



Nigerian Pidgin Variations in the Ikom-Ogoja Axis of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Received: 03-01- 2013

Accepted: 05-02- 2013

Published: 01-03- 2013

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.2p.223

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.2p.223>

Abstract

This Paper focuses on lexical items in the Ikom Ogoja variety of Nigerian Pidgin (NP). This however does not mean that the regularized Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is not being used in the area. However, factors such as contact with the substrate languages in the area and borrowing have all influenced the emergence of some variations in NP usage. The Paper highlights these variations in the Ikom-Ogoja axis of Cross River State in areas of borrowing, reduplication, metaphors and metaphorical extensions and euphemisms. This has helped to show the dynamism of NP which is constantly growing and expanding to suit the needs of a pluralistic society such as Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular.

Key words: Reduplication, euphemism, substrate, superstrate and metaphorical extensions.

1. Introduction

The one fact that is generally accepted about pidgin languages all over the world is that they arise from contact situations (Elugbe & Omama 1991, Todd 1984). Such contact situations included trade in particular. The Nigerian Pidgin (NP) as a contact language has expanded and stabilized due to certain factors which include the fact that it continued to be of relevance, it served as a common language as it became a ready means of communication in a multi ethnic society, and thirdly, Mafeni (1971:98) sees it as growing or stabilizing in a society that is undergoing urbanization

...The rapidly growing towns of Nigeria have increasingly become the melting pots of many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria and pidgin seems to be today a very widely spoken lingua franca, many towns and city dwellers being at least bilingual in pidgin and an indigenous language.

Pidgin therefore has developed from being a limited language of trade and business along the coastal regions of Nigeria to a fully-fledged language in its own right as a result of acquisition of new vocabulary items to meet the expanded communication challenges of its speakers. This new status has helped to tremendously improve the people's attitude and solidarity towards NP.

2. Methodology and the Theoretical Framework

Data for this work was obtained primarily through "naturally occurring casual speech" of the speakers of NP (Kadenge and Mavunga 2010). This was focused on the speech discourse of speakers of mainly Ikom Town and students at the Ogoja campus of the Cross River University of Technology. In Ikom town, focus was on Four Corners Ikom and the

market where use of NP is quite prevalent. We mainly employed participant observation and initiated topical issues in Nigeria such as the current flood disasters in Cross River State and some other States of Nigeria including Bayelsa, Delta, Kogi, Anambra State. We also brought up the security challenges in Nigeria. We also asked students for standard NP words in use and their variations in their locality. The age range was quite wide, ranging from 16 years to 60 years of both male and female respondents.

The theoretical assumption that underpins this work is the concept of the London school which had its inspiration from the British Linguist J.R. Firth which took the view that the meaning of a word could be equated with the sum of its linguistic environment and that therefore, Linguists could essentially find out what they need to know about a word's meaning by exhaustively analyzing its collocations. Firth's general approach to the study of languages continues to have echoes in modern linguistics through the work of eminent heirs to the London school of tradition such as John Sinclair and Michael Halliday, (Singleton 2000).

Bloomfield (1933) and Meillet (1921) were some of the earliest attempts to point out the indeterminacies about the notion of the word. A word could be "a minimal freeform" or "a unit of meaning" which may comprise elements that are smaller (e.g. morphemes) or larger than the word (e.g. phrase or idioms) whose meaning may not be apparent. Given the above discrepancies, linguists use the term "lexeme" or "lexical item" to denote an item of vocabulary with a single referent whether it consists of one word or more. The lexeme which one can equate to the form that one would look up in a dictionary encompasses the set of forms that may be used to realize the lexeme in various environments. Katamba (1993:17) refers to a "word" in this sense of abstract vocabulary item using the term "lexeme".

3. THE LINGUISTIC MAP OF CROSS RIVER STATE

3.1 *The indigenous Languages*

Cross River State is made up of politically of 18 Local Government Area (LGAs). This study focuses on Ikom to be found in the Central senatorial district of the state while Ogoja is found in the Northern senatorial district. Geographically however, both LGA's are neighbouring LGA's. Both LGA's like most in Cross River State, speak a plurality of languages. Most LGA's in the state do not have clear cut linguistic boundaries as there is linguistic overlapping (Ugot 2008).

Udoh (2003) also points out that homogenous LGA's include LGA's which have one language in the whole area and these LGA's are limited to Akpabuyo (Efik) Bekwarra (Bekwarra) Bakassi (Efik) Boki (Bokyi) Etung (Ejagham) Obubra (Mbembe) and Yala (Yala) out of the 18 LGA's. Of the remaining 11 heterogenous LGA's, they are divided into 2 categories. One group is made up of 2 or more languages co-existing in a kind of unbalanced asymmetry with one of the languages being more dominant. The dominant language gradually assimilates the others. Four LGAs have this kind of relationship. In Akamkpa, Odukpani and Calabar municipality the Efik language has almost assimilated the languages spoken in these areas. Some of the known moribund languages such as Kiong, Odot, Korop, Detop are spoken in those LGA's.

Even the Qua dialect of Ejagham, spoken in Big Qua in Calabar Municipality and Efut (in Calabar South) have almost been assimilated by Efik, though other towns like Ikom, Etung still speak Ejagham as one goes further north in the state.

In Yakurr LGA, the Assigha and Lenyim towns form a minority in an otherwise homogenous Lokaa-speaking LGA. The two Agbo communities are separated from the rest of their kith and kin on the other side of Cross River. Lokaa is the lingua franca of the area and at present, these people are bilinguals of both Lokaa and Leggbo. Although the threat of assimilation is not very eminent it is expected as a consequence of language contact. Other heterogeneous LGA's are made up of closely related two or more Upper Cross languages co-existing symmetrically with each other without any of them threatening the others beyond the normal shifts associated with languages in contact. Five LGA's fall within this group Abi (Leggbo, Bahumono) Biase (Nne, Ubaghara, Umon, Mehu, Isaninyongo, Iyongiyong.) Obanliku (Obanliku, Bende) Obudu (Bette, Utugwang, Ukpe) Ogoja (Ishibori, Mbube, Afrike).

The majority of Cross River State languages are threatened not by some foreign languages but by surrounding Nigerian languages, spoken by larger groups. Cross River State languages can be classified as minority languages and the linguistics situation is fairly complicated. There are over 30 languages and a network of dialects. The state has chosen the 3 languages of Efik, Bekwarra and Ejagham as the State languages. These languages are therefore used in the media and for news translation and some socio-political programmes. They are also used for advertisements.

3.2 *Nigerian Pidgin (NP)*

Due to the proliferation of Languages in Cross River State as a whole and the Ikom and Ogoja axis in particular, the NP has become very popular especially among the urban populations such as in Ikom and Ogoja. It is likely to continue to be as popular as it has been raised to the status of a social language and is now the language of choice in many informal gatherings. It is widely used in politics, at home, in schools, in trade and the mass media. It is officially used in news casting by the state media apparatus. In Cross River State, the NP is used as an essential communication medium. Most communities in Cross River State understand NP and it competes with the indigenous languages spoken in the community. Ugot (2008) observes for example that NP competes with Efik as an L2 in Biase Local Government Area of the State. The NP spoken is most welcome in a multilingual pluralistic society as the Cross River State and the NP is highly versatile.

3.3 The English Language

Although the indigenous languages are spoken in Cross River State along with NP, the English language is the official language of the state as it is in Nigeria. The language is used in administration, in business, in education (as a medium of instruction) in the media and in religion. It is therefore spoken widely in Cross River State alongside the local indigenous languages

3.4 The Igbo Language

Trade and proximity has brought about language contact between the Igbo at the borders of Cross River State in general and Biase in particular. Areas such as villages in Erei have all been influenced by Igbo and many Erei speakers are bilingual in Igbo. The Igbo language is one of Nigeria's three major languages. Ugot (2008) points out that this contact is mostly with Aribra and Ohafia of Abia State. The Igbo language competes as an L2 with Efik and NP in these communities.

4. Social Profile of NP

Historical sources of the origin of Pidgin and its evolution point towards Calabar, in the present Cross River State and the first administrative capital of Nigeria where first contact with Portuguese trading merchants brought about a Portuguese based pidgin known as "Negro Portuguese" in the 18th century (Mensah 2011). The arrival of the British as trading partners and later missionaries and colonial administrators further increased the demand for communication in NP which had metamorphosed into English based within the passage of history. Emenanjo (1985) recognizes NP as one of the four commonly spoken languages in Nigeria, competing with the country's so called national languages of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Nigeria's national Languages are based on population as these three languages boast the largest groups in Nigeria. Their languages have therefore been adopted as national languages and are widely used in the media, in education as a medium of instruction at mostly the primary level and all three languages are offered in some secondary schools curricula. Based on the criterion of population some languages are state languages while others are LGA languages in status. NP witnessed a series of transformations given the degree of contact with its superstrate (English) and substrate (Indigenous languages) sources.

During the pre and post independence era in Nigeria, the attitude towards NP was overwhelmingly negative and degrading. It was regarded as "broken English", "unruly jargon", "vulgar" and "corrupt" form of expression. It was outlawed in schools and Government circles. The language was mainly associated with peasants, artisans and the low-income population. In spite of the antagonism towards NP, it continued to hold sway, growing in prominence and utility. It is no longer seen as the restricted mode of interlingual communication with limited lexicon but as a language with its own vitality and essence. Mufwene (2008) maintains that

...as the pidgins communicative functions increased (such as the cities that emerged from erstwhile trade factors) these contact varieties became structurally more complex and regularity of use gave them more stability. These additional characteristics changed them into what is known as expanded pidgins like Tok pidgin and Nigerian pidgin English".

Although the NP is predominantly a spoken language which is very versatile and dynamic various unsuccessful attempts have been made to commit it into writing by devising a standard orthography for it. The social conditions of the Nigerian environment have placed greater demands on its use and functions. Many Linguists (Essien 1993, Egbokhare 2003, Emenanjo 1983 etc) have called for the adoption of NP as the national language in Nigeria while others (Marchese and Schnukal 1982) have called for its recognition as an indigenous Nigerian language as a result of its simplicity, popularity and neutrality. It serves as a more acceptable alternative to a lingua franca, given the constant rivalry among three major languages. It is politically, socially and ethnically detached.

Its sound system word formation strategies and sentence structure are devoid of complexity that could be encountered in learning any Nigerian language. The reviewed role of NP in the electronic media such as in news translation, drama, public enlightenment, mass mobilization and education promotes its sustenance as a language that bridges ethnic gaps and forges a badge of identity, (Mensah 2011). It is used in the Nigerian music scene particularly with the emerging Nigeria pop culture (Ugot 2009). NP issued within the religious domain in church sermons, songs, testimonies and as a medium of prayers. (Ugot forthcoming).

A number of literary genres such as drama, poetry and prose have been published in NP. NP has been identified as a language with its own unique linguistic structure and identity. It evolved within a known and specified time-frame and undergoes stages of growth to attain some level of linguistic refinement. Some of the known varieties of NP include Ikom, Calabar, Warri, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, and Ajegunle among others. The Warri variety is fast expanding towards creolization of their lexical items. This study is concerned with the variety of NP that is spoken in the Ikom-Ogoja axis of Cross River State.

5. PIDGINIZATION AND THE LEXICON IN THE IKOM-OGOJA AXIS

The use of the NP in the Ikom-Ogoja axis of Cross River State is very strong because of the heterogeneous nature of the area. There has therefore been a steady consistent use of the NP for communication. Certain factors are responsible for the peculiar variety of NP lexicon to be found in this axis of Cross River State. The vocabulary is basically the same as the wider NP spoken in Nigeria but certain expressions of NP in Nigeria are peculiar to certain areas and may arise as

an NP slang until they gain currency and are used widely. Some of them are first of all influenced by contact with the local indigenous language or the English language. This could be seen as in

5.1 Borrowing

English constitutes the superstrate source of borrowing for NP while other languages such as Portuguese, French, Nigerian English, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba etc are among the substrate sources. See table 1 showing superstrate and substrate influence on NP.

Some borrowing from the indigenous language is not lifted directly but is translated and used in NP. Eventually such directly translated words become current in usage in NP. This phenomenon is very strong in Nigerian English Ugot (2005). Examples of directly translated words infused in Ikom-Ogoja NP include the following

| 1. | NP | Source | Gloss |
|----|-------------|------------|------------------------|
| a) | tie face | Regular NP | 'Sulk' |
| b) | now | Regular NP | 'Immediately' |
| c) | go come | Regular NP | 'Bye bye' |
| d) | die me body | Ikom-Ogoja | 'Shocked/surprise me' |
| e) | woman hand | Ikom-Ogoja | 'Left hand' |
| f) | man hand | Ikom-Ogoja | 'Right hand' |
| g) | get belle | Regular NP | 'Be pregnant' |
| h) | hand | Regular NP | 'Tight fistted/stingy' |
| i) | finger foot | Ikom-Ogoja | 'Toes' |

Table 1. Super-strate and substrate influence on NP

| | Lexical Source | NP | NP Meaning |
|-----|------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2a) | English | veks maintain remote control | Vex Be calm Witchcraft |
| b) | Portuguese | palava pikin sabi | Trouble Child Know |
| c) | French | boku rundevu pantalum | Plenty Meeting Bogus pair of trousers |
| d) | Nigerian English | go slow machine houseboy | Traffic Motorbike Male servant |
| e) | Igbo | okoro ogbanje biko | An Igbo man A re-incarnated birth Please |
| f) | Hausa | aboki kaya nama | Friend Luggage Meat |
| g) | Yoruba | tokunbo ajebota ashawo | A fairly used item Rich spoiled kid Prostitute |
| h) | Warri slang | tomashanko yawa kolo | Locally brewed gin Trouble Mentally deranged |
| i) | Calabar slang | chairman bros eboi | A boss Clipped form of brother A wayward child |
| j) | Ikom-Ogoja slang | palinki bogde nga | Tall and lean Prostitute Girlfriend |

These forms may or may not readily make sense to speakers of other varieties of NP. Input from slang may come from one variety but gradually gain currency among others. In other words, NP slang are contributory and may be characteristically short-lived within certain sociolinguistic space

In the Ikom-Ogoja axis borrowing is also done from the surrounding local languages. Such NP words include:

| 3. | NP | Gloss |
|----|--------|--------------|
| a) | bogde | 'Prostitute' |
| b) | abrosh | 'Prostitute' |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| c)nyongo | ‘Witch, witchcraft’ |
| d)obrosho | ‘Prostitute’ |
| e)kponyo | ‘Vagina’ |
| f)agogo | ‘breast’ |
| g)simkpok | ‘Crippled’ |
| h)mbui/Ishi | ‘Stupid person’ |
| i)agologo | ‘Tall person’ (This is a corrupt form of the Igbo word ‘Ogonogo ‘A tall man’) |

5.2 Reduplication

In the Ikom-Ogoja variety of NP, there is reduplication as found in other varieties or the more conventional varieties. The only category of reduplication found in NP is complete total reduplication (Mensah 2011). In table 2 some reduplicated equivalents of conventional NP words are listed

Table 2. Reduplicated variants in Ikom-Ogoja NP

| | Conventional NP | Ikom-Ogoja | Gloss |
|-----|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| 4a) | Kpengele | Meremere | ‘Weakling’ |
| b) | Tinkini | Biribiri | ‘Tiny’ |
| c) | Kpatakpata | Kpetekpete | ‘Completely’ |
| d) | Talktalk | Kwarikwari | ‘Quarrelsome’ |
| e) | Katakata | Grigri | ‘Confusion’ |

The equivalent expressions in conventional NP may also be reduplicated as in (4c)(4d) and (4e). (4a) however is a product of derived duplication as *mere-mere* is from *mere* ‘weak’. (4b) and (4c) are frozen reduplication which is basically non-derived reduplication. In other words the reduplicating constituent does not have a meaning in isolation but a meaning is obtained from their combination.

Reduplication can be used for emphasis, usually with pragmatic relevance as in

5. a) talktalk and
 b) kwarikwari ‘quarrelsome’
 c) pispis ‘bed wetter’

Reduplication functions here in (5a) and (5b) to denote duration or length of the action described by the verb, expressing modal action. It also introduces a personal, friendly or affectionate touch into a situation as in (5c) which is used to describe a child who constantly wets the bed.

5.3 Metaphorical Extension

According to Robins (1984:345) metaphorical extension is a productive word formation process in which ...the correspondence of meaning of two or more words is used and understood in a related and recognized way.

The lexical items from the super-strate source denote entirely different meanings from those conveyed in NP in an analogical sense. Although NP vocabulary is less extensive than that of SE, it can convey similar types of information with fewer words often expressing abstractions by means of metaphorical extensions of basic vocabulary items like belly, eye and hand (Ugot and Ogundipe 2011).

6. a) Get belle ‘Be pregnant’
 b) Sharp eye ‘Be observant’
 c) Shine your eye ‘Be vigilant’
 d) taihan ‘tight fist’

Ugot & Ogundipe 2011

Others include:

7. a) Water don pass garri ‘A bad situation’
 b) Tokunbo ‘A fairly used item’

Metaphors are used to extend the meaning of words and forms as single symbolic formation. In *Water don pass garri* Mensah 2011 explains that garri represents a staple meal in Nigeria and its preparation is such that it must be done properly and not be submerged by too much water. If this were to happen, the meal becomes too sticky and unpalatable. In NP, this expresses a hopeless and helpless situation. Tokunbo on the other hand is a Yoruba name given to a male or female child born in the diaspora. The concept is metonymically linked to any goods ranging from electronics to clothes, cars, shoes, bags etc. that are imported fairly used in to the country, popularly called second hand goods. In Ikom-Ogoja NP expressions such as those listed below are also metaphors and metaphorical extensions.

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 8. | a) drop engine | ‘A woman who has given birth’ |
| | b) ogoja bye bye | ‘Periwinkle’ |
| | c) chopbelleful | ‘Get pregnant’ |
| | d) sekon nu | ‘A fairly used item’ |
| | e) alaska | ‘Ice cream’ |
| | f) dry die | ‘HIV/AIDS’ |
| | g) money get dada | ‘Money has been spent randomly on different things’ |

In (8a) a woman who has given birth is described as having “*dropped engine*”. This is a comparison to a car whose engine has been dropped, analogically implying that it is no longer brand new or ‘virgin’. *Ogoja bye bye* is the name given to periwinkle which is used to cook a particular type of vegetable soup. It came as a result of Ikom-Ogoja men who married Efik/Ibibio women and followed them to their homeland never to return. The women were said to ‘colonize’ them. The sound made in the sucking of the periwinkles is considered as the sound of the car horn taking the men to Calabar, from where they will never return. *Chop belleful* implies that the woman has ‘eaten’ and is now very full from whatever she has ‘eaten’.

Sekon nu is an Ikom-Ogoja variant for *tokunbo*. Ice cream is called *alaska* because it is a foreign concept and is presumed to be from Alaska, ‘the coldest place in the world’. *Dry die* is a reflection of what someone infected with HIV/AIDS becomes.

In (8g) *money get dada*, *dada* is like dreadlocks, twisted hair that appears scattered in many directions all over the head. In regular NP, the expression is *money don waka*.

5.4 Euphemisms

Euphemisms are linguistic devices that are used to handle words and expressions forbidden by social conventions. Taboo words which are considered as vulgar and desecrating constitutes a part of the linguistic repertoire of speakers of NP. Euphemisms accord the society a source of decency and improve communication, within the social intercourse. It promotes politeness, which constitutes a vital aspect of the norms of linguistic communication crucial to the formation and maintenance of social relationship (Ugorji 2009). The data below show some taboo forms and their corresponding euphemism in regularized NP and Ikom-Ogoja variations.

Table 3. Taboo forms

| 9 | Taboo Form | Regular NP | Ikom-Ogoja Variant | Gloss |
|----|----------------|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| a) | Fuck | Hama | Nakkanda | ‘Sexual intercourse’ |
| b) | Ashawo/Donatus | cash & carry | Obrosho | ‘Prostitute’ |
| c) | Toto | honeycomb | Toto pikin | ‘Clitoris’ |
| d) | Die | kpeme/Kpai | Meng | ‘Die/pass on’ |
| e) | Shit | download | Empti belle | ‘Defecate’ |
| f) | Period | Flow | Woman siksik Fly flag/ Sell oil | ‘menstrual period’ |
| g) | Prick | brokus/koko | Brakoss | ‘Penis’ |

These taboo forms pertain to expressions which relate to sex, the body, excretion and death and the restriction placed on their use serves as the conventional expression of respect and etiquette that is significant to the social order. The creation of euphemism is simply one way the speech community protects its members from the embarrassment of taboo forms and expressions.

5.5 Coinages and Neologisms

NP also uses coinages and neologisms or nonce formations. These new forms can be defined as new complex and coined words by a speaker/writer on the spur of the moment to cover some immediate need. It ceases to be a nonce formation when accepted by speakers as a term they have heard before (Bauer 1983). Such expressions include:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|--|
| 10. | NP | Gloss |
| | a) How far? | How are you?/ What’s going on?/ How are things? |
| | b) Na wa o! | A versatile expression that denotes disdain, shock, annoyance, teasing, disbelief, depending very much on the situation at hand. |

Ugot 2011

Coinages and nonce formation are also used to name previously non-existent objects or phenomenon that result from cultural contact or the situation at hand. Such words eventually gain currency. Ugot (2009) says such expressions include words that have recently been used in the genre of music for instance.

| | | |
|-----|----------------|---|
| 11. | a) kelekele | 'Secret, underhand' |
| | b) shokoribobo | 'Someone who has money' |
| | c) yahooze | 'Internet fraudster' |
| | d) sengemenge | 'Smoothly' |
| | e) yoriyori | 'An endearment, a softly beating heart' |
| | f) nakakpako | 'Make love, have sex' |

Most nonces and coinages emerge from the Warri axis of NP where the language has almost completed the creolisation process. These forms are started as slangs and gradually gain currency into the lexicon of NP through regular use. The Warri variety is usually the source of these socially invented meanings from where they spread to other varieties of NP. Marchese and Schnukal (1982; 218) remark that in Warri "NP has become the recognized lingua franca and the primary language of a great number of children, if not the majority". This is why it is considered to be the most versatile and dynamic of all the varieties of NP in Nigeria. The following expressions and forms are of the Warri NP.

| | Warri NP | Gloss |
|-----|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 12. | a)yawa | 'Trouble ,problem' |
| | b)yawa don gas | 'There's troubling brewing' |
| | c) kasala | 'Trouble, problem' |
| | d) gallant | 'Strong, of physical strength' |
| | e) nakakpako | 'have sex' |
| | f) karishoulda, Show body | 'proud' |
| | g) maga | 'Someone being duped/used' |
| | h) mugu | 'Complete idiot' |
| | i) baff up | 'To dress up' |
| | j) butty | 'From <i>Ajebota</i> 'a rich kid'' |
| |) shoddy | 'babe, girlfriend' |
| | l) tank | 'Drink' |
| | m) para | 'Vexing' |
| | n) Why you deypara? | 'Why are you vexing?' |
| | o) shegbele | 'Behave' |
| | p) chicala | 'Girlfriend' |
| | q) pale | 'Father' |
| | r) male | 'Mother' |
| | s)form | 'Pose' |

'You dey form boss', You are acting like a boss'. Other areas such as Lagos have produced some nonce forms.

| | From Lagos NP | Gloss |
|-----|----------------------|---------------------|
| 13. | a) no lele | 'No problem' |
| | b) carry go | 'Go ahead' |
| | c) chassis | 'Its okay, correct' |
| | d) no dulling | 'Be sharp, lively' |
| | e) shekpe | 'Alcohol' |
| | f) blau | 'Marijuana' |

| | From Calabar NP | Gloss |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| 14. | a) kukere | 'Don't worry' |
| | (This is borrowed directly from the language) | |
| | b) etighi | 'Name of a dance' |
| | c)mfunaIbagha | 'No problem' |
| | All three expressions are from the genre of music | |

From Ikom-Ogoja NP

| | | |
|-----|------------------------|----------------------|
| 15. | a) josef (bro) | 'Jealous persons' |
| | b) karibodi | 'Proud' |
| | c) ishi/Mbui | 'Stupid person' |
| | d)agologo/Alongo/Bambu | 'A very tall person' |
| | e)repe | 'Father' |
| | f)reme | 'Mother' |

Most NP words originating from Calabar and the Ikom-Ogoja axis are derived from the local languages. Language contact therefore has had a role to play in the local NP. *Repe* and *Reme* are borrowed from a source close to Cameroon.

5.6 Variants in Word Classes

The NP of the Ikom-Ogoja axis is as rich in word classes as the regular NP. Words in a particular class in NP may represent another in a different class in the same position or environment. For instance, nouns can be made to function as verbs and generally lose their nominal properties and weaken aspects of their original meaning. In NP, just like in English, the class of words is determined by their syntactic and morphological distribution.

| 16 | Regular NP | Ikom-Ogoja NP | Word Class | Gloss |
|----|--|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| a) | oyinbo | Moukala | Noun | 'Whiteman' |
| b) | amebo | Korikosa/join maut | Noun | 'Gossip' |
| c) | shayo | Mimbo/manyá | Noun | 'Alcohol' |
| d) | winsh | Nyongo | Noun | 'Witch/witchcraft' |
| e) | olokpa/AK /Black maria/Popo/ Black mamba | Akelebe/wetinyoukari/black people. | Adv | 'Police' |
| f) | Kill | Peme | Verb | 'Kill' |
| g) | put maut | Put leg | Verb | 'Intercede' |
| h) | Kiss | Chop maut | Verb | 'Kiss' |
| i) | kpengele | Kpanla/mere | Adj | 'Weak' |
| j) | lepa | Ichanga/drai skin | Adj | 'Skinny person' |
| k) | tranga/kakaraka | Tranga, Karanka/grigba | Adj | 'Strong' |
| l) | kpatakpata/samsam | Siam/fiam | Adv | 'Completely' |
| m) | now now/ today today | Kpamkpam | Adv | 'Immediately' |
| n) | nyafunyafu | Nyafunyafu/breketé/fufule/plenty | Adv | 'Plenty' |
| o) | wayowayo/wuruwuru | Konikoni/Ntumentume/Wayowayo | Adv | 'Dubiously' |
| P) | wellwell/bad bad | Bad bad | Adv | 'Very' |

These usages are not strictly limited to the Ikom-Ogoja axis as the conventional usage is also applied. Sometimes an adverb such as 'very' may be coined differently, depending on the context. For example:

17. a) I dey hungry sotey belle gum ground 'I am very hungry'
 b) I veks for you plenti 'I am very angry with you'

In Ikom-Ogoja NP, the pronoun *wi* 'we, us, our' is used repeatedly in a sentence

Mekwikomot for wihaus go wi farmgo do wi work wey papa send wi

'Let us leave the house and go to the farm to work as papa has sent us to
 Regularised NP

Mekwikomot for haus go farm go do work wey papa send us

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the phenomenon of NP variations as found in the Ikom-Ogoja axis of Cross River State. It highlights the enormous communication demands placed upon NP as a developing language and the constant need for new vocabulary and expressions. This motivation is anchored in borrowing, reduplication, metaphorical extensions, coinages, neologisms and euphemisms etc. The language adopts new forms to suit the locality and these are eventually introduced into mainstream NP.

NP is obviously dynamic from any of the variants spoken in Nigeria. It is changing and could fill the gap for the need of a medium of discourse in Nigeria and a language of state and national consciousness.

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