

The Influence of Pidgin Usage on Standard English Proficiency among University Undergraduates

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Abstract: The increasing prevalence of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) among university undergraduates has elicited ongoing concern regarding its potential impact on proficiency in Standard English (SE), the officially sanctioned medium of academic instruction in Nigeria. This study examines the degree to which Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) influences the utilisation of Standard English (SE) among undergraduates at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti (BOUESTI). Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 175 undergraduates across four colleges via a structured questionnaire. Researchers used both descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies and percentages, Pearson's correlation, and chi-square tests. The results show that students use pidgin frequently and that there is a statistically significant negative association between frequent NPE use and confidence and accuracy in SE use. The most common examples were grammatical interference, lexical transfer, and syntactic simplification. Even so, students demonstrated a good understanding of sociolinguistics, recognising that SE is appropriate for academic settings and NPE is better for casual conversation. The study finds that Nigerian Pidgin English is important for social and cultural interactions on campus, but its unchecked dominance makes it harder for students to learn academic English. The paper advocates for organised language enhancement programs, contrastive instruction, and comprehensive reinforcement of Standard English conventions within formal academic settings.

Keywords: Nigerian Pidgin English; Standard English; Language Interference; Language Enhancement Programs; Contrastive Instruction; Comprehensive Reinforcement; Grammatical Interference; Lexical Transfer; Syntactic Simplification.

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1. Introduction

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Nigeria's multilingual ecology creates a complex linguistic environment where English is the official language of education, government, and general communication [4]. Alongside Nigerian Pidgin English, there are more than 500 indigenous languages. In this context, English holds institutional authority and academic prestige, while Nigerian Pidgin English has developed as a widely accessible lingua franca that facilitates interethnic and informal communication. Pidgin English has become especially popular among young people and college students [39]. It is a way for them to show who they are, connect with others, and express themselves easily. The prevalence of Nigerian Pidgin English on university campuses has engendered pedagogical and linguistic apprehensions, particularly in teacher-training institutions where students are expected to attain a high degree of proficiency in Standard English. Researchers contend that continuous exposure to and regular utilisation of non-standard varieties may induce linguistic interference, resulting in grammatical, lexical, and syntactic deviations in formal language usage [6]. In scholarly settings, such deviations may compromise clarity, coherence, and communicative efficacy.

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI), as a specialised institution for training future educators and professionals, provides an appropriate environment for examining this phenomenon. It is important to understand how Nigerian Pidgin English affects students' use of Standard English [10]. This will not only help them communicate better in school but also ensure that graduates can be effective language models in their future jobs. This study examines the prevalence of Pidgin English usage among BOUESTI undergraduates and analyses its impact on their competence and confidence in Standard English [12]. The goals of this study are to find out how Nigerian Pidgin English gets in the way of using Standard English correctly in school; to look at the common grammatical, lexical, and structural features in students' English that show the influence of Pidgin English; to look into how students feel about and think about using both Pidgin and Standard English in different communication settings at the university; to find out how using Pidgin English regularly might affect students' confidence and competence in formal English, especially in academic discourse; and to suggest practical ways to help students improve their Standard English skills and reduce the negative academic effects of using Pidgin English too often [40]. The subsequent enquiries directed the research:

- How does the use of Nigerian Pidgin English affect the way BOUESTI undergraduates use Standard English?
- What kinds of grammatical, lexical, and syntactic mistakes do students make when they speak Pidgin English?
- What do students think about using Pidgin English and Standard English in both formal and informal settings?
- What strategies can be implemented to enhance students' proficiency in Standard English and reduce pidgin interference?

The study also tested the hypothesis that there is no significant impact of Standard English on undergraduate students who speak Pidgin English and those who do not in BOUESTI at the 0.05 level of significance [13].

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The growing use of Nigerian Pidgin English among undergraduates at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI) is a major academic issue. Pidgin is a way for students from different language backgrounds to communicate [14]. Still, its widespread use may make it hard to distinguish between formal and informal language in a university setting where Standard English is the primary way of teaching and testing [41]. Many students don't know the difference between formal and informal language, which suggests that future teachers may not speak Standard English very well. This could lead to a cycle of poor language modelling in classrooms, harming future generations of students. Focused research is necessary to examine the implications of Pidgin English within BOUESTI's unique sociolinguistic and academic context, understand its impact on students' use of Standard English, and formulate strategies to mitigate potential adverse academic outcomes [35].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Nigerian Pidgin English in the Nigerian Linguistic Landscape

Nigeria has one of the most complex language situations in the world, with many people speaking more than one language and languages constantly meeting one another [23]. Nigeria has more than five hundred native languages, but English is the official language for government, education, and national unity. Nigerian Pidgin English has become a common language, especially in cities and among younger people, along with English and native languages. Its function in the Nigerian linguistic ecology is both practical and symbolic, acting as a bridge between different ethnic, social, and educational groups. Nigerian Pidgin English emerged from initial interactions between Europeans and indigenous groups during trade and colonial engagements. Over time, it evolved from a basic contact code into a stabilised variety characterised by relatively systematic grammatical and lexical features, according to Attah et al. [25]. Even though it uses many English words, its grammar, phonology, and practical use are influenced by Nigerian languages. The hybrid nature of this language makes it easy to use and popular, especially among people with varying levels of formal education. Egbokhare [27] says that Nigerian Pidgin English has a strange place in modern Nigeria

[42]. It is often seen as informal or non-standard, so it is not allowed in official settings like schools or in formal writing. Conversely, it is prevalent in popular culture, mass media, religious discourse, and quotidian interactions. Its growth through music, radio, social media, and entertainment has made it even more of a language of identity, solidarity, and resistance to language elitism. In higher education institutions, Nigerian Pidgin English serves as a primary medium for peer interaction [28]. University campuses mirror wider societal linguistic norms, rendering pidgin a favoured medium for informal student communication, as noted by Unachukwu et al. [29]. This fosters social cohesion and facilitates communication; however, it simultaneously amplifies interaction between Pidgin and Standard English, creating conditions conducive to linguistic overlap and transfer. To assess its educational and academic ramifications, it is imperative to understand Nigerian Pidgin English within the national linguistic framework [26].

2.2. Standard English and Academic Communication

Standard English is the primary means by which knowledge is created, tested, and shared in academic communication worldwide, according to Kurniawan [32]. It is the official language of instruction in Nigeria from the upper primary level to tertiary education. Consequently, proficiency in Standard English is an essential prerequisite for academic achievement, scholarly writing, and professional engagement in both domestic and international arenas, as noted by Fadhil et al. [33]. Standard English, as a codified variety, is distinguished by relatively stable grammatical conventions, standardised orthography, and formal registers suitable for academic discourse [30]. These characteristics facilitate clarity, accuracy, and uniformity in communication, especially in academic writing and evaluation. Academic institutions bolster these norms via curricula, examinations, and publication standards, establishing Standard English as an indicator of intellectual proficiency and educational achievement [31].

In Nigerian universities, Standard English is used for research writing, lectures, tests, and homework. Students are evaluated not only on their content knowledge but also on their proficiency in articulating ideas coherently and accurately in accordance with Standard English conventions. Therefore, deficiencies in grammatical precision, lexical selection, or syntactic organisation can adversely impact academic achievement, even when conceptual comprehension is sufficient. In academia, however, Standard English is the most common language; other languages are also used, such as Tulasi et al. [36]. Numerous students function in multilingual settings where non-standard varieties are predominantly utilised beyond the classroom, as noted by Mantra et al. [37]. This causes a conflict between what institutions expect and how people use language in their daily lives. To address this tension, you need a nuanced understanding of Standard English, not just as a set of rules, but as a useful academic tool that needs to be consciously developed in situations where people speak different languages [34].

2.3. Language Interference and Code Switching

Language interference occurs when one language or variety affects another, typically in prolonged contact in multilingual settings. In second-language contexts like Nigeria, interference often occurs when elements of a more dominant or commonly used language are integrated into another language. This phenomenon is especially pronounced among speakers who switch between Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard English in their daily interactions. Interference can happen at different levels of language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis. In academic English, such interference frequently manifests in the omission of papers, the use of simplified verb forms, unconventional word order, or the direct incorporation of Pidgin lexical items into formal discourse [38]. Although these characteristics may not impede communication in casual contexts, they pose challenges in academic environments that require accuracy and adherence to established conventions. Code-switching, which is the systematic switching between two or more languages or varieties during a conversation or discourse, is very similar to interference. According to Miriam and Ofodu [17], Nigerian college students often switch between Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin English to show who they are, show support, or be informal. It is important to note that code-switching is not random; social factors and the situation drive it. Code-switching has significant sociolinguistic roles, but its frequent use can obscure the distinctions between formal and informal registers, as noted by Mustafayeva et al. [16]. In educational settings, habitual code-switching may unintentionally exacerbate interference, particularly when students have limited exposure to prolonged use of Standard English, as noted by Prastiti et al. [15]. Consequently, comprehending the interplay between interference and code-switching is essential for elucidating the impact of informal language practices on academic English proficiency.

2.4. Empirical Studies on Pidgin English and Academic English

Amao [19] examined the function of Nigerian Pidgin among students at Osun State University. The study seeks to evaluate the frequency of Nigerian Pidgin use in social interactions and its relevance within the student community by analysing survey data from 100 students. This case study added to the larger academic conversation about how pidgin is used in Nigerian colleges and universities. Nwankwo [18] investigated the function of Pidgin English in fostering unity among students at five chosen Federal/State Universities in Southeast Nigeria. Using a survey research design, a sample of 399 respondents was selected from

a total of 127,700 students. The study utilised a questionnaire examining the significance of Pidgin English in communication and student cohesion, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.85. The results showed that Pidgin English plays a big role in bringing students together because many people speak it and it is valued for its cultural richness.

One suggestion is that education authorities hold workshops to demonstrate the importance of Pidgin English, especially in Mass Communication departments. Osondu et al. [20] investigated mother tongue interference among junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, concentrating on "transfer of rules" errors attributed to Pidgin English as their first language. Data were collected from 120 randomly selected students from four schools using a quantitative design. The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Results showed many "Transfer of Rules" mistakes in phonology, with 54.4% of the answers incorrect for the sounds /θ/ and /z/. Also, 60.4% of the time, students misused the morpheme "er". The study suggested consistent practice to alleviate adverse first language transfer. Nigerian universities teach in English, but Nigerian English and Pidgin English make it hard for students to learn. They make mistakes and use non-standard phrases that make it harder to learn Standard English well. Many students prefer using these local dialects instead of Standard English, which is why they can be used interchangeably in school. This preference makes it less likely that people will follow the rules for proper usage and spelling.

Ogayi [2] discussed these learning problems and offered ideas for mitigating the negative effects of non-standard varieties on English learning in Nigeria. The researcher recommended that lecturers advocate for the utilisation of Standard English in formal communication, while students are counselled to eschew Nigerian English in academic discourse and writing. Akutaekwe and Ochuba [24] investigated the influence of Nigerian Pidgin English on the English language interest of Nnamdi Azikiwe University students. A study with 264 English Education students used a validated questionnaire to collect data, with a reliability coefficient of 0.77. The results showed that Nigerian pidgin negatively affects students' ability to use Standard English correctly in formal settings. To lessen the negative effects of Nigerian pidgin on students' language skills, it is suggested that it be banned in schools and other formal settings. That means that using Nigerian Pidgin English a lot is linked to not being as good at Standard English, especially in formal speech and academic writing. Students who depend on pidgin show grammatical mistakes, a limited vocabulary, and simplified syntax.

This is because they have been exposed to non-standard structures and have learned them incorrectly. Other research indicates that Pidgin English is not the sole factor contributing to deficient academic English. They underscore factors such as insufficient foundational education, a deficient reading culture, and a scarcity of practical opportunities to use Standard English outside academic settings. Pidgin English is among the various interrelated factors influencing academic language proficiency. Maala and Mkandawire [21] investigated the determinants contributing to inadequate English reading comprehension among Grade 8 students in three secondary schools in Lusaka District, Zambia. Using descriptive research design and qualitative methodology, data were collected from 27 participants through observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The analysis showed that several factors contributed to the situation, including teachers not knowing how to teach reading comprehension, students being illiterate, having limited vocabulary, being unmotivated, and having insufficient teaching materials.

Suggestions for improvement included ensuring that teaching materials are relevant, using effective teaching methods, establishing school libraries, and setting aside time for daily reading activities. Recent empirical studies underscore undergraduates' sociolinguistic awareness, demonstrating their comprehension of Standard English for academic contexts and Pidgin English for informal settings. The primary challenge lies not merely in selecting language but in regulating language use across various domains. Ojoo [22] examined the sociolinguistic ramifications of Nigerian Pidgin among HND II students at the Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa. It uses Fishman's domain analysis theory and collects data through interviews and direct observation. The results showed that Nigerian pidgin is common on college campuses and has a significant impact on how students learn and teach Standard English. The study examines the users of Nigerian Pidgin, their interlocutors, contexts, and objectives. In the end, it says that Nigerian pidgin makes informal communication easier, but it hurts the process of learning Standard English. Consequently, studies recommend educational strategies that improve academic English while acknowledging the sociocultural importance of Nigerian Pidgin English.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was utilised to investigate the patterns of language use and the perceived impact of Nigerian Pidgin English on Standard English among undergraduates. The participants consisted of undergraduates from BOUESTI. A stratified sampling method was used to select 175 students from four colleges to ensure the sample was representative by discipline and level of study. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on how often students use Pidgin English, how often they experience linguistic interference, how confident they are in Standard English, and how they feel about both varieties. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) summarised the responses, while inferential statistics (chi-square and Pearson correlation) assessed the relationships between variables.

4. Presentation of Results

4.1. Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1 showed that 78 (44.6%) of the respondents were men and 97 (55.4%) were women. The almost equal distribution ensures that both genders are well represented, reducing bias in language-use responses. Most respondents (48.6%) are between 21 and 25, while 36.0% are between 16 and 20. Only 15.4% are 26 or older. This distribution is typical for college students of this age. The sample consists of 54.9% of students in higher-level classes (300 and 400), indicating that most of the respondents have been using university language for a long time. The four colleges contributed respondents evenly, with education contributing the most (29.7%). These spread guarantees diversity across disciplines, enabling the results to be applied across the whole university.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by demographic factors

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	78	44.6
Female	97	55.4
Total	175	100
Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
16–20 years	63	36
21–25 years	85	48.6
26 years and above	27	15.4
Total	175	100
Level	Frequency	Percentage
100L	38	21.7
200L	41	23.4
300L	49	28.0
400L	47	26.9
Total	175	100
College	Frequency	Percentage
Education	52	29.7
Science	44	25.1
Social Science and Management	39	22.3
Technology	40	22.9
Total	175	100

4.2. Research Question One

- How does using Nigerian Pidgin English affect how BOUESTI undergraduates use Standard English?
- How often do people use Pidgin English?

Table 2: Frequency of Pidgin English usage and its influence on Standard English among students

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Frequently use Pidgin English when communicating with friends on campus.	66 (37.7)	59 (33.7)	18 (10.3)	20 (11.4)	12 (6.9)
Using Pidgin English makes me less confident in using Standard English	49 (28.0)	62 (35.4)	29 (16.6)	23 (13.1)	12 (6.9)
I sometimes transfer Pidgin English structures directly into my spoken English (e.g., "He dey go" instead of "He is going").	58 (33.1%)	61(34.9%)	25(14.3%)	19(10.9%)	12(6.9%)

Exposure to Pidgin English on social media and among peers affects how I speak Standard English.					
Influence of Social Media and Peer Interaction on Language Use	55(31.4%)	64(36.6%)	27(15.4%)	20(11.4%)	9(5.1%)

Table 2 shows that 37.7% strongly agreed and 33.7% agreed that they often use Pidgin English to talk to friends on campus. This means that more than 70% of respondents reported using pidgin regularly when talking to their peers. Twenty-eight per cent (28.0%) strongly agreed, and thirty-five per cent (35.4%) agreed that using pidgin makes them less confident in their ability to use Standard English. This means that most people (63.4%) think that hearing pidgin all the time makes them less confident when they must speak or write formally. It was also shown that 33.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 34.9% agreed that they sometimes use Pidgin English structures in their Standard English. This indicates that two-thirds of respondents encounter structural interference, thereby validating a principal indicator of Pidgin influence. It was also shown that 31.4% strongly agreed and 36.6% agreed that their use of pidgin on social media and with friends affects their Standard English. This means that digital and social spaces are very important for keeping up informal language habits.

4.3. Research Question Two

- What kinds of grammatical, lexical, and syntactic mistakes do students make when they use Pidgin English?
- Common Grammatical, Lexical, and Syntactic Errors Associated with Pidgin Interference.

Table 3: Pidgin English usage frequency and its influence on Standard English among students

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I often omit articles (e.g., the, a, an) in English due to influence from Pidgin English.	52(29.7%)	68(38.9%)	25(14.3%)	20(11.4%)	10(5.7%)
I mix Pidgin English vocabulary (e.g., waka — "walk," chop — "eat") into my Standard English sentences.	48(27.4%)	72(41.1%)	30(17.1%)	17(9.7%)	8(4.6%)
I sometimes use Pidgin English verb forms in place of correct English grammar (e.g., He dey go — "He is going").	61(34.9%)	70(40.0%)	22(12.6%)	15(8.6%)	7(4.0%)
My English sentence structure is sometimes influenced by Pidgin English word order.	45(25.7%)	65(37.1%)	35(20%)	22(12.6%)	8(4.6%)
I receive corrections from lecturers or peers for Pidgin English-influenced errors in my writing.	50(28.6%)	63(36.0%)	28(16.0%)	24(13.7%)	10(5.7%)

Table 3 shows that 68.6% of respondents (29.7% + 38.9%) said they often omit papers (a, an, the) in Standard English due to Pidgin influence. Additionally, it was noted that 68.5% of respondents actively incorporate Pidgin lexicon into their Standard English. Using words like "waka" (walk) or "chop" (eat) in this way shows how pidgin is a source of expressive vocabulary in casual conversation that can also be used in more formal settings. A staggering 74.9% of students reported using Pidgin verb forms in their Standard English. The example "He dey go" for "He is going" shows a basic grammatical transfer, where the Pidgin continuous tense marker "dey" takes the place of the Standard English "is." Also, 62.8% of respondents said that pidgin affects how they put together English sentences. This syntactic interference can make sentences that are clear but grammatically awkward in Standard English. A total of 64.6% of students said they had been corrected for mistakes traced back to Pidgin English. This shows that the interference is not only something the person doing it thinks is happening, but also something that can be seen and is important enough to fix in school.

4.4. Research Question Three

- What do students think about using Pidgin English and Standard English in school and in everyday life?
- How do students feel about Pidgin and Standard English?

Table 4: Students' attitudes toward Pidgin English and Standard English usage

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel Pidgin English is more convenient for informal discussions among students.	70(40%)	65(37.1%)	20(11.4%)	12(6.9%)	8(4.6%)
I believe Standard English is more appropriate for academic communication.	75(42.9%)	68(38.9%)	15(8.6%)	12(6.9%)	5(2.9%)
Pidgin English helps me express myself better than Standard English when I am relaxed.	65(37.1%)	62(35.4%)	25(14.3%)	16(9.2%)	7(4.0%)
Lecturers discourage the use of Pidgin English in class.	58(33.1%)	71(40.6%)	22(12.6%)	16(9.1%)	8(4.6%)
Students who speak Pidgin English during academic discussions are taken less seriously.	50(28.6%)	55(31.4%)	35(20%)	25(14.3%)	10(5.7%)

A large majority, 77.1%, think that Pidgin English is easier to use for casual conversations. This shows that it is a lingua franca that helps people communicate and feel connected across ethnic and social lines on campus. Table 4 also showed that 81.8% of students think Standard English is good for academic communication. This shows that Nigerian universities are aware of the diglossic context, where Standard English is valued for formal and educational purposes. A total of 72.5% of respondents think that Pidgin English makes it easier to express yourself when you're relaxed. This shows that students feel emotionally and culturally connected to it as a more authentic way to express complex emotions and cultural ideas. It was reported that 73.7% of students perceive their lecturers as discouraging the use of pidgin in class, underscoring the institutional emphasis on Standard English for formal academic communication. A total of 60% of respondents thought that using pidgin in academic settings made them look less serious. This shows that there is a linguistic stigma associated with pidgin and a lack of education or seriousness in formal settings.

4.5. Research Question Four

- What can be done to help students get better at Standard English and stop pidgin from getting in the way?
- Ways to Help Students Get Better at What They Do?

Table 5: Strategies to improve Standard English proficiency among students

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Regular English Language workshops or seminars should be organised for students.	92(52.6%)	63(36%)	12(6.9%)	5(2.9%)	3(1.7%)
Lecturers should correct students' English language errors in class.	85(48.6%)	70(40%)	10(5.7%)	7(4%)	3(1.7%)
Students should be encouraged to use Standard English in both academic and social settings.	70(40%)	68(38.9%)	20(11.4%)	12(6.9%)	5(2.9%)
Exposure to media content in Standard English can improve students' proficiency in English.	75(42.9%)	72(41.1%)	15(8.6%)	10(5.7%)	3(1.7%)
Peer study groups using Standard English can help reduce Pidgin English interference.	68(38.9%)	65(37.1%)	25(14.3%)	12(6.9%)	5(2.9%)

An overwhelming 88.6% of respondents favour regular English language workshops or seminars Table 5 indicating that students understand they need structured support to improve their Standard English skills outside the regular curriculum. A total of 88.6% of students think that teachers should fix language mistakes during class. This shows that they are aware of language problems and are open to getting immediate feedback in school settings. At the same time, 78.9% of respondents support promoting Standard English outside of school, saying that regular practice in different social situations makes you better at it. 84% of students think that watching media in Standard English makes them better at it, which shows that they

understand how immersive learning works. Also, 76% agree that using Standard English in peer study groups can help with Pidgin interference. This shows how peer groups can help create a supportive space for practising formal English.

4.6. Hypothesis Testing

Researchers used a Pearson Correlation Coefficient test to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between how often students use pidgin and how well they speak Standard English.

Table 6: Correlation analysis of pidgin usage and Standard English proficiency

Variable 1	Variable 2	Pearson's r	p-value	Strength
Pidgin Usage Frequency	Confidence in SE	-0.687	<0.001	Strong Negative
Pidgin Usage Frequency	Grammatical Interference	0.734	<0.001	Strong Positive
Pidgin Usage Frequency	Lexical Interference	0.712	<0.001	Strong Positive

Correlation between Pidgin Utilisation and Standard English Proficiency Metrics

Table 6 shows that correlation analysis reveals substantial associations between Pidgin usage and Standard English proficiency among BOUESTI undergraduates. There is a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.687$, $p < 0.001$) between Pidgin use and confidence in Standard English, which means that using pidgin more often is linked to being less confident. Moreover, Pidgin usage exhibits a positive correlation with grammatical errors ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.001$) and lexical transfer ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that heightened Pidgin usage is associated with greater interference in Standard English. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that Pidgin English influences Standard English proficiency: frequent Pidgin speakers demonstrate diminished confidence and heightened grammatical and lexical challenges.

4.7. Discussion of Findings

This study underscores the pivotal function of Nigerian Pidgin as a lingua franca among students, facilitating informal communication and characterised as a “bonding language” in tertiary institutions. A significant majority (63.4%) of respondents reported that frequent use of pidgin diminishes their confidence in Standard English, corroborating the findings of Sambo and Ogo [1] and Aboh and Ladegaard [8], which suggest that excessive use of non-standard varieties reduces self-assurance in formal contexts. Structural interference was also observed, with two-thirds of respondents reporting the use of Pidgin structures in Standard English. This supports the interference theories proposed by Weinreich and backed up by Kalli and Musa [3]. Furthermore, the impact of social media and peer interactions on pidgin was observed, with 68% concurring that these elements influence their Standard English usage. This aligns with the findings of Marco et al. [9] and Oluwatoyosi [11], which indicate that platforms such as WhatsApp and TikTok facilitate the normalisation of Pidgin expressions in formal communication. This study found that 68.6% of respondents frequently omit papers due to Pidgin influence, corroborating Foyewa [7] findings, which identify this omission as a prevalent error among Nigerian ESL learners. Furthermore, 68.5% incorporate Pidgin lexicon into their English, demonstrating its function as a source of informal expressive vocabulary, which aligns with Moyi and Egu [5]. Additionally, 74.9% employ Pidgin verb forms in their English, as illustrated by the phrase “He dey go,” signifying a notable grammatical transfer. Also, 62.8% said that pidgin changes the way they write sentences, which could make their grammar sound strange. Notably, 64.6% reported being corrected for Pidgin-related errors, indicating the extent to which Pidgin interference affects academic communication and what this means for teaching.

77.1% of respondents regard Pidgin English as suitable for informal communication, underscoring its role as a unifying lingua franca on campus. This aligns with the research by Marco et al. [9], which found that pidgin is a “social leveller” for Nigerian youth. Conversely, 81.8% assert that Standard English is appropriate for academic discourse, underscoring the diglossic characteristics of Nigerian universities. Sambo and Ogo [1] say that students know that Standard English is important in formal settings. Also, 72.5% think pidgin lets them express themselves better, which shows how important it is to their culture and how deeply emotionally meaningful it is, as Aboh and Ladegaard [8] say. However, 73.7% say their teachers don't want them to use pidgin in class, indicating a preference for Standard English, which aims to reduce linguistic interference. Notably, 60% believe that using pidgin academically results in being taken less seriously, reflecting a linguistic stigma linked to “accentism”. A resounding 88.6% of participants support English language workshops, acknowledging the necessity for organised assistance to enhance Standard English proficiency. Likewise, 88.6% think that teachers should correct language mistakes in class. This shows that they would rather receive feedback right away to address language problems caused by Pidgin interference. Additionally, 78.9% endorse the use of Standard English in social contexts, emphasising the necessity of regular practice, while 84% associate media consumption in Standard English with enhanced proficiency. Lastly, 76% agree that using Standard English in peer study groups can help with Pidgin interference. This shows how important peer dynamics are in language learning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established that there is a considerable impact of Nigerian Pidgin English on the use of Standard English by BOUESTI undergraduates, especially in confidence in communicating and grammatical correctness. The findings show that students who use Nigerian pidgin English often may struggle to transition to Standard English in formal academic settings. The difficulties are particularly apparent in sentence structure, choice of language, enunciation, and adherence to grammatical norms. This could therefore impact students' confidence in using Standard English in classroom discussions, presentations, examinations, and other academic activities. Pidgin English is an important part of society, but its presence in schools means that institutions need to respond deliberately. Nigerian Pidgin English serves as an intercom language for people of diverse linguistic backgrounds, fostering social connection and cultural identification. However, given that it co-occurs frequently with Standard English in educational contexts, educational institutions should develop approaches to help students discern between informal and formal language use. In this way, purposeful answers might help students become more aware of the linguistic needs of academic and professional communication.

It is suggested that universities organise seminars to help students enhance their language abilities, use contrastive analysis in English classrooms and advocate the usage of Standard English in formal academic contexts. Workshops can give students hands-on experience in developing their speaking, writing, reading and listening skills in Standard English. The use of contrastive analysis in English classrooms can help learners recognise and appreciate the distinctions between Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard English, thereby minimising common language faults. Furthermore, promoting Standard English in official academic contexts such as lectures, seminars, coursework, and examinations can help institutionalise good language practice and enhance students' competence over time. These procedures can help strike a balance between the needs of professional and academic communication and ensure that everybody can understand. With these approaches, institutions can help students to develop effective communication skills while still acknowledging the social and cultural importance of Nigerian Pidgin English. This balanced approach can lead to better academic success, increased confidence in formal communication and better preparation for future professional contexts where Standard English is commonly required.

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