# Towards the Standardisation of Naijá: Vocabulary Development and Lexical Expansion processes<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

Like other pidgins and creoles, the development of *Naija languej* (NL) (aka Naija Languej) from a contact variety into a creole has been characterised by lexical expansion for expressing new concepts and technical terms. NL derives its vocabulary largely from English and Nigerian languages lexical sources. However, the processes involved in deriving lexical terms in NL, and their application, are yet to be standardised. This study examines the morphological processes utilised in expanding NL's lexicon within the larger context of basic techniques for lexical expansion in languages in general. The aim is to provide guidelines for the application of these processes for the creation of new lexical items in NL.

Keywords: Naija languej; vocabulary; expansion; standardisation; morphological process

#### Introduction

Naija Languej (aka Naija Languej) is the linguistic outcome of contact between the indigenous peoples and Europeans along Nigeria's coastal shores, and which has subsequently been shaped by the nation's colonial history and multilingual context. NL is essentially a spoken language with an estimated population of over 75 million speakers that cut across the geographical, multiethnic, and socioeconomic class terrain of Nigeria and the Nigerian diaspora community. With a growing population of first language speakers for whom the language variety has creolised, NL is reported to be 'not only the African language with the largest number of speakers, but also the most widely spoken pidgin/creole language in the world' (Elugbe and Omamor 1991, Ofulue 2004, Faraclas 2013). Its current scope is a reflection of its status that has changed over time from a contact language in the pre-colonial era to a language of identity, integration, and inter-ethnic communication in the post-colonial era. This development is evidenced by the increasing use of Naija Languei for information dissemination by government and corporate organisations, religious organisations. the entertainment and movie industry, and the media (cf. Elugbe and Omamor 1991, Oloruntoba 1992). However, its expansion into more formal domains of radio, television and online news broadcasts and programming, bible translation, literary writing, most of which have been facilitated by the traditional and new media (Ofulue 2012) within the context of co-existing with English, its exoglossic lexifier along with Nigeria's indigenous languages, have motivated continuous lexicalisation.

As with languages in general, and with pidgins and creoles in particular, NL's lexicon has been expanding to accommodate new concepts and terms brought about by its growing use and function in the various spheres including new media (and in particular, social media). According to Holm (1988), lexicons of pidgin/creole varieties are usually restricted in size and make up for this through processes such as multifunctionality (one word having many syntactic uses), polysemy (one word having many meanings), and circumlocution (lexical items consisting of phrases rather than single words). He also noted that their lexicons have been [and still are] influenced by European and African lexical sources, African lexical sources as well as by morphological and semantic changes. The processes by which these expansions and changes take place include lexical loaning/retention, coining, semantic shifts such as broadening/extension, narrowing, syntactic shifts, calquing, and reduplication. Mühlhäusler (1997:166ff) observes that while rudimentary pidgins rely on syntactic means to expand their lexicon (cf. e.g. gras belong fes 'beard' in early Tok Pisin), expanded pidgins develop through morphological means. Contrary to the notion that pidgins/creoles have restricted lexicons, Oloruntoba (1992) argues that, based on speakers' usage practices, Naija Languej's lexicon is quite dynamic, and is in a constant flux comprising the use of basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal varieties within a speech community (e.g. chop 'eat' in basilectal NL, eat in mesolectal and acrolectal varieties). According to Faraclas (1996), lexical processes in Naija Languej are mostly derivational processes and they include processes like multifunctionality of word order, prepositions, serialised verb constructions, and ideophones; reduplication, and compounding.

The present study builds on previous studies by examining techniques and guidelines for creating new words in NL. Such a guide is necessary to standardise the application of techniques and methods of word formation, thereby encouraging a systematic approach instead of current practices of ad hoc application of

processes which for example, result in extensive borrowing from English where equivalents in NL exist. To achieve this objective, the present study examines word formation within the context of lexicalisation and institutionalisation processes. It also draws on previous research by NERDC (1988) that outlines principles and techniques for the creation of metalinguistic terms in African languages.

#### Theoretical Framework

Pidgins and creoles have long been perceived as languages that have little or no morphology compared to their source languages (e.g. Hall 1953 cited in Lefebvre 2003). However, scholars have argued that it is not the case that they do not have morphology at all (e.g. Plag 2000, Lefevbre 2003). Plag (2000:5) notes that morphology, especially of varieties borne out of contact situations is characterised by 'massive borrowing of morphologically complex forms from languages involved in the contact, sometimes accompanied by reanalysis'. Using examples from Sranan, he argues that contrary to McWhorter's hypothesis that the creole prototype is characterized by semantically transparent morphology, creolisation, by its nature as 'a contactinduced process is responsible for the quick and inevitable rise of non-transparent morphology in these languages due to wholesale borrowing of analysed and unanalysed complex forms' (Plag 2000: 8). From the perspective of derivational morphology in pidgins and creoles, Lefebvre (2003) provides evidence of the emergence of productive morphology in Haitian creole and propose methodologies for identifying affixes that make for productive morphology. She also highlights the problem of identifying such affixes that are potentially native (productive) to Haitian creole since creoles are known to derive most of their vocabulary from their superstrate language. According to her, a process for creating new words can only be deemed to be productive if it is 'available to speakers to form new words with sufficient frequency in a predictable manner'. Bakker (2002) for example notes that reduplication as a productive morphological process is 'very common' in pidgincreole varieties like NL. Thus, the issue is not whether pidgins and creoles have morphology or not, rather, the nature of their morphology and development.

The concepts of lexicalisation and institutionalisation are also relevant to this study in that they involve word formation processes at the synchronic level of analysis. Word formation processes are seen as instances of lexicialisation because involve the creation of new word forms in a language (Brinton and Traugott, 2005), a view that is supported by Trask's (1977) definition of lexicalisation as 'the process by which two or more words become a single unit that is associated with a form and meaning over time' (e.g. God be with you became 'Goodbye'). Lipka et al (2004) emphasise the sociolinguistic aspect of associating a lexical item to a form and meaning by means of frequent use. In this respect that Institutionalisation, 'the integration of a lexical item with a particular form and meaning into the existing stock of words as a generally acceptable and current lexeme' involves the general acceptance and establishment of new word forms by a community and as such, should precede institutionalisation precedes lexicalisation (Bauer 1983). These concepts are important for explaining word formation processes in NL in view of its ongoing lexical expansion and 'within the context of words that have not existed in a language for a very long time and are not yet fully established and accepted by the language community' (Lipka et al, 2004). It is Bauer's (1983) view that lexicalisation can be achieved at the various linguistic levels of description for example, lexicalisation can be morphologically or semantically motivated at the morphological level. Thus, from the perspective of standardisation, lexicalisation and institutionalisation can provide insight into the application of word formation processes in terms of what happens to new words after they have been formed, and their subsequent institutionalisation as part of the lexicon of a language.

Adopting a derivational morphology approach in this study, focus is on word formation as the aspect of morphological processes that deals with combinations of more than one base form and the operation of processes such as derivation and compounding that modify the base forms to create new words, and or change their grammatical category or meaning.

## Methodology

Data for the study were drawn mainly from a 16,000 word corpus of online sports commentary in NL. Other sources that were consulted include an online bible translation in NL, newspaper articles, and conversations. Word classes of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs were identified as NL vocabulary in the context of use. They were analysed in terms of original source of the words, type of word formation method, and the derivational process in operation.

## Data analysis and discussion

The analysis shows existing NL words (stems/roots), the derived phrases and expressions, the derivational processes as well as their use in context.<sup>2</sup> A two-level glossing is utilised for data, the first level showing the data glossed using *Naija Languej Akedemi* (NLA) orthography, and the second level is the English gloss. Guidelines proposed by the NERD (1988) for the creation of technical terms and found to be applicable for the creation of new terms in NL was adopted in this study. The guidelines are replicated below:

**Semantic Transparency:** Since the purpose/function of technical terms is usually for the purpose of teaching and therefore to convey new information, only terms that will not need additional explanations should be adopted. By extension, new terms in general, should be created for the purpose of conveying meaning. Therefore, new terms should as much as possible be always transparent in meaning. Choice of word formation process will then depend on which one best assures transparency of meaning. Semantic extension, for example, is a strategy that is quite productive in NL for this purpose.

**Duplication of terms:** If the language already has an existing word whose meaning adequately captures the meaning of a foreign word, creating a new word for that foreign term amounts to duplication of terms and redundancy.

**Length of terms:** Short terms are usually preferred to long terms because they are easier to pronounce and to remember. However, short terms should not be preferred at the expense of transparency of meaning. What the language accepts phonologically and morphologically should also be taken into consideration.

**Testing for acceptability:** Where a language has two ways of expressing a new concept, one of them will have to be dropped in fulfilment of the second principle. The criterion guiding which one of them should be dropped is which one is most transparent in meaning. However, if both are transparent in meaning, then the term will need to be tested among users of the language.

**Exhausting collocational range of terms:** New terms should be used in combination with other words as much as possible to allow the term to be illustrated as widely as possible and to facilitate derivation. Coinages are a good illustration of this principle.

In addition to these guidelines, NERDC (1988) also proposed a procedure for the creation of equivalents and foreign terms. Since the creation of new terms mostly involve finding functional equivalents, these guidelines have also been adopted in this study and are reproduced in (2) below:

a. Determine the exact meaning of the foreign term; b. identify the part of speech (e.g. noun); c. identify its sub-class within the part of speech (e.g. abstract noun); d. find the element or combination of elements in the language that match the attributes in a-c.

## Word formation in Naiia Languei

The productive derivational processes in NL are of three major types- coinage, semantic extension, and borrowing.

## Coinage

Coinage is one of the three basic techniques identified for increasing vocabulary of languages. It involves combining base forms to create new words or expressions. The goal of coinage is to increase the number of words or expressions in a language. There are two types of coinages, semantically motivated and semantically unmotivated coinage. Semantically motivated coinage involves combining meaning bearing elements together to capture the meaning of a word form in a foreign language. It includes coinage by affixation, by composition, by description, by restructuring, and by translation. In NL, coinages are semantically motivated in that they involve the combination of two meaning bearing elements to form a new single word or an expression of meaning. Three types of semantically motivated coinages are illustrated in (2) and (3).

## Frozen coinages

These are words created from the combination of at least two words, and which over time have come to be used as single units to convey a meaning that is different from their composite parts.

(2)
NL Gloss
Root: opstie 'upstairs'
Derivation: (opstie) 'storey'
Process: Borrowing + compounding: up + stai

op stie

Contextual example: ol di haus na opstie 'All the houses are storey buildings'

It should be noted that 'opstie' is a frozen coinage, and being so, both the root and the 'derivation' have maintained the same lexical form.

(3)

Root: komot (commot) 'leave'

Derivation: (komot) 'leave/get out of/remove/release'

Process: Borrowing + compounding: kom + ot

Come (v) + out (prep)

Contextual example: Adebayor no yan anything as him dey commot for the Presidential quarters

→ 'Adebayor did not say anything as he was leaving the Presidential quarters'

## Compounding

Two meaning bearing words are combined together to form a compound word and convey a non-literal meaning or idiomatised meaning, that is the addition or loss of semantic features.

(4)

Root: waka 'walk'

Derivation: wakapas 'walk by'; 'walk past'

'an (un)intentional gatecrasher'

Process: Compounding: waka + pas

walk PREP

Contextual example: The waka-pass who became the star The gatecrasher who became a star/celebrity'

(5)

Root: sidon 'sit down'

Derivation: sidon-luk 'wait and see'/indifference attitude

Process: Compounding: si(t) + don + luk

sit down look

Contextual example: Na sidon-luk di pipu jusde do nau 'It's an attitude of indifference that the people are now showing'

However, one observes that, in certain instances, a frozen coinage that has come into common usage emerges through a composite process as can be seen in the example below:

(6)

Root: troway 'waste, lost'
Derivation(s) troway salute 'greet'; 'salute'

born troway 'an abandoned/motherless baby'

Process: borrowing + clipping + compounding

(throw away) (tro' + 'way) (troway)

Contextual example: (a) ... dem troway am like water 'they threw it away like water'

- (b) de penarity wey Terry troway for Moscow in 2008 'the penalty which Terry lost in Moscow in 2008'
- (c) I wan troway salute to all de playas and coachi wey helep us win de Nations Cup
  - 'I want to salute all the players and coaches who helped us win the Nations Cup'

# Composition

It involves the combination of the individual meanings of two or more terms to bring about a composite meaning that is same as the desired term. This process does not appear to be as productive in NL as it is in many of the substrate languages. Speakers [and writers] tend to simply borrow the English equivalent if there is no existing word in NL. However, the following are examples of technical terms that have been translated using the process of composition:

(7)

NL Gloss Root: Manej 'manage'

Derivation: Manej manej 'makeshift; improvisation'

Process: Borrowing and reduplication

Contextual example: Dis sup na jost manej manej 'This soup is just an improvisation'

Dis na manej manej languej

This (be) manage manage language 'This is a makeshift language' (Elugbe & Omamor, 1991)

As with other languages, technical terms need to be translated into NL. In line with the guidelines earlier stated, the first step should be to first decide if the borrowed word conveys the intended meaning in NL. But where the concept may require some explanation, the process of composition can be considered. For example, a bible translation in NL transliterates technical concepts (e.g. *apostols* 'apostle', *disaipols* 'disciples', *resureshon* 'resurrection'). However, if the principle of semantic transparency were to be applied, it would require more than borrowing or literal lexical equivalents to convey meaning. As illustrated in (7) the process of composition is more appropriate especially where there are no existing equivalents in use, and borrowing would yield zero semantic meaning.

#### **Semantic extension**

Semantic extension involves extending individual meanings of existing words. The goal of semantic extension is to increase the number of meanings that a single lexical item in the language can convey. In NL, existing words are extended beyond their base meaning as the examples in (8) and (9) show:

(8) NL Gloss Root: wota 'water'

Derivation: wota (semantic ext.) 'body of water/tears'

Process: Borrowing/semantic extension

Idiomatic: wota pass gari 'an overwhelming situation'

Contextual example: Water kon pass garri for de host nation 'It was a bad situation for the host nation'

(9)

Root: jam 'bump into/hit'
Derivation: jam (semantic ext.) 'meet'

Process: Borrowing/semantic extension

Contextual example: Ethiopia go jam Egypt for the first match' Ethiopia will meet Egypt in the first match'

Semantic extension in NL includes processes of calquing and reduplication.

#### Calquing

This process involves the translation of existing words or idioms word for word. The meaning of two individual words is extended to derive a new meaning. Holm (1988) notes that calquing provides evidence for the substantial semantic influence of substrate languages on Pidgins and Creoles. Here are some examples in Naija Languej:

Process: Calquing + compounding

Contextual example: Hin belle sweet am well well for de trophy wey Ivory Coast playas carry

'He is very happy about the trophy which Ivory Coast players lifted'

(11)

Root: trot 'throat'

Derivation: longatrot 'gluttony; greed(y)'

Process Calquing + compounding: longer + throat longa trot

Contextual example: Na longatrot de do di man 'It's greed that is affecting the man'/'The man has a problem of greed'

## Reduplication

Reduplication as a morphological process which is characteristic of substrate languages in NL's context, is a very productive process in NL. Reduplication in NL involves the repetition of an existing word which results in an extension in meaning. The process of reduplication in Naija Languej is quite productive in creation of new words formed from existing words in the lexicon and ideophones as illustrated in (12) and (13):

# JOLAN: Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria Volume 20, Number 1 (2017)

(12)NLGlossRoot:Waka'walk'Derivation:Wakawáká'Roam about'

Process: Borrowing and reduplication

Contextual example: Her wakawaka dey vex me 'Her roaming (about) annoys me'

(13) NL Gloss
Root: San 'sand'
Derivation: Sansan (sand sand) 'sand'
Process: Reduplication: san + san (sand + sand)

Semantic extension: 'clog in the wheel'; 'ruin', 'ruination'

Contextual example:

de Elephants pour sand for Ghana garri again

'The Elephants (Ivorian Football Team) ruined the fortune of Ghana again'

But as e kon bee, na sand sand enta de host garri 'But as it turns out, it's misfortune for the host'

New words are also formed through frozen reduplication; that is, the reduplicated morpheme does not have meaning on its own. Ideophones are a very productive class of words in NL Pidgin, many of which belong to this category:

(14) NL Gloss

Root: magomágó 'dribbling/dishonest act'

Process: (frozen) Reduplication

Contextual example:

CAF no dey happi at all with de magomágó wey Jdidi take refiree di game 'Caf was not happy at all with the dishonest act with which Jdidi refereed the game'

(15) NL Gloss

Root: smesme 'physically/intellectually slow/dull manner'

Process: (frozen) Reduplication

Contextual example: si as hin de do smèsme 'look how s/he is acting slowly/dull'

## **Borrowing**

A third technique for increasing vocabulary in languages is borrowing. It involves borrowing terms from languages that are spoken in close proximity to the receiving language. The main sources of borrowing in Naija Languej are English, its superstrate source, and Nigerian languages, its substrate source. As with other languages, NL borrows nouns more readily than other parts of speech. Borrowed words are expected to follow the phonology and structure of NL. Examples of borrowed nouns and verbs are presented in (16) and (17):

(16) NL Gloss Source Root: wuruwuru 'corrupt act' Yoruba

Process: Borrowing

Contextual example: Ref(eree) wuruwuru forAfcon 'Ref(eree)' s corrupt act PREP AFCON'

(17) NL Gloss Source Root: wahala 'trouble' Hausa

Process: Borrowing

Contextual example: Guinea golkipa na hin cos de wahala for Gyan 't was the goalkeeper who caused the trouble for Gyan'

(18) NL Gloss Source Root: helep 'help' English

Process: Borrowing/assimilation into the phonological structure of NL

Contextual example: ... na *de* lass penarity wey hin save na hin helep dem carry *de* cup 'It was the last penalty that he saved which helped them to lift the cup'

NL also borrows adjectives and adverbs. Examples in (19) and (20) show verbs, adverbs and adjectives respectively. Note that borrowed adverbs and adjectives in NL are modified through reduplication:

# JOLAN: Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria Volume 20, Number 1 (2017)

(19) NL Gloss Source Root: nau-nau (now now) 'immediately' English

Process: Borrowing/reduplication now + now

Contextual example: *E be like say make African Cup of Nations start now now* 'It is as if the African Cup of Nations should start right now'

(20) NL Gloss Source Root: wel-wel 'very well' English

Process: Borrowing/reduplication well + well

Contextual example: Ivory Coast go salute their number 1 goalkeeper, Boubacar Barry well well

'Ivory Coast will salute their number 1 goalkeeper, Boubacar Barry very well'

It is important to note, however, that the meaning associated with the contextual usage of each of the NL root words and coinages may also vary or be better realised in its actual context, albeit the primary sense is always maintained or approximated. More examples of lexicalisation processes in NL are included in the appendix to this paper.

## Conclusion

The processes discussed above are the most productive in the creation of new terms in Naija Languej. This study focused on developing guidelines on how to select the most appropriate technique given what is known about the resources that are available in NL and the meaning of technical or foreign terms. Based on the findings, the following are proposed guidelines for creating new words in NL:

- Existing lexical items should always be the first source to avoid duplication of terms and unnecessary borrowing.
- Conveying intended meaning should be the goal.
- Where there is no existing word, the choice of technique to adopt should be determined by the kind
  of word or concept to be derived. For example, a technical concept, if derived through the process
  of borrowing directly from English or one of the substrate languages, may not convey intended
  meaning.
- There must be consistency in the application of any of the processes.
- Phonological, morphological and standard orthographic principles of writing in Naija Languej should be adhered to. For example, proper nouns and borrowed words should be written in line with the phonology of NL.

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This is an updated version of a paper that was first presented at the Conference on Naija Languej which held at the University of Ibadan, July 2009. The label, *Naijá Langwej* was adopted to project the language's creolized status at least in some parts of Nigeria; to reflect its functions that have surpassed the functions of a pidgin; and to do away with the term *pidgin*, which has helped to encourage derogatory connotations about the language. It also espouses the variety's distinct identity as a language in its own right as well as the Nigerian spirit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The multifunctional nature of Naija Languej words make for productivity in terms of their capacity to function in more than one grammatical class. However, since the focus is not on grammar it is not discussed here.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The grammatical classes to which lexical items belong are not crucial to the aim of this study, and so are not indicated.

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## Appendix

Appen	NL Word	Process	Gloss	Context
1.	Tok tok	Borrowing and reduplication	Talkative; talking	Ebi too talk talk → 'Ebi too/quite talkative' Ebi enjoy talk talk → 'Ebi enjoys talking'
2.	Nau nau (Now now)	Borrowing and reduplication	Right now; immediately	E be like say make African Cup of Nations start now now  → 'It is as if the African Cup of Nations should start right now'
3.	Wel-wel (Well well)	Borrowing and reduplication	Very well	Ivory Coast go salute dia numba 1 golkipa, Boubacar Barry well well  → 'Ivory Coast will salute their number 1 goalkeeper, Boubacar Barry very well'
4.	kwik kwik (Quick quick)	Borrowing and reduplication	Quickly	dem no go waka comot from Nations Cup quick quick
5.	Plenti Plenti	Borrowing and reduplication	Very plenty; a lot of	Fungus don kill plenti plenti grass wey dey de field  → 'Fungus has killed a lot of grass that's on the field'
6.	Jam	Semantic extension	Meet; hit	Ethiopia go jam Egypt for the first match  → 'Ethiopia will meet Egypt in the first match'
7.	wakapass	Borrowing and compounding	Gatecrash	the waka-pass who became the star
8.	Troway	Borrowing, clipping and compounding	Greet; salute	I wan troway salut to ol di pleyas and cochi  I want throw away salute to all the players and coaches  → 'I want to salute all the players and coaches'
9.	Kọmọt	Borrowing and compounding	Leave/get out of/remove/relea se	Adebayor no yarn enitin as in de komot fo di Presidential quarters.

				→ 'Adebayor did not say anything as he was leaving the Presidential quarters'
10.	Sidon-luk	compounding	A wait-and-see or indifference attitude	Na sidon-luk di pipu jus de do nau  → 'It's an attitude of indifference that the people are now showing'
11.	Manej manej	Borrowing and reduplication	makeshift; improvisation	Dis na manej manej langwej This (be) manage manage language  → 'This is a makeshift language'
12.	Wota pass gari	Borrowing/se mantic extension	An overwhelming situation; a bad situation	Water kon pass garri for <i>de</i> host nation  → 'It was an overwhelming situation for the host nation' 'It was a bad situation for the host nation'
13.	Bele swit	Calquing and compounding	To be happy	Hin belle sweet am well well for de trophy wey Ivory Coast playas carry → 'He is very happy about the trophy which Ivory Coast players lifted'
14.	Longatrot	Calquing and compounding	Gluttony; greed; greedy	I no see to chop I get longatrot I do not have opportunity to eat, I am greedy
15.	Wakawáká	Reduplication	Roam about	Her wakawaka dey vex me 'Her wandering (about) annoys me'
16.	Sansan	Reduplication	Clog in the wheel of; ruin, ruination	But as e kon bee, na sand sand enta de host garri    'But as it turns out, it's ruination/misfortune for the host'
17.	Magomágó	Reduplication	Dribbling/disho nest act	CAF no de hapi at all with de magomágó wey Jdidi take refiree de game  → 'Caf was not happy at all with the dishonest act with which Jdidi refereed the game'
18.	Wahala	Borrowing	Trouble	Guinea golkipa na hin cos de wahala for Gyan  → 'It was the goalkeeper who caused the trouble for Gyan'
19.	Helep	Borrowing and assimilation into NL phonological structure	Help	Na de lass penarity wey hin save na hin helep dem carry de cup  → 'It was the last penalty that he saved which helped them to lift the cup'
20.	Man pikin	Compounding	Man child; indefinite noun	Why yu kon dey tok sey dem go kari Man Pikin put for kros?  → 'How can you say The Son of Man must be lifted up?'
21.	Shapshap	Reduplication	Quickly; smartly; immediately	Ethiopia wan equalize sharp sharp but Enyeama pari de ball  → 'Ethiopia wanted to equalize quickly but Enyeama parried the ball'
22.	Wuruwuru			Ref(eree) wuruwuru for Afcon 'Ref(eree)'s corrupt act PREP AFCON'