

# 'I dey trust you waa': Pidgin English as a Current Spoken Communication Tool at University of Mines and Technology\*

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## Abstract

Pidgin English (PE), though not that popular in Ghana in the past, seems to be gaining ground in the educational institutions today. Of particular interest is the observed increase in PE use among students of the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), who are training to become professionals in the mining and allied fields. What has caused this? How do the students feel about PE use? And what are their own views about PE-speaking in Ghana? This study, the first to examine PE at UMaT, aimed at finding empirical answers to these questions. A questionnaire was administered to 457 undergraduates selected at random from First and Second Year students. Analysis of the responses shows that majority of the students consider PE use "beneficial/advantageous" and "comfortable" because "it gives them a sense of belonging to the student body"; it is "easy and fun to speak"; and "trendy/spoken by friends". They recognise that PE is not Standard English (SE) but "feel unashamed" speaking it. However, they think it is not good enough to speak PE all the time as it will "distort [their] SE", and also "attract wrong public perception [of them] as poor scholars". Left to the students alone, "there should be restrictions on PE use in Ghana to informal occasions" and "insistence on SE use". It is concluded that UMaT students feel comfortable speaking PE but admit that it can adversely affect their SE. It is recommended that more studies be conducted into PE as a topical issue in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Pidgin English, Mining and Allied Engineering Fields, Professionals, UMaT Students

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Pidgin English (PE) in Ghana: Brief Historical Background

Pidgin English (PE) is very simply, a form of language combining some English and other languages, usually including local dialects, which both speaker and listener understand. PE exists in West Africa; Ghanaian Pidgin English (GhaPE) is seen as part of West African Pidgin (WAP)/West African Pidgin English (WAPE), but it is "not an important lingua franca" (Dako, 2012); and it is different from that of, say, Nigeria, Liberia and Cameroon.

Historically, there are essentially two accounts as to how PE arrived in Ghana. It is thought that it became a contact language during the colonial era, to enable the colonial masters (Europeans) who were the bosses to communicate with the subjects or the local people, who were people of low status. Thus, it was linked to low esteem from the start; it was "bastardized" and PE became despised as an "uncivilized" variety of English (Boadi, 1971; Zabus, 1991 in Wiredu, 2013, p. 162). Yet PE is also thought to have been introduced to Ghana by "itinerant male labourers from Liberia and Sierra Leone and policemen, soldiers, traders and domestic servants from Nigeria" (Dako 2002a, Dako 2002b, Dako 2012; and Dadzie 1985), so it

developed as "*Kru brofo*"; "*Abongo brofo*" (Dako 2013, p. 149), which would mean something like: "English that is not really English". In other words, this language form called PE was just "bad English", or "broken English" (Baitie 2010) as it departed from the Queen's English or Standard English (SE). SE has been explained to be "the medium of writing in English Language, grammatically stable and codified" (Crowley 1999, p. 271). SE refers to the particular form of English which is acceptable in a given English-speaking country as the national norm, and includes grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Generally, PE is any form of English that deviates from SE.

### 1.2 Types of PE Spoken in Ghana Today

Despite the foregoing historical perspective, PE spoken in Ghana today has been observed to be in two main forms as "the educated variety" and "the uneducated variety". Huber (1999; 2004a, 2004b) describes the two varieties respectively as "institutionalized pidgin" and "non-institutionalized pidgin" (see Osei-Tutu 2016, p. 191).

The educated variety, which is considered as "the acrolectal manifestation of GhaPE" (Dako 2013, p. 149), is so-called because it is mainly used by students in the second cycle schools and the universities. Thus, it is used by people who, it is believed, can manage the SE, hence, they use PE

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not really as a necessity but for other reasons. The educated variety, from its characteristics, has been variously called Student Pidgin (SP) (Dako, 2002a, 2002b; 2012; 2013; Forson, 1996, 2006; Osei Tutu, 1999; Wiredu, 2013) or School Pidgin English (SPE) (Amuzu and Asinyor, 2016); and Ghanaian Student Pidgin (GSP) (Osei-Tutu, 2016).

The uneducated variety of PE in Ghana is the older type and the educated variety is the latter one. The uneducated variety has been referred to also as “*Town Pidgin*” (Dako 2002a) and “*Motorpark Pidgin*” (Amoako, 2011 in Osei-Tutu (2016, p. 191). Thus, the uneducated variety is associated with people of lower status, say, the illiterates, labourers- mainly males- who cannot really manage the Standard English (SE) when they need to use English to communicate with people who do not speak their local language. Speakers use this variety of PE as a necessity but are considered uneducated and at the lowest range of the social ladder. They are even so depicted in fiction as observed by Dako and Yitah (2012).

### 1.3 Emergence of the Educated Variety

Two main theories explain the emergence of SP/SPE/GSP in Ghanaian schools and Osei-Tutu (2016) recounts these: the first, by Dadzie (1985), has it that, it was “a result of youngsters in the harbor cities of Ghana (i.e. Takoradi and Tema) imitating the speech (among other behaviours) of sailors who had returned from journeys abroad. These youngsters looked up to the returned sailors as the avant-garde of fashion and progress and, therefore, wanted to copy their mannerisms” (p. 191) and, the second, by Dako (2002a), maintains that, “it was a response to vestiges of colonial language policies in high schools (and indeed at all other levels of education) that insisted on students using English in all communicative situations. ... though they were able to grasp the formal registers of English, they found it more difficult to acquire its informal registers and hence adopted an attitude to the effect that, though they could be forced to speak English, they would choose the type of English to speak” (p. 191). Actually, “Student Pidgin (SP) first appeared in the Ghanaian secondary schools in the late 1960s and then moved into the universities. As is the case with Ghanaian Pidgin, SP was from the beginning a male code. We now observe an increasing number of female students adopting this code” (Dako and Quarcoo 2017, p. 25). Despite the fact that there is not much evidence to support either view, Osei-Tutu (2016) opines that both authors have contributed to information on the appearance of this variety of PE in Ghana (GSP) since those high schools Dako refers to are found in the coastal cities Dadzie also meant” (p. 191).

### 1.4 General Perception of On-campus PE in Ghana

Generally, PE in Ghana, whether “educated” or “uneducated” has been seen as one and the same and, therefore, perceived negatively as a result of the history of PE in Ghana. There is a “subjective rejection” of PE in the Ghanaian society as pointed out by Ahulu (1995) and Obeng (1997) (in Wiredu 2013). In fact, it is noted that, “None of the varieties is a welcome code at a typical formal gathering in Ghana” (Desiree 2004, cited in Amuzu and Asinyor 2016, p. 50).

This is so because PE is mainly seen as an “incorrect” form of the English we go to school to learn and use since it appears to be a strange mixture of English and other languages which are usually the local language(s) or dialect(s) of the speaker. It is believed that while English is the lexifier, “Ga and Akan, which are indigenous Kwa languages spoken in Ghana” are, to a large extent, “GSP’s substrate languages” (Osei-Tutu 2016, p. 191). As such, PE is also received unfavourably by most parents and teachers, who have sometimes even spelled out punishment for its use. Obviously, many parents and teachers are against their children and wards speaking PE because they think that PE use can “contaminate” the SE they learn and thereby lead to poor performance or even failure in their final examinations, moreso as SE is a core subject and a prerequisite for further education at the tertiary level. In short, attitudes towards PE, no matter the type, have usually been negative, and the reason is not far-fetched.

Thus, the question of PE on the school/university campus appears irritating and almost unthinkable for most parents. Therefore, they would choose to speak English at home with their children for success (Dako and Quarcoo, 2017). Indeed, in pre-tertiary Ghanaian institutions, it is not uncommon to see the words: “SPEAK ENGLISH” written on walls to alert the pupils and students to speak SE, not PE. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and Chief Examiners’ Reports nearly always express concern about the falling standard of performance in English and sometimes cite PE use by the students as a negative influence causing the poor performance (e.g. see Ferdinand (2018) on WASSCE 2018). Although in their respective studies, Omari (2010), and Amuzu and Asinyor (2016) do not find any link between PE use by students and poor performance in these students’ SE, Huber (1999) finds PE use to adversely affect SE and Mireku-Gyimah (2014) observes that PE use has the likelihood to negatively affect students’ SE. Indeed, Forson (2006) notes that PE use adversely influences SE. He observes that, “there is a general feeling in the country that the standard of

English proficiency in our universities is falling; and the blame falls squarely on Pidgin use by students” (cited in Wiredu 2013, p. 162).

Therefore, teachers, fearing the adverse effect of PE use on the performance of their students, have seriously tried “to discourage it in class but boys freely resort to it in the school-yard and when unobserved by members of the teaching staff” (see Huber 1999, p. 147). On use of pidgin and creoles in education in some West African countries-Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia- Huber (2014) notes in a report that some Ghanaian educationists considered PE to be “a dangerous creature”. As far back as 1985, a university department in Ghana “proscribed the use of pidgin in its confines” and, in 2002/2003, an ex-Vice Chancellor strongly advised fresh students against use of PE, explaining that it was going to hamper their academic performance (Rupp, 2013). Also, Baitie (2010) notes how one university in Ghana erected a signboard in an anti-pidgin stance with the inscription “PIDGIN IS TAKING A HEAVY TOLL ON YOUR ENGLISH, SHUN IT”. It is not only in Ghana that people are concerned about PE use on campus and have sought to ban it. Eta (2006) also observes that, in Cameroon too, a university went to the extent of erecting signboards around the campus, in a serious campaign against PE, with inscriptions some of which read as follows:

NO PIDGIN ON CAMPUS, PLEASE!  
BE MY FRIEND, SPEAK ENGLISH  
IF YOU SPEAK PIDGIN, YOU WILL WRITE  
PIDGIN (cited in Amuzu and Asinyor 2016, pp. 50, 51).

In spite of all attempts by teachers and lecturers as well as institutions to discourage PE use on campus(es), university students have persisted in it. In Ghana, recently, PE seems to be the preferred current spoken communication tool to SE, which is the lingua franca, and also to the local languages together with their dialects. At UMaT, a leading Ghanaian public university offering mining and related engineering programmes, speaking of PE among students is not dying out; rather, from observation, it has increased among these students who are considered to be privileged and training to become professionals in the mining and allied engineering fields.

So, given the importance of English in one’s life even as a young Ghanaian adult and the perception that most Ghanaian parents and teachers frown on PE use, we ask ourselves certain pertinent questions that readily come to mind. For example, what has prompted the increased use of PE on UMaT campus among these students? Who at all speak PE at UMaT? What is the motivation or the

advantage(s) for the students using PE? How do they feel speaking PE? What are the students’ own attitudes towards PE use in Ghana and what are their own views about PE-speaking in Ghana, generally? These questions regarding the who, what, where, how and why of PE among students at UMaT, need to be answered. Hence, this study is aimed at finding empirical answers to them and other relevant questions.

Even though PE use in Ghana and Ghanaian educational institutions has received scholarly attention by researchers as recounted, *supra*, no study has been conducted on PE at UMaT. Therefore, this research is the first major work to examine PE as a current spoken communication tool at UMaT. It is an exploratory survey in which a questionnaire is administered to elicit the necessary information from the subjects who are First and Second Year Undergraduate students of UMaT.

### *Research Objectives/Questions*

This research seeks to investigate PE use on UMaT campus among students. It examines:

- (i) Who speak? - (Identity: Name, Gender/Sex, Senior High School (SHS), etc. attended, Age, English Grade at WASSCE, and with whom)
- (ii) Where do they speak? (i.e. location/place)
- (iii) When do they speak? (i.e. time/occasion)
- (iv) Why do they speak? - (i.e. motivation or advantages)
- (v) Why do they not speak? (i.e. the disadvantage(s))
- (vi) What are the students’ own attitudes towards PE in Ghana?
- (vii) What are the main PE terminologies /expressions at UMaT and what are their meanings in SE?

## **2 Resources and Methods Used**

### **2.1 Resources**

#### 2.1.1 The Population

The population consisted of all First and Second Year UMaT Students, pursuing Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree programmes in engineering disciplines, namely Geomatic, Geological, Mining, Minerals, Petroleum, Environmental and Safety (at the Faculty of Mineral Resources Technology [FMRT]); and Mechanical, Electrical and

Electronic, Computer Science and Engineering; and Renewable Energy; and Mathematical Sciences (at the Faculty of Engineering [FoE]). They totalled 1 153 students (2017/2018 figures).

First and Second Year Students were selected for this study because they were younger, had left the SHS not too long ago and were readily available. First Year Students were considered because they had just arrived on campus and, being fresh students, were likely to have carried PE-speaking with them from the SHSs they had attended and just left. Thus, they might have brought along their own specific SHS “brands” of PE, including lexical items and expressions which might be different from other brands from elsewhere. Second Year Students were considered because they, having spent one full year at UMaT, may have adopted some existing UMaT PE terms or changed their attitudes towards PE. Also, they might possess different views from those of the fresh students about PE.

### 2.1.2 The Sample

Some 223 students (out of 622 in First Year) and 234 (out of 531 in Year Two) formed the sample and the size. In all, 457 out of the 1 153 students (forming approx. 40% [39.64]) were the subjects of this study. They were from both well-endowed and less-endowed schools, and were male and female; young and old (Mature), and Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian (438 and 19 Or 96% and 4% respectively). The 457 students were randomly selected, and comprised all who willingly agreed to take part in the study as respondents. All the subjects had the option to remain anonymous. They completed the questionnaire in their smaller groups in class during the first week at lectures (Semester One). The return rate was 100%.

## 2.2 Methods Used

### 2.2.1 Instrument and Data Collection

A questionnaire was purposefully designed to solicit the required information from the respondents. It was explained that the questionnaire was meant for a study to solicit information on PE at UMaT and in Ghana and that the purpose was not to cast the respondent in any bad light.

The instrument, i.e. the questionnaire, had a number of items. Data solicited involved, among others, personal/bio, educational background and the attitudes as well as the personal views of the respondents on PE in Ghana, and the PE vocabulary or terminologies and their meanings in SE.

### 2.2.2 Analysis of the Responses

All the completed questionnaires from the smaller groups were combined (unedited) and labelled. The results were sorted and grouped according to the responses. The results were then analysed for the two groups together. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the results. The results were reported in descending order, with the highest percentages first. Where necessary, the percentages were approximated to the nearest whole number and the absolute figures written against the percentages.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 1. Who speak? - (Identity: Name, Gender/Sex, Senior High School (SHS), etc. attended, Age, English Grade at WASSCE, etc. etc.)

#### a. On Identity:

- (i) *Name*: 75% (343) willingly gave their names as opposed to 25% (114) who did not. The large number of students who gave their names (identity) shows that they were eager to partake in the research as subjects, and to co-operate with the Researcher. This is likely the result of the clear explanation of why the information were being solicited from them, and probably their interest in the subject, PE.
- (ii) *Gender/Sex*: 81% (368) were Male; 17% (80) were Female; and 2% (9) did not indicate their gender/sex. Therefore, the students/respondents were predominantly males, and this was to be expected given the nature of the University and its programmes.
- (iii) *SHSs, etc. Attended*: The students were mostly Ghanaians from both well-endowed SHSs and less endowed ones; the majority of them, as has been usual of UMaT students, notably came from prestigious city Boys schools in regional capitals such as Mfantshipim, in Cape Coast, Central Region; Ghana Secondary Technical School (GSTS), in Takoradi, Western Region; Koforidua Secondary Technical School, in Koforidua, Eastern Region; and Prempeh College, in Kumasi, Ashanti Region. The less-endowed schools included those in the catchment area and others elsewhere in the country. In fact, there were over forty Ghanaian SHSs involved.
- (iv) *Age (in years)*: 59% (270) were within the age range 19 -21; 18% (82) were within 16-18; 8% (37) were within 22-25; 5% (23)

were within 26-28; 5% (23) were within 29-31; and about 5% (22) were within 32-35. Therefore, the majority 59% (270) of the students/respondents fell between the age range 19-21 years. Age range 16-21 years formed 77% (352) students/respondents (i.e. Age ranges 16-18 and 19-21 combined (i.e. 59% + 18% = 77% Or [270 + 82 = 352]). Thus, the respondents were quite young. Considering age ranges combined for 26-35 years, there were only 68 respondents in the sample forming just about 15% (23+23+22=68 or 5% + 5% + 5% = 15%) and they were those who were older, probably Mature students.

- b. *On Grade in English (WASSCE)*, 54% (247) had *Grade B*; 23% (105) gave *No Response*; 14% (64) had *Grade C*; and 9% (41) had *Grade A*. Combining holders of Grades A, B, and C, there were 352 students (54%+14%+9% = 77% i.e. 247+64+41 = 352), who had *Excellent to Good* grades in English and so qualified well. It is likely that the 23% (105) who did not give their grades included some or all of the international (foreign) students, mainly francophone, who did not really know the equivalences of their grades in English. The international (foreign) students who participated were 18 out of the 457 respondents and formed about 4%. In all, the vast majority of the students were expected to be proficient in English.
- c. *On Whether they Have Spoken PE before*, a whopping 86% (393) said *Yes*; only 13% (59) said *No*; and just 1% (5) provided *No Response*. The 1% (5) may have included the females and the older (Mature) students.
- d. *On Whether they Currently Speak PE*, 62% (283) said *Yes*; 36% (165) said *No*; and only about 2% (9) gave *No Response*. Hence, the majority of the students confirmed that they were currently PE speakers. However, it could be observed that some students had dropped PE use as they entered the University from the SHS, considering that the number of students who had spoken PE before (see 1f) was higher than that of those who were speakers currently, the difference being 110 (i.e. 393-283), which forms about a third. It is likely that of this number were those who might have heard about the negative reception given PE at UMaT or had found their new higher status as university students to abandon PE, which, as previously noted, has been poorly welcomed on campus by teachers over the years. The 36% (165) who said *No* and about 2% (9) who gave *No Response* possibly included the Mature students

as it is observed that the older the students (possibly Mature students), the more they did not speak PE. These students were against PE use, did not know how to speak PE, or were now learning to speak PE.

- e. *On Whether PE is the Same as Broken English (BE)*, 50% (229) said *No*; 36% (165) said *Yes*; and about 14% (63) gave *No Response*. The majority, 50% (229) forming half the total number of the students, reckoned that BE is just another word for PE.

## 2. Where do they speak? (i.e. location/place)

*On Where they Speak PE*, 33% (151) said *Everywhere*; 29% (133) said *On Campus*; 13% (59) said, *In the presence of peers/At the Hall/Hostel*; 9% (41) said *At Home*; 12% (55) said *Other*; 2% (9) said *In Class*; and 2% (9) said *At Unofficial locations*. Thus, the majority, being over a third of the students would speak PE “Everywhere”.

## 3. When do they speak? (i.e. time/occasion)

- a. *On Occasions for Speaking PE*, 58% (265) said *When with Friends/Peers*; 12% (54) said *When necessary/When I feel like speaking*; 10% (46) said *Unofficial Occasions*; 9% (41) said *Always/Anytime*; and 11% (51) said *Other*. Therefore, the majority, constituting more than half the total number of students/respondents speak PE among peers (as a group) while only 9% (41) speak PE at unofficial occasions, but it would be observed that, altogether, the other half or so responded variously to mean they use PE only at informal gatherings and with their peers. They buttressed this point (see 3 b and c below).
- b. *On Whether they Speak PE at all times*, an overwhelming majority 79% (361) said *No*; Only 13% (59) said *Yes*; and 8% (37) gave *No Response*.
- c. *On Category of People they Speak PE with*, as many as 60% (274) said *Friends*; 28% (128) said: *Peers/Colleagues/Co-workers*; only 3% (14) said: *Relatives* (of these, 1 student said: with the father); 2% (9) said *PE Initiators /Communicators/PE Speakers* (i.e. those who start the conversation with them in PE/those who are fluent in PE); 6% (27) said *Other*; and 1% (5) (out of the 457 said *Superiors* (The “superiors” here may be young demonstrators /lecturers or just their seniors in Third Year and Fourth Year. Combining Friends, and Peers /Colleagues, it would be clearly observed that 88% (i.e. 60%+28% Or [274+128 = 402]) of the students would speak PE as long as their

friends/peers are present, but not at all times and not on all occasions.

It would appear that the tail end of this statement is contradictory, but a critical look at the responses shows, as was later explained by one non-participating “senior” student in a conversation, that the students were not contradicting themselves at all. Indeed, they would speak PE everywhere if their friends are around, but they, together with these friends, would not speak PE at some times or on certain occasions. For example, during lectures and religious functions, at seminars, group discussions, JCR and SRC meetings and others like them. It was learnt by the Researcher in that conversation that, even at rehearsals for religious programmes, any use of PE would find the speaker getting chased out.

#### 4. Why do they speak? - (i.e. motivation/advantages)

- a. *On Motivation for Speaking PE*, a whopping 70% (320) said it is *Beneficial*; 22% (100) gave *No Response* and only 8% (37) said it is *Not Beneficial*. Together, those who said PE is not *Beneficial* and those who gave no responses constituted only a third (30%). Thus, the motivation of the vast majority of the students, forming two thirds, was their consideration that PE use is *Beneficial/Advantageous*.
- b. *On Why PE is Beneficial (Advantageous)*, various responses were given by the respondents as reasons. Sometimes, a respondent gave more than one response. Some 36% (165) of the responses were because *It [PE-speaking] makes [them] special and gives [them] a sense of belonging to the student body*”; 26% (119) were because *It allows Easy Communication*; 20% (91) were because *It is Trendy/or Spoken by Friends*; 14% (64) were because *It is Fun to Speak*; and 4% (18) were because *There are No Grammatical Rules*.

These reasons are interesting in two main ways. The first is that, because “it is trendy/or spoken by friends”, PE use may be said to be contagious and peer pressure (most probably from the boys from the “big” schools) could be observed to be a factor influencing PE use among these young students. In fact, considering “the sense of belonging” as a reason, together with this sister response that it is “trendy or spoken by [their] friends”, we observe that 56% (i.e. 36%+20%) of the responses had to do with PE-speaking Peers and Mates as the motivating factors. Generally, the responses indicate that PE-speaking is a way of assuring

oneself as being part of the student body. Similarly, combining Easy Communication and Fun as reasons for speaking PE, 40% (i.e. 26% + 14%) of the responses had to do with the fascination of the language itself. The second is that, since only 4% of the respondents cited lack of grammatical rules as their motivation for using PE, it could be said that the students were not deficient, but rather proficient in SE, and so did not need PE to be able to function in the University. This confirmed the students’ remarkable grades in English (WASSCE) which, in turn, showed that they qualified well (see 1 e).

#### 5. Why do they not speak? (i.e. the disadvantage(s))

- a. *On Why PE is Not Beneficial/Why PE is Disadvantageous*, various responses were given by the respondents as reasons. Sometimes, a respondent gave more than one response. Some 57% (261) of the reasons were because *It Distorts Formal English*; 25% (115) were because it is *Unrecognised* and 18% (81) were because there is *The Temptation to Use it at Official Settings*. In all, concern about the students’ SE (“Formal English”) and how to confine PE use to Unofficial gatherings were prime reasons to the students/respondents, as noted of the majority and also the last group (i.e. 57% + 18% = 75% [Or 261 + 81 = 342]). It is probable that the concerns of the greater majority were genuine and that they actually cared more about their SE, unlike the one third or so who did not really share these concerns for which PE use is seen as disadvantageous.
- b. *On How they Feel Speaking PE*, the majority of the respondents, 73% (334) said *Comfortable and Unashamed*; 15% (69) said *Uncomfortable but Unashamed*; but only 10% (46) said *Uncomfortable and Ashamed* and about 2% (8) said *Comfortable but Ashamed*. In all, over half the number of the students feel comfortable speaking PE, they do not feel ashamed in the least, and only a relatively insignificant 10% (46 out of the 457) feel both uncomfortable and ashamed. This confirmed the observation that, currently, PE has become popular and the students speaking PE on UMaT campus these days do not feel shy about it.
- c. *On Whether they will Recommend PE to Professionals in the Offices*, a great majority of the students, 86% (393 out of 457) said a categorical *No*, only 14% (just 64 out of the 457) said *Yes*. It is clear from 5b and 5c also that use of PE should preferably be outside

formal settings, confirming an earlier finding (see 3 c).

- d. *On What is the Public Attitude towards PE in Ghana*, the majority 47% (215) said *Negative*; and 36% (164) said *Positive*, but 15% (69) said *Negative and Positive*; while just 2% (9) said: *Other* (i.e. gave other/different views from the above-mentioned). The majority, though less than half the total number of students, confirmed the generally negative perception of PE out there in the society.
- e. *On What should be the Public's Attitude to PE-speaking in Ghana*, 44% (201) said *Negative*; 42% (192) said *Positive*; but 12% (55) could not decide and thought it should be both *Negative and Positive* while some 2% (9) said: *Other* (i.e. other/different views from the above-mentioned). The majority of the students' own attitudes were also negative, but in both 5 d and 5 e, the trend indicates that opinion is nearly equally divided.

## 6. What are the main PE vocabulary/expressions at UMaT and their meanings in SE?

The following are examples (and "analysis") of PE terminologies/expressions at UMaT and their meanings as written by the respondents:

- a. "you dey bab": meaning *do you understand?* (SE: you; and Broken English, "dey bab"; "bab" for SE "understand").
- b. "who dey belle me": meaning *who is calling me?* (SE: who, me; and Broken English, "belle" as in SE: "bell" for SE "ring").
- c. "chale sup": meaning *what is going on/what is happening friend?* "Chale" is *Ga* (Ghanaian language) and an address term literally meaning, "friend"; "sup" Broken English expression – cropping/corruption of "what's up".
- d. "komot for there": meaning *leave there!*. (Broken English expression for SE: "go away") "Komot" (also "comot"), a corruption of SE: "come out".
- e. "it is cuul, it's understanding for low level": meaning *it is acceptable for "poor" people*. (Broken English for "it is cool", SE: "it is acceptable, satisfactory").
- f. "gbeke" (*Ga*; Ghanaian language) meaning *evening/night* as in: "I no cho last gbeke" meaning *I didn't eat last night*.
- g. "gbele" (*Ga*; Ghanaian language) meaning *open*, as in: "gbele the book" meaning *open the book*.
- h. "gyie"/"jie" (*Ga*; Ghanaian language) meaning *remove*, as in: "jie the table" meaning *remove the table*.
- i. "ah so you figa sey you do something anaa, you still be nobro." meaning *ah! do you think you've achieved something? You are still nobody*. (Broken English and SE with Twi, "anaa" Twi; Ghanaian language); "figa" for SE: "figure"; "figa sey" may connote "think that"; *nobro* (*no brother*, English? No Bro, not No Bo as in the Twi pronunciation: "No Bɔ" for the English "Nobody").
- j. "how muchee you chop?" meaning *how old are you?* (NB: Not "how much did you eat/chop?"): (Broken English)
- k. "abi you go go some?" ("abi" meaning *isn't it?* a Nigerian (Yoruba) term for confirmation, and common in Nigerian Pidgin expressions; here used with "... you go go some?" (Twi (Akan) transliteration) meaning *will you also go?* (i.e. wo beko bi/ wo (nso) wo beko bi (anaa)? in Twi (Akan). With the question tag, "You will also go, isn't it?" is PE for SE: "You will also go, won't you?". "Go" repeated: "go go" is Broken English for SE: "will go" (PE and SE: go, some, and Broken English).
- l. "I no cho" (NB: cho (i.e. chop, eat English) last gbeke" meaning *I didn't eat last night*. (SE: I, no, and cho as in SE: I didn't eat last night/I didn't have (my) dinner last night).
- m. "he dey dab" meaning *he is copying*. (Broken English with SE: he; "dab" for SE: "dub").
- n. "waten you dey rep" meaning *what are you writing?* "waten" Broken English expression – corruption of "what thing?". (Broken English, with SE: you, "rep" for SE: "represent-/record").
- o. "I dey trust you waa" meaning *I trust you very much* (Broken English and SE with Twi/*Ga*; "waa"; Ghanaian languages, meaning "to a great extent").

It is observed that the PE terminologies/expressions at UMaT are mainly composed of SE, broken English, and Ghanaian languages, usually Twi and Ga, separately or combined. They are usually a fine blend of these. However, a Nigerian pidgin word, "abi" could be combined with Ghanaian expressions.

### Summary of the Findings

The study finds the following:

- (i) A masculine-bias of speakers of PE in the UMaT community but this is to be expected as the University is engineering oriented and has naturally attracted a student population highly skewed in favour of males despite the gender mainstreaming policy in place.
  - (ii) The youthful nature of the speakers, and the “fashionable” status enjoyed by PE on the campus even though some students find PE to be a threat to their SE and others fear they may be tempted to use it at the wrong place(s).
  - (iii) PE is recognised as Broken English by the students but they love PE because they think it makes them feel special/it gives them a sense of belonging, it allows easy communication and it is fun to speak it as their friends also speak it.
  - (iv) PE use is contagious. Some students speak it out of peer influence.
  - (v) The students would speak PE everywhere, as long as they are in the midst of their friends or peers but they would not speak it at all times or on all occasions; for example, they and their friends would not speak PE at official gatherings.
  - (vi) Nearly equal numbers of the students are for as against PE-speaking in Ghana. They are also nearly equally divided in number as to seeing harm in PE use and not seeing any. In fact, one respondent thinks that PE should even replace *Twi*, one of the main local languages in Ghana, which is often the major substrate language in PE in Ghana.
  - (vii) The students think that PE should be tolerated in Ghana to benefit those who need it but professionals should not speak PE in the offices.
- (ii) The speakers of PE are mostly between the age range 16 to 21 years.
  - (iii) The speakers of PE are all proficient in English, having passed their English examination well at the SHS level and qualified with grades A, B, and C in English (WASSCE).
  - (iv) The speakers are mostly males.
  - (v) The majority of the students find PE use advantageous, and they feel comfortable and unashamed speaking PE because they think “it gives them a sense of belonging to the student body”; it is “easy and fun to speak”; and “trendy/spoken by friends” even though they recognise that it is not SE. However, they think it is not good enough to speak PE all the time as it will “distort [their] SE”, and also “attract wrong public perception [of them] as poor scholars”.
  - (vi) Some of the students who had spoken PE before ceased speaking PE on entering the University.
  - (vii) Some students who do not know how to speak PE wish to learn it as they find the “language” fashionable.
  - (viii) The majority of the students would not recommend PE to be spoken in the offices among professionals.
  - (ix) The majority think the public’s attitude to PE in Ghana, especially in the schools is negative and should remain so but others think otherwise.
  - (x) PE at UMaT is mainly a blend of English and Ghanaian (local) languages which are *Ga* and *Twi* (or Akan), either separately or combined. Sometimes, the Nigerian Pidgin word *abi* is also added.

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

- (i) PE in the university community at UMaT among First Year and Second Year students could be seen as Student Pidgin and essentially confirms the characteristics of the speakers as described by earlier researchers of Pidgin English in the Ghanaian educational institutions, including the universities.

### 4.2 Recommendations

In view of the findings and the conclusions, it is recommended that:

- (i) Some restrictions be placed on when and where PE could be spoken in the UMaT community since PE at UMaT (as elsewhere) would not be going away any time soon.
- (ii) There should be a national debate on the matter of PE use in the educational institutions and offices among students, teachers, and other professionals.

- (iii) Further research be conducted to sample the views of Third and Fourth Year Students on PE in Ghana.
- (iv) Further research be carried out to discover more about the structure of the PE at UMaT as compared to those elsewhere.
- (v) Further research be carried out to discover more about PE as a topical issue.

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