

# Evaluating Pidgin as a Pragmatic Solution for a Global Lingua Franca.

Prisca Godspower Ochulor, PhD

Department of English and Literary Studies, Bingham University, Karu.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1106038>

Received: 22 May 2024; Accepted: 17 June 2024; Published: 18 July 2024

## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to elucidate how a common language can be possible within the globe. As the globe is becoming a small village with common goals like world trade, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, sports, and politics. To successfully achieve the goals, a common is needed, it is against this backdrop that this paper is set to evaluate pidgin as a pragmatic solution for a global lingua franca. The paper uses Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework. It adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach and the data was purposively collected, described, and analyzed. The findings revealed that it is possible to adopt pidgin as a global lingual Franca since there is a standard orthography developed for it. The paper recommends that policy makers should make provision for the recommendation of pidgin as a global language considering its usefulness to the world as well as making the resources needed for its evaluation possible for the success of the world's common goals.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Ethnology, there are currently 7099 living languages around the world today and the most ten (10) spoken languages are Mandarin (Chinese Language) 1.3 billion native speakers, Spanish 472 million native speakers, English 370 million native speakers and 978 million people who speak it as a second language. Hindi 342 million speakers, Arabic 315 Million speakers, Portuguese 232 million native speakers, Begala 229 million native speakers, Russian 154 million native speakers, Japanese 126 million native speakers and Latinda (western Punjabi) 118 million native speakers, and the Ethnology did not mention pidgin because it has no native speaker. To avoid religious, tribal, political, social, and cultural issues in selecting a language for global use, a language without a native speaker will be the best choice. Pidgin has international acceptability in terms of trade and commerce. It has acquired social and economic value even though countries with high native speakers struggle to use it, especially in business transactions.

The English language is being assumed as a global language because of its 370 million native speakers and 978 million people who speak it as a second language. Critically the second language users of English struggle to learn it and speak it like native speakers. Pidgin on the other side without native speakers, exists among people without a common language but with the essential need to communicate with each other either locally or intentionally. Pidgin is used for entertainment, information, business, or other purposes and it is spelled as pronounced, and it has the flavor of the indigenous language which it has contact with. The paper is to evaluate pidgin as a pragmatic solution for a global lingua Franca.

Pragmatics is a field of study that evaluates how human language is utilized in social interactions, as well as the relationship between the interpreter and the interpreter (Ariel 2008). Some rules govern language which pidgin does not adhere to, pidgin language can be used In social interaction without the knowledge of syntax, concord, or grammatical rules, it functions according to the situation. Pragmatics helps users to look

beyond the literal meaning of words and utterances and allows the users to focus on how meaning is constructed within context. In pidgin meaning is constructed according to the context, the interlocutors do not need to understand each other's indigenous language when added to pidgin for them to understand the language. Pidgin language can be created for the practical and immediate purpose of communication between people who otherwise would have no common language. The fundamental function of every language is to link meaning and expression together, which pidgin does in a simple and dignified manner. Crystal (1971), states that, people find language a fascinating aspect of human behavior and that they are delighted to examine it from various perspectives. It is on this premise that this paper examines pidgin as a global lingua Franca as it has been in existence with other languages without considerable attention given to it.

The world is a multi-lingual society with different languages that cannot be ascertained and as such, it will be very difficult to select or recommend a Lingua Franca among the world languages. Apart from Multilingualism and the heterogeneous nature of the globe, pidgin and some other languages co-exist in a country either as an official language or a Lingua Franca. The globe with its diversity of languages needs one language that would bridge the linguistic barrier amongst the countries, especially in international trade, pidgin is being recommended, because it will not be easy to choose or select a particular country's indigenous language as a Lingua Franca, it will not be easy for the whole world to study an indigenous language, the procedures, facilitators and the choice of language will be something to battle with. Halliday et al (1973:30) point out that it is only in countries that face a really difficult national language problem that a foreign language flourishes as a Lingua Franca. This paper is not considered a national language but a global one. The world is now like a global village where technology draws one closer to each other for the sake of peace, unity, business, and sports, the globe needs a common language as a lingua Franca.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The world is turning into a global village that needs a common language to function, as in world trade, IMF, UN, sports, and other functionaries that bring the world together and this language needs to be devoid of ethnic, religious, political, and geographical influence. The paper is to highlight pidgin as a common language because it has no native speaker and is devoid of the aforementioned, it is observed that some percentage of every citizen of the countries of the world speak pidgin, if that should be the case, making it a viable lingua Franca is what this paper is out to highlight to bridge world language barriers

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of this study is to do a pragmatic study of pidgin for a global language, the study seeks to:

1. Examine how pidgin can be made a global lingua Franca
2. Identify criteria a language needs to be referred to as a Lingua Franca

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theory adopted to frame this paper is Bandura's (1991) social Cognitive theory. The theory is based on the concept that learning is affected by cognitive behavioral and environmental factors. Pidgin as a language is always influenced by environmental factors, especially the need to communicate with someone who does not share a common language with you, especially in business. Environmental factors are one of the reasons indigenous language is sometimes added to pidgin. He suggests that observation and modeling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Pidgin is often influenced by environmental factors, observation also is very important, one does not need to go through the four walls of the classroom to learn pidgin language, and it is unconsciously acquired like an indigenous language. Bandura's theory goes beyond the

perception of learning by being the result of direct experience with the environment. Any environment that allows speakers of different language backgrounds to interact in an informal setting, has allowed them to express themselves in pidgin.

The social cognitive theory perspective argues that learning is inherently social and happens in a social context, however, he emphasizes that learning does not occur passively, attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation are required to benefit from social learning practice. He refers to social learning as the same as informal learning which sometimes is backed up by motivation. Pidgin as a global lingua franca does not require to world to learn a new language. It has been a language that is behind the scenes and features anytime the need arises. It has been acquired unconsciously by all users. The curiosity to interact in politics, trade, sport, and business with people who are not in the same language community with you, gives rise to its usage. The environment can be a World Trade Organization meeting, United Nations meeting World Bank meeting, or any other international or national meeting, instead of going with an interpreter, pidgin can serve the purpose of Lingua Franca. This theory supports the argument that pidgin is possible as a global lingua franca because it is easily learned through observation and imitation. It emphasizes the role of cognitive processes, such as conceptions, judgment, and motivation in shaping behavior and the environment that influences it. The zeal to communicate with a none native speaker of your language either for business or other purposes motivates one to learn a simple language like pidgin which requires no teacher but observations and imitation in an environment where it is being used. One of the key aspects of the theory is reciprocal determinism which is the dynamic interaction between personal factors, behavior, and the environment that enables individuals to believe in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A lingua franca can be viewed from different perspectives, for instance, a country with multiple languages may decide to adopt one of the languages to serve the purpose of communication in the country as a national language or official language Ochulor (2022) this paper, is considering a global language and adopting one of the nation's language Is not in the picture of this paper, it is considering a neutral language as pidgin to serve as a global language. A lingua franca is also seen as a bridge language, common language, auxiliary language, or link language. It is a language that is systematically used to make communication possible between groups of people who do not share a native language Romaine (1988) The Oxford Language Dictionary sees lingua franca as a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different. Samarin (1987) also sees lingua franca as a language without a native speaker and therefore should be studied pragmatically for global usage.

Pidgin links religions, cultures, and people of all classes together. Pidgin did not emanate from a particular geographical area in the world and cannot be said to be a native of a particular nation or group of people, its long existence notwithstanding. Researchers have defined pidgin from different perspectives, some see it as a bastardized language, others as the language of the less privileged or low classes while others see it as a language with potential communication value. There is no consensus among the researchers on the definition of pidgin. Tood (1991) sees pidgin as a marginal language that arises to fulfill certain communication needs among people who have no common language. Recently pidgin has gained international recognition as football commentators are now using it in their commentary. Jubril (1995) observes that pidgin is expanding its territorial space as a lingua franca in ethnically heterogeneous areas. It is no longer news that television and radio stations such as BBC cast some of the news in pidgin as well as present dramas in pidgin. Some billboard advertisements are done in pidgin. Some poets have written poetry and drama in pidgin. Jugbe (1995) says that pidgin has acquired the kind of popularity that no indigenous language can acquire, it is against this backdrop that this paper considers selecting pidgin as a global lingua Franca. Some countries have adopted pidgin as their mother tongue, and it is widely spoken in countries like Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria. a form of pidgin that has developed into the mother

tongue of the Krio community in Sierra Leone. Bilkisu Labran, the head of the new BBC language service for Nigeria (2023) says that pidgin is quite fluid, it keeps changing all the time and it is expressive as well ‘Sometimes if you don’t have a word for something, you can just create an onomatopoeic sound and just express yourself, and it will be appreciated and understood, “I can talk about the gunshots that went *gbagbagba* and you get my gist. It captures it vividly instead of searching for the right word to explain the sound of the gun.” The Oxford English dictionary definition of pidgin is a language containing lexical and other features from two or more languages, characteristically with simplified grammar, and a smaller vocabulary than the language from which is derived, used for communication between people not having a common language.

The globe is made up of numerous languages and different ethnic groups who do not necessarily have a lingua franca, with language challenges in the world, pidgin unconsciously becomes the only available means of communication outside an individual community and this enhances the widespread of pidgin within the globe and a big solution to language problem. Pidgin performs an integrated role in politics, sports, mass media, and so on and a greater majority of citizens of the countries who have never been literate enough to learn or have an understanding of their country’s official language take advantage of it. It is observed that most of the indigenous languages contribute to the pidgin vocabulary and that is one of the reasons for its high social usage. The fast spread of pidgin has helped to solve several problems usually posed by the lack of a common language in some countries, it is on this premise that the study is evaluating pidgin as a pragmatic solution for a global lingua franca. Pidgin serves as a convenient form of communication in reaching a targeted audience in an informal setting. Ochulor (2022) according to that, advertisement agencies in most African countries use pidgin more than other languages, and the rhythmic of pidgin sounds poetics, in songs, cartoons, and other settings

The objective of this paper is to examine pidgin as a lingua franca and identify the criteria needed for a language to be lingua franca by evaluating pidgin as a pragmatic solution for a global lingua franca. Grundy (2000) identifies pragmatic mapping as general factual knowledge of the context as useful for constructing meaning out of an utterance. The context of the situation is the inhabitant of pidgin, context gives rise to new words in pidgin, which can be English language mixed with the local language at the time the user lacks the right choice of word in English to express the situation. Grundy adds that the pragmatic interpretation of utterance goes beyond the meaning of lexical components and the structural relations among them. This emphasizes that there is no grammatical rule that governs the use of pidgin, it is just for communication. People all over the world come together for trade such as in World Trade Organization (WTO). The main function of WTO is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly predictably and freely as possible and this can only be possible if the language of communication is understood, most countries and state representatives attend WTO with an interpreter, they speak through an interpreter and it is one of the reasons why a common language is needed. WTO deals with global rules of trade between nations and these rules can be judiciously adhered to if all participants get first-hand information about the rules than through an interpreter.

Lawal (2000) asserts that the understanding of the mapping of pragmatics helps to illustrate that a pragmatics interpretation of utterances goes beyond the meaning of lexical components and the structural semantics relations among them. A common language like pidgin has nothing to do with structural semantics because it is not only for the uneducated citizen but for the educated ones too. The United Nations is an organization that maintains world peace and most of the people that go to war for the nations are mostly uneducated soldiers that need simple and not rigid language like pidgin to communicate. A language without a rigid structure is needed to communicate effectively for world peace and pidgin is the most suitable for such.

Hymes (1972) asserts that in discussing meaning in communication, the situational component cannot be

discounted. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) which encourages International Monetary Cooperation by expanding trade and economic growth and discouraging policies that would harm prosperity is an avenue for world communication. There are a lot of organizations that bring the world populace together and a common language is needed for easy communication and world progress.

## METHODOLOGY

The data used for this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources, the primary data was purposively drawn from different environments where pidgin is used for communication, is described, and analyzed while the secondary data were from extant literature to establish the gaps.

## PRESENTATION

To establish good relations with all countries in the world, there must be a common language. For WTO, UN, World Bank, IMF, Football, politics, and other world competitive games to function effectively and produce good results, a common language is needed. Pidgin can be made to function as a global lingua-franca by adopting an orthography for it. In Nigeria a group of linguists referred to as *Naija lang Akedemi* (NLA) in 2009 proposed a harmonized orthography for writing pidgin. Pidgin which is influenced in writing by the sounds can also have an orthography for documentation purposes, to adopt a language as an official lingua franca, it has to be written down in text like any other language. Although many writers write in pidgin the spellings are not uniform, though it is made up of English words and some indigenous languages but the English spellings are not uniform: for instance, some write “they” as “dey” while some as “de” and can’t differentiate “they” from “the” but with the orthography it will have a legal backing. The NLA harmonized pidgin vowel sounds are <a> <i> <o> <u> <e> <n> <o>. All the vowel sounds are also present in English vowel sounds. There are five diphthongs as <ei>, <ai> <ao> <iΣ> <OΣ>, and some of these variants are found in some indigenous languages that have contact with pidgin. They have twenty two consonant sounds <b> <ch> <d> <f> <g> <gd> <h> <j> <k> <kp> <l> <m> <n> <p> <r> <s> <sh> <t> <v> <w> <y> <z> the consonant <kp> and <gb> can be evidence of indigenous language. If the sound system consider above can be adopted it will establish the orthography of pidgin and be suitable for adoption as a global lingua franca because of its distinct phonetic potentials which cannot be considered as English sounds or any other language of the world. The context of use makes pidgin special especially when some lexical items are used to express something new. Pidgin has social and economic values if adopted as the world lingua franca. Socially the language brings countries together, especially in the area of sports. Today there are World Cup competitions where different countries compete, of recent the commentators at the World Cups are now using pidgin so that spectators will have first-class information no matter where they are watching from. The economic value of the language comes from international trade, World Bank meetings, IMF meetings, UN meetings, and so on. The use of a common enhances the speedy performance of any action. The rules of syntax are not adhered to and therefore pose no challenges in usage. It can equally help monolingual countries to become bilingual.

## VARIETIES OF PIDGIN

Pidgin being a language that draws vocabulary and grammar from several languages may have different varieties around the globe. Countries all over the world are known for their accents, everyone speaks with his/her country’s accent, and people can speak the same language with strikingly different accents. Someone from Sirre lone can speak pidgin but it is not possible to have the same accent with someone from Ghana. When pidgin is more of an indigenous language of a particular country or society, it can be referred to as that society variety. Pidgin differs in pronunciation depending on where it is spoken and the indigenous language that influenced it. People often bring the phonology of their first language to pidgin making it look

like a variety of the language.

Received Pronunciation (RP) was adopted for Standard English usage but there are other varieties of English like American English, Australian, Nigerian, and Chinese English. The globe can adopt a particular variety of pidgin to enjoy high social prestige as RP in Britain is being regarded as the accent of those with power and influence. Given a particular variety of legal backing by language, policymakers can influence pidgin as a global lingua franca. Speakers of pidgin are far more widely distributed geographically throughout the globe.

## **BROKEN ENGLISH**

There is always a misconception about pidgin and Broken English amongst researchers and learners of English as a second language. Pidgin has the characteristics of imploring loan words, especially from the indigenous language it has contact with it. Some scholars do not separate pidgin from broken English. Nnnanna (1977) sees broken English as the manifestation of the effort of a non-English, speaker to communicate in English, which entails that the speaker is not well learned in English but makes an effort to speak like its native speaker or produce the standard or acceptable form of English but at the end, unable to get it rightly

Seyi (1973), views broken English as almost devoid of the connecting form of words and inflection such that is usually characterized by strings of lexical items arranged in some logical order to form sentences. Kperoji (2010) sees broken English as a derogatory term coined by native English speakers to describe non-native English speakers' frequent violations of Standard English syntax. This paper is in agreement with Kperoji's definition because broken English is different from pidgin, pidgin is a language that can stand on its own not a violation of any language. Broken can also be regarded as a conscious effort of an English speaker to make it standard in the process of mutilating it and comes out disjointed (broken) and in bad shape. It takes the knowledge of a well-schooled person especially in English to dictate that a sentence is written in broken English. In broken English the speaker or writer makes conscious efforts to write or speak in Standard English but only to be discovered that the rules of syntax are not observed. For instance: *I want to see you.* (Standard English) *me like see you* (broken) *I wan cee you* (pidgin). Pidgin is a contact language that involves the fusion of foreign and indigenous languages. Whinnom (1971) gives four criteria used to distinguish a pidgin from any other language. As a simplification, improvement, unintelligibility, and stability. He stressed that pidgin is a restricted domain and functions with a simplified structure compared to the source of language, that it generally has low prestige and attracts negative attitude, that it has a short life span, develops for a restricted function, and disappears when the functions disappear. It is against this backdrop that the paper presents pidgin as a viable lingua franca for the globe, to give it a legal backing for a permanent stay, and document it so that it will not disappear after use. Lexicographer always discovers new words but never allow them to disappear after the functions disappear. The paper suggests that orthography should be adopted for the pidgin to give it a permanent stay since there is always reason for the globe to come together either for meetings, politics, or sport, a common language is needed and pidgin being a native speaker of nobody in the globe is suggested to be the viable global lingua franca.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pidgin is a viable lingua franca for the globe, and the paper calls for its recognition by world language policymakers. Global transactions such as in WTO, IMF, World Bank, Sports, and Politics will perform an interesting transaction if the world adopts a common language. The globe can adopt NLA orthography for documentation and a particular variety can be standardized. Holm (1998) states that pidgin Lexicons are frequently small it is multifunctional (one word with several syntactic uses) which makes them easy to learn and use. A word may have two or more lexical variations depending on the speaker and the content. It does

not require a professor to teach it, it is unconsciously acquired due to contact. It borrows from Portuguese, and indigenous languages, like any other language such as English Language borrowing from French and Latin. Most Academics do not pay serious attention to pidgin, all languages of the globe are being studied as a discipline in all the institutions of higher learning except pidgin, it is being marginalized and it is more widely used than any other language of the globe. Faraclas (2004) observes that more than two-thirds of the world's population today use pidgin including graduates and professionals. It is observed that about 90% of the citizens of the world can understand and speak the pidgin language and indigenous language is always added to pidgin to express the world the user finds no suitable word to describe a situation using the environment making it a variety of that country.

This paper recommends that due to widespread and acceptability if a great number of people are involved in a particular language, that language needs attention by those in authority either by modifying or restructuring the language for public interest and assigning a role for the language. This paper recommends that pidgin should be assigned a global role because it has a neutral code, no geographical or ethnic base with good and economic value. It has no political or religious backing it is on its own. It also recommends that a world pidgin day should be celebrated, where a resource person or persons will educate the world on the importance of a common language and its significance to the globe to give it easy acceptability. Though not a destination but an adventure that creates new words as events unfold. It is not a language of colonization or conquest, let us make a globe a small village with a common language for easy communication, it will create peace and harmony.

## REFERENCES

1. Ariel, Mira (2016) Defining pragmatics, Cambridge University press
2. Ariel, M. (2008) Pragmatics and Grammar. New York. Cambridge University Press.
3. Crystal (1991) English as a Global Language Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
4. Crystal. D. (1971) Linguistic. London: Penguin Books
5. Elugbe B (1995) Nigeria Pidgin: Background and Prospects. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books
6. Grundy, p. (2000) Doing pragmatic. London. Arnold
7. Halliday et al (1993) Explorations in the functions of Language London Edward Arnorld
8. Halliday etal (1973) Explorations in the function of language. London. Arnold
9. Homes D (1972) introduction to ethnography of communication. Penncy; ivania. Press  
[https://www.ifranigeria.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=89guide-to-standard-naija-orthography-an-nla-harmonized-writing-system-for-common-naija-publications&catid=67:naija-languaj-akedemi](https://www.ifranigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89guide-to-standard-naija-orthography-an-nla-harmonized-writing-system-for-common-naija-publications&catid=67:naija-languaj-akedemi)
10. Italian-Based Pidgins and Lingua Franca Linguistics Special Publications Vol.14.1975 pp 70-72
11. Jubril (1995)
12. Nnanna, N (2017) Language practice: Benin Samugo Benin
13. Ochulor P. (2022) Nigerian Pidgin: A viable option. Kaduna: Kabod Limited Kaduna
14. Romaine Suzanne (1988) Pidgin and Crede Language. Longman
15. Romaine S. (1988) Pidgin and Credes: Language London. Longman
16. Samarin A (2008) Linguistic Field: A Practical Guide New York Palgrave
17. Simons G and Charles D. Languages of the world, 21<sup>st</sup> edition, Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Retrieved May 2024 <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
18. Todd L. (1991) Pidgin and Creoles: Oxford Black Well London
19. Wells. John (2008) Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) Longman
20. Whinnom (1971) Language and Hybridization Pidgin Tales from the China Coast. WWW. Researchgate.net & Publication