



ANALYSIS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION FIDELITY BY DIGLOSSIA OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN ENGLISH AMONG SOUTH-EAST RESIDENTS OF PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The essence of oral communication is for ideas, information and knowledge to be expressed and understood as communicated. This study analyzed the level of comprehension of oral English communication in diglossic relationship among the residents of Rivers South-East District of Port Harcourt in South-South Nigeria. Ferguson's theory of diglossia and communication theory of symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead were used in investigations

Introduction

All aspects of human society are tied to the existence of a particular language. Languages in south-south region of Nigeria are not only used for daily communication but also to express the cultural diversity of the people. It is the cord that binds the various people together. South-south region of Nigeria, especially the city of Port Harcourt is richly blessed with multiple indigenous languages and their dialects which cut across different ethnic groups. However, the socio-linguistic vitality generated by the different groups also breeds infidelity of oral communication among the residents.

Oral language communication, sometimes referred as verbal communication is one of the most treasured possessions given to man. Such communication is not only used to express one's identity, exchange thoughts or ideas but also for transmission of oral information, to convey meanings, to transmit feelings, attitudes, facts and beliefs as well as to convey the effects of minds and systems affecting one another (Birvenus in Hassan,2010). Oral communication is thus employed in dialogue for the purpose of achieving mutual understanding.

However, the insatiable nature of human beings and the diverse ways in which they express themselves makes it impossible for speakers in multi-ethnic societies to achieve mutual understanding of communicated ideas and information for the benefit of all. Fidelity in communication refers to the ability of the receiver of

into oral communication fidelity and feedback in this community. Participant observation was employed as well as survey research method to collect data from 623 purposively sampled respondents. The findings of the study revealed that all the residents used low level diglossia more

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frequently than high level formal English. The study recommends that Nigerian Pidgin English should be standardized for usage in this region and concludes that Nigerian Pidgin English and high level English should be used diglossically together based on their different contexts.

an oral Information to produce an exact replica of transmitted ideas or information as provided by the sender of the information. This usually occurs at the output stage of the receiver, that is, the audio stage.

Thus, it was due to the inability of the different ethnic groups to completely understand each other and also Nigeria's inability to evolve an indigenous language for universal usage that led to the adoption of the English language as the formal medium of communication in trade and administration of government (Emike et al, 2019). Therefore, in many ways, English language serves as Nigeria's inter-ethnic language as well as the language of commerce, education, public communication and administration. It equally serves as the language of social, religious and political interactions in Nigeria.

However, the English language is an acquired mainly through a formal school system of teaching and learning, an experience that is not given to a large section of the Nigerian population which is not afforded the opportunity to acquire the language in this way. Furthermore, as a second language, the English language constitutes some difficulties for both learners and users. Its vocabulary, syntax and phonology are for many strange and different from those of the mother tongues found in this part of the country (Jowitt, 2000). In addition, poor methods and quality of teaching the language by the non-native users compound and complicate the problem of second language (L2) learning. Consequently, the inconsistencies inherent in the syntax of English resulted in the adoption and use of Pidgin which is a grammatically simplified form of English among the heterogeneous people of in the South-South region of Nigeria (Chukwuma, 2017; Emike et al, 2019). But, although commonly used in many parts the country and in particular more pervasively in the South-South, Pidgin has not been granted official status.

Nigeria's Pidgin English can be described as a combination of the English language and a whole host of indigenous languages. Derived from a mixture of various languages such as Igbo, Edo, Yoruba, Ikwere, Ogoni to mention a few, it is adopted to enable effective communication as well as to overcome linguistic barriers between individuals and groups in communities. Accordingly, depending on its development, Pidgin English is classified into different types - jargon, stable Pidgin, extended or expanded Pidgin and Creole. The use of pidgin in the society alongside formal English language has consequently resulted in diglossia.

Diglossia is the coexistence of two varieties of the same language in a speech community. It is sometimes seen as a kind of bilingualism where one variety of the language has a high prestige in society and the other a low prestige (Decamp, 2001). Such a situation can be found in many communities around the world such as in Arab countries where classical Arabic coexists with a more colloquial variety used in everyday speech, or, in China where Standard Chinese is used as the official, literary standard while local varieties are used in daily communication (Jacob, 2003). The primary focus of the following is to examine the fidelity and feedback of the usage of diglossia in South-East District of Port Harcourt in Rivers state, that is, the area made up of Ikwere, Ogo, Abua, Andoni, Ogo and Iba with a population of about 1,720,790. The study seeks to analyze challenges militating against absolute as well as appropriate understanding that can ensure fidelity and feedback of its diglossia. It will also provide some insight into barriers that affect effective communication among the residents.

Statement of Problem

Languages and dialects of immediate speech communities are affected by problems of mutual intellectuality. This is because a particular speech community may not completely understand another speech community. In such instances, Nigeria's Pidgin English provides a solution that enables different speech communities to understand each other. However, the usage of Pidgin English is regarded as a dialect for the uneducated class of people. While it is mainly used in casual conversations and everyday trading activities, it is generally considered a debased and intellectually inferior form of communication rather than a means of serving special communication purposes that enhance communication fidelity among users.

The success or failure of Nigerian Pidgin English usage among multi-ethnic groups is dependent on the intellectual activities of linguistics and communication scholars within and outside speech communities because the absence of their services in the provision of an effective interface between the different ethnics groups appear to compound the problems of poor communication fidelity and feedback where the daily

interactions among the people are concerned. Furthermore, Nigerian Pidgin English is believed to constitute haphazard admixtures of various linguistics elements and lack any convention on how lexical items are arranged to make meaning. Yet, standardization using the linguistic elements of speech communities could be tapped to enhance effectiveness of communication as well as to preserve the cultural heritage of the people.

Objectives of Study

The aim here is to analyze the effectiveness of using Nigeria's Pidgin English as a channel of communication in Rivers State South-East District of Port Harcourt. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. Find out the extent of residents use of Nigeria Pidgin English in their oral communication.
2. Determine the level of challenges to communication fidelity that is experienced by residents when communicating with other residents of different ethnic backgrounds.
3. Analyze the extent of Nigeria's Pidgin English diglossic relationship with high-level English usage in the area.
4. Survey activities that display features of low variety usage of diglossia.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do residents of River's South-East District of Port Harcourt use Nigerian Pidgin English?
2. What level of communication fidelity challenges do the residents of the area face?
3. What is the level of diglossic relationship between low-level pidgin (L) and high level English among residents of the area?
4. What activities display features of low variety usage of diglossia?

Conceptual Framework

This discourse is anchored on two theories. Firstly, the study is centered on Ferguson's theories of diglossia. According to Ferguson (1959), diglossia describes a special type of bilingualism in which two co-existing linguistic codes of different status compete with one another. The codes determine the varieties which are labeled 'H' and 'L'.

'H' stands for standard variety which is used for 'high' purposes such as the language used in literature, newspapers, and other formal institutions. The 'L' is used to indicate the low variety that is often used for spoken conversations and in informal situations such as in everyday trading activities and in popular music. Speakers in the communities chose to use a particular variety based on the circumstance of the communication to be made. Hence, Ferguson's theory of diglossia is pertinent here because the researcher seeks to find out the variety that ensures more fidelity of communication as well as feedback among the residents of the South East district of Port Harcourt, River State.

Secondly, this study is also anchored on the communication theory of symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead. According to Griffin et al (2015), the symbolic interactionism of Mead as stated by his student Blumer deals with meaning, language, and thought. By meaning, interactionists hold that humans act toward people or things on the basis of the meaning they assign to those things or people. Thus, usage of low variety 'L' in Nigerian Pidgin diglossia is based on the meaning assigned as long as it achieves fidelity of communication. Furthermore, interactionists are of the view that an individual's interpretation of symbols can be modified by his or her own thought processes. The interpretation of symbols semantically and connotatively is arrived at bearing in mind the context of interpretation. Symbolic interactionists therefore describe thinking as an inner conversation (minding). As Mead maintains, man naturally talks to himself in order to sort out meaning in difficult situations. Consequently, language is a necessary requirement for thinking that enables the individual to interact symbolically. The choice of language is therefore important for communicating meaning and thought in order to achieve communication fidelity and a good feedback.

Linguistic Vitality

The people of the South-East District of Port Harcourt in Rivers State are not only a highly diversified group of people in their culture but are also multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and are rich in linguistic vitality. Their languages are used to communicate identities, ideas, emotions and thoughts in different types of interactions among the people in order to achieve fidelity and positive feedback in intra-personal communications within each speech community. But communicating with other speech communities is a difficult task and fraught with the potential for misunderstanding. It is not surprising that various ethnic groups of Ikwere, Ogboi, Abua, Andoni, Ogba, and Ibana among others hardly achieve communication fidelity and feedback when they speak among themselves. It is historically because of this challenge which is common among numerous ethnic groups in the country that the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted English language as the official language in formal spheres of life. Not only does the English language enable communication between different peoples but it is also seen as a unifying language for all Nigerians in spite of their diverse languages, social-cultural and religious backgrounds. A multi-lingual and multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria would have become a veritable biblical Tower of Babel if each ethnic group made use of its own indigenous language for official communication purposes.

Instead, the English language which historically came into Nigeria through trade, religion and colonization, is firmly entrenched in the life of the country. Regarded as the language of international communication and as well as the language of science and technology, it appears to open the doors to educational advancement and prestigious employment. But while the English language is given second language status in Nigeria, it is mainly acquired through a system of formal teaching and learning and constitutes some challenges for many non-native speakers who use it for communication purposes. The vocabulary, syntax and phonology are strange to learners because it is different from those of their mother tongues. In addition, poor methods and quality of teaching the language by the non-native speakers compound the problem of second language speakers when attempting to use the grammar, syntax, phonology, semantics as well as other aspects of the English language. Most uneducated users of the language find it difficult to construct sentences that are error free in their use of English for communication in both formal and non-formal settings. The reality is that most individuals in the South East District of Port Harcourt are unable to afford the cost of acquiring formal education in the English language because of the socio-economic difficulties that they face. Consequently, this has resulted in the wide spread use of Pidgin English that cuts across regional boundaries. In fact, Pidgin is a language that is understood and spoken not only in Rivers State but all over Nigeria in spite of its low status. Hence the communicative import of Pidgin cannot be ignored.

Pidgin English is created from the combined efforts of people who speak different languages (Theodore, 2017). It is a context language that developed when two languages are used for specific communication purposes. The one that is used to serve the superstrate is usually considered more prestigious while the one with less prestige serves as the substrate in communication usage. Usually the superstrate is the standard language while the substrate is the indigenous language of the people. However, socio-linguistics does not see Pidgin as a language because it does not have native speakers. Edward (2003) merely sees it as “baby talk” or as a convenient means of communication that ensures appropriate feedback of what has been spoken.

The history of Pidgin in Nigeria is again traceable to the early contact between the coastal people of the Niger Delta area and Europeans traders, in particular, the Portuguese in the 15th century (Elugbe and Omamn, 2001). Later, the Dutch took over from the Portuguese and became major trade partners of the people of the Niger Delta. But from 1650, the English became major participants in the slave trade adding to the mix of languages already in use in the area. Hence, much of the Pidgin used for communication in Port Harcourt originates from the trading activities between the Europeans and their host communities. This may also explain why some communication scholars view Pidgin as a marginal or contact language used for trade. For example, Holmes (2013) asserts that “on the sea-coast, a multi-lingual context, pidgin developed as the language of trade between the traders...” Herzfeld (2003) adds that this makeshift language borrows vocabulary from the superstrate.

As a medium of oral communication between Nigerians and their colonial masters, Pidgin has undergone a series of developmental processes before the emergence of what is now regarded as Nigerian Pidgin. It is worth noting that under normal circumstances, it is expected that if pidgin has served its limited purpose which some scholars ascribe to it, then it should no longer be in use. However, in the case of Nigeria pidgin, this has not happened. Pidgin is still in use beyond its original limited function as a trading language between the Europeans and the indigenous coastal people. The reality is that when two or more languages come in contact, a kind of sociolinguistic transformation occurs (Theodore, 2017). In some instances, a diglossic situation may result to a language shift or even language extinction. In other instances, it could lead to the formation of a creole language or even the birth of a new language altogether (Ajani, 2007). But how is fidelity of oral communication achieved? How are Nigeria's indigenous speakers able to communicate without formal education in the English language? These are the questions that this study sets out to answer by examining oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian pidgin and formal high level English among residents of Rivers South East District of Port Harcourt.

The word diglossia is derived from French and was brought into the English language by Charles Ferguson in 1959 when he described diglossia as a linguistics situation where two varieties of a language exist side by side in a speech community with each having a definite role to play. In a diglossic situation, the two varieties of language are distinct and are used for different communication purposes. One of the varieties is the standardized high variety (H) while the other is the low variety (L) which maybe standard or not. Crystal (2003) explains that the high variety is the one that is learned at schools and used in churches, radio and television programmes. In other words, it is used in serious and formal situations. On the other hand, the low variety (L) usage is related to informal situations, for example, among family members. Ferguson cited in Sneddon (2003) defines diglossia as:

A relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may be a standard or a regional standard), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector for the ordinary conversation.

This definition is based on a multi-dimensional characterization of diglossia in relation to attitudes and usage that induced function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, grammar, lexicon and phonology (Theodore, 2017).

Some scholars like Wardhaugh (2006) believe that diglossia is actually a wide spread phenomenon. Similarly, Trudgill cited in Todd (2008) explains that diglossia includes any linguistic speech activity where language switching takes place. This is common in many parts of the world especially in Greece, the Middle East and Haiti. Examples include Arabic diglossia situation which has high variety, classical low, and colloquial. Here, the concept of diglossia refers to the co-existence of two genetically related varieties of the same language in a particular society. However, this does not ensure communication fidelity for all members of the society. But it explains how languages and their varieties exist in complex interrelation in which they are assigned different tasks. This is especially so for the speech community where language combinations as well as complementary distribution in forms and function use distinct codes.

Identification Features of Diglossia Situation

Ferguson cited in Sneddon (2003) identified four representative diglossic situations. These are (1) Arabic (in the Arab World), (2) modern Greek (in Greece), (3) Haitian Creole (in Haiti) and (4) Swiss German (in Switzerland). These diglossic speech communities use functional compartmentalization of both 'H' and 'L' varieties for their communication activities. This means that:

Arabic speaking communities: the coexistence of literacy (H) and dialectal Arabic (L)

Greece: communication in the alteration of Greek katharevousa (H) and dhimotiki (L)

Haiti: interact formally in the alteration of standard French (H) and Haitian creole (L)

Switzerland: speaks in the alteration of standard German (H) and Swiss German (L)

In spite of the above, a number of researchers such as Ennaji and Hudson (2002) have pointed out that neither the functional compartmentalization of codes nor the linguistic distance between them are enough criteria attribute of a diglossic situation. Rather, conceptual unity of those diglossic situations creates quite specific set of relationships between functional compartmentalization of codes, the lack of opportunity for the acquisition of 'H' as a native variety resulting in an absence of native speakers of 'H', and, the stability in the use of 'L' for vernacular purposes. This type of diglossia is referred to as classic diglossia. Its main features include:

- a. The two varieties involved are genetically related i.e two dialects of the same language with some degree of mutual intelligibility to enhance communication fidelity. Therefore, it is important to stress that diglossia in this sense is not bilingualism.
- b. The 'H' variety is not usually acquired as a mother tongue and its mastery requires some kind of formal learning.
- c. The 'L' variety is acquired as the home language by members of the diglossic speech community. They are used for communication in different types of contexts.

The phonological structure of Nigerian Pidgin English used for oral communication in low 'L' level diglossia variety has 23 consonants, seven vowels and has two tones. In Nigerian Pidgin English, verbs do not have inflection to indicate tenses (e.g, 's', 'ed') instead, independent particles are used to show past, non-past (bin, de). Adjectives in English can be derived from nouns and verbs by the processes of suffixation. Examples of Nigeria's Pidgin English used in low level diglossia and their formal high level variety of diglossia include:

1. So tae - until
2. How bodi, how you dey - how are you doing today
3. How far?- Hi
4. Wetin? - what
5. I no no - I don't know
6. I no sabi - I don't understand
7. I dey fine - I am fine
8. Wetin de happen - what is going on
9. Wahala- problem / trouble
10. A beg - I am pleading
11. Comot - get out of here
12. Comot for road - make way
13. Den send you? - have you been sent to torment
14. Gimi - give me
15. I wan chop - I want to eat
16. Come chop - come and eat
17. Vex - upset
18. I no gree - I don't agree
19. Abi - isn't it
20. No be so? - is that so?

Fishman (2019) extends the scope of diglossia to cover any sociolinguistic situation where two distinct languages operate for different functions. Thus, the distinction between an 'H' and 'L' variety can be used in situations such as in immigrant minority contexts that coexist with majority (H) but utilize a minority (L) language used side by side, each with a set of compartmentalized roles. To illustrate his view, Fishman (2019) explains that the coexistence of Spanish (the language of the colonizers) and Guarani (the American Indian

indigenous language) in Paraguay should also be considered an example of diglossia. Spanish is the variety used in the domains of education, religion and government while Guarani represent the 'L' variety for everyday conversation. For Fishman (2019), the domains of language (eg. families, friendship, religion, education, employment) govern language choices in multilingual settings since 'proper' usage dictates that only one of the theoretically co-available languages or varieties will be chosen by a particular class of interlocutor (s) on certain occasions to discuss certain topics.

Fishman's extended use of diglossia differs from Ferguson's rather narrower definition of the term in two major aspects. First, the codes used in extended diglossic communities are not varieties of the same language. Each of the codes involved represents a separate variety as a home language by a particular group in the community. However, only one of these varieties functions as the 'H' variety while the other plays the role of the 'L' variety. Pauwels (2003), refers to this extended type of diglossia as 'interlingual' diglossia as opposed to the 'intra lingual' type observed in classic diglossic communities. Secondly, communicators of the 'H' and 'L' varieties in extended diglossic communities belong to different social groups, and therefore, use the H and L varieties for different occasions of intra and intergroup communications.

But not all theorists favour the extension of the scope of diglossia to cover cases of both related and unrelated varieties. Hudson (2002) for example, argues for limiting the meaning of diglossia essentially to cases envisioned by Ferguson. He holds that the sociolinguistic arrangement in bilingual communities where two distinct languages are used do not qualify as diglossia but societal bilingualism. This is on the assumption that diglossia and societal bilingualism are fundamentally different in their social origins, evolutionary course of development, and, resolutions over the long term. All the same, Myers-Scotton (2006) points out that although speech communities characterized by extended diglossia are quite different from those that are classic diglossia, they are not different in the consequences for a society which views one or more varieties as H and one or more as 'L'. Such communities employ the two or more languages in their repertoires for different communicative roles.

As noted by Ferguson, the low variety (L) is usually acquired naturally by the child in his home environment but the high variety (H) is acquired through explicit teaching in a formal school setting. This is true of the South-East District of Port Harcourt where the younger generations easily acquire Nigerian Pidgin English while English ('H' variety) is learnt in schools. In terms of acquisition one is a communicatively acquired (L) variety while the other (H) variety which is learnt depicts a true situation of diglossia. Equally important, a study conducted by Chukueggu (2010) on diglossia and code switching in Nigeria found that code switching occurs frequently and unconsciously in diglossic situations and advocates that all speakers should stick to one particular code at a time. She asserts that there is no need to mix the H-variety and the low-varieties.

Methodology

This study employed participants' observation as well as a survey research (structured questionnaire) method as its main instruments for data collection. The research questions and the questionnaire items derived were face-validated by experts in the Department of English and Oral Communication at University of Port Harcourt. To establish reliability, Cronbach alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments and 0.84 as the reliability coefficient. The study employed simple percentage to answer questionnaire items for the research questions. They elicited broad responses from respondents who were purposively selected for ease and convenience of distribution and collection. Seven hundred questionnaires and seven trained research assistants were given ninety copies each. The researcher himself administered and collected 70 copies and the total number of the items returned where 623 copies which is 89.9%.

The researcher adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) prescription for a suitable sample size. Krejcie and Morgan suggest that if a population size falls in between one of two levels, then use the next large size and its corresponding sample size. Nnamdi (2006) also avers that in the United States of America, almost all survey organizations considered a sample size of 1200 to 1300 randomly selected from the entire USA (population estimates of 2007 to 301, 139, 950) as being adequate for generalization for the entire country. Considering

this suggestion of the scholars that the figure of 100,000 amidst its corresponding sample of 384 being lower than the study is population of 1, 720,790 based on 2014 census estimated national population, the researcher decided to adopt a sample size which agrees with Krejcie and Morgan (1970). They state that sample size increases less rapidly than population size (p.127). All of these suggestions were taken into considered before the sample size was decided at 700 respondents in the following analysis of oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian Pidgin English among residents of Port Harcourt.

Research question 1

To what extent do residents of South- East area of Port Harcourt use Nigerian Pidgin English in oral communication?

Table 1: Extent of usage of Nigeria Pidgin English among the residents of Rivers South-East

Category of response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Large extent	427	68.6%
Low extent	101	16.2%
No extent	11	1.8%
Undecided	84	13.5%
Total	623	100%

Source: Field work on analysis of oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian Pidgin English among residents of South - East District of Port Harcourt, 2023.

Table 1 shows that to a large extent, 427, that is (68.6%) of the residents use Nigerian Pidgin, while 101 (16.2%) of respondents do so at a low extent. 11 (1.8%) respondents at no extent. 84 (13.5%) respondents were undecided.

Research question 2

At what level do residents of South-East District of Port Harcourt encounter challenges in communication fidelity when relating to people of different ethnic groups using formal English?

Table 2: Challenges of communication fidelity among ethnic groups

Category of response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
High level	411	66%
Low level	184	29.5%
No level	12	1.9%
Undecided	016	2.5%
Total	623	100%

Source: Fieldwork on analysis of oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian Pidgin English in Rivers South East district of Port Harcourt, 2023.

Table 2 shows a high level of oral communication infidelity among the residents at 411(66%), low level infidelity at 184 (29.5%). No level communication infidelity at 12(1.9%) and those who were undecided at 16(2.57%).

Research question 3

Which communication activities displayed high level usage of the diglossia among the residents?

Table 3: Communication activities that display high level of diglossia

Category of response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Mass media activities	117	18.78%
Schools activities	108	17.33%
Bank activities	111	17.81%
Religious activities	92	14.80%

Local government interactions	42	6.74%
Legal institutions		
Medical activities	101	16.21%
Total	52	8.35%
	623	100%

Source: Fieldwork on analysis of oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian Pidgin English in Rivers South East district of Port Harcourt, 2023.

Table 3 shows high level of oral communication fidelity by diglossia. Mass media communication activities in the area was at 117(18.78%), school communicative activities 108(17.33%), banking activities at 111, (17.81%) while religious communication activities was at 92 (14.80%). Responses on local government interactions was at 42, (6.74%) while legal communication activities at 101(16.21%) and medical communication activities at 52(8.35%).

Research question 4

What types of activities display features of low variety usage of diglossia?

Table 4: Activities that display low variety usage of diglossia

Category of response	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Market activities	325	52.1%
Grassroots empowerment	21	3.4%
Small Businesses	56	8.99%
Festivals and ceremonies	73	11.7%
Music and celebrations	61	9.8%
Political activities	87	14.00%
Total	623	100%

Source: Fieldwork on analysis of oral communication fidelity by diglossia of Nigerian Pidgin English in Rivers South East district of Port Harcourt, 2023.

Table 4 shows activities of low level variety diglossia. Market activities was at 325 (52.1%), grassroots empowerment programmes at 21 (3.4%), small businesses was 56 (8.99%), festivals and ceremonies at 73 (11.7%), music and celebrations at 61 (9.8%) and political activities at 87 (14%).

Discussion of findings

The first table shows that to a large extent, the residents use Nigerian Pidgin English and have challenges of communication fidelity without it. The second table shows that there is a poor degree of understanding among the residents when formal English is used in their interactions thus affecting fidelity of feedback. The third table shows that mass media activities, school activities, legal institutions as well as banking activities are the three main areas where high level formal English is used among the residents. However, local government interactions, religious activities and medical activities have a poor level usage of formal English among the residents. The fourth table shows high features of low variety diglossia in market activities, political activities, festivals and ceremonies but low features in grassroots empowerment activities, music and celebrations.

Conclusion

From the findings above, it is apparent that Nigerian Pidgin English should be considered a dialect of the English language by the government and its usage encouraged so as to enhance fidelity of communicated messages. The residents of Rivers South-East district of Port Harcourt should not be discouraged from using Pidgin in their daily activities because it enhances the comprehension of ideas, knowledge, information and interactions which in turn aids peaceful co-existence among the different speech communities.

Recommendations

The study recommends the use Pidgin English in the South-East District of Rivers State, Nigeria since understanding is the essence of communication. Pidgin English could be enhanced through formal standardization by linguistics and could be used as a dialect of high-level formal English. This would require consultation and input from a diverse range of stakeholders including educators, linguists, media practitioners and members of the general public. In so doing, all will be invested in ensuring the place and continued utility of Nigerian Pidgin English.

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