Chapter 3

Plural marking in Nigerian Pidgin English: A sociolinguistic study of diaspora speakers

Precious Affia

York University

This study examines plural marking in Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) in light of an ongoing change in the language. Many older studies hold that *dem* and zero markings are the dominant plurals used in NPE (Mafeni 1971, Faraclas 1989) while more recent studies hold that *-s* is the dominant plural in NPE (Deuber 2005, Ogunmodimu 2014). This apparent time study assesses the choice of plurals in the spontaneous speech derived from sociolinguistic interviews with 20 older and younger NPE speakers living in Winnipeg to bring to light the patterning of this change. The interaction between age and gender is found to be statistically significant as *-s* is the dominant plural used among the educated middle-class speakers of NPE in Winnipeg, with younger speakers and female speakers leading the change while the older male speakers are slower to adopt this change.

1 Background

1.1 Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE)

Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) is part of a continuum of West African Pidgin Englishes that stretches from Sierra Leone in West Africa to Gabon in Central Africa (Barbag-Stoll 1983). In 2016, Nigeria was estimated to have between three and five million people who use primarily NPE in their day-to-day interactions, and up to seventy-five million people (about 35% of the population) who use NPE as their second language (BBC 2016). However, in a more recent study, Faraclas (2021) claims that there are about 110 million speakers of NPE in Nigeria,

making it not just the most widely spoken language in Nigeria but one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. NPE has come to dominate urban spaces in Nigeria and has widespread acceptance. It has even become the first language of many Nigerians, especially in Edo state, Warri, Port Harcourt and Sapele (Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Igboanusi 2008). Although English is the official language in Nigeria, NPE has almost taken over the role of lingua franca in informal domains (Ogunmodimu 2015). NPE and its lexifier language English are "separate varieties". Evidence of this comes from Deuber (2006) who empirically investigates the possible existence of a continuum in Nigeria by looking at NPE spoken by educated speakers in Lagos, Nigeria in the areas of copula constructions, tense-aspect marking and verbal negation. She finds NPE and English to be two separate varieties with no evidence for intermediate varieties.

Despite NPE being an informal lingua franca, which transcends regional, ethnic and linguistic boundaries, it has no official status or recognition in Nigeria (Faraclas 2021). NPE is not acquired through formal education and has no standardized orthography. Until rather recently, it was accorded a low prestige in Nigeria and relegated to the less educated. It is now increasingly used also by and among educated people and in tertiary institutions (Agbo & Plag 2020). It cuts across religious affiliations, and even Nigerians in the diaspora use NPE as a language that reflects their "Nigerianness", a marker of identity and solidarity (Akande & Salami 2010, Affia 2022). Affia (2022) conducted a preliminary attitudinal study with ten Nigerians in Toronto (five males and five females) to assess the role of NPE in identity formation in the diaspora. The participants in the focus group expressed in different ways how NPE is tied to their identity as Nigerians when identifying with other Nigerians in Toronto. In light of the widening use of NPE, the present study will examine how the language is used in the diaspora with a focus on one salient feature of the language, plural marking.

1.2 The variable: Plural marking in NPE

Plural in NPE is marked in a number of ways. Faraclas (1989) argues that most nouns in NPE are assumed to be singular, except when indicated by morphosyntactic or pragmatic contextual cues, and bare nouns are given a generic reading. The (morpho-)syntactic means of signaling plural in NPE as identified in Tagliamonte et al. (1997) are the use of inflectional plural -*s*, the postnominal plural *dem*, and prenominal determiners which include numerals and indefinite quantifiers. Reduplication of adjectives/nominals is another plural marking strategy in NPE, and NPs can also occur without any overt plural marker (zero marking) where

the plural reading is derived from context based on prior information (Ogunmod-imu 2014).

2 Literature review

2.1 Plural marking in NPE

Both descriptive and variationist studies have examined the use of plural markers in NPE. Faraclas (1989) analyzes the grammar of NPE based on transcribed inter-views of Nigerians who were living in Port Harcourt between 1985–1986. He ex-plains that in NPE, most nouns are assumed to be singular except when indicated by pragmatic or morphosyntactic cues. Numerals, quantifiers, the postnominal plural *dem* and null marking (zero marking: where the plural noun is bare and has no suffix or plural modifications) were reported as the plural markers in his study. He found that *dem* and null marking are the most common plurals in NPE (Faraclas 1989: 352), and that *-s* can be used as a plural indicator but referred to it as 'borrowing'. Mafeni (1971: 110) also identifies *dem* as the most common if not the only plural marker in NPE. Deuber (2005) is a more recent study that investigated the grammar of NPE speakers in Lagos, a metropolitan city in Nige-ria. According to Deuber (2005: 119), although people in Lagos use *dem*, it is very limited, has disappeared from the speech of the average educated Nigerian and is restricted to formal radio broadcasts as a conscious pidginization strategy. One possible reason for the difference in the frequency and use of *dem* between the studies by Faraclas and Mafeni on the one hand, and the study by Deuber on the other hand, is that the former studies were conducted in areas where NPE is creolized and used as the first language of many, while the latter was an L2 variety. It may also be a result of an ongoing change in the language.

In the variationist study of Tagliamonte et al. (1997), the authors look at lin-guistic factors that may influence the choice of plural markers. The data collected for analysis was from 12 NPE speakers (11 adults and one child) living in Ontario, Canada. They were all born and raised in NPE-predominant areas in Nigeria, (Bendel, Rivers, Lagos) and immigrated to Canada between 1991 and 1996. The age range for the adults was from 28 to 52 years and they were all middle-class educated Nigerians. In the study, the variable context was individual nouns with plural reference, accompanied by overt plural marker or not. In their data, the plural marker *dem* accounted for less than 1% while *-s* was the dominant marker used. Animate nouns favored overt *-s* plural marking, and generic-referenced NPs favored zero marking. "Definiteness" was not a distinguishing factor in their

data and linguistic factors such as the preceding or following phonological segment were not significant factors in the choice of plural the speakers used. Tagliamonte et al. (1997) suggest that knowledge of other languages may play a role in the choice of plural used and the speakers of Igbo in their study were more likely to use zero marking as a plural strategy as an influence of a dominant Igbo grammar. The researchers suggested that the more exposed to English a speaker is, measured by their acquired level of education, the more likely it is that they will use more inflectional plural *-s*. Social factors such as age and gender, which are the main focus of the present study, were not investigated, and an apparent time analysis was not the goal of their study.

Ogunmodimu (2014) is another variationist study of plural marking in NPE. In contrast with Tagliamonte et al. (1997), Ogunmodimu's data collection was carried out in Nigeria. The variants investigated were inflectional plural *-s*, zero marking, numerals/quantifiers, *dem* and double-marking which is when more than one plural marking strategy is used to mark plural on a noun phrase. The participants were native speakers of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, and minor languages Urhobo and Edo. He analyzed the social factors such as ethnicity, education, and region of residence, and a linguistic factor of animacy of antecedent. His results showed that *-s* was the dominant plural used by the speakers while *dem* was rare (Ogunmodimu 2014: 10). Animate referent NPs strongly favored *-s* plural over inanimate referents (Ogunmodimu 2014: 13). Speakers with higher education levels strongly preferred the *-s* plural marker over others. The use of *dem* was highly disfavored by those with higher levels of education (Ogunmodimu 2014: 13). Speakers of Igbo, Urhobo and Edo, all have lexical plural markers in their native languages that function somewhat like *dem* and these speakers used *dem* more than speakers of Hausa, which does not have such a plural marker. Yoruba speakers, on the other hand, produced no *dem* even though they use the third person plural pronoun to mark plural in Yoruba. For double marking, speakers with university education used double marking more than those who only had high school education (Ogunmodimu 2014: 14). The author noted that education is the major factor determining the use of *-s*, suggesting it is as a result of contact with English (Ogunmodimu 2014: 15). There was an absence of significant differences correlating with speaker's gender, L1 or region of residence, which, according to the researcher, suggests a broad consistency of NPE. Language change using an apparent time framework was not investigated by Ogunmodimu (2014).

2.2 Social variables - age, gender and dominant language

The social variables investigated in this study are gender, age and dominant language. The gender of a speaker has been found to be one of the most important social factors predicting sociolinguistic differences. Studies investigating speaker gender go back to foundational studies (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972), both showing that gender is a predictor of linguistic differences. Trudgill (1972) explains that women produce linguistic forms which closely approach that of the standard language or have higher prestige than those produced by men (Trudgill 1972: 180), which could be the case in NPE. His sociolinguistic study of British English has a striking feature in common with the Labov (1966) study of American English, with both investigating the variable production of *-ing* as either /iŋ/ or /in/ in English words like *singing*. Trudgill's results showed that in Norwich, males used a higher percentage of non-standard [in] forms than females in British English. The same results were found for American English in Labov (1966). His results suggested that working-class non-standard speech is more highly valued and prestigious for male speakers, which he calls covert prestige. This was reinforced not only by usage but by the fact that male participants under-reported their use of the standard or prestige form while the women over-reported theirs. He therefore argued that women and men respond to different norms; men to covert vernacular prestige norms and women to overt, standard-language, prestige norms. In a more recent study by Kristian (2018), she investigated the same variable *-ing* among Newfoundland youths. Her results showed that gender was significant, with male speakers favoring the non-standard [in] compared to their female counterparts. Analyzing the gender effect in the present study is important because it has not been well investigated in previous sociolinguistic studies of plural marking in NPE. By looking at gender, I intend to see whether women will use more of the variant (*-s*) that has the prestige of the superstrate, English, than men.

Age is another important factor that is analyzed in this study. A gradually increasing or decreasing frequency in the use of linguistic features according to speaker age can be interpreted as a change in progress, where the apparent time hypothesis is used to investigate this change (Tagliamonte 2012). Apparent time is the study of language change by examining the distribution of variation by age groups like the older and younger generation of speakers at one point in time. For example, Labov (1963) carried out sociolinguistic interviews with the residents of Martha's Vineyard in 1961 to study (*ay*) and (*aw*) diphthongs. Younger and older people (69 in total) were interviewed assuming that the younger group would show how the dialect had changed. The age ranges analyzed were 14 to

30, 31 to 45, 46 to 60, 61 to 75 and over 75 (Labov 1963: 291). In his analysis, Labov calculated an index value for the height of the vowel nucleus of each speaker for each diphthong. The results showed that the nuclei of both diphthongs were progressively higher with each younger age cohort. The interpretation was that the older speakers learned the language at a time the speech community as a whole had lower values for the height of the diphthongs. So, the older speakers' speech reflected the state of the language at that earlier date. The regular increase across the generations investigated represents a generational change in progress with younger speakers leading the change (Labov 1963: 291). In the case of plural marking in NPE, older studies give *dem* and zero marking as the primary plurals (Faraclas 1989, Mafeni 1971) while newer studies show *-s* as the primary plural used in NPE (Ogunmodimu 2014, Tagliamonte et al. 1997). One way to investigate this change is through an apparent time study, where the speech of different generations is examined. This study seeks to infer from comparisons of two generations that any differences may be attributed to linguistic change in progress.

Finally, since Nigerians are mostly multilingual, the languages they speak could have an impact on their use of NPE. If the dominant language of an NPE speaker is Yoruba, for instance, the speaker may tend to use features in NPE that are similar to that of Yoruba when speaking NPE. This makes the variable 'dominant language' an important one when investigating variation in NPE. We saw that previous researchers suggest the influence of some of these languages as factors in their studies (Ogunmodimu 2014, Tagliamonte et al. 1997). In my study, apart from English and NPE, Yoruba and Hausa are the two Nigerian languages reported as dominant languages by some of the participants. Most of the participants are Yoruba speakers, which is a West African language different from Igbo, the native language of the majority of the participants in Tagliamonte et al. (1997). Since the authors suggested that substratum[1] influence from Igbo may have been the reason for the high rate of zero marking, because zero marking is a strategy

---

[1] I chose to include "dominant language" as a factor instead of "substratum language" because, although all the participants reported that they spoke at least one substratum Nigerian language, some of them, especially participants in the younger group, expressed that they did not speak their native language fluently and frequently, using it only to exchange pleasantries and to converse with their grandparents. Hence, I decided to analyze their reported dominant language – the one they speak fluently and frequently with other Nigerians – as a factor that can influence their use of NPE, instead of a substratum language that some may not speak at all. So, the participants expressed greater preference, fluency and use of a particular language in their linguistic repertoires. Eight out of ten older speakers preferred Yoruba and spoke it in social settings, and in their homes every day, which could affect their use of NPE. It contrasted with the younger speakers where more variability of dominant language is found.

in Igbo, it will be interesting to see if the plural marking of Yoruba speakers and participants in my study will suggest substratum influence for those who speak the substratum language fluently and frequently. The plural marking patterns of NPE, Yoruba and Hausa are presented below in section §3.2.

2.3 Linguistic variables

Animacy, type of nominal reference, and determiner type are the three linguistic variables investigated in this study. In the data, animacy was divided into animate NPs (human and animate nouns, ex. *boy*, *dog*) and inanimate NPs (*table*). For the factor nominal reference, I divided NPs into definite NPs (*the boy*) indefinite NPs (*a boy*) and generic referent NPs (*boys*). Determiner type is divided into possessive (*our house*), no determiner (*house*), demonstrative (*that house*), numeric (*two houses*) non-numeric or quantifier (*many houses*) and definite determiner (*the house*). The primary reason for investigating these linguistic variables is that both determiner type and animacy were found to be significant in Tagliamonte et al. (1997)'s study. I adopt these linguistic factors here to see if the patterns found in their study would be mirrored in my data.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection and subjects

Twenty participants took part in the study, ten males (five younger and five older) and ten females (five younger and five older). Two age categories were targeted: those in the older category were 50 years old and above (born in 1963 and before) while the younger category included individuals between the ages of 18–35 years (born between 1985–2001). They were all NPE speakers living in Winnipeg, Manitoba at the time of the interviews in the fall of 2019. They were recruited and selected through the snowballing method, targeting those who lived in Nigeria long enough to acquire NPE and speak it fluently. I went to a Nigerian church in Winnipeg and discussed the study with the pastor, who then recommended church members who fit into the older group age category. The individuals who spoke NPE signed up to participate in the study and recommended their friends to participate as well. For the younger group, I approached Nigerian students at the University of Manitoba where I was obtaining my master's degree in linguistics at the time. The people who fit the criteria for the study participated and recommended others. Sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with the participants in NPE, and the recordings were the source of data for this study. As a

young female speaker of NPE, I conducted all the interviews mostly presenting a cheerful countenance while the conversations in the interviews progressed. The interviews with the younger speakers, who were mostly University of Manitoba undergraduate students, were conducted in the sociolinguistics lab of the University of Manitoba. The older speakers were interviewed in their own homes or in quiet places of their choice, like libraries and churches in Winnipeg. Topics discussed in the sociolinguistic interviews were informal and centered on issues such as language use, school activities, hobbies, sports, TV shows, friends, family, etc. The interviews were semi-structured to allow the participants to be flexible with their responses, and each interview lasted for about an hour. The recording device used for the interviews was the Zoom H4N Handy recorder. Sanken COS-11D Miniature Omnidirectional Lavalier Microphones were used as external microphones. All the speakers were multilingual with fluency in English, one major or minor Nigerian language, and NPE. The major languages reported were Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, and the minor language was Ẹ́dó/Bini. The dominant languages of the speakers which were self-reported in the interview were Yoruba (10), NPE (5), English (4) and Hausa (1). More information about each individual participant is provided in Appendix 2 and this is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of speakers by dominant language

Dominant Language	older	younger
English	1F	1M 2F
Yoruba	5M 3F	1M 1F
NPE	1F	2M 2F
Hausa	-	1M

3.2 Data

In this section, I present examples from my data for the following types of plural: inflectional *-s*, *dem*, reduplication, zero marking, and numerals/quantifiers. Although these are oral recordings, the transcription is in NPE orthography, not IPA. I also provide data from the literature on plural marking in Hausa and Yoruba.

The inflectional plural affix *-s* is similar to the [s] and [z] allomorphic forms of the plural marker in English in voicing assimilation which is suffixed to the noun in the NP. However, from the recordings and also from my knowledge as

a native speaker of NPE, [əz] the third allomorphic form of the English plural marker, cannot appear after stridents in words like *church*, *judge*, etc. As seen in (1) below,[2] *-s* is attached to the noun *Nigerian* to give it a plural reading.

(1) Hia dey espensiv fo os Nigerian-s (06m2001)
    here is   expensive for us Nigerian-PL
    'We Nigerians find it expensive to live here'.

3.2.1 *Dem*

In (2), the *dem* plural marker which immediately follows the noun *fren* signifies or provides a plural reading to the noun in the sentence.

(2) Yu no   ol of mai fren   dem. (14f1970)
    you know all of my friend PL
    'You know all of my friends'.

3.2.2 Reduplication

In NPE, nominals or adjectives can be reduplicated to mark plurals. The adjectives usually precede the noun. In (3), the reduplication of the noun *ashawo* shows that the word signifies more than one prostitute, providing a plural reading to the NP. In (4) below, the adjective *fain* is reduplicated to indicate plurality of the noun *haus*.

(3) Ashawo-ashawo   na im   yu no.   (20f1985)
    prostitute-prostitute is what you know
    'Prostitutes are the people you know'.

(4) Im   go go biud fain-fain haus. (20f1985)
    him go go build fine-fine house
    'He will go and build fine houses'.

3.2.3 Zero marking

Plural reading here is derived from context due to the absence of overt plural marking and it relies on prior information to show the number of the noun in question. An example is seen below in (5) where the sentence, which is definite, does not have any overt plural marking on the noun *lab*, but the plural reading is derived from the context of the sentence.

---

[2]Speaker 06 male born in 2001.

(5) An mai skul   get ol di lab. (19f2000)
      and my school get all the lab
      'And my school has all the laboratories'.

3.2.4 Numerals and quantifiers

Numerals are used in NPE to show plural. The sentence in (6) below shows the use of a numeral in the NP *sevun yes* 'seven years' and the inflectional plural suffix *-s* to mark plural. This could be viewed as a type of *double marking*.[3]

(6) Ai wok fo dem fo sevun ye-s   bifo   ai kom Canada. (11m1974)
      I   work for them for seven year-PL before I   come Canada
      'I worked for them for seven years before I came to Canada'.

Quantifiers are also used to indicate plural in NPE. The sentence in (7) shows the use of a quantifier and zero marking on the noun in question, such that the plural reading is derived from the word *meni* 'many' preceding the noun in the NP.

(7) So meni choch no bi laik hie. (18f1969)
      so many church no be like here
      'So many churches are not like the ones here'.

3.3 Plural marking in Yoruba and Hausa

To adequately investigate possible dominant language influence, I present the plural marking strategies found in Yoruba and in Hausa. In Yoruba, there is a 3rd person plural pronoun that is used as a plural marker, but unlike the one found in NPE, it precedes the noun (8). Yoruba also has reduplication of adjectives (9) and zero marking (10) for plural marking (Ogunmodimu 2014).

(8) (Yoruba, Ogunmodimu 2014)
      Awon   oluko yin   oga ile   iwe.
      3PL.PRO teacher praise head house book
      'The teachers praised the principal of the school'.

---

[3]For double marking,the plan was to look at them separately to determine their patterning and possible statistical significance. However, only six cases occurred in the data, five of which were a combination of *reduplication of adjectives + -s*. It was unclear in the context of use whether the reduplication of adjectives recorded for double marking were intensifying the adjectives or pluralizing the nouns. Therefore, given the small number of occurrences of this plural marking strategy in the data, and uncertainty, this testing was not done.

(9) (Yoruba, Ogunmodimu 2014: 10)
Ile   nla nla po   ni ilu   eko.
house big big many in town Lagos
'There are big houses in Lagos'.

(10) Kole ri   aja ninu   igbo.
Kole see dog inside bush
'Kole saw a dog inside the bush', or
'Kole saw dogs inside the bush'. (Yoruba, Ogunmodimu 2014: 10)

In Hausa, the most widely spoken language in northern Nigeria, plural is marked by nominal inflection and nominal reduplication (Table 2).

Table 2: Hausa (Ogunmodimu 2014: 10)

	singular	plural	
a.	zabo	zabi	'guinea fowl'
b.	bàkā	bakunkunâ	'bow'

3.4 Analysis

Each interview recording was coded in ELAN transcribing software, a transcription tool that can be used for extracting and coding tokens of linguistic variables for quantitative analysis (Nagy & Meyerhoff 2015: 5). After coding the variables, I exported transcription annotations and token codes into an Excel sheet used in the statistical analysis program, RStudio. A total of 811 tokens of plural nouns were retained for quantitative analysis excluding tokens from unintelligible recordings, situations where the number is ambiguous, where there is ambiguity over whether the pluralized NP (*-s*) is English or NPE in the context of the sentence (for instance, the phrase *'I hate books'* can be English or NPE). In such cases where it is not clear from the context if the speaker codeswitched to English or not, the tokens were excluded. In R, I ran the generalized linear mixed model, or glmer. Within the model, I used random and fixed effects to determine the choice of plural marker used by the speakers from all the variables investigated. *Speaker* and *noun* as random effects were fit to the dataset in the R model. Fixed effects in the model were a two-way interaction between age category and gender, all social factors (age, gender and dominant language) and the linguistic factors (animacy, type of nominal reference and type of determiner).

4 Results

As seen in Table 3, *-s* is the dominant plural marker used in the data at 80%, while the postnominal plural *dem* is used about 1% of the time. Zero marking made up about 17% and reduplication occurred in 1.5% of the tokens counted.

4.1 Age, gender and dominant language

Although *-s* is the most frequently used variant, each variant's rates of usage differ by age. As seen in Figure 1, the younger speakers use the inflectional plural *-s* 90% of the time, while the older speakers use it 60% of the time. Zero marking is more common among the older speakers (35%) than among the younger speakers (7%). Although *dem* is not used much overall, it is especially worth noting that it is absent in the younger speakers' speech.

Figure 2 breaks down the distribution of the plural marking pattern across male and female speakers. The female speakers use somewhat more *-s* (83%) than the male speakers (79%). The male speakers use zero marking (20%) more than the female speakers (13%). The data suggests that there is slightly less *-s* usage among men and they make up for it with zero marking.

The dominant language of the speakers were Yoruba (10), NPE (5), English (4) and Hausa (1). Participants that have English as their dominant language, as seen in Figure 3, use more *-s* (91%) than speakers of the other groups. The Yoruba speakers use *-s* 85% of the time while zero marking is used 14% of the time. For the NPE speakers, *-s* is the dominant plural, used 76%, and zero marking is used 20% of the time. The Hausa speaker used the inflectional plural *-s* 55% of the time and zero marking 43% in his speech. Although this is a marked difference, nothing much can be said concerning his distribution as it could be his idiolect. Overall, the findings show that English language dominant speakers use *-s* more than the speakers in the other groups. Furthermore, Yoruba, NPE and Hausa speakers use zero marking more than the English speakers. The statistical analysis will show whether any of these differences are statistically significant.

Table 3: The overall distribution of variants

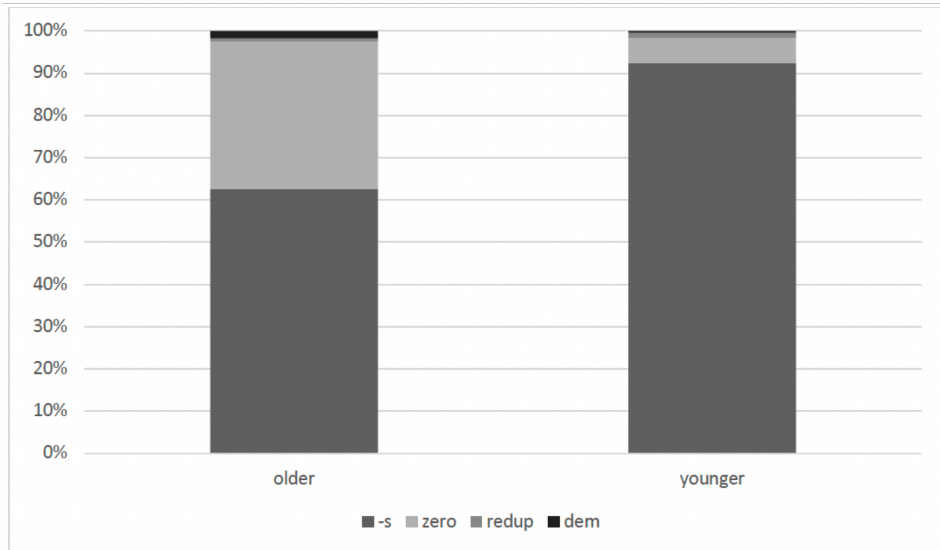| overall distribution	%	N
-s	80.6	655
dem	0.9	7
zero	17.0	137
redup	1.5	12
Total N		811

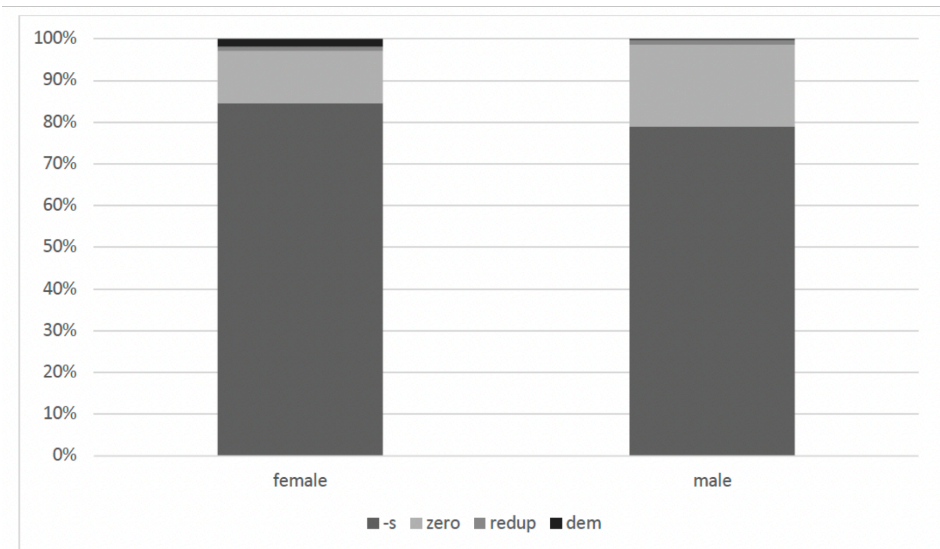Figure 1: Use of plural variant by age group

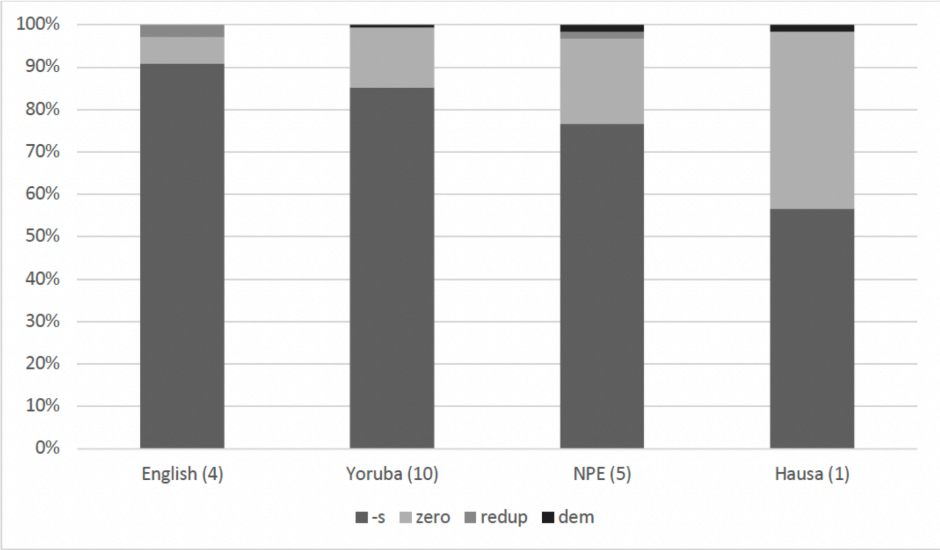Figure 2: Use of plural variant by gender

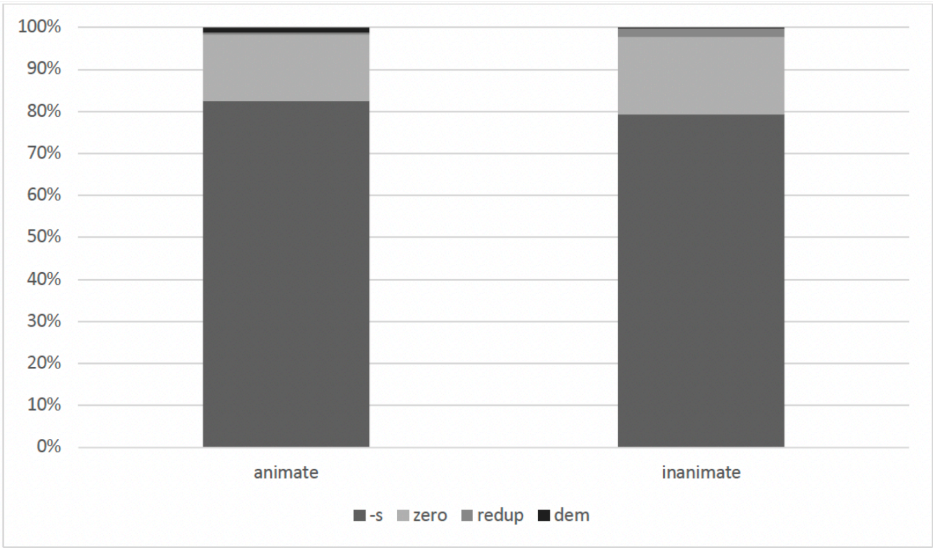Figure 3: Use of plural variant by dominant language

Figure 4: Use of plural variant by animacy

4.2 Linguistics variables

The linguistic variables investigated are animacy (animate and inanimate), type of nominal reference (definite NPs, indefinite NPs, generic NPs), type of determiner (definite, possessive, demonstrative, non-numeric/quantifier, numeric, no determiner). I did not find any interesting distributions or patterning with reference to these linguistic variables in the data, which is evident in the statistical result where no linguistic variable is significant. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show the distribution of plural NPs by the linguistic variables analyzed in this study.

4.3 Statistical analysis

For the statistical analysis, the variants examined were limited to two: the inflectional plural -*s* and zero marking as they made up 95% of the selected tokens. The R code for my model is:

```
glmer(plural~gender * age_category
        + animacy
        + type_of_nominal_ref
        + type_of_determiner
        + dominant_language
```
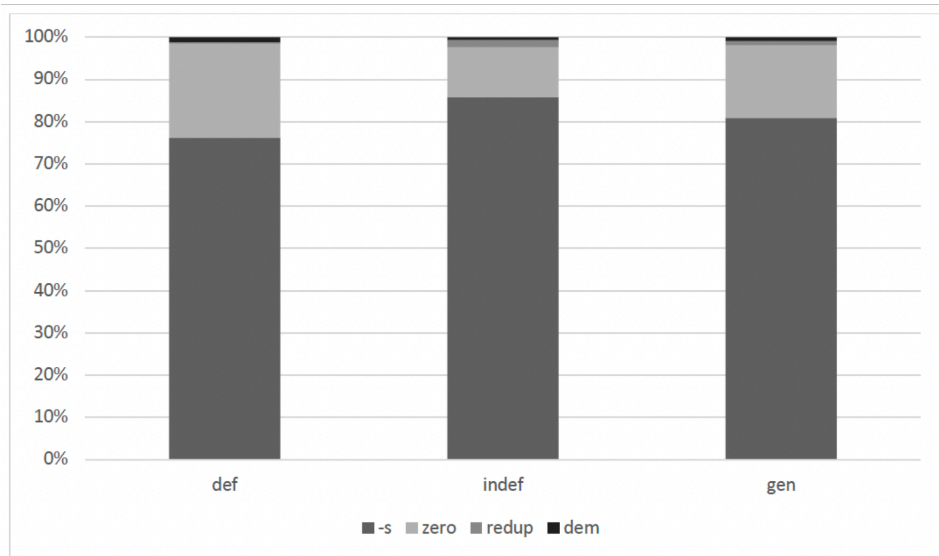

Figure 5: Use of plural variant by type of nominal reference
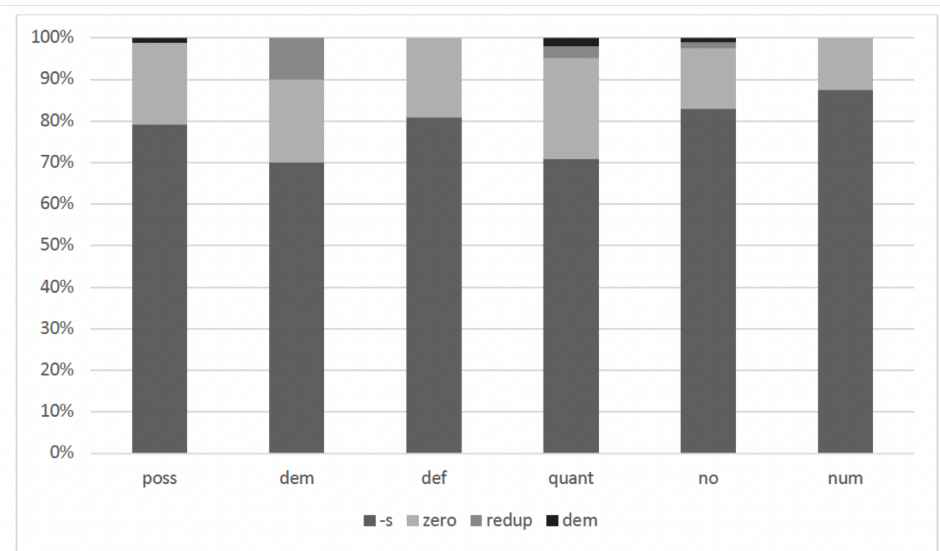
Figure 6: Use of plural variant by type of determiner

```
        + (1|speaker)
        + (1|noun),
   family = binomial,
   data = NPEFInal,
   control = glmerControl(optimizer = "bobyqa")
)
```

Table 4: Output of the best fit model

	Estimate	SE	z	$\Pr(> |z|)$	
intercept	-4.98	1.35	-3.67	0.000234	***
Ageyounger	-0.95	0.75	-1.26	0.20	
Gendermale	4.45	0.93	4.77	1.83×10^{-6}	***
Gendermale:Ageyounger	-5.57	1.26	-4.39	1.11×10^{-5}	***
dominant langHausa	6.32	1.08	5.85	4.77×10^{-5}	***
dominant langNPE	4.31	0.89	4.81	1.49×10^{-6}	***
dominant langYoruba	2.77	0.84	3.26	0.001083	**

The statistical results in Table 4 show the variables that remained after non-significant variables were removed from the model. The asterisks (*) show the levels of significance for each variant. The variables remaining are gender and dominant language, indicated by the asterisks under the Pr>|z| column. None of the linguistic predictors – animacy, nominal reference and type of determiner– had a significant effect on the choice of plural forms used by the speakers, even though predictors like animacy and type of determiner were statistically significant in the study by Tagliamonte et al. (1997).

Although age on its own is not significant, the interaction of age and gender is. Specifically, while men are statistically less likely to use the plural form *-s*, this is especially true among older males. As shown in Figures 7 and 8, the distribution of the two plural forms used by older males is approximately equal, whereas, for all other speakers, *-s* is the clear preferred variant. The tokens (zero marking and *-s*) produced by individual speakers are seen below in Figure 7. These are organized by gender and age, as indicated by (M/F) and birth year on each individual's code. This means that there could be a change in progress going on from the use of zero marking to *-s*, especially among the older group, where the female speakers are ahead in this change.

Dominant language is also a significant factor in the choice of plural used by speakers of NPE. The statistical analysis confirms the significance of the descriptive results, where zero marking is used more by speakers who have Hausa, NPE and Yoruba as dominant languages than those whose dominant language is English. The statistical analysis suggests that the interaction of age and gender is the most relevant potential indicator of a change in progress, and that the dominant language of a speaker may play a role in the choice of plural used.

5 Discussion

5.1 Age, gender and dominant language

As the statistical analysis shows, the interaction between age and gender is significant in determining the use of plural markers in NPE. This means that the interaction of both variables is predictive in the choice of plural marker used, not simply the individual variable age. The older male participants tend to use zero marking more than any other speaker group, as is apparent in Figure 8. The fact that older speakers (specifically the males) favor zero marking more than the younger group and the women, may be evidence that zero marking is the older variant. This is because from the literature regarding change in progress, there is often an interaction where women lead a change in progress, while older
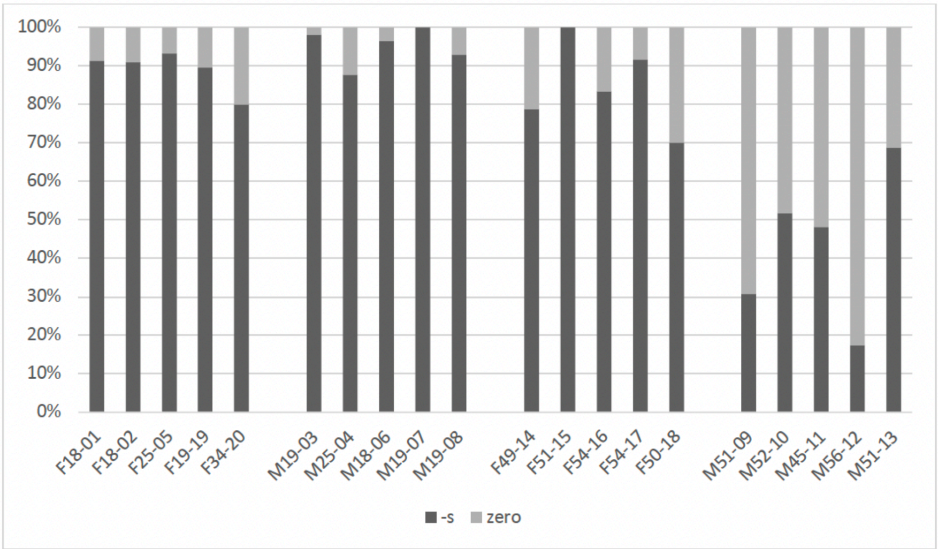
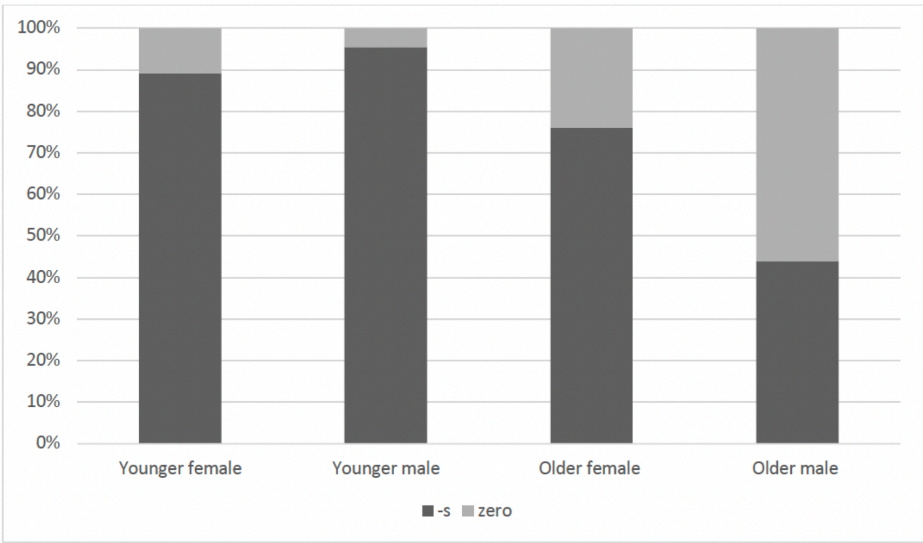Figure 7: Distribution of *-s* and zero marking by individual speakers

Figure 8: Age and gender distribution of *-s* and zero

men lag behind (Labov 1963, Tagliamonte et al. 1997). This interpretation may be strengthened by the contrast between older studies which show zero as the main plural in NPE (Faraclas 1989, Mafeni 1971) and more recent studies with -*s* as the main plural in NPE (Tagliamonte et al. 1997, Ogunmodimu 2014, Deuber 2005). Recall that the apparent time analysis shows language change through a comparison of the frequency of use of a language feature among different generations of speakers. The difference points to language change. Therefore, this apparent time study suggests a change in progress in reference to plural marking in NPE from zero marking to -*s*. -*s* is more dominant in the grammar of the younger generation than that of the older generation, with very little use of the older variants (zero marking).

Women used -*s* more than men, who in turn used zero marking more. As has been shown in this study, -*s* is a plural marker that is available in the English language. English has a higher prestige than NPE because English is an official language in Nigeria and in Canada. The common everyday language in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where the participants reside, is English. It is understood that women produce linguistic forms that more closely approach the standard language than men (Trudgill 1972, Kristian 2018). Based on the results of my study, and since -*s* has higher prestige as it is affiliated with the English language, it could be why women, particularly in the older generation, use -*s* more than men.

Apart from speaker age and gender, it is important to discuss the factor dominant language, since it was found to be significant in the statistical analysis. As seen in Figure 3, Yoruba, NPE and Hausa-dominant language speakers used zero marking more than the English-dominant speakers. This may be because, in Yoruba and NPE, zero marking can be used as a plural marking strategy and as such, it may be a result of substratum influence, as suggested in previous research (Tagliamonte et al. 1997, Ogunmodimu 2014). Not much can be said concerning the impact of Hausa as a dominant language, since only one participant spoke Hausa as a dominant language, and the pattern observed in his speech could be a result of his individual idiolect. Since the Yoruba, NPE and Hausa dominant language speakers use zero marking more than the English speakers, dominant language could be an important factor in the choice of plural used in NPE.

All the participants of this study are fluent English speakers. It may very likely be that the more NPE speakers are exposed to the formal English language, the more the grammatical features of English like -*s* are borrowed into NPE (Ogunmodimu 2014). This is especially so because English is the lexifier language for NPE and most of its vocabulary is English. Transfers between both languages are therefore common. One reason why -*s* is more predominant among the younger speakers may be because in Nigeria today, most children first learn the English

language in school and are later exposed to NPE as adults by association. This was expressed by most of the younger speakers in the discussion of language use in the interviews. As such, it could be common for them to use some rules of the grammar of English in NPE, like in plural marking. On the other hand, the older speakers were first exposed to their native language and NPE and were introduced to English as a class subject/course when they enrolled in school. This could explain why the older speakers used more zero marking than -*s*. It is important to note that eight out of the ten younger speakers were concluding their first year in the university and had lived in Canada for about a year (as shown in appendix 2), making their length of time and exposure to English in Canada shorter than the older speakers who had lived longer in Canada. This further strengthens the result of this apparent time study where the older speakers' speech, particularly the male speakers, may be reflecting the state of the language at a much earlier time during their acquisition of the language.

5.2 Linguistic factors

Contrary to Tagliamonte et al. (1997), which found determiner and animacy to be significant in the choice of plural marker used, I did not find any linguistic factor that predicts the use of a particular plural variant in a statistically significant way. As seen in Tagliamonte et al. (1997), animate NPs appear to be somewhat more likely to take -*s*, but animacy was not significant in the present study. Also, the received wisdom about plural marking in creoles is that overt marking should be favored in contexts where plurality has not been otherwise disambiguated in the NP headed by the noun in question (Tagliamonte et al. 1997: 114). Nouns with demonstrative determiners and non-numeric determiners or quantifiers which are not supposed to favor overt marking (in this case -*s*) are at least seen as slightly favoring zero marking more than the others in my data (see Figure 6 above). The lack of statistical significance may be due to limited amount of data. It is possible that with more data, a different result may be obtained.

5.3 The plural marker *dem*

This study arose from the question of the disappearance of *dem* as a plural marker in NPE. Since NPE is spoken in different geographical areas of Nigeria and has been nativized in some areas like the Niger Delta part of the country (Faraclas 2021), it could be the case that the variety of Pidgin spoken and the education of the speaker, play major roles in the use of plural marking in the language. According to Ogunmodimu (2014), *dem* is still commonly used as a plural marker in the

variety of NPE spoken in regions where NPE is nativized, like in the Niger Delta and the southeastern part of the country. Members of this community, seem to rate speakers of NPE highly with regard to the level of education attained, modernity and general sophistication (Ihemere 2006: 205). In a society like this where NPE is highly regarded, it is possible for features of the grammar such as *dem* to still be preserved over time. Faraclas (1989) was based on transcribed interviews of Nigerians living in Port Harcourt between 1985 and 1986 and he found *dem* to be the main plural used in NPE. The *dem* plural may still be a strategy used often by people in this area who are educated and are native speakers, and may be more frequent among uneducated speakers who may not have a command of the formal English language. This is supported in the Goldvarb result for *dem* in Ogunmodimu (2014: 13) that shows that the speaker's education level is a significant factor, with lower levels of education favoring *dem.*

6 Conclusion

This quantitative study investigates the use of plural markers in NPE. The fact that older literature (Faraclas 1989, Mafeni 1971, Agheyisi 1971) recognized *dem* and zero marking as the dominant plural markers, while more recent studies (Tagliamonte et al. 1997, Deuber 2005, Ogunmodimu 2014) find *-s* to be the dominant plural marker with a rare occurrence of *dem* in the data, indicates that there is a change going on in the language. This apparent time study has shown that the younger generation of speakers and the female speakers are the leaders of this change, and the older male speakers are slower to adopt this change, which conforms with results from previous sociolinguistic studies (Labov 2001, Tagliamonte 2012). This study is therefore a good indication of patterning for change in progress in the plural marking in NPE, at least for middle-class educated individuals. The change could also be a result of familiarity with English or due to the prestige of English which is the official language in both Nigeria and in Canada, which are the countries where the participants used to reside and currently reside respectively. Further studies could rigorously investigate education and geographical area (specifically Port Harcourt, Nigeria) as factors that could affect the use of plural markers in NPE.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this chapter follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the following additions.

DEM	demonstrative determiner	NO	no determiner
		NPE	Nigerian Pidgin English
GENR	generic	NP	noun phrase
NON-NUM/QUANT	non-numeric determiner/quantifier	REDUP	reduplication

Acknowledgements

Appendix A Sociolinguistics interview questions (NPE and English)

A.1 Nigerian Pidgin English

- Abeg tel mi somtin abaut ur bakgroun?

    1. Hu bi ur papa an mama, granpapa an granmama?

    2. Wia dem (bin) from?

    3. Wia dem de naw an wetin dem de du?

- Abeg tel mi abaut haw yu take gro.

    1. Wia yu bin de, gro op?

    2. Haw e bin de wen yu de di ples? Yu get memories wey sti de fresh fo yur main yu fo laik sher?

    3. Wia u bin de go skul? tel mi abaut di skul, di students, di tichas.

    4. Haw yu bin de tek go di skul? Haw di skul bin de? Which kain subject dem bin de tich dia?

    5. Haw meni klas wey yu finish dia, or yu bin cheng skul?

    6. Tel mi abaut di frend dem wey yu bin get dat taim? How dem bin de?

    7. Wetin yu bin de like du fo fun wit yur frend dem?, laik d kain ple una bin de laik?

8. Wich religion una de praktis? Wich choch or mosk una de go, if eni de?

- Wich language yu bin de spik wen yu de grow op?

    1. Wich language dem wey pipu araund yu bin de spik?

    2. Wich language dem yu de spik naw?,

- (For people who indicate they speak more than one language)

    1. If yu de spik pas wan language, wich wan yu sabi speak pas?

    2. Yu de use difrent language fo diferent tins?

    3. You de mix di language wen you de tok somtaims?

    4. Giv ezampul of haw yu de tek mix d language dem?

    5. Yu de eva mix am wit persn wey sabi spik ol of dem?

- Mek we tok abaut yur experience fo Winnipeg

    1. Haw e tek difrent from haus (Nigeria)

    2. Tel mi abaut yur fest winta espiriens

    3. Haw yu si skul hia an skul fo haus? Wich wan yu laik pas? Wai? (for students)

    4. Wetin yu mis pas fo Nigeria

    5. Wetin yu fo laik go bak haus go du?

    6. Wat of yur frends fo haus, yu de mis dem?

    7. Yur papa, mama an yur family membas dem, wetin yu mis abaut dem?

- You feel se awa traditions dem de impotant?

- Wetin mek yu tink laik dat?

    1. Yu fit tel me abaut di wans yu sabi?

- (for people with children)

    1. Wia yur chudren (grandchudren) de/bin go skul?

    2. Yu fit tel me tins abaut di skuls?

    3. Wetin dem tich dem fo di skul?

    4. Yu fil se dem de teach dem wel?

5. Wich language dem de spik or len for di skul?

- (if the children are still very young)

    1. wetin yu hope se dem go bicom?

    2. Wetin bi d difrens bitwin di laif yu bin get nd di wans wey yur chudren get naw?

    3. Wich kain values and sense wey yu de tich yur chudren?

    4. E get eni oda tin yu fo laik gist me?

A.2 English

- Please tell us something about your background.

    1. Who are your parents and grandparents?

    2. Where did they come from?

    3. What brought them to Winnipeg?

- Please tell us something about how you grew up.

    1. Where did you grow up?

    2. What was it like there? Do you have any memories?

    3. Where did you go to school? Tell us something about the school, the students, the teachers.

    4. How did you get to school? What did the schoolday look like? What subjects were you taught?

    5. Which grades did you complete?

    6. Who were your friends? What were they like?

    7. What kinds of things did you do for entertainment, such as hobbies or sports?

    8. What church or religious group did you and your family attend, if any?

- Which languages did you grow up with?

    1. Which languages did the people around you speak?

    2. Which languages do you speak now?

- (For people who indicate they speak more than one language)

1. If you speak more than one language, which one do you feel you speak best?

2. Do you use different languages in different circumstances or with different people?

3. Do you ever mix up your languages?

4. Do you ever accidentally use a word from the wrong language?

5. Do you ever use both languages in a conversation with someone who is fluent in both?

- Let us talk about your experience in Winnipeg.

  1. How does it differ from home (Nigeria)?

  2. Tell me about your first winter experience

  3. How do find schooling here compared to schooling in Nigeria? (for students)

  4. What do you miss most about/in Nigeria?

  5. What would you love to go back to Nigeria to do if you have the opportunity?

  6. Tell me about your friends back home. Do you miss them?

  7. What about people in your family (if they are still in Nigeria) do you miss them? If yes, what do you miss most about being with them?

- Do you feel that tradition is important? Why or why not?

  1. Can you tell me about the ones you know?

- (for people with children)

  1. Where do/did your children go to school?

  2. Can you tell us something about the school(s)?

  3. What do/did they teach them?

  4. Do they get the programming they need?

  5. Which languages are/were they learning?

- (if the children are still not adults) What do you hope for your children's future?

1. What is different between your children's lives and your life as a child?

2. What values and knowledge do you teach your children?

3. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

Appendix B Information about the individual participants

Table 5: More information about individual participants. "age_M": Age at migration.

Speaker	State of origin	Born and raised	age	age_M	gender	languages spoken	
						other	dominant
01f2001	Imo	Port Har-court	18	17	F	Igbo	English
02f2001	Osun	Lagos	18	17	F	Yoruba	English
19f2000	Edo	Binin	19	18	F	Bini	NPE
05f1994	Oyo	Oyo	25	21	F	Yoruba	Yoruba
20f1985	Abia	Edo	34	32	F	Igbo	NPE
06m2001	Edo	Warri	18	17	M	Urhobo	NPE
03m2000	Anambra	Lagos	19	18	M	Igbo, Yoruba	English
07m2000	Gombe	Gombe	19	18	M	Hausa	Hausa
08m2000	Edo	Binin	19	18	M	Bini	NPE
04m1999	Ogun	Ogun	20	19	M	Yoruba	Yoruba
14f1971	Lagos	Lagos	48	40	F	Yoruba	Yoruba
18f1969	Lagos	Lagos	50	36	F	Yoruba	Yoruba
15f1968	Ondo	Ogun	51	41	F	Yoruba	Yoruba
16f1965	Edo	Benin	54	50	F	Yoruba	NPE
17f1965	Ogun	Lagos	54	48	F	Yoruba, Bini	English
11m1974	Lagos	Lagos	45	32	M	Yoruba	Yoruba
09m1968	Ogun	Abeokuta	51	39	M	Yoruba	Yoruba
13m1968	Osun	Lagos	51	45	M	Yoruba	Yoruba
10m1967	Ogun	Abeokuta	52	40	M	Yoruba	Yoruba
12m1963	Ekiti	Lagos	56	49	M	Yoruba	Yoruba

References

Affia, Precious. 2022. Nigerian Pidgin English: The identity of a Nigerian away from home. Presentation at the 2nd Conference for Graduate Students in Language, Communication, and Culture, University of Alberta.

Agbo, Ogechi Florence & Ingo Plag. 2020. The relationship of Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin in Nigeria: Evidence from copula constructions in ICE-Nigeria. *Journal of Language Contact* 13(2). 351–388.

Agheyisi, Rebecca N. 1971. *West African Pidgin English: Simplification and simplicity*. Stanford University. (Doctoral dissertation).

Akande, Akinmade T. & Lasisi Oladipo Salami. 2010. Use and attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin English among Nigerian university students. In Robert McColl Millar (ed.), *Marginal dialects: Scotland, Ireland and Beyond*, 70–89. Aberdeen: Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland & Ireland.

Barbag-Stoll, Anna. 1983. *Social and linguistic history of Nigerian Pidgin*. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag.

BBC. 2016. Pidgin—West African Lingua Franca. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38000387 (16 November, 2016).

Deuber, Dagmar. 2005. *Nigerian Pidgin in Lagos: Language contact, variation and change in an African urban setting*. Colombo: Battlebridge Publications.

Deuber, Dagmar. 2006. Aspects of variation in educated Nigerian Pidgin. In Ana Deumert & Stephanie Durrleman (eds.), *Structure and variation in language contact* (Creole Language Library 29), 243–261. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Elugbe, Ben Ohiọmamhẹ & Augusta Phil Omamor. 1991. *Nigerian Pidgins: Background and prospect*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC.

Faraclas, Nicholas G. 1989. *A Grammar of Nigerian Pidgin*. Berkeley: University of California.

Faraclas, Nicholas G. 2021. Naija: A language of the future. In Akande T. Akinmade & Oladipo Salami (eds.), *Current trends in Nigerian Pidgin English: A sociolinguistic perspective*, 9–38. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter.

Igboanusi, Herbert. 2008. Empowering Nigerian Pidgin: A challenge for status planning? *World Englishes* 27. 68–82.

Ihemere, Kelechukwu Uchechukwu. 2006. An integrated approach to the study of language attitudes and change in Nigeria: The case of the Ikwerre of Port Harcourt City. In Olaoba F. Arasanyin & Michael A. Pemberton (eds.), *Proceedings of the 36th Annual conference on African linguistics*, 194–207. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Kristian, Sarah. 2018. Social aspiration and traditional speech features among rural Newfoundland youth. In Elizabeth Kelley Seale & Christine Mallinson (eds.), *Rural voices: Language, identity, and social change across place*, 143–164. Lanham: Lexington.

Labov, William. 1963. The social motivation of a sound change. *Word* 19(3). 273–309.

Labov, William. 1966. *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Labov, William. 2001. *Principles of linguistic change: Social factors*, vol. 2. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mafeni, Bernard. 1971. Nigerian Pidgin. In John Spencer (ed.), *The English language in West Africa*, 95–112. London: Longman.

Nagy, Naomi & Miriam Meyerhoff. 2015. Extending ELAN into variationist sociolinguistics. *Linguistics Vanguard* 1(1). 271–281.

Ogunmodimu, Morakinyo. 2014. Plural marking strategies in Nigerian Pidgin English (Naija). *Fleur de Ling: Tulane University Working Papers* 1(1). 143–160.

Ogunmodimu, Morakinyo. 2015. Language policy in Nigeria: Problems, prospects and perspectives. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5(9). 154–160.

Tagliamonte, Sali. 2012. *Variationist sociolinguistics: Change, observation, interpretation*. Malden/Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Tagliamonte, Sali, Shana Poplack & Ejike Eze. 1997. Plural marking patterns in Nigerian Pidgin English. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 12(1). 103–129.

Trudgill, Peter. 1972. Sex, covert prestige, and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich. *Language in Society* 1. 175–195.