

AFRICA

DEVELOPMENT

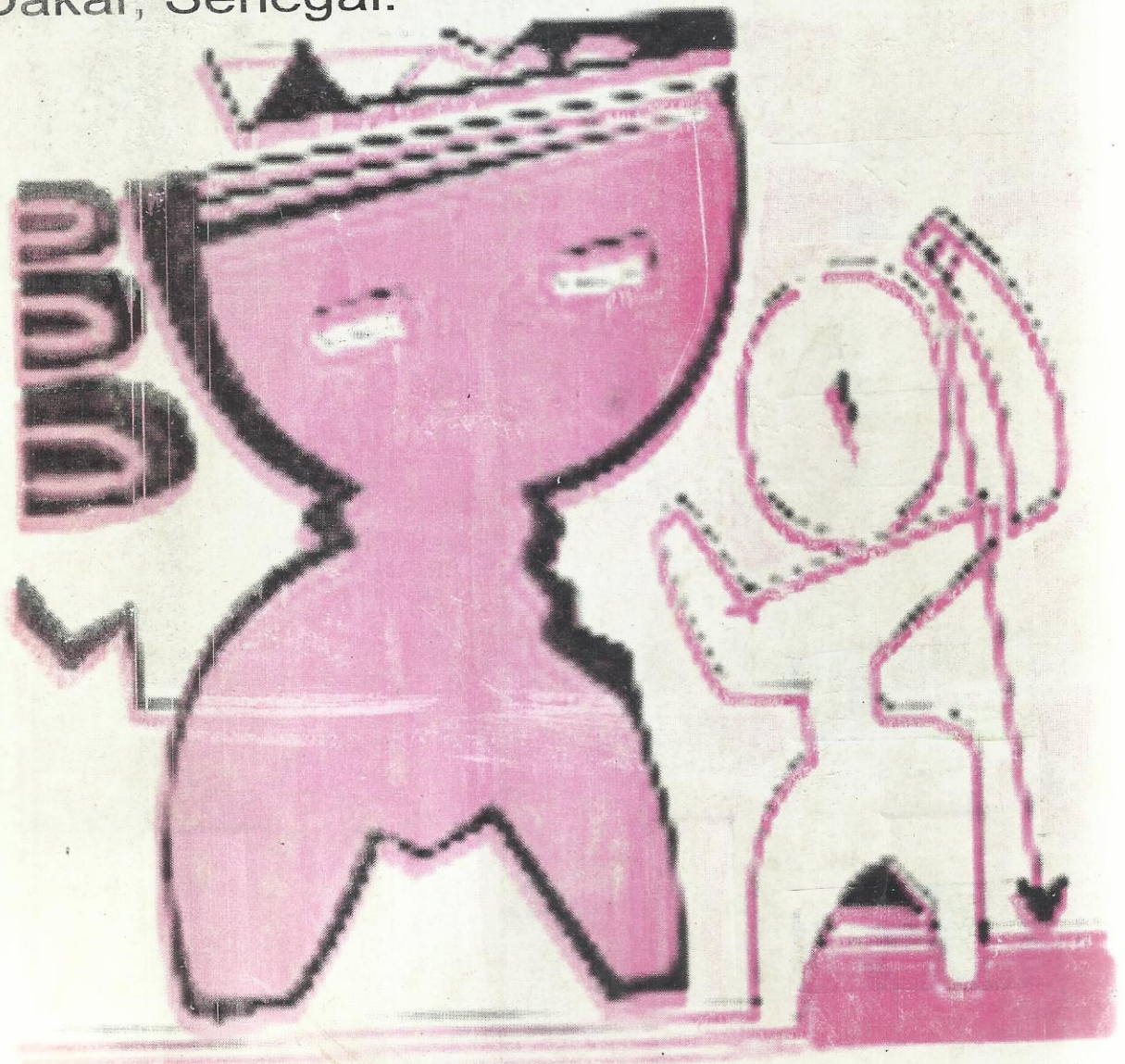
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Africa Development is the quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) based in Dakar, Senegal, published since 1976. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of developing world issues.

Africa Development welcomes contributions in English or French Languages which cut across disciplinary boundaries. Articles with a narrow focus and incomprehensible to people outside their discipline are unlikely to be accepted.

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***USE OF PIDGIN IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE: A CASE
STUDY OF MAMMAN VATSA'S TORI FOR GETI BOW
LEG AND OTHER PIDGIN POEMS.***

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ABSTRACT

*This paper focuses on the textual and artistic contents of Nigerian Literature in English-based Pidgin using Mamman Vatsa's *Tori for Geti Bow Leg* and other Pidgin poems as a case study. The approach was linguistic and we found out among others that the vocabulary of the Pidgin is simplified, reduplicated and compounded. Poetic features such as figures of speech, onomatopoeia, rhyme pattern, idioms and proverbs are used in the text. These findings indicate that English based Pidgin is an effective medium of literary creation and expression.*

1.0 Background.

Pidgin may be described as a contact language used in situations where the speakers do not have a language in common. Such situations include inter-ethnic social communication, commercial activities and preaching.

Pidgins are characterized by a compounding or hybriding of two or more languages (with one as a foreign language); serving as a second language to the speakers; having restricted usage and a large vocabulary borrowing from other languages.

It is for these and other features that some scholars have viewed Pidgin as a debased form of a standard language. But recently, the trend among linguists, has been to regard Pidgins as languages that deserve recognition in their own right and are as worthy of scholarly attention as other languages.

A survey of studies in the beginning of Pidgin in Nigeria points to the contact between Englishmen and Nigerians who engaged in trade transactions along the coasts. This is supported by the fact that Pidgin English is spoken more in the Southern Nigeria than in the North. (Mafeni 1971)

2.0 Title Use of Pidgin in Vatsa's *lori for Geil Bow Leg and Other Pidgin Poems*.

There are forty one poems in the collection; all of them are written in Pidgin. The Dedication, Acknowledgements, Publishers note and notes about the author are all written in standard English. This raises a curious question: Will the speakers/users of Pidgin for whom the collection is intended understand these sections or are they deliberately omitted from them? This comes to my mind as a product of the reservation in the writer's mind about the potentiality of Pidgin in expressing certain ideas considered to be serious or technical.

Most of the poems are indeed very short in lines, stanza and overall length. This may be accounted for in the fact that Pidgin is mostly used in informal contexts, characterized by short expressions with frequent pauses. The author may be influenced by this. As he feels his audience is mostly those with low intellectual capacity who may not be able to decipher long complex expressions.

The themes range from the private meditation on life to public issues like drunkenness, oppression, family feuds, effects of property and misconducts.

2.1 Linguistic Analysis: A Sketch

2.1.1 The words or vocabulary of the poems are simplified forms of the English vocabulary as portrayed here:

Pidgin	English Equivalent
<i>Bot</i>	but
<i>anoda</i>	another
<i>divors</i>	divorce

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<i>anoda</i>	another
<i>divors</i>	divorce

<i>Lla!</i>	tllat
<i>tok</i>	talk
<i>de</i>	the
<i>ting</i>	thing
<i>wit</i>	with
<i>wold</i>	world
<i>apartai</i>	apartheid
<i>enta</i>	enter
<i>contry</i>	country
<i>betta</i>	better
<i>bicos</i>	because
<i>dell</i>	then
<i>mout</i>	mouth
<i>feda</i>	feather
<i>nefa</i>	never
<i>nika</i>	knickers
<i>truza</i>	trousers
<i>devul</i>	devil
<i>dem</i>	them

2.1.2 Reduplication is another feature which occurs in the words used in the poem; these include:

- Adjectives (diffren-diffren, quick-quick, butu-butu)
- Verbs (sleep-sleep, manage-manage, make-make)
- Nouns (katakata, tiefi-tiefi, borrow-borrow, wok-wok)
- Adverbs (tru-tru, patapata, at-all at-all, je-je)

2.1.3 Another morphological feature observed in the vocabulary is what may be taken as Pidginisation of the English vocabulary, this time not simplification but compounding.

Aside from alteration in the English spelling form of a word, an additional morpheme, often a vowel is added. These include:

Pidgin	English Equivalent
<i>judgmenti</i>	judgment
<i>marketi</i>	market
<i>sma/u</i>	small
<i>kingi</i>	king
<i>till/e</i>	till
<i>/eti</i>	let
<i>bigi</i>	big
<i>argumenti</i>	argument
<i>mi/iki</i>	milk
<i>fieri- fiefi</i>	thief
<i>fiti</i>	fit
<i>geti</i>	get

2.1.4 Deletion of letters in words initially, medially or finally is another linguistic feature in the vocabulary of the writing.

It is apparent that the deletion serves mostly as a vocabulary simplification process; also it helps in making for a smooth swift from one word to another. Such words are:

<i>an/</i>	and
<i>/if'</i>	life
<i>'e</i>	he/she
<i>'im</i>	his/her
<i>as'</i>	ask
<i>efiy</i>	every

<i>inglis'</i>	Eng lish
<i>wan/</i>	want
<i>dar/in'</i>	darling
<i>slJak'</i>	shake
<i>revenu/</i>	revenue
<i>pesn</i>	person

2.1.5 Compound words, apart from reduplication also feature in the vocabulary.

These are:

<i>Sauna-people</i>	(nominal)
Lou'Speaker	(nominal)
So-tay	(adverbial)
Wahala-life	(nominal)

There is another aspect of compounding.

As against the conventional ones pointed out already viz the nominal (modifier + head noun); there is the compound formation which comprises the word and the '0' intonation marker. This feature may be transferred from the Nigerian indigenous languages. Examples include:

"Bot him fit-o
Apartai
 No be Betta ting-o!
 Me I no know-o;"
 Dis life sef Na hele-Ie-o!
 Me 1 de-o.?"

2.1.6 There are some Pidgin words which cannot be traced to English. They are either purely Pidgin or derived from the indigenous languages. These are:

Palava	-	Trouble
Chop	-	Food
Lai-lai	-	at all
Whosai	-	where
Yanga	-	pride
Shokoto	-	cloth
Pafuka	-	spoil
Barawo	-	thief

2.2.1 Grammatical patterns occur in the poems mostly in the form of run on line.

"Man/no go rnarry/anodawife/ onless him/ divors am" (complex sentence).

"Dat day/na waa igo bi"(simplex sentence)

"Forefa an' efa/na him/wan / live for dis wold an' I no wan' palava/bot God set ..
 //(compound-complex sentence)

“Dem pick ‘im pocket/An’ dey halla” (compound sentence)

From the above constructions, phrases, independent and dependent clauses may be used.

2.3 Punctuation Marks such as hyphen, capitalization, question mark, quotation mark, apostrophe, exclamation mark, comma, colon and semi-colon are used for various grammatical and stylistic purposes.

All proper nouns begin with the capital letter. Examples are:

Angelina, God and Lagos.

2.4 Poetic devices such as figure of speech, onomatopoeia, rhyme pattern, idioms and proverbs.

Figures of Speech:

You/ yousef/you too maki yanga/leki say you be/hen wey cock dey chase- simile.

Smallu boyj you nefa/sabi wearjnika set/you deyas forjtruza - sarcasm

Head na kingi - metaphor

I hia say you/an’ Brok in (Inglis’) na twin broad/ - personification.

Proverbs and Idioms:

De man/wey de sell meat/na him sabi fly/wey/gef/one eye.

It is the meat seller that knows the one-eyed fly.

One day/na one day an/Tori go geti/bow leg.

One day something terrible will happen.

Lice wey dey/for poor man/im clot/no dey lif long

The lice that live in a poor man's dress do not live long.

Abi/Na tortoise piss/for yah an?

Is your hand smeared with tortoise faeces?

Pesn wey/wan/ follow/long road/make him fes look/for betta shoe

He that must trek a long distance should first acquire good shoes.

Onomatopoeiac words include:

'Sofri-sofin~ suggesting softness

pr-pr-pr-pr. . .

All' kr-kr kl- ft.l

An | clue/(-cluck/ -cluck .. /

Suggesting the sound of a hen.

',. Kalakata -- to scatter/trouble

Rhyme Pattern is actlieved in two poems "*Tru'Tok*" and "*Pnvd !:Joja cry oy*"

Borrow-borrow

no be tiefi-tiefi

tiefi-tiefi

no be borrow-borrow

aro

na borrow-borrow

Borrow-borrow

Na aro

Barawo

Na tlefi-tlefi

An / tiefi-tieri

Na barawo

The Rhyme scheme is abba, abba, abba.

I no fitl see my wffe

I no fitl see my moda

I no fiti see my fada

Which kine waha/a-//fe

The Rhyme scheme is abba.

2.5 Notes on the spelling form: The effort to standardize Pidgin by writing it is of a great interest to many scholars.

In this collection, the poet has achieved consistency in his spelling of words. However, the following features could not be easily accounted for in this work. These are:

i) The doubling of letters in words like *sma//u/ commot peep/ betta/ ha//a/gramma*.

This feature does not seem to follow the idea of simplification in vocabulary and syntax which is associated with Pidgins.

ii) The substitution of *y* with *'if'* in *armie/ pa'mie/ ear'ie/ and darlie.!*

This spelling form is rather complex and may defy the principle of 'spell as you speak' which tends to inform the writing of Pidgin.

The above indications, notwithstanding, there is the commendable *effort* in trying to provide, as much as possible, alternative forms for spelling the words derived from English. Also commendable is the sincerity of the writer in retaining the spelling of words where drastic changes will 'kill' the meaning.

3.0 SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have traced the evolution of Pidgin in Nigeria; including its uses in the past and today as well as the varieties which have emerged based on sociolinguistic factors.

We have specifically examined the use of Pidgin in literature and some issues involved in the writing of Pidgin.

In assessing the use of Pidgin in Mamman Vatsa's collection of poems, we have found out that:

Pidgin has its vocabulary borrowed from English, the indigenous languages and artificial creation.

The vocabulary of Pidgin is, to some extent, simplified by way of deletion and reduplication.

The 'a' intonation marker, borrowed from the indigenous language or expression has given Pidgin a flow in poetic expression

Pidgin has grammatical patterns as well as punctuation markings.

Figures of speech, onomatopoeia, idioms and proverbs can be effectively used as poetic devices in Pidgin; and rhyme scheme could be achieved in Pidgin poems.

Personal and public issues constituting themes can be effectively handled in Pidgin.

From the above, we should conclude by positing that:

There is hope for Pidgin as a language of literary and creative work.

It is not impossible to construct an orthography for the language. Indeed the agencies involved should consider this with a sense of urgency.

Pidgin will constitute a virile medium of reaching to a larger spectrum of the society since it has the highest number of speakers than any given language in the country.

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