

A Sociolinguistic Study of Pidgin and Creole in Nigeria: Language Use and Social Identity

Juliet Akpa

Department of English
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: Julietakpa5851@gmail.com
Phone: +2348144806765

Abstract

Language is a fundamental aspect of human society essential for building relationships, conveying information, sharing knowledge and shaping culture. There is hardly any human activity that does not happen in the arena of language. In Nigeria, language plays a crucial role in shaping social identity, mediating interaction, and reflecting ethnic, economic and sociocultural realities. This paper examines how Nigerian Pidgin and creole language function as a tool for communication and identity construction within a multilingual, multifaceted and multiethnic country like Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin developed as a contact language during trade interactions between Europeans and various Nigerian ethnic groups. Over time, it has expanded beyond its initial utilitarian function into a widely used lingua franca, especially in urban centers such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Warri. Because pidgin and creole languages are mostly spoken by poor and illiterate descendants of slaves, there has been a lot of stigmatization and disrespect for both pidgin and creole as manifested in expressions like broken English, bastard Portuguese, etc.

Despite the stigmatization, Nigerian Pidgin has gained significant prestige in informal domains, media, music, and youth culture. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language choice in Nigeria is deeply tied to identity. Nigerian Pidgin allows speakers to project solidarity, informality, and cultural authenticity. For instance, its use among youths often signals modernity, street credibility, and resistance to elitist norms associated with Standard English. In contrast, Standard English is typically employed in formal settings such as education, governance, and professional communication, reflecting power and institutional authority. The paper opines that language is crucial for expression of thoughts, culture and identity and also for social engineering. History can shape language including how it is perceived and language in turn shapes culture and identity.

Keywords: English Language, pidgin, creole, social identity.

Introduction

Language is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been studied by both linguists and philosophers. Language is a fundamental aspect of human society essential for building relationships, conveying information, sharing knowledge and shaping culture.

According to Edward Sapir, language is a purely human and non- instinctive method of communicating ideas, thoughts, and desires through a system of voluntarily produced sounds.

The definition of Sapir expresses that language is mainly concerned with only human beings and constitutes a system of sounds produced by them for communication.

Language is a system of symbols, sounds, gestures or signs used to convey meaning and communicate ideas, thoughts and messages between individuals and groups.

Functions of Language

Some of the functions of language are:

1. Communication: We humans use language to convey information, knowledge and to exchange social interactions.
2. Expression: Language enables us to express ourselves and our linguistic creativity. It also helps us form and express our identity.
3. Cognition: language influences thought, perception and problem solving.
4. Socialization: Language shapes cultural norms, values and social relations.

Types of language:

1. Spoken (verbal)
2. Written (textual)
3. Sign language (visual- gestural)
4. Non verbal language (body language, expressions)

Definitions of key concepts: language, sociolinguistics, pidgin, Creole, and Social Identity

Language

Language is an attribute of man; man does not share it with any other animal. The concept of language has been of interest to scholars for a long time. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, stated: (1) "Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts." The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulated the following definition: "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates." Any succinct definition of language makes a number of presuppositions and begs a number of questions. The first, for example, puts excessive weight on "thought," and the second uses "arbitrary" in a specialized, though legitimate, way

Aristotle defines language as a speech sound produced by human beings to express their ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings.

Ferdinand de Saussure defines language as an arbitrary system of signs constituted of the signifier and signified. First of all language is system based on logic or reason and secondly the system covers both objects and expressions used for objects. Thirdly, objects and expressions are arbitrarily linked.

Finally, expressions include sounds and graphemes used by humans for generating speech and writing, respectively, for communication.

Sociolinguistics

Social linguistics is a field of study which studies the relationship between language and society, examining how language use varies based on social factors like:

1. Identity (age, sex, ethnicity class)
2. power dynamics (status, authority, class)
3. Group membership (social networks, communities)
4. Context (situation)
5. Culture (values, norms, beliefs)

Social linguistics helps us understand:

1. How language reflects and shapes social identity.
2. How power dynamics influence language use
3. How language varies across social contexts.
4. How language change occurs over time.

By exploring the intricate relationships between language and society, sociolinguistics provides insights into the complex dynamics of human communication.

Pidgin language

In as much as, they are the same, they still have one common distinction that separates each other. Pidgins are used by the people who have had a language which is their primary language, whereas creoles are used by some people as their mother tongue. However, the distinction is harder to establish than it might seem (Macaulay 171

Pidgin language refers to a simplified language that emerges as a means of communication between groups of people who do not share a common language. No scholar has explicitly traced the origin of the word 'pidgin', though speculations have been made. The emergency of pidgin came into being as a result of desperate demand for means of communication of trading groups whose languages are mutually unintelligible.

One thing is clear, pidgin has to do with contact, either in trade, migration, etc between two or more hitherto linguistic/cultural set of people who need to comprehend one another in a simplified language. Initially, they are used primarily in trading or plantation situation (Femi Akindele and Wale Adegbite 54). Speakers of pidgin

Characteristics of Pidgin Language

- 1. Simplified Grammar - Pidgin languages often exhibit simplified grammar structures compared to their parent languages. Complex verb conjugations and intricate syntactical rules are streamlined, making

them more accessible for speakers from various language backgrounds.

2. Vocabulary Fusion - pidgin languages draw their vocabulary from the languages that contributed to their formation. As a result, these languages often incorporate a diverse mix of words and expressions from African, European, Asian, and Indigenous languages.

3. Pronunciation and Phonology – Pidgin languages frequently adopt simplified phonetic systems, making pronunciation more straightforward for speakers of different native languages. This phonological adaptation enhances mutual comprehension.

4. Intuitive Word Order - Creole languages tend to have a relatively fixed word order, which contributes to their ease of learning. This predictable structure facilitates smooth communication, especially among speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

5. No native speakers (not used as a first language)

6. Often used for communication between groups with different languages.

Examples of Pidgin Language

1. Nigerian pidgin (Spoken in Nigeria)

2. Singlish (Spoken in Singapore)

3. Tok Pisin (Spoken in Papua New Guinea)

Pidgins play an important role between in facilitating communication and trade between diverse language groups, and can also provide insights into language contact, change, and the dynamics of multilingualism.

NIGERIAN PIDGIN

Nigerian Pidgin is an English-based creole language spoken as a lingua franca across Nigeria. In the 2010s, a common orthography was developed for Pidgin which has been gaining significant popularity in giving the language a harmonized writing system.

Nigerian Pidgin	
Naija	
Naijá (languēj)	
Native to	Nigeria
Native speakers	L1: 4.7 million L2: 116 million (2020) ^[1]
Language family	English Creole

	• Atlantic • West African Pidgin English • Nigerian Pidgin
Writing system	Latin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	pcm
Glottolog	nige1257

Variations of Nigerian Pidgin are also spoken across West and Central Africa, in countries such as Benin, Ghana, and Cameroon.

Tones

Nigerian Pidgin has been described as a tonal language, having a high tone and a low tone. The high tone can be written with an acute accent, and the low tone, though typically left unmarked, can be written with a grave accent.^[18] Additionally, monosyllabic high-tone words shift into a high falling tone before a pause.^[18]

Pidgin Word (tones fully marked)	Tone pattern	English Meaning
/bàbá/	LH	Father
/bábà/	HL	Roman Catholic priest
/fádá/	HH	Father
/fàdà/	LH	Roman Catholic 'father'
/sìsì/	LH	young maid
/sísì/	HL	sixpence (5 kobo)

However, this has been contested by subsequent linguists, due to variance in pitch intonation on lexemes, especially for questions. One rival suggestion is that Nigerian Pidgin "is something of a pitch-accent language in which, given a word there may be only one high tone, or one sequence thereof in opposition to one low sequence"; downdrift is attested in the intonational system.

Most written texts in Nigerian Pidgin do not show any tonal markings, and do not reflect any lexical pitch differences.

Phonology

Nigerian Pidgin, like many pidgins and creoles, has a simpler phonology than the superstrate language. It has 23 consonants, seven vowels, and two tones.

Language and Class

There has been a lot of contempt and disrespect for both pidgin and creole. Proofs of such contempt are manifested in expressions like: broken English, bastard Portuguese, nigger French, cook house lingo, etc.

The cause of this contempt was the function of the earlier belief, that pidgin and creole languages "were corruptions of higher" usually European languages, and in part from attitude toward the speakers of such languages who were somehow an affront" (Holm 1).

Creole languages often have very low prestige in the societies in which they are spoken. This is because:

i. To begin with their social status, many creole languages are spoken by descendants

of enslaved Africans or of transplanted inhabitants of islands in the Pacific, a provenance that already makes their chances of gaining high prestige slim.

ii. Most regions in which they are spoken are not very wealthy, and there often is an upper class in those regions which speaks something other than the creole. For example, in Nigeria, you'll hardly find the elites speaking pidgin among themselves.

iii. In addition, however, creole languages are often perceived as somehow "derived" or "simplified" variants of other languages. This sets creole languages apart (in a negative way) from other languages spoken by non-dominant groups, such as the indigenous languages like Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The latter also carry low social prestige, but are at the same time often regarded as "original" and "complex."

Nigerian Pidgin is commonly used throughout the country, but it has not been granted official status. Pidgin breaks the communication barrier between different ethnic groups and it is widely spoken throughout Nigeria.

In Nigeria, pidgin English is mostly spoken by the lower class and the illiterate. Most rich and educated Nigerians rarely speak pidgin English. Using pidgin language often indicates that the conversation is informal.

Variations of Pidgin in Nigeria

Many of the 250 or more ethnic groups in Nigeria can converse in the language, though many speakers will use words from their native tongues. The pidgin of an Igbo man resident in Onitsha is different from the pidgin of a Warri man resident in Warri.

For example:

- Yorùbá ṣebi (pronounced 'sheh-bi') is often used at the start or end of an intonated sentence or question: "I hope you'll come ?" becomes Ṣebi you dey come?
- Yorùbá abi (another variant of the words ṣebi and ba)
- Igbo unu, equivalent to the English term "you people", has been adopted as una. For example, Una don commot? in Nigerian Pidgin means "Have you people left?" in Nigerian English.
- Igbo biko, meaning "please." For example, the sentence Biko free me means "Please leave me alone".
- Yoruba oga equivalent to the English term "boss or mentor", has been adopted from the Yoruba word oga.
- Hausa ba at the end of an intonated sentence or question: you no wan come, ba? means "You don't want to come, right?"
- Portuguese sabi at the beginning or middle of a sentence to mean: 'to know'. For example; 'why you no go sabi the man?' means 'How can you say you do not know the man?'

Nigerian Pidgin also varies from place to place. Dialects of Nigerian Pidgin may include the Sapele-Warri-Ughelli dialect that has majorly influenced large parts of Nigeria, Benin City dialect that has its influence from Bini language, Port Harcourt dialect that has elements of the mixed tribes in Rivers State, Lagos (particularly in Ajegunle influenced by sizeable Niger Deltan populace); and Onitsha varieties that draws influence from Igbo language.^[6]

Nigerian Pidgin is most widely spoken in the oil state Niger Delta where most of its population speak it as their first language. There are accounts of pidgin being spoken first in colonial Nigeria before being

adopted by other countries along the West African coast.^[11]

While Pidgin is spoken by many, there are wide swathes of Nigeria where Pidgin is not spoken or understood, especially among those without secular education in core northern parts — Gombe State, Yobe State — of Nigeria.

Relationship to other languages and dialects Similarity to Caribbean Creoles

Nigerian Pidgin, along with the various pidgin and creole languages of West Africa, share similarities to the various English-based Creoles found in the Caribbean. Linguists^[who?] posit that this is because most of the enslaved that were taken to the New World were of West African descent. The pronunciation and accents often differ a great deal, mainly due to the extremely heterogeneous mix of African languages present in the West Indies, but if written on paper or spoken slowly, the creole languages of the Caribbean are for the most part mutually intelligible with the creole languages of West Africa.^[12] The presence of repetitive phrases in Caribbean Creole such as su-su (gossip) and pyaa-pyaa (sickly) mirror the presence of such phrases in West African languages such as bam-bam, which means "complete" in the Yoruba language. Repetitious phrases are also present in Nigerian Pidgin, such as koro-koro meaning "clear vision", yama-yama meaning "disgusting", and doti-doti meaning "garbage".

Furthermore, the use of words of West African origin in Surinamese Creole (Sranan Tongo) and Jamaican Patois, such as unu and Bajan dialect wunna or una – West African Pidgin (meaning "you people", a word that comes from the Igbo word unu or unuwa also meaning "you people"), display some of the

interesting similarities between the English pidgins and creoles of West Africa and the English pidgins and creoles of the Caribbean, as does the presence of words and phrases that are identical in the languages on both sides of the Atlantic, such as *Me a go tell dem* (I'm going to tell them) and *make we* (let us).

A copula *deh* or *dey* is found in both Caribbean Creole and Nigerian Pidgin English. The phrase *We dey foh London* would be understood by both a speaker of Creole and a speaker of Nigerian Pidgin to mean "We are in London" (although the Jamaican is more likely to say *Wi de a London* and the Surinamese way is *Wi de na London*.) The word originates from the Igbo word *di* meaning the same thing and pronounced similarly: *anu di na ofe* (literally "meat is in pot") and *anyi di na london* (lit. "we are in London"). Other similarities, such as *pikin* (Nigerian Pidgin for "child") and *pikney* (used in islands like St. Vincent, Antigua and St. Kitts, akin to the standard-English pejorative/epithet *pickaninny*) and *chook* (Nigerian Pidgin for "poke" or "stab") which corresponds with the Trinidadian creole word *juk*, and also corresponds to *chook* used in other West Indian islands.

Connection to Portuguese language

Being derived partly from the present day Edo/Delta area of Nigeria, there are still some words left over from the Portuguese language in pidgin English (Portuguese ships traded slaves from the Bight of Benin).

For example, the word 'sabi' means to know. It is derived from the Portuguese word 'saber' which means 'to know' or 'to know how to'. Eg. *You sabi do am?* means "do you know how to do it?". *Sabi* means

"to know" or "to know how to", just as "to know" is *saber* in Portuguese. (According to the monogenetic theory of pidgins, *sabir* was a basic word in Mediterranean *Lingua Franca*, brought to West Africa through Portuguese pidgin. An English cognate is *savvy*.) Also, the pidgin word *pikin* or "pickaninny" comes from the Portuguese words *pequeno* and *pequenino*, which mean "small" and "small child" respectively.

Nigerian English

Similar to the Caribbean Creole situation, Nigerian Pidgin is mostly used in informal conversations. Nigerian Pidgin has no status as an official language. Nigerian English is used in politics, education, science, and media. In Nigeria, English is acquired through formal education. As English has been in contact with multiple different languages in Nigeria, Nigerian English has become much more prominent, and it is often referred to as a group of different sub-varieties. Although there is not a formal description of Nigerian English, scholars agree that Nigerian English is a recognizable and unique variety of English.

Creole-language / kri:əʊl læŋgwɪdʒ/

A creole language is a language that emerges as a native language of a community, often from a pidgin language. Creoles develop when a pidgin language becomes the primary language for a group of people, typically children, who learn it as their first language. This process is called creolization.

A creole language is a stable natural language that develops from the process of different languages simplifying and mixing into a new form (often a pidgin), and then that form expanding and elaborating into a full-fledged language with native speakers, all within a fairly brief period.

Creole languages are often characterized by a tendency to systematize their inherited grammar (e.g., by eliminating irregularities or regularizing the conjugation of otherwise irregular verbs). Like any language, creoles are: (a) characterized by a consistent system of grammar, (b) possess large stable vocabularies, and (c) are acquired by children as their native language. These three features distinguish a creole language from a pidgin.

The precise number of creole languages is not known, particularly as many are poorly documented. About one hundred creole languages have arisen since 1500. These are predominantly based on European languages such as English and French^[8] due to the European Age of Discovery and the Atlantic slave trade that arose at that time.^[9] With the improvements in ship-building and navigation, traders had to learn to communicate with people around the world, and the quickest way to do this was to develop a pidgin; in turn, full creole languages developed from these pidgins. In addition to creoles that have European languages as their base, there are, for example, creoles based on Arabic, Chinese, and Malay. The lexicon of a creole language is largely supplied by the parent languages, particularly that of the most dominant group in the social context of the creole's construction. However, there are often phonetic and semantic shifts. On the other hand, the grammar that has evolved often has new or unique features that differ substantially from those of the parent languages.

Characteristics of Creole Language

1. Native speakers. Unlike pidgin, creole has native speakers who acquire the language from birth.
2. Complex grammar and vocabulary: creoles develop a more complex grammar and vocabulary than pidgins.
3. Autonomous language: Creoles are distinct languages, not simply simplified versions of other languages.
4. Unique cultural identity: Creoles often reflect the history and cultural identity of their speakers.
5. Innovative Expressions - Creole languages are known for their creativity and adaptability. Speakers often employ metaphors, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions that reflect the unique historical and cultural experiences and values of their communities.

Examples of Creole languages

1. Haitian Creole (Haiti)
2. Jamaican Patois (Jamaica)
3. Louisiana creole (USA)
4. Nigerian Pidgin

Creoles can arise from various language combinations such as African languages and European languages, European colonial languages and indigenous languages, Asian languages and European languages, etc.

Creoles are essential part of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage, and their study provides insights into language contact and language change.

Cultural Significance of Creole Languages

Creole languages are not just tools of communication; they hold immense cultural significance. They are symbols of identity, representing the shared history and experiences of the communities that speak them. These languages embody the strength and resilience of cultures that have faced challenges and adversities like colonization and slave trade while preserving their distinct heritage.

Furthermore, Creole languages contribute to cultural diversity and enrich the global linguistic landscape. They play a crucial role in preserving traditional knowledge, folklore, and oral traditions, ensuring that the wisdom of ancestors is passed down through generations.

Social Identity

Social identity refers to the way in which individuals define themselves in relation others, based on group membership, social categories, and cultural norms. It encompasses various aspects, including:

1. Group membership: Belonging to a social group such as family, ethnicity, or nationality.
2. Social roles: Occupying positions within groups, like student, coworker, or parent.
3. Cultural norms: Adhering to values, beliefs, and practices of a particular culture.

4. Personal Identity: Individual characteristics like personality, interests, and values.

Social identity influences self- concept and self- esteem, group cohesion and solidarity, inter-group relations, social behaviour and conformity, and identity formation and change.

Understanding social identity helps us explore how individuals navigate complex social relationships, negotiate belonging and exclusion, and construct their sense of self within social context.

Examining the Interplay Between Language and History

Colonial Nigeria was ruled by the British Empire from the mid-nineteenth century until 1 October 1960 when Nigeria achieved independence. Britain annexed Lagos in 1861 and established the Oil River Protectorate in 1884. British influence in the Niger area increased gradually over the 19th century, but Britain did not effectively occupy the area until 1885. Other European powers acknowledged Britain's dominance over the area in the 1885 Berlin Conference.

European slave trading from West Africa began before 1650, with people taken at a rate of about 3,000 per year. This rate rose to 20,000 per year in the last quarter of the century. The slave trade was heaviest in the period 1700–1850, with an average of 76,000 people taken from Africa each year between 1783 and 1792. At first, the trade centered around West Central Africa, now the Congo. But in the 1700s, the Bight of Benin (also known as the Slave Coast)

became the next most important hub. Ouidah (now part of Benin) and Lagos were the major ports on the coast. From 1790 to 1807, predominantly British slave traders purchased 1,000–2,000 slaves each year in Lagos alone. The trade subsequently continued under the Portuguese Empire. In the Bight of Biafra, the major ports were Old Calabar (Akwa Akpa), Bonny and New Calabar.^[16] Starting in 1740, the British were the primary European slave trafficker from this area.^[17] In 1767, British traders facilitated a notorious massacre of hundreds of people at Calabar after inviting them onto their ships, ostensibly to settle a local dispute.^[18]

In 1807, the Parliament of the United Kingdom enacted the Slave Trade Act, prohibiting British subjects from participating in the Atlantic slave trade. Britain subsequently lobbied other European powers to stop the slave trade as well. It made anti-slavery treaties with West African powers, which it enforced militarily with the blockade of Africa. Some of the treaties contained prohibitions on diplomacy conducted without British permission, or other promises to abide by British rule.^[19] This scenario provided an opportunity for naval expeditions and reconnaissance throughout the region. Britain also annexed Freetown in Sierra Leone, declaring it a Crown Colony in 1808.^[20]

The decrease in trade indirectly led to the collapse of states like the Edo Empire. Britain withdrew from the slave trade when it was the major transporter of slaves to the Americas. The French had abolished slavery following the French Revolution, although it briefly re-established it in its Caribbean colonies under Napoleon. France sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803, the

same year that it gave up on trying to regain Saint-Domingue from the Haitian Revolution. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it ended slavery in its possessions. Between them, the French and the British had purchased a majority of the slaves sold from the ports of Edo. The economy suffered from the decline in the slave trade, although considerable smuggling of slaves to the Americas continued for years afterward.

Lagos became a major slave port in the late 1700s and into the 1850s. Much of the human trafficking which occurred there was nominally illegal, and records from this time and place are not comprehensive. According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Voyage Database, 308,800 were sold across the Atlantic from Lagos in 1776–1850. British and French traders did a large share of this business until 1807 when they were replaced by the Portuguese and the Spaniards. By 1826–1850, the British Royal Navy was intervening significantly with Lagos slave exports.^[21]

Whether British conquest of Nigeria resulted from a benevolent motive to end slavery or more instrumental motives of wealth and power, remains a topic of dispute between African and European historians. Many locals remained unconvinced of the Crown's authority to completely reverse the legal and moral attributes of a social institution through fiat. Regardless, slavery had decimated the population and fuelled militarisation and chaos, thereby paving the way for more aggressive colonisation.

As a result of all of these historical events, today, Nigerians speak English, pidgin and creole languages.

Language and Social Identity

Nothing is most treasured in a community other than language. It is a gift for expression of thought, culture and identity, which is central to the realization of the community's social identity. To be integrated to a group, one must be linguistically identified to such group, for proper assimilation and acceptability.

Language embodies the group social evaluations and expressible exhortations for social engineering of the community. Learning and mastering a language helps the user to learn the implicit and explicit "ways" of a given group; and along with the language the value-implicates of those "ways". Our behaviour and perception, our logic and thought come within the control ambit of a system of language. "Along with language, we acquire a set of social norms and values" Mills (qtd in Macaulay 160). Language, therefore, becomes paramount to individuals in identifying them.

For example, if I say I am Igbo, it means I identify as Igbo not just in dressing but also in language. And this means I speak Igbo, I know some Igbo folktales, myths, I use and appreciate Igbo proverbs. One can assert that the deeper one understands a language, the more one aligns with the society that owns that language. For instance, as an Igbo person, the deeper I understand Igbo language, the more I understand Igbo cultures, norms, values and beliefs that are not explicitly stated. Igbo names like Udokamma, Ifunanya, Onyemaechi, Eziafa ka ego, nwa ka ego, Afamefuna, etc. carry deep meanings and beliefs of the Igbo.

Udokamma means Peace is better (than war, crises, etc), Ifunanya means love, Onyemaechi means who knows tomorrow? Eziafa ka ego means good name is greater than money; nwa ka ego means child is

superior to money; Afamefuna means May my name not be lost (which underscores Igbo people's value for procreation).

Examples of Igbo proverbs include but are not limited to:

1. Onye buru chi ya uzo, o gbagbuo onwe ya na oso. (He who runs ahead of his personal God will grow tired of running.)

2. Onye fee eze, eze eruo ya aka. (A man who pays respect to the great paves way for his own greatness.)

3. Igwe bu ike (Multitude is strength)

4. Aka nri akwo aka ekpe, aka ekpe kwo aka nri (If the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand washes the right hand.)

5. Nwata kwocha aka, osoro ogaranya rie nri. (If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings)

6. Egbe bere, ugo bere; nke si ibe ya ebena, nku kwaa ya.

Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, let its wings break.

7. Onye ajuju adighi efu ụzọ.

He who asks questions never misses the road.

Asking leads to knowledge.

8. Aka nri kwo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwo aka nri.

The right hand washes the left, and the left washes the right. Cooperation leads to success.

9. Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe.

When a person says yes, their spirit agrees. This means that personal effort brings divine support.

10. Ihe onye metara, ya buru.

Whatever evil a man does, let him bear the consequences.

You bear the consequences of your actions.

11. Otu onye anaghị azu ahia.

One person does not run a market.

Community effort is essential as certain things cannot be maintained by an individual. This means that everybody is important in a community.

12. A na-esi n'ụlọ mara mma pụta ama.

One's good reputation begins at home.

Charity they say, begins at home.

13. Onye na-amaghị ebe mmiri bidoro maba ya, agaghị ama ebe ọ kwụsiri.

He who does not know where the rain began to beat him cannot know where it stopped.

Before you can solve a problem successfully, you need to first understand the root of that problem.

14. Uche bu akpa; onye ọ bụla n'ya nke ya.

Wisdom is a bag; everyone carries theirs.

15. Nku di na mba na-eyere mba nri.

A peoples' firewood cooks their food.

This means that a people's culture serves them.

16. Ọkụkọ anaghị echefu onye foro ya odu na udu mmiri.

A chicken never forgets where the person who sheltered it during the raining season.

This means that people don't forget who helped them when they were vulnerable or their lowest.

17. Ezi aha ka ego.

A good name is better than money. This

means that reputation matters more than wealth.

18. Nwoke anaghị akwa akwa n'ihu ọha.

A man does not cry in public. This underscores the Cultural expectation of emotional restraint placed on Igbo men.

It is important to note that the emotion being restrained is any emotion that may portray a man as being weak or vulnerable. Men are not restrained from showing anger.

19. Ihe ọma anaghị efu ụzọ.

Good things do not get lost. Good deeds are rewarded.

20. A na-eji obere ihe atụ nnukwu ihe.

Little things are used to measure big things. Small signs reveal bigger truths.

Language enables an individual to tap into the cultures, beliefs, principles and wisdom of his or her ancestors. As a young Igbo woman, these Igbo norms, principles and beliefs handed over to me through language help me navigate life. When I am compelled to make a choice between peace and war, I remember that it is peace that is better, not war. When someone shows me kindness and love, I know that I have the duty of reciprocating it because my language has taught me that aka nri kwo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwo aka nri. One of the ways to influence a people is to influence their language.

Pidgin proverbs

Person wey use Elephant set trap, na him know wetin he wan Catch.

Loose translation: Someone who wants to use elephant to set trap is just being greedy

because which animal is bigger than elephant?

Chicken wey run away from borno go Ibadan go still end up inside pot of soup

Loose translation: You can't run away from your destiny

Today's newspaper na tomorrow Suya wrap.

Loose translation: You cannot be in your peak forever. When the paper was newspaper, people paid to get it, it was in high demand but when it became irrelevant, they turned it to suya wrap (something close to trash).

To piss (urinate) no hard but fowl no fit.

Loose translation: It's easy doesn't mean everyone can do it.

If life dey show you pepper, make pepper soup.

Loose translation: Make something good out of a bad experience.

I get am before no be property.

Loose translation: I used to be rich doesn't necessarily mean I am rich now. Learn to accept the reality and live in the present.

If person too tey for party e go follow dem wash plate

Loose translation: Don't overstay your welcome.

No matter how hot your tempa (temperament) be, e no fit boil beans.

Loose translation: Your anger won't solve the problem, so calm down.

Opolo eye no be open eye

Loose translation: Having Big eyes doesn't make you wise.

Bring suya, bring suya....na cow body dey suffer am.

Loose translation: Every action has a consequence. To the person eating the suya, there's no problem, in fact all is well as the suya is delicious. But to the cow whose body is being cut for suya, it is injustice.

Escort me, Escort me, na im slave trade take start.

Loose translation: Serious things sometimes start in an unserious way.

Nearly no dey kill bird.

Loose translation: It's either you have it or you don't. Nearly scoring a point doesn't mean you scored the point.

Fly wey no get adviser na im dey folow dead bodi enta grave.

Loose translation: A fly that doesn't have an adviser follows corpse to the grave. It is important to have a counselor in life. The fly ended up being buried with the corpse because nobody advised him.

Jollof Rice wey dey for d bottom of pot today go dey for top of cooler 2moro.

Loose translation: no condition is permanent. Someone who is poor today can become rich tomorrow.

Pikin wey dey carry for back no dey know say to waka na work.

Loose translation: A dependent would not know what it takes their provider to carry them and therefore may not appreciate their effort.

Na from clap dance dey start.

Loose translation: Big things start small! It started with ordinary clapping but eventually turned to full music.

Cunny man die, cunny man bury am.

Loose translation: It takes a thief to catch another.

Pikin wey say mama no go sleep, him eye no go touch sleep.

Loose translation: A problem maker does not enjoy peace.

Lean on me, no be press me die.

Loose translation: I will support you does not mean you should kill me with your burden.

Na condition make crayfish bend.

Loose translation: Life can humble somebody and stop them from manifesting their true potential.

Person wey chop belle full, no know wetin hungry man dey see.

Loose translation: The Privileged don't know what the poor masses are passing through.

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