic factors in evaluating the status of the mutually intelligible WAPE varieties to inform its future development.

Introduction

The emergence of pidgins and creoles has been described as one of the sociolinguistically significant outcomes of European contact in Africa (Adegbija 2004:14, Echu & Obeng 2004:12).

In West Africa, English pidgins and creoles are found from the Gambia in the northwest to Cameroon in the southeast (Holm 1988: 406). The term 'West African Pidgin English' (WAPE) has been used in the literature to refer to a variety of related pidgins 'that range from rudimentary to highly expanded, creole like varieties' spoken in the coastal countries where English is an official language - the Gambia, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon (Holm, 1988: 426, Sebba, 1997:126). However, this study focuses on the varieties of WAPE that are spoken in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon because they have the most substantial population of pidgin speakers among West African countries (cf. Peter & Wolf 2007). WAPEs are classified under the Atlantic group of English based pidgins and creoles according to historical, geographical and linguistic factors (Holm 1988).

There is a general consensus in the literature that WAPEs emerged from trading contacts between Europeans and indigenous peoples along the coast and later spread into the interior of the coastal countries (Holm, 1988). Huber (1999a) is of the view that many of the similarities shared by WAPE varieties are largely a result of the influence of Krio through a diffusion process along the West African coast. Although WAPEs share common origins, socio-historical, sociolinguistic and structural similarities, such that they are mutually intelligible to a large extent, they also exhibit sufficient differences to make them distinct varieties (cf. Sebba 1997, Peter & Wolf 2007).

The West African varieties being examined in this study are identified variously in the literature as *Nigerian Pidgin [English], Ghanaian Pidgin [English],* and *Cameroon Pidgin[English]* (also called Kamtok),and will be referred to as Nigerian Pidgin (NP), Ghanaian Pidgin (GP), and Cameroonian Pidgin (CP) respectively. Studies have also shown that the three

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varieties share structural features that distinguish them, as expanded pidgins, from other varieties like the more developed Krio creole variety of Sierra Leone (e.g. Huber 1999: 6).

Although these varieties share a common sociohistory, they have evolved into three sociolinguistically distinct varieties in terms of use, functions and attitudes towards them. Since several detailed studies have been carried out on the sociolinguistic aspect of individual varieties, to conduct another investigation will not only amount to repetition, but will also be too much for a single paper. The present study will be limited to presenting an overview which will form the basis for a comparative analysis.

In this paper therefore, we shall first briefly review the literature drawing on available detailed sociolinguistic research in the three varieties. Then, we shall present an overview of the sociolinguistic contexts of their emergence. The overview forms the background for sociolinguistic descriptions of language use, functions and attitudes towards WAPE varieties. The paper also discusses language development efforts and the implications for language planning. In the next section, we carry out a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences, and the factors that have impacted their development and spread in their current social contexts. The final section of the paper will examine the patterns that characterize the status of the WAPE varieties and the implications for future developments.

2. Previous Studies

Peter & Wolf (2007) provide the first comparative account of the structural features that distinguish the WAPE varieties from one another. They note that while WAPE varieties share structural similarities, they also display some distinctive structural features 'given the different linguistic situation in each country and their close interaction, if not sociolinguistic continuity, with the national varieties of WAE (see e.g. Simo Bobda and Wolf, 2003), whose structural differences are in turn the outcome of a number of factors peculiar to each country' (p. 4). Peter & Wolf (2007) observe that a number of structural features set GP[i] apart from NP and CP on the one hand, while NP and CP, on the other hand, are more similar structurally. They also found that most of the differences are at the level of pronunciation, followed by the grammatical and lexical levels[1]. Similarly, it is expected that the WAPE varieties will have sociolinguistic similarities as well as some differences. Of interest to the present study, therefore, is Peter & Wolf's observation that the structural features that set GP apart from NP and CP are attributable to the social parameters of GP's geographical distribution, low functional load, and low social prestige.

Of the three varieties of WAPEs, Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is perhaps the most researched, with studies on the historical, structural, and sociolinguistic aspects. Faraclas (1996) describes NP as the most widely spoken variety in Africa and the most extensively used Pidgin form in the world, with an estimated population of over 60 million second language speakers (Faraclas et al 2005) and more than 1 million first language speakers. It is in the light of its increasing population of first language speakers that NP is viewed by some as a variety that is creolising, especially in coastal parts of the country (cf. Mafeni 1971, Marchese & Schnukal 1982, Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Ofulue 2004. The findings of the various studies represent major research in NP and their findings illustrate NP's sociolinguistic development over a period of about thirty years.

Mafeni (1971) provides an overview of NP's historical background, functions and structure. In his view, the development and spread of NP is a result of the process of urbanization which facilitated the growth of many multiethnic towns and cities where

NP is the lingua franca along with a dominant indigenous language. Based on a sociolinguistic survey conducted in a speech community in Warri in the Niger Delta region, Marchese & Schnukal (1983) observe that NP has become a lingua franca and it is creolising in view of its expressive functions and acquisition as a first (primary) language of the speech community. In a study of NP's social and linguistic history, Barbag-Stoll (1983) examines NP's emergence and development as a variety of WAPE. The study shows that NP is a developing language that fulfils a social function as a medium of communication and plays an integrative role within Nigeria's multiethnic context. Agheyisi (1984) examines the widespread use of NP and its changing role resulting in the development of social varieties of the language. She notes that although NP is spoken by all socioeconomic classes of people, the social negative attitude towards it is due to its association with the uneducated and the lower socioeconomic class.

Elugbe & Omamor (1991), in the first book length study that covers historical, structural and sociolinguistic aspects of NP, confirm Marchese & Schnukal's view of NP's creolising status. They take the position that NP should be treated as a language in its own right, distinct from English, in view of its creolised status in some sections of the country. They note its spread into more informal and formal domains of literary writing, media, religion and education. From a broader perspective of speakers' social experience, Oloruntoba (1992) in a doctoral study, examines how NP speakers negotiate its status and social identities for themselves in the Western Niger Delta region. She observes that speakers' usage practices are framed by their social experiences within the larger context of the region's social history. She also notes that the functions of NP have changed over time from serving purely communicative purposes to indexing social identities. Similarly, its status, which was previously associated

with the uneducated and lower class during the colonial era, has been redefined in the post-colonial era. Deuber's (2005) is the most recent sociolinguistic study that investigates the relationship between NP and English, its lexifier language, among urban, educated NP speakers in Lagos, a metropolitan city in the southwest of Nigeria. Her findings also support Elugbe & Omamor's view of NP as a language that is separate from English. In her view, NP functions as an 'unofficial national language' and its vitality resides in its role of indexing 'a culture' (2005:208).

The studies reviewed above were conducted in the South, where there are large concentrations of NP speakers. In their studies, Igboanusi & LOTHAR (2005) and Mann (2011) include data from the northern parts of the country. Igboanusi & LOTHAR (2005) focus on conflict and competition among Nigeria's major languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba), English and NP. They hold the view that English and NP pose a threat to the major Nigerian languages due to the spread of NP into areas where the major languages are predominant. Based on a survey of language attitudes and loyalties covering southern and northern states, they report that NP does not rank highly in comparison with the other languages.In his survey of southern and northern states that investigates attitudes toward NP, Mann (2011) observes that attitudes are based on the socioeconomic benefits and perceived prestige which the use of NP accords speakers. Results from both studies show that while NP is used in both the south and the north, attitudes towards the language are more favourable in the south than in the north.

Empirical sociolinguistic research in Cameroon Pidgin [English] (CP) is comparatively minimal (cf. Schröder 2003:22). Detailed studies include Koenig et al's (1983, cited in Schröder 2003), which provides a sociolinguistic profile of urban centres in Cameroon; Mbassi-Manga's (1973, cited in Schröder 2003),

which describes CP in its historical and sociolinguistic context; and, more recently, Schröder's (2003) book length study on the status, functions and prospects of CP. Schröder (2003:82) confirms the view in previous studies that CP is the most widely spread language in Cameroon spoken by about 2 million speakers. In view of a twenty year gap between Schröder's and the last major sociolinguistic study before it, she observes that, 'the situation of CamP [CP] can be assumed to have changed considerably' (Schröder 2003:23). He reports that while Mbassi-Manga's study reports that CP's general function is mainly that of communicative purposes, his findings (2003: 182) indicate that CP has acquired more functions as an intra-group and inter-group language for both anglophones and francophones. CP is associated with the anglophones, even though it is also used by francophones living in anglophone areas of Cameroon. While it has a strong hold in domains it is traditionally associated with, Schröder observes that its acquisition of more functions in other domains is generally impeded by the spread of English and French.

Amoako's (1992) and Huber's (1999) are the most comprehensive studies on Ghanaian Pidgin (GP), though there are several other scholarly publications (e.g. Dako 2002). Huber (1999) observes that very   little work has been done on the sociolinguistic aspect of GP, and a detailed systematic study of the sociolinguistic aspects is yet to be conducted. In Ghana, two varieties of GP have been identified according to the demographic context of use, age, gender, and socioeconomic class of the speakers. The variety that is associated with urban, informal use by young educated male speakers is variously referred to in literature as the *student, educated, institutionalised or acrolectal* variety (e.g. Dolphyne 1995, Huber 1999, Dako 2002). The variety that is associated with informal use by the uneducated

lower socioeconomic class of speakers is variously referred to as the *uneducated, non-institutionalised or basilectal* variety. However, the student variety is the more researched of the two and will be referred to in this study as the student variety of GP (cf. Huber 1999). It is the variety spoken by secondary school and university students, perhaps informed by its predominant spread in educational contexts (Huber 1999:3). Amoako's study (cited in Huber 1999) examines GP from historical, structural and sociolinguistic perspectives. He holds the view that GP is historically a derivative of NP aided by social factors of migration, which explains NP's notable influence[2]. Huber (1999) investigates the diachronic and synchronic aspects of GP within its West African context. His view differs from that of Amoako with regard to GP's diachronic development and its relationship with NP. Huber devotes a chapter in his study to GP's sociolinguistic aspects.

While these studies provide sociohistorical and sociolinguistic descriptions of the individual varieties, the present study will analyse the sociolinguistic similarities and differences that have shaped their status within their social contexts. The findings of these individual studies will therefore constitute data for a comparative analysis of WAPE varieties in this study.

3. Socio-historical Contexts of WAPE varieties

Fig.1: Map of West Africa showing the West African coast

The emergence of WAPE varieties has been traced to trade contacts with Europeans, beginning with the Portuguese, the Dutch and then the British (and Germans in Cameroon) along the West African coast from as early as the 15th century. Other participants who played significant roles in the formation phase include Krio speakers and Krumen from the 18th century onwards (Holm, 1988).There is some debate, however, with regard to how, where, and when the early forms of Pidgin English (restructured English Pidgin) replaced Pidgin Portuguese, which is believed to have been in existence as an established lingua franca prior to the formation of the WAPE varieties. According to Holm (1988), the use of restructured English increased dramatically in West Africa as the British came to dominate the slave trade during the 18th century, while recaptives and others from Sierra Leone introduced Krio to Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon during the 19th century.

The influence of English on the three WAPE varieties, which was facilitated by British presence within a context of geographical proximity, intermingling and migration of the various participants occasioned by trading and administrative exigencies, can be traced to early contacts with the British along the Gold Coast and Slave Coast around the early 17th century, followed by Nigeria and Cameroon in the 18th century. The British took over from the Portuguese as major trading partners along the coastal shores of Nigeria and had established two trading ports in Bonny and Calabar on the Bight of Biafra by the end of the 18th century (cf. Holm 1988).

Holm (1988) and Huber (1999) attribute the similarities among the three varieties to interregional connectedness that was occasioned by geographical proximity, British administrative influence and structure. The relationship was aided by the fact that the Gold Coast and Lagos had once been governed from Sierra Leone. This situation changed and they were governed under the Gold Coast Colony. West Cameroon was governed by Britain from Nigeria from 1919,thus facilitating interconnectedness through inter-regional migration. These administrative arrangements provided a context for extended contacts and interaction among the various groups. Furthermore, Huber (1999:129) notes that NP and CP share more core grammatical features that originated in Krio than either of them has with GP, and concludes that the relationship predates the period of any influence NP may have had on GP. In his view, NP and CP can be regarded as one and the same variety. However, while the evidence supports a closer relationship between NP and CP than with GP, there is also sufficient evidence of structural (cf. Peter & Wolf 2007) and sociolinguistic differences to distinguish them.

4. Demographic profile and sociolinguistic context of WAPE varieties

According to Adegbija (1994:15), 'the language situation in sub-Saharan Africa is generally characterised by a type of dense multilingualism composed of indigenous languages, exogenous languages, and in many cases, Pidgin languages'. This observation is illustrated by the demographic profile of the three countries where WAPE varieties are spoken. The contexts are also characterised by different language policies and language situations.

Nigeria

Demographic profile: Of the three countries, Nigeria has the highest number of languages (510) spoken by a population of over 160 million, over a land area of 923,768 km with a population density of 153 persons per square kilometre (NBS 2010, Lewis 2009). Population size is a key criterion for the classification of major versus minority languages. The three 'major' languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are spoken as first or second languages by about half of the population, and they function as regional lingua franca and Languages of Wider Communication (LWC). The other languages, which account for the bulk of indigenous languages, are viewed as 'minority' languages and they function as languages of immediate community. About 58% of the population comprising second language speakers are literate in English (NBS 2010). Adegbija (1994: 16) aptly surmises the linguistically diverse nature of Nigeria's population when he notes that 'although precise statistics are not available, one can safely   conclude from the evidence available that no language in Nigeria is spoken by as much as 50% of the entire population as a first language'.

Language policy: The language policy as outlined in the country's policy on education assigns the functions of an official language to English, which therefore is the language of government (cf. NPE 2004), education, the media, and business. While the major languages, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, are national languages, the indigenous languages, as 'languages of the immediate community', are meant to serve as languages of instruction for the first three years of schooling. The policy is however not strictly adhered to as English or NP is often used in heterogeneous contexts where it is predominant (cf. Bamgbose 1991).

Language situation: English was introduced into Nigeria twice at different times and in different ways, first as spoken by the British traders in contact with indigenous groups from which NP emerged, and second as a language of education in the colonial era (Mufwene 2009). NP, which coexists with English and the indigenous languages, functions as a lingua franca and is predominantly spoken in the southern region

Language Situation: English was introduced into Nigeria twice at different times and in different ways, first as spoken by the British traders in contact with indigenous groups from which NP emerged, and second as a language of education in the colonial era (Mufwene 2009). NP, which coexists with English and the indigenous languages, functions as a lingua franca and is predominantly spoken in the southern region and in urban contexts, although with speakers that cut across Nigeria's geographical, multiethnic and socioeconomic class terrain. Deuber (2005:208) describes NP's position in relation to the other languages as a triglossic language situation in which it is in a 'broad diglossic' relationship with English, but it is also distinct

from the indigenous languages. NP is used for communication alongside indigenous languages and regional languages at the local/regional level as a language of the immediate community, and as a lingua franca in certain geographical locations. At the national level, NP has parallel functions with the national languages, and it is used as a lingua franca among Nigerians at the international level.

Cameroon

Demographic profile: Cameroon has about 286 languages spoken by a population of 18 million over a land area of 475,440 km^2, and a population density of 37 persons per square kilometre (Lewis 2009). The most widely used indigenous languages that function as languages of wider communication for inter-ethnic and regional communication are Bulu (South), Duala (Littoral), Ewondo, and Ewondo Populaire (Centre/South), Fulfulde (North), Mungaka (North-West), and CP (Schröder 2003). Even though it is viewed as an Anglophone based language, it is spoken by both Anglophone and Francophone people. Given the number of indigenous languages, the Cameroon linguistic situation has been described as a 'highly complex' one. However, the situation is made even more complex by the presence of two official languages, English and French (Schröder 2003: 42).

Language policy: Cameroon's language policy of official bilingualism makes it the only country on the continent with two exogenous languages as official languages. Schröder (2003: 47) reports that although Cameroon can hardly be described as a bilingual country in practice, there is evidence of relative openness to English/French bilingualism and interest in the other official language among educated Cameroonians.

Language situation: The first contact between the indigenous population and Europeans in Cameroon occurred in the 15th century (1472), first with the Portuguese, and then with the British (1850 – 1884),followed by the Germans (Schröder 2003). CP is believed to have grown out of the 18th century Pidgin English used around Calabar on the Bight of Biafra (Holm 1988). Igboanusi and LOTHAR (2005) attribute the mutual intelligibility between NP and CP to this sociohistorical relationship. CP is used at all levels of informal and religious communication, except at the international level. CP co-exists with the two official languages and the indigenous languages in the sociolinguistic context described above. Schröder (2003:148) confirms that CP follows the official languages in order of importance and is used more often than the indigenous languages to serve the role of a common language, especially in the Anglophone part of the country.

Ghana

Demographic profile: Ghana has about 80 languages[3] spoken by a population of 23 million, over a land area of 238,000 km^2 with a population density of 79 persons per square kilometre (Huber 1995, Lewis 2009). The major languages, namely Akan, Ewe, Dangme, Ga, Nzema, Dagaare, Gonja, Kasem and Dagbani, are national languages. Five of the languages, Akan (43%), Ewe (10%), Ga-Dangme (7%),Dagaare (6%) and Dagbani (3%) (Huber 1995) are spoken by about 70% of the population. Akan is a major lingua franca spoken in the southern region and in some urban contexts. Hausa[4] is also a lingua franca spoken in the northeast and in Hausa speaking communities located in the southern region.

Language policy: The language policy, which required that educational instruction should be conducted in an indigenous language for the first three years of schooling, was replaced in 2002 with a law that stipulates the use of English from the first year (Owu-Ewie 2006). Prior to the policy reversal however, English has been in use because of the heterogeneous nature of the schools, particularly in the urban centres (Huber 1999). English is Ghana's official language and it is the language of government, administration, the media and other formal situations, while the indigenous languages are predominant in traditional contexts and in the regions, including Ga in Accra and Akan in southern Ghana.

Language situation: Although not officially recognised, GP co-exists with English, which is its major lexifier language, and the indigenous languages. According to Huber (1995), 'Ghana's [socio]linguistic situation is best described as diglossic with English dominating formal situations and Ghanaian languages dominating the informal, traditional, and in less heterogenous areas'. GP is used mainly in informal contexts along with indigenous languages at the local level of communication, and following English and major indigenous languages at the national levels of communication.

5. Findings

This section provides a comparative analysis of sociolinguistic similarities and differences that characterise the sociohistorical, demographic, and sociolinguistic contexts of WAPE varieties.

The patterns that characterise the sociohistorical contexts of the WAPE varieties include: 1) their parallel emergence within the same period; 2) their contact with similar groups of people; and 3) the linguistically diverse nature of the contexts of the individual contact situations. Krio played a significant role in the emergence of the WAPE varieties and the factors that facilitated its influence directly and indirectly through NP include interregional connectedness and large scale migration. The individual contact situations differed with regard to the indigenous languages that were involved as well as the sources of Krio influence. It is worth noting that NP's influence on GP and CP appears to be unidirectional in nature as there is no evidence of similar transmissions from GP and CP to NP. It is also possible that NP's direct access to Krio influences may have contributed to its advanced development ahead of CP and GP.

Demographically, Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon are a reflection of sub-Saharan Africa's linguistic diversity and dense multilingualism. Such linguistically complex contexts engender language contact, which facilitates the development of pidgins (Adegbija 2004). The demographic patterns, in terms of high population density vis-a vis number of languages, show that the three countries have highly complex and linguistically diverse contexts in common. The pattern suggests that the higher the population density and number of languages, the greater the complexity of the linguistic landscape. Consequently, the propensity for pidgins to be used predominantly in linguistically heterogeneous areas is a characteristic shared by the WAPE varieties. Their sociolinguistic contexts confirm this observation as the WAPE varieties thrive in linguistically heterogeneous locations like urban centres and regions (e.g. Lagos, Port Harcourt, Southern region in Nigeria; Accra, Southern region in Ghana; and Yaounde, Western region in Cameroon).

The sociolinguistic contexts of the WAPE varieties are defined by the configurations that characterise their language situations and the type of language policies adopted. All the three

WAPE varieties are similar in their use at all levels of communication except for international communication. NP and CP share similarities in their roles as lingua franca, which places them in a competitive stance with the indigenous languages that have similar functions. The use of NP and CP as lingua franca at all levels of communication is an indication of the relatively strong position NP and CP varieties of WAPE occupy in their individual language situations; a factor that has positive implications for their future development. The analysis shows that while NP and CP share similarities with regard to the prominent positions they hold, GP is characterised by its restricted and limited use across the levels of communication in their individual linguistic systems.They also have the dominant presence of exogenous languages in common. As is the case in many African countries, the language policies of these countries favour and promote the exogenous languages. The language policies of Ghana and Nigeria are similar in that they promote one exogenous language, English, as official language and major indigenous languages as national languages, while Cameroon's policy promotes two exogenous languages as official languages. The presence of two exogenous languages in relation to CP is a factor that has significant implications for the status of CP and distinguishes it from NP and GP. Table 1 summarises the language situations of the WAPE varieties using Bamgbose's (1991)[5] three-language model to illustrate the position of the varieties in relation to the other languages in their sociolinguistic contexts.

Table 1: Summary of status of WAPE varieties

LEVEL	NIGERIA	GHANA	CAMEROON
Local	Indigenous languages Nigerian Pidgin	Indigenous languages Ghanaian Pidgin (mostly uneducated variety)	Indigenous languages Cameroon Pidgin (in towns)
Regional	Indigenous languages Regional languages (Fulfulde, Nupe, Kanuri, Idoma, Tiv, Ibibio, Efik, and Ijo Nigerian Pidgin English	Indigenous languages Ghanaian Pidgin	Indigenous languages Cameroon Pidgin (language of wider communication) Other LWCs: Duala, Bulu, Ewondo, Ewondo populaire, Mungaka, Fulfulde, English French
National	English National languages; Yoruba (lingua franca in southwest) Lingua franca in southwest Hansa (lingua franca in north) Nigerian Pidgin (lingua franca in south zone, urban linguistic heterogenous contexts)	English National languages: Akan (lingua franca in southern region) Ewe, Dangame, Ga, Nzema, Dagaare, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, Hausa (lingua franca in the northeast, Hausa speaking communities in southern region) Ghanaian Pidgin (educated variety in urban contexts)	English and French Cameroon Pidgin
International	English	English	English and French

Sources: Bamgbose (1991), Deuber (2006), Huber (1999), Schröder (2003)

Language Use and Functions

WAPE varieties are examined in terms of major domains of use and functions using Smith's (1972 cited in Barbag-Stoll 1983) approach which identifies three language functions: communicative, integrative (and/or instrumental), and expressive. The communicative function marks transmission of referential, denotative information between speakers, e.g., inter-ethnic communication; the integrative function marks a speaker's use of the language as a member of a particular *social* group, e.g., in-group communication; and the expressive function marks the speaker as a valued member of a particular *linguistic* group (or speech community).[6]

NP has spread into virtually all domains of use even though its primary domains are informal contexts (e.g. Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Oloruntoba 1992, Deuber 2005). NP is gradually finding its way into more formal domains of use. Recent developments include literacy primers and a Bible translation that is in progress.[7] Worthy of note is its expansion into the non-traditional domains of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the new media (e.g. the Internet and social media). For example, the establishment of the WAZOBIA radio station which broadcasts only in NP and which is now widely accepted with stations in four metropolitan locations, Lagos (southwest), Abuja (the Federal capital), Port Harcourt (south) and Kano (north) (cf. wazobiafm.com 2012), is a reflection of the extent of NP's use. There is also an attendant expansion of NP into the written medium on social media platforms by a predominantly young literate audience. Speakers, therefore, not only use NP to perform communicative, integrative and expressive functions; they are expanding NP's functions to meet needs in the written medium within ICT and the new media.

CP is still an informal register that is used in a wide range of domains and features prominently in discussions expressing humour, intimacy and secrets (Schröder 2003), except in a few formal domains like the religious domain. Todd (1984:96) attests to its use as a major liturgical language of the Catholic Church in the Anglophone part of the country. The translation of the New Testament, *Gud Nyus fo ol pipul* (2002) in CP is further evidence of CP's role and importance in the religious domain. CP performs a communicative role in its use for anglophone-francophone communication, for mass mobilisation by politicians (cf. Ayafor 2000, cited in Schroder 2003); and an integrative role in its use among anglophone university students (cf. Atechi 2011). Only the use of CP to express intimacy and secrets comes close to fulfilling an expressive role. This is expected, particularly in view of the fact that there are speakers who acquired CP as a first or primary language, which suggests that CP is being used to mark their identity as members of speech communities where CP is predominantly used as a first language. Indeed, the results of a survey carried out by Alobwode (1998, cited in Atechi 2011) reveal that between 10% and 30% of the respondents who live in areas within the anglophone part of the country and urban cities (e.g. Mamfe, Kumba, Limbe, Buea, Bamenda, Douala, and Yaounde) acquired CP as a first language. Simo Bobda and Wolf (2003) also confirm the expansion of CP into domains that were the 'preserve of the official languages, English and French'.

GP's most prominent domain of use is among the educated young male population, especially secondary school and university students in informal urban contexts where it functions as an in-group language (cf. Dolphyne 1995, Huber 1999, Dako 2002). Huber (1999) observes that the student variety of GP[8] is spoken mainly in secondary and tertiary institutions as an

in- group social register, while the other [uneducated] variety functions as a lingua franca that is spoken in urban multilingual contexts. The student variety of GP is used by speakers with high educational attainment, e.g., secondary school and university students. It gained wider currency in educational institutions in the 20th century with functions of signaling peer group/in-group identity and solidarity. Huber (1999) also notes that GP is restricted to a small but growing section of the society and is less widespread in terms of area and number of speakers than it is in other Anglophone West African countries. The functions that these varieties of GP fulfill constitute one of the parameters that are used to identify and distinguish them. It is assumed that this variety of GP, which is gender specific, has also spread among the educated adult urban male population aged up to 45 years in urban informal contexts (Huber 1999: 151). Dako (2002) estimates that about 80% - 90% of the educated male population who are below the age of 50 years use this variety of GP.

From the foregoing, it is clear that GP is not used extensively across major domains. Consequently, its functions are limited. The use of the varieties of GP is determined by a number of variables: 1) domains of use in terms of urban/rural, contexts; and 2) speakers' status in terms of education, age, and gender (cf. Huber 1999: 159). While the variety associated with the less educated performs a communicative function, the student variety of GP fulfils an integrative function for its speakers in that it serves as a social group identity marker.

A comparative evaluation of the status [vitality] of WAPE varieties is presented based on domains of use and identified functions. Eight major domains of use are compared across the three varieties: administration, education, mass media, political campaigns, religion, literature, and entertainment.

Table 2: Summary of Domains of use and Functions of WAPE Varieties

Domains of Use	NP	GP	CP
Administration/work **(Government, Parliament, National/State Assemblies**			
Formal	X	X	*
Informal	***	X	***
Education			
Formal (in class)	*	X	*
Informal (outside class)	***	***	*
Mass Media (Print and Electronic)	****	*	*
New Media (Internet and Social Media)	***	X	X
Political Campaigns	****	X	***
Religion (Churches)	****	*	***
Commerce / Trade	****	***	***
Literatures (novels, drama , poetry)	***	*	*
Entertainment			
Music	****	*	*
Humour (Comedy)	****	*	***
Roles and Functions			
Ethnic/ Cultural Identity	X	X	X
National Identity	***	X	***
Lingua Franca (Communicative)	****	***	****
Social Identity (integrative)	****	***	***
Group Identity (expressive)	****	X	***

Key: **** high *** medium * low frequency/degree of use
Sources: Elugbe & Omamor (1991), Oloruntoba (1992), Deuber (2005), Adekunle (1995), Dolphyne (1995), Huber (1999), Dako (2002), Chumbow & Simo Bobda (1996), Schröder (2003

Table 2 shows that although WAPE varieties are quite varied across the eight selected domains, there are some patterns that characterise their use and the functions that they perform within the different domains of use. These patterns will be analysed in terms of restriction/ expansion and degree of use. NP is the most widespread of the three varieties in view of its comparatively high degree of use in a greater number of formal and informal contexts (cf. Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Oloruntoba 1992, Deuber 2005, Taiwo & Babalola 2009). NP is followed by CP which, though also widespread across the domains, is used mostly in informal domains and, to a limited degree, in some formal domains (cf. Schröder 2003, Simo Bobda & Wolf 2003, Mbangwana 2004, Atechi 2011). GP shows the least spread across the domains and the degree of use is equally low (cf. Dolphyne 1995, Huber 1999, Dako 2002). The above shows that there is a correlation between the patterns that characterise their spread and their degree of use.

Table 2 also reveals that NP and CP are more similar compared with GP which is restricted in terms of spread across domains of use and degree of use within domains. The use of NP and CP is more widespread because they are used in more domains than GP. NP and CP also show a higher degree of use (medium to high) than GP which, apart from the informal context of the education domain and the commerce domain, shows a comparatively low degree of use across the domains. The restricted and limited use of GP is a result of the factors that determine the use of its two varieties. The student variety of GP is therefore a functionally marked variety while the variety associated with the uneducated is the unmarked variety of GP.

Age is an important factor that characterises the use and functions of WAPE varieties. Various studies have observed a more widespread and higher degree of use of WAPE varieties among the younger generation (e.g. Deuber 2005, Schröder 2003, Huber 1999). For NP, its spread into non-traditional domains like the new media as well as expansion in social identity functions is attributed to the younger generation. Similarly, Huber (1999: 159) and Schröder (2003: 113) observe that GP (educated variety) and CP are used in a wider range of contexts by the younger generation than by the older generation.

In table 2, WAPE varieties mark three of the five identities. None of the varieties was observed to mark cultural identity, which is a function of the mother tongue. The functions comprise marking different identities and fulfilling certain communication needs. The role of WAPE varieties as lingua franca in inter-ethnic communication remains their most prominent function, even though GP performs that role in more restricted contexts. GP is the most restricted of the three varieties in use and functions. All three varieties are also similar in marking social identity. NP and CP are more similar in comparison with GP in marking national, group and social identities. The group and social identities fulfil integrative and expressive functions respectively. GP, on the other hand, performs communicative functions in inter-ethnic communication, and in limited contexts, integrative functions for in-group communication. Factors that affect their use and functions include age, speaker's socio-economic status and the context of use. Huber (1999) and Schröder (2003) report a difference in the use of GP and CP respectively by the younger generation who use them in a wider range of contexts than the older generation; the latter use them mainly in informal contexts and to communicate with non-literates.

Attitudes

According to Adegbija (2004: 133), 'Generally, languages acquire value, prestige, and esteem commensurate with their perceived utility in different domains of life'. In sub-Saharan Africa, attitudes towards languages are shaped by a variety of

factors including socio-historical forces, especially the effects of colonialism; pressures for upward social mobility as a result of the imposition of European languages and colonial/post-colonial language and educational policies; and people's perceptions about the kinds of functions particular languages can fulfil. From a broad perspective that accounts for the sub-Saharan African context, therefore, Adegbija's (1994: 255) view of language attitudes 'accommodates evaluative   judgements made about a language, its variety or its speakers towards efforts at promoting, maintaining, or planning a language, or even towards learning and teaching it'.

Pidgins and creoles have a history of being viewed as socially-marked varieties of language and wrongly perceived as inferior languages (e.g. Mann 2011). Factors that have contributed to this view include the circumstances of their emergence, their association with the lower socioeconomic and non-literate sections of society, and their co-existence with European lexifier languages within their post-colonial contexts (e.g. Elugbe &Omamor 1991, Oloruntoba 1992). However, studies have also observed changing attitudes towards the use of WAPE varieties (e.g. Agheyisi 1984, Oloruntoba 1992, Deuber 2005, Huber 1999, Bobda & Wolf 2003).

Since attitudes are evaluated on the basis of the kind of functions languages fulfil, we examine   particular functions that have added value or prestige to WAPE varieties, as well as the acceptability of WAPE varieties as lingua franca, national languages and medium of instruction. The three WAPE varieties are characterised by patterns of covert prestige and varying degrees of stigmatisation which derive from functions that mark in-group identities and fulfil group solidarity. The findings show that the three varieties share a high degree of covert prestige, particularly among the younger generation who derive a group identity value from their use (cf. Marchese & Schnukal 1983: 218, Deuber 2005:51, Schröder 2003:210, Huber 1999:159). However, the varieties differ with regard to the range of contexts, with NP having the widest range of contexts in which the high value attached to its use accords it high covert prestige, and in some cases, overt prestige. It is followed by CP in a number of contexts in which the high value attached to its use gives it high covert prestige in a number of contexts; and GP in which the value associated with its use accords it high covert prestige in certain restricted contexts.

The studies examined show that attitudes towards the use of WAPE varieties for in-group communication are more favourable than attitudes towards their use if they are to function as official languages/ lingua franca. Mann's (2011) survey shows that 33.5% of respondents in southern states and 17.5% of respondents in northern states are in favour of NP's adoption as an official lingua franca (official language), 'in spite of its sociolinguistic vitality as *the* urban *lingua franca* in Nigeria'. However, Mann considers these results favourable in the light of the fact that NP is 'a non-formalized, non-graphized, socially-marked variety of language which is still not recognized in any official government document as one of the languages in Nigeria'. For CP, Schröder's (2003: 204) survey shows that only 4.5% and 6.7% of respondents said they would like to know CP and to improve their knowledge of CP respectively. Conversely, Atechi's (2011: 19) survey among university students shows a more positive trend, in which 85% of the respondents agree that CP is a

lingua franca in the Anglophone part of the country as well as in most sections of the Francophone part of the country, and about 49% of respondents agree that CP should be made one of Cameroon's official languages. For NP and CP, geographical location is a factor, as attitudes in northern Nigeria and in the Francophone part of Cameroon are generally less favourable towards NP and CP as official languages/lingua franca (cf. Mann 2011, Bobda & Wolf 2003). With regard to GP, negative attitudes towards it as an official language/lingua franca constitute one of the effects of comparatively exceptional positive attitudes towards English (cf. Huber 1999).

Attitudes towards the WAPE varieties as national languages follow similar patterns of covert prestige. Studies (e.g., Elugbe 1995) observe that NP meets the various criteria for national languages which include neutrality, population, geographical spread and acceptability. Various studies (e.g., Elugbe 1995 and Deuber 2005) also show that NP is the most ethnically neutral language in Nigeria. However, the result of a survey conducted by Deuber (2005) in Lagos, an urban context among educated speakers of NP, shows that the number of respondents who agree that NP is a corrupt form of English is equal to the number of respondents who disagreed (22% each), while 53% of the respondents opted for a middle ground response ('Pidgin is similar to English, but it does have its own grammatical rules'). In comparison, of the languages in Schröder's (2003:196) survey of which languages have acquired the status of a national language, CP ranked the highest with 29.1% . Both NP and CP fulfil the major criteria for national languages, except in terms of the acceptability criterion where attitudes are not as favourable

(cf. Elugbe 1995, Deuber 2005, Schröder 2003). However, the fact that NP is viewed as an 'indigenous' language (Elugbe 1995: 291), and CP as more African than the official European languages (Schröder 2003:196), shows that attitudes towards them are favourable. GP is the least eligible, as it is yet to acquire the status of a predominant lingua franca as a prerequisite.

Findings of attitudes towards WAPE varieties as a medium of education are also varied. For NP, location is a factor, as attitudes towards it as a medium of education are more favourable in parts of the country where NP is the lingua franca. In their survey of the Delta region, Schnukal & Marchese (1983) report that 40% of their respondents (under 15 years) responded positively; Oloruntoba's (1992) survey of Benin, Sapele and Warri reported a positive response from 52% of the respondents. Mann's (2011) survey of northern states had positive responses from only 18.3% of the respondents compared with 28% from the southern states. Gani-Ikilama (1990: 225) notes that the most common basis for objection to the use of NP in education is the notion that it will interfere with the acquisition of English. In comparison, attitudes towards CP as a medium of education are less favourable, while they are negative for GP. Atechi's survey of attitudes towards CP as a medium of instruction shows that only 31% agree that it should be used in schools. Schröder's (2003: 245) results are similar to Atechi's (2011), as a greater majority (89.6%) do not think CP should be used in schools.

The findings confirm that *attitudes* towards appropriate use of codes in a speech community have a high correlation with their *functional* distribution and the relative *social status* of their speakers (e.g., Saville-Troike 1982:185).While NP and CP's predominance in terms of their function as lingua franca

contributes to the more positive attitudes towards them, GP's non-dominant inter-ethnic communication function contributes to the less positive attitudes towards it (cf. Simo Bobda & Wolf 2003).

The most relatively favourable attitudes are towards NP, both as an official language/lingua franca and as a national language.It is followed by CP, while GP shows the least favourable attitudes. The findings of this study corroborate Huber's (1999: 160) observation that there is a positive perception among Ghanaians that Nigeria has 'the best and real Pidgin', and that it stems from the belief that the development of GP in Ghana is a result of the influence of NP. They also substantiate his observations 1) that attitudes towards GP are more negative than those towards NP in Nigeria, particularly among the educated elite; and 2) that attitudes towards NP and CP are more similar than those towards GP. The higher degree of stigmatisation observed in GP, in comparison with NP and CP, is a reflection that GP is still in the early stages of development, thus corroborating Huber's assessment of GP that (1999:158) 'the position of pidgin in Ghana mirrors that of Nigeria in the 1960s'. These observations indicate that there is a correlation between predominant functions and attitudes towards the WAPE varieties.

A comparative analysis of attitudes towards WAPE varieties therefore confirms Peter & Wolf's (2007:2) observations that there are 'different attitudes towards Pidgin English that prevail in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. Researchers agree that in Ghana WAPE is held in the lowest esteem, while it has the widest acceptance in Nigeria; WAPE in Cameroon seems to range somewhere in the middle'. The expanding functions of NP and CP are a positive indication of a concomitant shift in attitudes towards greater acceptability of WAPE varieties.

Language development

WAPE varieties function mainly as spoken languages. However, the expansion of their functions and the evolvement of attitudes towards them has made language development necessary. Ferguson (1968, cited in Deuber 2005: 52) distinguished three dimensions for evaluating language development (corpus planning activities):graphisation, standardisation and modernisation. Indeed, language in written form is considered a significant factor, and consequently the next step in the maintenance and development of spoken languages (cf. Bendor-Samuel 1996), since codified languages attract higher status and functions. However, none of the WAPE varieties enjoys official recognition or has accepted standardised orthographies, even though they all have a history of literarydevelopment and an increasing literate population who have facilitated the expansion of their functions into more domains. For example, NP is characterised by etymological-based writing practices that follow the English writing system, while linguists have proposed phonemic based writing systems that depict NP as a language in its own right, independent from its English lexifier (e.g., Mafeni 1971, Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Faraclas 1996, Literacy International 2007, and *Naija* Language Academy (NLA)[9] 2010).The issues that arise from non-standardisation include inconsistent and highly variable writing and spelling systems. Another aspect of language development, which refers to status planning activities, involves making decisions to expand, restrict or assign particular functions to a language. Currently, these decisions evolve from speakers' usage practices, but are not officially guided in any coordinated fashion.

The issues highlighted in previous studies confirm Sebba's (1997) observations about four major problems that make it difficult for pidgins and creoles to become standardised languages, namely their low status; their similarity with their lexifiers (which causes them to be perceived as inferior); their variable nature; and the adoption of a model/variety for their standardisation. In view of negative perceptions by the greater majority towards the use of WAPE varieties in schools, any language development effort to promote their use will have to take into account the various concerns expressed about the perceived detrimental effects of their use on the acquisition of languages of upward social mobility. Simo-Bobda &Wolf (2003) note that many, especially the elite and teachers, will need to be convinced of the benefits to be accrued from developing the pidgin to function as an official language or as a medium of education. However, Elugbe & Omamor (1991) argue for a broad view of literacy that includes other languages apart from English for communicative purposes and national development. Since 'people are best reached in their language or that of the immediate community', they recommend the inclusion of NP for programmes that are designed to promote literacy, such as Adult Literacy (1991: 137). The current realities in Nigeria, for example, show that the government and its agencies engage intranslating information from English into the local languages and Nigerian Pidgin. Similarly, Gani-Ikilama (1990) and Schröder (2003) recommend the development of NP and CP respectively as tools to facilitate the acquisition of the languages of education, at least at the basic/primary levels. In line with lessons from the African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

experience, this study advocates the adoption of a curriculum that incorporates the differences between WAPE varieties and Standard English to help children transit from the language of the home or community to the language of formal education (cf. Migge et al 2010).While NP, and to a fair extent CP, has enjoyed a greater degree of development as a result of extensive research, attitudes towards GP have largely impeded its development. Hence, GP is the least developed of the three varieties with regard to corpus and status planning research activities.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on previous studies that provide socio-linguistic descriptions of three WAPE varieties, the major goal of this study has been to account for the similarities and differences in domains of use,functions and attitudes that have shaped their sociolinguistic status. The study confirms Adegbija's (1994) observation that 'there is a close link between history, language policies, social interactions and the functions and uses of languages in the shaping of the socio-linguistic' status of WAPE varieties. There is a vertical connection within each variety and a horizontal relationship across the varieties in the socio-histories, demographic profiles and language policies of the WAPE varieties shaping their use, functions and attitudes towards them and their subsequent development. Despite the similarities in their socio-histories, demographic and sociolinguistic contexts, the observed differences in the outcome in their use, functions and attitudes towards them confirm 'the unpredictable nature of socio-historical forces which cause a pull in different directions' (Adegbija 1994: 47).

Taken together, the findings of this study show that a combination of sociolinguistic forces and factors has shaped the current status of the WAPE varieties. For example, the effects of NP's earlier and direct exposure to Krio influences for aconsiderable period of time; its more heterogenous linguistic and demographic context; a pluralistic language policy; a triglossic language situation; and the larger population of speakers who use NP as a first/primary language, have contributed to its being the most developed of the WAPE varieties. In contrast, under similar sociohistorical, demographic and sociolinguistic contexts, a diglossic language situation and a particularly high value attributed to English have contributed to GP's status as the least developed of the WAPE varieties. While CP shares similarities with NP and GP in terms of sociohistorical, demographic and sociolinguistic contexts, and with NP in terms of a growing population of first language speakers, it also differs from NP and GP with regard to its language situation which is affected by its bilingual language policy, thus influencing its status as a developed WAPE variety.

In line with Lanehart's (2001: 4) observations about language and African American English compared to WAPE varieties, this study has provided a holistic view of the interrelatedness of the various aspects of their sociolinguistic development and why speakers of WAPE varieties 'continue to speak it despite antagonistic pressures socially, economically, educationally, and otherwise'. While official recognition in their current sociolinguistic contexts will certainly increase positive attitudes towards WAPE varieties, the nature of their expansion indicates that it is the speakers and their communication needs that determine the direction of development. For example, NP and CP have continued to expand into more formal domains and functions, and attitudes towards them are changing in spite of stigmatisation, lack of codification and official recognition.

Age or generation are primary variables that affect the use, functions and attitudes towards WAPE varieties. The study shows that generally, the younger generation had more positive attitudes and attributed more prestige to the use of WAPE varieties than the older generation, especially the educated conservative elite, who had more negative attitudes. The younger generation are also the primary agents of expansion into more domains of use. Wolf (2001: 192) confirms the importance of the youth as a major factor when he states that linguistic usage of children [and youth in general] reflects current developments and is the best indicator to predict future trends. Future research should focus on this section of the population, as their patterns of language behaviour constitute a point of reference for future spread and expansion of the WAPE varieties. Huber (1999: 156) notes for GP that 'a comparison of the status of GhaPE [GP] with that of Pidgin in Nigeria reveals interesting similarities and differences. It may also point to future sociolinguistic developments of Pidgin in Ghana'. By extension, a comparison of similarities and differences in the status of the WAPE varieties also offers interesting indications of their future sociolinguistic developments. By focusing on the sociolinguistic aspect of WAPE varieties, this study contributes to a greater understanding of the nature and sociolinguistic status of the WAPE varieties that make up the continuum to inform its future development.

Notes

The use of postpositional dɔm as a plural marker; the use of *na* as a copula, as focus marker, and as intensifier; the use of *dɔn* as retrospective marker; the use of *bin* as tense marker are found in NP and CP, but not in GP. In pronoun system: *Ji* as the third person singular pronoun is found in CP, but not in GP and NP. *una* as the second person plural pronoun is found in NP and CP (as *wuna*) but not in GP*mi* as (unmarked) subject pronoun and *mi* as possessive pronoun are found in NP, but not in GP and CP (cf. Peter & Wolf 2007: 17).

[2] Reviewer's comment: There was a strong Nigerian influence through the police and the military – often referred to as Abongo brofo (the English of the military/police). Today the barracks are still pidgin speaking. There was also a considerable presence of Nigerian traders – from the riverine states and Yoruba speaking areas. Accra had a 'Lagos Town' where pidgin was used.

[3] Unlike NP and CP, GP is not listed in Ethnologue as one of Ghana's languages (Lewis 2009).

[4] Reviewer's comment: Hausa is actually more prevalent and spoken by more people today in the big zongos of the southern cities.

[5] The model is based on the fact that, in multilingual situations, speakers learn another language apart from their first language for instrumental or integrative purposes. At the local/regional level therefore, several indigenous languages will be in use with one regional language as a second language. The language use at different levels of communication is dependent on a number of factors including the heterogenous nature of the context, the functional load, the participants, setting, topic etc. In general, NP is used alongside the other languages at these levels of communication.

[6] This function is best understood in the light of Marchese & Schnukal's 'functional' definition of a creole as a 'language of pidgin origin which must fulfil an 'expressive' function for individuals in a speech community'. This definition is meant to replace the traditional definition of a creole which requires identifying a speaker's first language and as M&S have pointed out, it is difficult to determine a child's first language in a multilingual setting where several languages are acquired at the same time, .e.g., similar functions that a primary or first language fulfils.

[7] Ehrihabor's (2011, 2012) collection of poems was published using *Naija* Language Academy's ethnophonemic based writing system. Mercy Ministries Bible Translation project is in collaboration with Literacy International. Literacy International has produced two literacy primers for the learning and teaching of NP.

[8] The reviewer of this paper confirms this distinction and refers to the educated variety as 'Ghanaian Student Pidgin'.

[9] The *Naija Langwej Akademi* (NLA) was inaugurated in July 2009 in collaboration with the French Research Institute (IFRA). **The academy was established to** coordinate research in NP for the promotion and standardisation of NP, produce a reference grammar and a dictionary. The academy is currently engaged in corpus development.

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