

LEXICAL SENSE RELATIONS IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN

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BENIN CITY**

OCTOBER, 2025

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) HONOURS IN LINGUISTICS STUDIES.

OCTOBER, 2025.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for His infinite mercy throughout the course of my study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I thank the Lord Jesus for His supernatural strength and guidance all the way. which made this project a success.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor. Prof. (Mrs.) E. M. Omoregbe for her unwavering support, guidance and invaluable insight all through the course of this project. Her expertise, brilliance and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the direction and the quality of this project.

Special thanks to the Head of Department, Dr. (Mrs.) P. O. Solomon-Etefia, who has motherly role cannot be quantify. Thank you very much ma. I also to specially thank Mr. A. Ajala. I appreciate every correction of his which has not only made me better at writing, but also at research and meticulousity.

I'm also grateful to Mr. G.O Agharuwa for his earnest and fatherly support throughout my stay in school.

I'm very grateful to my Faculty, and my department. The prestigious Department of Linguistics for providing me with readily available and accessible resources at her library.

I am very grateful to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Aliu for meeting my needs at all time and for doing everything in their capacity to ensure the success of this project. They played a huge role in the whole process, and showed their supports by consistently requesting for updates all through the process, and without them, the execution of this project would have been impossible. Also, I am grateful to my siblings, Jude Otori, who

kept checking up on me, Josephine Aliu, who was always there for me. Precious Aliu Chelsea for her emotional supports, constant reach outs, and availability whenever I was frustrated, and Progress Aliu, for her care.

All my friends who have been with me since the beginning of this degree also contributed immensely to the completion of my project. To Akinkunmi goodness Fiyinfoluwa , my best girl. Thank you so much for checking up on me constantly, pushing me and encouraging me all through the period it took me to complete this project, I love you.

To Adaniken divine-gift thank you for your insights, listening ears and inputs, they are invaluable. To Donald my good friend, thank you for being there. I am grateful for your support also.

I am also grateful to myself for accepting the challenges writing this topic posed, and for not giving up even when the difficulties were overwhelming.

Finally, to Onanefe igwekpe Great thank you so much for easing my burden and making the completion of my project a success. Thank you for helping me with other activities I was juggling with my project and executing them well. I honestly do not know how I would have managed without you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin. The study identified and classified the lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin, including synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy. It also examined the linguistic sources contributing to these sense relations. It analyzed the socio-cultural factors influencing the development and usage of lexical sense relations. Lastly, it explored variations in lexical sense relations across different contexts of Nigerian Pidgin use. The motivation behind this study stems from the growing recognition of Nigerian Pidgin as a major tool of communication in Nigeria and across West Africa, juxtaposed with its persistent marginalization in formal linguistic research. This study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary data were gathered through interviews and casual conversations with 10 Nigerian Pidgin speakers from different regions and backgrounds, while secondary data were sourced from newspapers, songs, comedy skits, and online content in Nigerian Pidgin. The theoretical framework used for the research was structural semantics by Trier (1931). The findings revealed that Nigerian Pidgin is rich in lexical sense relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy. These word relationships help speakers express different meanings in creative and flexible ways. The language draws from English, local Nigerian languages, slang, and sound-based expressions to build its unique vocabulary. Social and cultural factors like class, youth lifestyle, and media also shape how words are formed and used. Meanings often depend on context, region, and the speaker's background, making Pidgin highly adaptable. This means one word can have many meanings based on how and where it is used. The researcher recommends further study on this research work and other lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin not touched in this research work be carried out by scholars, linguists and any other person interested in the sense relations of Nigerian Pidgin.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Language is one of the most powerful emblems of social behavior and in the normal transfer of information we use language as a medium by which we establish and experience our most important human relationship. Also, it serves Humans an essential for conducting the most mundane transaction of our daily lives (Okolo & Ezikeojiaku, 2012). Language is the primary vehicle through which human culture and unique experience is shared and transmitted from one generation to another. It is a dynamic system used for communication, and it is often enriched by various semantic relationships among words, known as lexical sense relations. These include synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, and homonymy, among others. Understanding these relationships is vital for grasping the full meaning and usage of words within any language. While extensive research has been conducted on lexical semantics in languages such as English, French, and other widely studied tongues, relatively little attention has been given to Nigerian Pidgin, a major lingua franca in Nigeria and parts of West Africa.

Nigerian Pidgin (NP), often referred to as Naija or Naija Pidgin, is a creole language that has evolved from English and various indigenous Nigerian languages. It is widely spoken across ethnic and educational backgrounds and serves as a crucial tool for interethnic communication. Despite its widespread usage and cultural significance,

Nigerian Pidgin has often been relegated to informal settings and is still underrepresented in academic linguistic research, especially in the area of semantics.

Lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin are particularly interesting due to the language's hybrid nature, drawing vocabulary from English while adopting phonological, syntactic, and semantic features from indigenous Nigerian languages. This results in unique semantic relationships that may not align neatly with standard English definitions. For example, some words in Nigerian Pidgin may exhibit polysemous or idiomatic meanings shaped by local cultural contexts. Others may show shifts in sense due to socio-linguistic influences and language contact phenomena.

This study seeks to explore the lexical sense relations that operate within Nigerian Pidgin, examining how these relationships shape the meaning and usage of words in various communicative contexts. By doing so, it hopes to fill a gap in existing linguistic literature and contribute to the documentation and understanding of a vital but understudied language variety.

The motivation behind this study stems from the growing recognition of Nigerian Pidgin as a major tool of communication in Nigeria and across West Africa, juxtaposed with its persistent marginalization in formal linguistic research. While the language plays a significant role in fostering unity among Nigeria's linguistically diverse population, its semantic structures particularly lexical sense relations—remain largely unexplored. This research is driven by the need to deepen our understanding of how meaning is constructed, altered, and maintained in Nigerian Pidgin, especially given its hybrid

linguistic background and socio-cultural influences. By focusing on lexical sense relations, this study aims to illuminate the systematic nature of the language, challenge the perception of Nigerian Pidgin as merely a “broken” or informal version of English, and highlight its legitimacy as a full-fledged language system.

1.1 History and Development to Nigeria Pidgin

Nigerian Pidgin, often referred to as "Pidgin English" or simply "Pidgin," is a creole language that emerged in Nigeria during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The development of Nigerian Pidgin can be traced back to the interactions between European traders, especially the British, and various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Initially, these interactions were primarily through the medium of trade. The necessity for communication between the English-speaking traders and the diverse linguistic communities in Nigeria led to the creation of a simplified English-based pidgin that incorporated elements of local languages, such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. This pidgin language served as a linguistic bridge facilitating trade and social interactions in the coastal regions and later in urban centers (Stewart, 2003).

As Nigeria underwent colonization, the use of Nigerian Pidgin expanded beyond trade to become a popular means of communication in various social contexts. The British colonial administration employed Pidgin English in their dealings with the local populations, recognizing its practicality as a lingua franca in a nation characterized by over 500 indigenous languages. The emergence of urban centers, particularly in Lagos, further solidified the pidgin's place in everyday life, as people from different ethnic

backgrounds congregated in pursuit of economic opportunities. By the mid-20th century, Nigerian Pidgin had begun to take on a more distinct form, evolving from a mere pidgin to a fully developed creole language, rich in lexical and syntactic resources (Bamgbose, 1990).

In contemporary Nigeria, Nigerian Pidgin has gained cultural significance, reflecting the identity and experience of a diverse population. Nigerian Pidgin is used in diverse contexts, including informal conversations, markets, media, music, and digital platforms like X, reflecting its dynamic role in communication and cultural expression. Lexical sense relations semantic relationships such as synonymy (e.g., *kpai* and *kpeme*), antonymy (e.g., *Ajebutter* vs. *Ajepako*), hyponymy (e.g., *Runs* as a hypernym for *hustle* or *scam*), polysemy (e.g., *chop* meaning “to eat” or “to enjoy”), and meronymy—form the backbone of meaning construction in any language. In Nigerian Pidgin, these relations are particularly intriguing due to its creole nature, which blends lexical items from multiple linguistic sources while adapting them to local socio-cultural contexts.

The study of lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin is underexplored compared to its syntax or phonology (Faraclas, 1996; Elugbe & Omamor, 1991). Yet, it is critical for understanding the language’s semantic structure and its role in Nigeria’s linguistic landscape. This study aims to investigate the lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin, analyzing how words relate semantically and how these relations contribute to the language’s functionality and cultural significance.

Nigerian Pidgin has also been the subject of academic interest, with linguists studying its unique grammatical structures and sociolinguistic implications. Despite perceptions of inferiority compared to Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin stands as a testimony to Nigeria's complex socio-cultural history and its people's resilience in creating a vibrant means of communication (Aidoo, 2017).

1.1.2 Linguistics Classification on Nigeria Pidgin

According to the Nigeria Pidgin Ethnologue (2009), there are over five hundred and twenty five (525) Native languages spoken in Nigeria.

However, the official language is English. As reported in 2003, Nigeria English and Nigerian pidgin were spoken as a second language by 60 million people. Blench and Roger (2014). Communication in English language is much more popular in the country's urban communities than it is in rural areas. Due to globalization, pidgin breaks the communication barrier between different ethnic groups and it's widely spoken throughout Nigeria.

It is therefore classified as follows:

Language family	English /Creole Atlantic Krio Nigeria pidgin
Adopted from Nigeria pidgin Ethnologue	(16 th ed, 2009)

1.2 Problem Statement

While Nigerian Pidgin is a vital medium of communication in Nigeria, its lexical sense relations—how words relate to each other in terms of meaning—remain underexamined. Existing research on Nigerian Pidgin has largely focused on its grammatical structure, sociolinguistic functions, or historical development (e.g., Ihemere, 2006; Deuber, 2005), with little attention to the semantic relationships that govern its lexicon. For example, the synonymous use of *sabi* and *know* or the polysemous nature of *chop* (to eat, enjoy, or consume) highlights a complex network of sense relations that influence communication but lack systematic documentation.

The absence of detailed studies on lexical sense relations limits our understanding of how Nigerian Pidgin organizes meaning and adapts to diverse communicative contexts, such as social media, music, or everyday speech. Furthermore, as Nigerian Pidgin evolves through globalization and digital platforms, new lexical items and sense relations (e.g., slang like *slay* or *vibe*) are emerging, yet their semantic connections to existing words are poorly understood. This gap hinders efforts to standardize Nigerian Pidgin or use it effectively in education, literature, or media. This study addresses this problem by analyzing the lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin, focusing on their types, patterns, and socio-cultural implications.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

Scope

This study focuses on lexical sense relations (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, Homonym, polysemy and collation) in Nigerian Pidgin, analyzing their patterns, sources, and socio-cultural significance. The analysis will draw on data from diverse contexts, including spoken conversations, social media posts (e.g., on X), song lyrics (e.g., Afrobeat), and media broadcasts (e.g., Wazobia FM). The study prioritizes urban varieties of Nigerian Pidgin, particularly from Warri and Port Harcourt, where the language is widely spoken. It focuses on semantic relationships rather than phonological or syntactic aspects, though these may be referenced for context.

Limitations

The study faces the following limitations:

1. **Data Constraints:** Nigerian Pidgin is primarily a spoken language, and limited written records may restrict the availability of comprehensive lexical data.
2. **Regional Variation:** Lexical sense relations may vary across regions (e.g., Warri vs. Port Harcourt), and this study may not fully capture all regional differences due to time and resource constraints.
3. **Dynamic Lexicon:** The rapid evolution of Nigerian Pidgin, especially in digital and youth culture, means that sense relations may change during the study period, potentially affecting findings.

4. **Sample Size:** The analysis will rely on a finite sample of texts and recordings, which may not represent the full diversity of Nigerian Pidgin's lexicon.

Despite these limitations, the study will employ rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure robust findings on lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of lexical sense relations (e.g., synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy) are prevalent in Nigerian Pidgin?
2. How do lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin reflect influences from English, indigenous languages, or creole innovations?
3. In what ways do socio-cultural factors shape the formation and use of lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin?
4. How do lexical sense relations vary across different communicative contexts, such as spoken discourse, social media, or popular culture?

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin. The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify and classify the lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin, including synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy.

2. To examine the linguistic sources (English, indigenous languages, or innovations) contributing to these sense relations.
3. To analyze the socio-cultural factors influencing the development and usage of lexical sense relations.
4. To explore variations in lexical sense relations across different contexts of Nigerian Pidgin use.

1.6 Methodology

This study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary data were gathered through interviews and casual conversations with 10 Nigerian Pidgin speakers from different regions and backgrounds, while secondary data were sourced from newspapers, songs, comedy skits, and online content in Nigerian Pidgin. Instruments used involved interviews, supported by tools such as voice recorders, notebooks, mobile phones, and computers. To ensure validity, data were collected from reliable and diverse sources, with meanings cross-checked across different contexts. Reliability was maintained through consistent data collection methods and follow-up interviews with some participants. The data were analyzed descriptively by identifying and categorizing lexical sense relations such as synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and polysemy in both spoken and written forms.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it fills a critical gap in the linguistic analysis of Nigerian Pidgin by focusing on its lexical sense relations.

1. By documenting how words relate semantically, the study provides insights into the language's meaning-making processes, enhancing our understanding of its structure and functionality as a creole.
2. This contributes to the broader field of creole linguistics and semantics, particularly in multilingual contexts like Nigeria.
3. The findings will benefit linguists and sociolinguists studying language contact, semantic organization, and creole languages.
4. Additionally, the study will support educators, writers, and media practitioners who use Nigerian Pidgin in formal or creative contexts by offering a clearer understanding of its lexical semantics.
5. It also highlights the cultural significance of Nigerian Pidgin, showing how sense relations reflect social values, humor, and identity.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews relevant literature which are related to this research work "Lexical sense relations in Nigeria Pidgin". The chapter is divided into three sections which are: conceptual review, previous studies which gave rise to the motivation of this current study, and lastly, the concern of the present study.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The concepts to be reviewed are lexemes, word, sense relations and Nigerian Pidgin.

2.1.1 Lexeme

A lexeme is the basic unit of meaning in a language, representing a single word or a group of words with a shared meaning, regardless of grammatical variations. The notion of a lexeme is usually associated with the work of Matthews (1972, 1974 in Bonami et al., 2018). Linguists have many technical terms that they rely on in their everyday work, such as lexeme and morpheme, but when pressed about their meanings, they are often at a loss to give precise answers, or even vague answers that sound satisfying (Haspelmath, 2024). According to Lasserre and Montermini (2014:157), lexemes are deterministic because when they are applied to a particular item, they can only give an output which is entirely predictable. A lexeme is a unit of lexical meaning that creates endings regardless of the number of possible flashes or the number of words (Shavkatovna, 2022:68).

2.1.2 Sense Relation

A sense relation is the semantic relationship between words based on their meanings, such as synonymy, antonymy, or hyponymy. According to Von Heusinger, Maienborn and Porter (2011:458) "there are two basic types of sense relation. They are the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. The most commonly presented in introductory texts are the paradigmatic relations that hold between words of the same general category or type and that are characterised in terms of contrast and hierarchy. The syntagmatic relation hold between words according to their ability to co-occur meaningfully with each other in sentences.

Sense is the type of meaning clearly associated with words and sentences by the language system not the speaker meaning (Hurford, Heasley & Smith, 2007:95 in Zuhrotun, 2020:24). According to Jaszczolt (2002:11) "the meaning of words appears from research about what relationships are put into sentences and in the language system." Zuhrotun (2020:24) asserted that there are similarities in the idea about sense relations and lexical relations based on Yule's (2014:113) standpoint of characterizing the meaning of words with its relationship to other words as the analysis of lexical relations.

According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007) "sense relations are categorized into eight types, that is synonymy, paraphrase, hyponymy, antonym, homonym, polysemy, entailment, and ambiguity. Each of these terms will be explained briefly.

2.1.2.1 Synonymy

According to Chaer (2009:83), "synonymy etymologically comes from ancient Greek word *onoma* which means 'name', and *syn* which means 'with'. According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007), "synonymy is the relationship between two predicates that have the same sense." It is a relationship between predicates, and not between words (i.e. word-forms).

2.1.2.2 Paraphrase

According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:108), "paraphrase is a sentence which expresses the same meaning as another sentence without changing its meaning.

2.1.2.3 Hyponymy

According to Chaer (2009:98), the word hyponymy derived from ancient Greek language, that is *onoma* means 'name' and *hypo* means 'under'. So, hyponymy literally defined as 'the names that are included in other names". While according to Yule (2014:115), "hyponymy means one form whose meaning belongs to the meaning of another."

2.1.2.4 Antonym

Chaer (2009:88) said that antonyms come from ancient Greek word *onoma* which means 'name', and *anti* mean 'opposite'. Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:121) asserted that "a traditional view of antonym is that it is simply "opposite was of meaning".

2.1.2.5 Homonym

According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:130), "homonym is one of an ambiguous word whose different senses are unrelated to each other." Yule (2014:116) argues that homonym is two words with the same form that are unrelated to meaning.

2.1.2.6 Polysemy

According to Yule (2014:117), the word polysemy is derived from the Greek word poly "many" and semy "meanings", which can be described as one form written or spoken having multiple meanings that are related. Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:130) asserted that polysemy is a word which has various very closely related senses.

2.1.2.7 Entailment

The principle that under certain conditions in the truth of one statement ensues the truth of a second statement (Zuhrotun, 2020). Entailment applies cumulatively. This, if X entails Y and Y entails Z, and then X entails Z. Two sentences may be said to be paraphrases of each other if and only if they have exactly the same set of entailments or, which comes to the same thing.

2.1.2.8 Ambiguity

According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:128), "ambiguous is often interpreted as a word that has more than one sense." Of all these eight (8) sense types, only few of them will be used in the analysis of this work.

2.1.3 Nigerian Pidgin

Pidgin, as a linguistic phenomenon, represents a unique blend of languages that emerge from contact situations, typically involving speakers of different native tongues (Iwuchukwu & Okafor, 2017). In the 21st century, it has gained scholarly attention for its complex social, cultural, and linguistic implications.

Pidgin is characterized by simplified grammar and vocabulary, arising from the need for communication between speakers of diverse languages, often in colonial or trade contexts (Isa et al., 2015). According to Mufwene (2001: 188), "pidgins are not merely simplified forms of a dominant language but are fully functional languages in their own right". This highlights the misconception that pidgins are inferior or primitive.

The evolution of pidgin languages into creoles, which are stable languages that develop from pidgins, is significant. For instance, Jamaican Patois and Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea have evolved to become fully-fledged languages with rich literary and cultural expressions (Holm, 2000). This transition often reflects sociopolitical changes, as communities seek to assert their identities.

Moreover, pidgin languages serve as important tools for social mobility and cultural expression. In urban settings, pidgin can facilitate a sense of belonging among diverse groups. As stated by Baker (2011:215), "pidgin serves as a bridge, enabling communication while allowing for cultural expressions that resonate with local identities".

Recent research has also examined the role of pidgin in globalization. As English continues to spread, various pidgin forms emerge, adapting to local contexts. For

example, NPE has gained popularity in music and media, reflecting a dynamic interplay between globalization and local culture (Yakpo, 2024).

According to Iwuchukwu (2017), Nigeria's multilingual background provides a veritable ground for the emergence of pidgin-(abridge language for inter-ethnic communication and interaction), as a formidable National language. However, several growing opposing forces tend to make the realization of such dream in the 21st century a fantasy rather than reality.

Yakpo (2024) states that West African Pidgin, or "Pidgin," comprises a group of related and mutually intelligible forms of English, spoken by around 140 million people in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, and The Gambia. From just a few thousand speakers two hundred years ago, it has evolved into a significant global language due to factors like modernization and social integration. Factors such as population growth, migration, and the rise of West African cultural industries are expected to further increase the number of Pidgin speakers, potentially reaching 400 million by 2100. Unlike major global languages such as English and French, which typically spread through colonization and elite influence, Pidgin's growth offers valuable insights into the natural evolution of languages in the twenty-first century.

The origins of the Hawaiian pidgin language reflect the history and diversity of the islands. First used in the mid-19th century by the sugarcane laborers who spoke Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and English and needed a way to communicate with one another, today, the language is common across the islands of Hawai'i. Recently, some

vocabulary—*hammajang*, for example—has been entered into the Oxford English Dictionary.

In the words of (Crystal, 2008:36) as cited from Onome and Ogunjimi (2020), a “Pidgin is a language with a markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon and stylistic range compared to other languages and which is a native of no one.” Fromkin et al. (2011) suggest that pidgin languages originated when speakers of unintelligible languages interacted under specific socio-economic and political conditions, resulting in the creation of a shared language that is not native to any of the speakers. Various theories have been proposed to explain the emergence of pidgin languages, which can generally be classified into two categories: monogenetic and polygenetic theories. The monogenetic theory posits that all pidgins stem from a single source, while the polygenetic theory contends that pidgins from different linguistic communities arise through separate processes of development and adaptation (Ike, 2012). Despite these differing perspectives, both theories recognize a commonality: pidgin languages emerge as contact languages that facilitate communication among diverse groups.

In this context, NPE can be viewed as a simplified or “debased” form of Standard English as it exists in Nigeria. Okechukwu (2012) highlights that the linguistic landscape of Nigeria reveals that NPE predominantly developed in regions where Nigerians first encountered the English language during the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly in trade and colonial settings. This pidgin not only serves as a functional means of communication but also reflects the cultural and historical influences of its speakers.

Today, NPE has evolved, incorporating elements from various Nigerian languages and dialects, making it a dynamic and vibrant aspect of Nigeria's linguistic identity.

Onjewu and Okpe (2015) were of the view that pidgin is a language accepted and recognized though unofficially by Nigerians at all levels of education and classes as a language that is effective for communication. They asserted that the reason for such a development may not be far from the thinking of Egbokhare (2001) as well as Ugot and Afolabi (2011) that Pidgin thrives in a linguistically heterogeneous environment which of course is the situation in Nigeria where about 500 hundred indigenous languages exist (Mark, 2012) as cited from Onjewu and Okpe (2015). Nigerian Pidgin English is a form of English mixed with Nigerian ethnic languages, serving as a common language throughout Nigeria. It is commonly referred to as “Pidgin,” “Broken English,” or simply “Broken.”

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

This section highlights and discusses previous studies which are related to this present study.

Mensah (2011) investigated word formation strategies in NP as a means of enriching its vocabulary and expanding its internal resourcefulness and functionality, from the theoretical standpoint of lexical semantics. The paper noted that English constitutes the superstrate source of borrowing for NP, while languages like Portuguese, French, Nigerian English, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba among others are its substrate lexical influences. The study discovered that the meaning of lexical items in NP may be

achieved through creativity or expressiveness and may be independent of the original meaning in the source language. The paper joined the agitation for the standardization of NP to enhance its propagation of knowledge and maximize its communicative potentials as a language of wider communication in Nigeria.

Mensah et al. (2012) examined language-internal mechanisms that transformed lexical items into morphosyntactic items either for semantic value, creativity, expressivity or routinization. Their basic argument is that grammaticalization in NP is not contact-induced but a language-internal phenomenon, which revealed that NP has both a synchronic and diachronic existence that are imperative in evolving its unique grammar.

Saaed et al. (2025) focused on Nigerian Pidgin (NP). It addresses the task of Implicit Discourse Relation Classification (IDRC) and systematically compare an approach translating NP data to English and then using a well-resourced IDRC tool and back-projecting the labels versus creating a synthetic discourse corpus for NP, in which they translated text and project labels from an annotated corpus, and then train an NP classifier. The latter approach of training an NP classifier outperforms their baseline by 13.27% and 33.98% in f1 score for 4-way and 11-way classification, respectively.

Scholman et al. (2025) presented a parallel English-Nigerian Pidgin corpus of PTB 3.0-style discourse relation annotations, named DiscoNaija. They explained the corpus design criteria, report inter-annotator agreement, and alignment and projection evaluations. They also presented an update to a Nigerian Pidgin connective lexicon, named NaijaLex 2.0. An exploratory corpus analysis focused on comparing the

distributions found in DiscoNaija to those found in PDTB 3.0 and a comparable corpus of English, DiscoSPICE. They identified various features of Nigerian Pidgin discourse coherence: (i) relations tend to be expressed implicitly more often in Nigerian Pidgin in general; (ii) anti-chronological temporal relations tend to be expressed less and are also likely to be expressed explicitly in Nigerian Pidgin; and (iii) coordinating conjunctions occur less frequently in Nigerian Pidgin than in English. The study asserted that DiscoNaija corpus can facilitate a multitude of applications and research purposes, for example to function as training data to improve the performance of discourse relation parsers for Nigerian Pidgin, and to facilitate research into discourse features of creole languages.

2.3 CONCERN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The previous studies mostly focused on how Nigerian Pidgin (NP) forms new words, borrows from other languages, and develops its grammar. For example, Mensah (2011) looked at how NP gets its vocabulary from English and other local languages, and how NP creates new meanings for words. Mensah et al. (2012) explored how NP changes words from their normal use to more fixed grammatical forms within the language itself. Saaed et al. (2025) and Scholman et al. (2025) focused on how NP expresses connections between ideas in texts, using tools and annotated data to study discourse relations and compare NP to English.

However, this present study is different because it focuses on lexical sense relations in NP. That means it looks closely at how words in NP relate to each other in

meaning such as synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and other semantic relationships. While the previous works focused on word formation, grammar, or discourse, this study is more about meaning connections between words. It adds to the knowledge by exploring how NP users understand and use word meanings in relation to each other.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework for the analysis of this research. The theoretical framework to be employed is "structural semantics" by Trier (1931).

3.1 STRUCTURAL SEMANTICS

Structural semantics is a theory in linguistics that explains how the meanings of words are related to each other within a language system. It is based on the idea that words do not carry meaning in isolation but gain their meaning through their relationships with other words in the same semantic field. This approach is particularly useful in studying how vocabulary is organized and understood by speakers of a language.

The theory was developed by Trier, a German linguist, in 1931. In his work titled *Der deutsche Wortschatz im Sinnbezirk des Verstandes*, Trier introduced the concept of semantic fields. He argued that words in a language are grouped into fields based on shared areas of meaning, such as colors, emotions, or kinship terms. Within these fields, each word holds its meaning in contrast to others. For example, the meaning of "hot" is partly understood in relation to "cold" or "warm."

Trier's theory was influenced by the earlier ideas of De Saussure, a Swiss linguist who laid the foundation of structuralism in his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics* (1916). Saussure proposed that meaning in language comes from differences between linguistic signs, not from direct reference to the world.

Later scholars expanded Trier's ideas. Ullmann, in the 1950s and 60s, worked on lexical fields and semantic change, showing how meanings shift over time. Lyons, in his 1963 work *Structural Semantics*, developed a clearer framework for analyzing sense relations like synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy. Coseriu (1970) also contributed by emphasizing the historical and functional context of meaning, offering critiques of Trier's fixed-field approach.

3.2 APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

In studying Lexical Sense Relations in Nigeria Pidgin, this theory provides a suitable framework for analyzing how meanings are constructed through contrasts and associations among words in the language.

Nigeria Pidgin, being a contact language with influences from English and various indigenous languages, contains a unique vocabulary with meanings often dependent on context and usage. Structural semantics helps uncover these meanings by examining patterns such as synonymy (words with similar meanings), antonymy (words with opposite meanings), hyponymy (category relationships), and polysemy (a word having multiple related meanings).

For instance, the word *waka* in Nigeria Pidgin can mean "walk" or "leave", depending on context. Structural semantics allows us to explore how *waka* relates to other verbs like *move*, *go*, or *comot*. Similarly, examining antonyms like *baff* (to bathe) and *dirty* reveals how opposites function in meaning construction. This framework also highlights how meaning in Nigeria Pidgin is structured through systems of oppositions

and groupings, not just individual word definitions. It enables the identification of semantic fields, such as food, body, or movement, and shows how words within each field relate to one another.

By applying structural semantics, the research can present a clearer picture of how lexical meaning in Nigeria Pidgin is organized, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the language's internal structure and usage patterns.

3.3 RELEVANCE/JUSTIFICATION OF THE THEORY

The Structural Semantics theory is very relevant to this research because it focuses on how words relate to one another within a language system. This theory studies meaning by examining the structure of language, especially the relationships between words, such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy. These are key sense relations that are central to this research. Using this theory helps us understand how meanings of words in Nigeria Pidgin are shaped by their connections to other words in the language. It allows us to analyze how speakers of Nigeria Pidgin understand word meanings not in isolation, but through contrasts and associations with other words.

This theory is preferred over others, like the Referential or Cognitive theories, because it focuses more on the language system itself rather than mental processes or real-world references. Structural Semantics is more suitable because this research is about how meaning is structured and organized in Nigeria Pidgin.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyzes the data for this research. The structural semantics theory framework will be used for the analysis of the research, and the analysis will reflect the specific objectives of the research.

4.1 Lexical Sense Relations in Nigerian Pidgin

The analysis to be presented will draw on the structural semantics framework, which emphasizes how meanings are relational and organized within a system rather than existing in isolation. By examining synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and polysemy, this study will highlight not only the linguistic patterns of Nigerian Pidgin but also the social and cultural dimensions that shape its vocabulary. The following sections detail the observed sense relations, illustrate them with examples, and discuss their sources and socio-cultural influences, thereby offering insight into the flexible, expressive, and context-sensitive nature of Nigerian Pidgin. There are lots of lexical sense relations in grammar. For this research, we shall only limit our analysis to only 4 observed in Nigerian Pidgin (synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms and polysemy).

4.1.1 Synonyms in Nigerian Pidgin

Table 1

S/N	Word	Synonyms	Gloss
1.	Kpai	Kpeme	Die
2.	Mugu	Maga	Fool
3	Kom-kom	Kpangolo	Container
4.	No yawa	No wahala	No problem
5.	Mom-cee	Maleh	Mother
6.	Dey your lane	Pack well	Mind your business
7.	Lem	Press, chop	Eat
8.	Crash	Lay	Sleep
9	Gbaga	Plante	Escape
10.	Run comot	Japa	Flee
11.	Troway	Commot	Throw away or remove
12.	Wahala	Gbege	Trouble or problem

The data in Table 1 shows several pairs of Nigerian Pidgin words that are synonyms, meaning they have similar or related meanings, even if they are used in different contexts or regions. Using the structural semantics framework, which looks at how words are related in meaning within a system, we can say these word pairs belong to the same lexical fields and share sense relations.

Data 1: kpai/ kpeme

Example

- (i) The woman kpai yesterday
- (ii) Alfa don kpeme

Explanation

kpai and kpeme both belong to the field of death and mean "to die", showing total synonymy.

Interpretation

data 1(i) explains that woman died yesterday

Data 1(ii) explains that Alfa has died

Data 2: Mugu/ MAGA

Example

- (i) Ese be confirm Mugu
- (ii) Osas maga don pay.

Explanation

Mugu and maga in data 2 both mean "fool" and refer to someone who is easily deceived, especially in a scam, showing near-total synonymy with slight social or contextual

Interpretation

Data 2(i) statement explains that Ese is a fool

Data2(ii) statement explains that Osas scam victim has paid him.

Data 3: kom kom/ kpangolo

Example

- (i) I don Dey carry kom-kom since.
- (ii) Who carry this kpangolo put for here

Explanation

In data 3 kom-kom and kpangolo both mean "container", especially something metallic, and reflect how Nigerian Pidgin uses sound symbolism or reduplication.

Interpretation:

Data 3(i) explains the speaker saying he/ she has been carrying container since.

Data 3(ii) explains the speaker asking who dropped the container there.

Data 4: No yawa/ No Wahala

Example

- (i) No yawa, we go see tomorrow
- (ii) No Wahala, I Dey with you.

Explanation

In data 4, no yawa and no wahala both express the idea of "no problem" or "all is well", common in casual conversations, showing functional synonymy.

Interpretation

Data(i) explains the speaker telling the listener no problem, they will see tomorrow

Data (ii) explains the speaker telling the listener not to worry that he/ she is by his side.

Data 5: Mom-cee/ Maleh

Example

- (i) I Dey go my mom-cee house.
- (ii) Maleh Dey kitchen Dey cook

Explanation:

In data 5, mom-cee and maleh both mean "mother", but may vary by speaker background or tone, showing social variation within synonymy.

Interpretation:

Data 5(i) explains the speaker saying he/ she is going to his mom's house.

Data 5(ii) explains the speaker saying he/she is going to see his mum.

Data 6: Dey your lane/ pack well

Example

- (i) Dey your lane, no let me follow you vex
- (ii) Packwell commot for here.

Explanation

In data 6, dey your lane and pack well both mean "mind your business", expressing a warning or advice, and are used depending on tone or situation, showing contextual synonymy.

Interpretation

Data 6(i) explains the speaker telling the listener to mind his or her business to avoid the speaker from getting angry.

Data 6(ii) explains the speaker telling the listener to mind his business and leave.

Data 7; lem/ press/ chop

Example

- (i) I no las las press that money.
- (ii) You no gree gimme chop
- (iii) How far? Make we lem make we for get strength reach that side.

Explanation:

In data 7 lem, press, and chop all mean "eat", but while chop is the most common, the others are used in specific styles or jokes, showing stylistic variation.

Interpretation:

Data 7(i) explains the speaker telling the listener that he/ she couldn't eventually spend a particular amount of money.

Data 7(ii) explains the speaker telling the listener that the listener didn't give the speaker food to eat.

Data 7(iii) explains the speaker telling the listener that they should go and eat so they will have strength to go somewhere.

Data 8; lay/ crash

Example

- (i) How far? I go just lay for your side
- (ii) When I reach house, I go just crash, I don Taya

Explanation:

In data 8, crash and lay both mean "sleep", and are used informally, especially among young people.

Interpretation:

Data 8(i) explains the speaker telling listener that he/ she wants to sleep at his house.

Data 8(ii) explains the listener telling the speaker that he/she is tired and would just like to sleep when he/ she reaches home.

Data 9; gbagba/ plante

Example

- (i) The guy just gbagba commot for here now
- (ii) She don plante.

Explanation:

In data 9, gbaga and plante both mean "escape", but may differ slightly in intensity or imagery, gbaga sounds more dramatic.

Interpretation:

Data 9(i) explains the speaker telling the listener that the guy just escaped

Data 8(ii) explains the speaker telling the listener the girl has escaped.

Data 10; run/ japa

Example

- (i) I gats run commot for here before maleh reach house.
- (ii) Be like I go japa from this country, I don Taya.

Explanation;

Run comot and japa in (j) also mean "flee", especially from danger or hardship, with japa being more recent slang, showing how new terms enter the language and become synonyms.

Interpretation:

Data 10(i) explains the speaker telling the listener that he/ she has to flee before his mom reaches home.

Data 10(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he/ she has to flee from the country because he/ she is tired of the country's hardship.

Data 11: Troway

Example

- (i) I go troway your bag
- (ii) Commot for my house

Explanation:

In data 11, troway and commot both suggest removal or discarding, though troway is more forceful, while commot can also mean to leave.

Interpretation:

Data 11(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he/ she is going to dispose the listener's bag

Data 11(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener should leave he/ she's house.

Data 12: Wahala/ gbege**Example**

- (i) No bring your Wahala come here
- (ii) Gbege don sup

Explanation:

Finally, wahala and gbege in (1), both mean "trouble", but gbege often carries a stronger or more dramatic tone.

Interpretation:

Data 12(i) explains the speaker telling the listener not to trouble him/her

Data 12(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that there is problem or trouble.

These examples show how Nigerian Pidgin uses synonymy to enrich meaning, allow flexibility, and reflect social, stylistic, and contextual variations, which is a key interest in structural semantics.

4.1.2 Analyzing Antonyms in Nigerian Pidgin

Table 2

S/N	Word (Pidgin)	Antonym (Pidgin)	Gloss (English meaning)
13.	Ajebutter	Ajepako	A soft, pampered person vs. a street-smart, rugged person
14.	Hammer	Broke	To make big money vs. to be poor/broke
15.	Shine	Dull	To stand out/be smart vs. to be unnoticed/slow
16.	Pepper	Sufferhead	Living large vs. suffering/struggling
17.	Sabi	Mumu	To be smart/skilled vs. to be foolish/dull
18.	Vibe	Off	Good energy/flow vs. lack of energy/awkwardness
19.	Scope	Mugu	To outsmart vs. to be fooled/deceived
20.	Blow	Fall hand	To succeed/go viral vs. to fail/disappoint
21.	Package	Scatter	To present oneself well vs. to be disorganized/messy
22.	Run things	Dey under G	To be in control/in charge vs. to be under someone's control

Using the structural semantics theory, which explains meaning through relationships and oppositions between lexical items in a language system, we analyze the Table 2, Nigerian Pidgin antonyms:

Data 13; Ajebutter/ Ajepako

Example

- (i) You na Ajebutter na
- (ii) You be confirm pako, Ajepako

Explanation;

Ajebutter/Ajepako – this binary opposition reflects contrasting social upbringing: pampered vs. rugged, and their meaning is derived relationally, not in isolation.

Interpretation;

Data 13(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener is a soft person.

Data 13(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener is a rugged person

Data 14: Broke/ hammer

Example

- (i) I just broke like church rat
- (ii) Burna boy don hammer better money.

Explanation:

Data 14, Hammer/Broke illustrates a paradigmatic contrast between economic prosperity and lack, forming a semantic field of financial status.

Interpretation:

Data 14(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she has deteriorating financial status.

Data 14(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that burna boy has prospered financially.

Data 15: shine/ dull**Example**

- (i) Omo that babe just Dey shine
- (ii) Why you Dey dull like this?, you nor just sharp.

Explanation;

Shine/Dull in data 15 reflects cognitive or social alertness versus slowness or invisibility, representing a mental or social contrast.

Interpretation:

Data 15(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the lady is socially active

Data 15(ii) interprets the the speaker asking the listener why he or she is not smart.

Data 16: pepper/ suffer head**Example**

- (i) Chaii, make I just pepper like this I go too ball
- (ii) You na jus suffer head, better one.

Explanation;

Pepper/Sufferhead in data 16 forms a binary of enjoyment/luxury versus hardship, and the meaning of pepper here is idiomatic (wealth/success), structurally meaningful only in contrast with sufferhead.

Interpretation;

Data 16(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that when he or she becomes successful, he or she will enjoy.

Data 16(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener is suffering.

Data 17: sabi/ mumu**Example**

- (i) That girl too sabi, she be confirm designer.
- (ii) You jus mumu, your head like coconut.

Explanation:

Sabi/Mumu in data 17 shows intelligence or skill opposed to ignorance or foolishness; they derive meaning within the competence domain.

Interpretation:

Data 17(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the lady is very skilled at her work that she is a good designer

Data 17(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener is dull, that the listener is not smart.

Data 18: Vibe/ off me

Example

- (i) That Dj too get vibes
- (ii) Omo, this matter off me o, no be small

Explanation:

Vibe/Off in data 18 contrasts good energy or social fluency with awkwardness or emotional disconnect, situated in the affective-semantic field.

Interpretation:

Data 18(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the Dj has good energy

Data 18(ii) interprets the speaker telling listener that the situation is awkward.

Data 19: Scope/ Mugu

Example

- (i) Na scope we go jus use na, we no get choice
- (ii) That client na better Mugu

Explanation:

Scope/Mugu in data 19, lies within the intelligence-deception axis, where scope (to outsmart) is only meaningful when set against mugu (the one being deceived), emphasizing power dynamics in communication.

Interpretation:

Data 19(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that they just have to outsmart the whole situation since they are left with no choice.

Data 19(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the client is easily deceived.

Data 20: blow/ fall hand**Example**

- (i) Guyy, I don finally blow
- (ii) You jus Dey fall my hand, you go follow me work again

Explanation:

Blow/Fall hand in data 20, contrasts success or virality (blow) with failure or embarrassment (fall hand), drawing meaning from the success-failure continuum.

Interpretation:

Data 20(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she has finally become famous.

Data 20(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener has dissapointed him/ her and the listner won't work with him/ her again

Data 21: package/ scatter

Example

- (i) Package yourself well
- (ii) Why everywhere jus scatter like this?

Explanation:

Package/Scatter contrasts self-presentation or organization with disarray, emphasizing social image and control.

Interpretation:

Data 21(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener to presente himself well.

Data 21(ii) interprets the speaker asking the listener why the whole place is disorganized

Data 22: run/ under g

Example

- (i) Na me Dey run things for here
- (ii) E Dey under my g, no worry.

Explanation:

Run things/Dey under G expresses agency and leadership versus subjugation or lack of autonomy.

Interpretation:

Data 22(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she is the one in charge.

Data 22(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that a particular person is under he or she's control.

In structural semantics, these pairs gain meaning through oppositional positioning within Nigerian Pidgin's lexical system, often influenced by sociocultural values like wealth, intelligence, control, and social performance, thus reflecting how meaning is systematically organized and relational in nature.

4.1.3 Analyzing Hyponyms in Nigerian Pidgin

Table 3

S/N	Hypernym (General term)	Hyponyms (meaning of specific terms)
23.	Pikin (child)	Baby, young pikin, fine pikin, ugly pikin
24.	Chop (food)	Rice, beans, yam, bread
25.	Runs (hustle)	Scam, prostitution
26.	Lamba (a broad term for talk)	Story, music
27.	MAGA (a slang for a fool)	Someone that can be easily decived, a victim of scam
28.	Moto (vehicle)	Car, okada, keke, bus
29.	Waka (movement/travel)	Trek, run, stroll, japa
30.	Shakara (showing off)	Flaunt, pose, overdo, form
31.	Kasala (trouble)	Fight, wahala, police case, gbege
32.	Tori (story/news)	Gist, rumour, update, gossip

Using the structural semantics theory, which focuses on how words relate in meaning, the data in Table 3 shows how Nigerian Pidgin uses hyponyms (more specific terms) under broader hypernyms (general terms) to build meaning.

Data 23; pikin

Example

- (i) Your pikin don Dey grow
- (ii) This pikin fine die
- (iii) You na still pikin
- (iv) Chaii see as this pikin wor wor

Explanation:

In data 23, "pikin" (child) is the general term, and its hyponyms include "baby," "young pikin," "fine pikin," and "ugly pikin," showing different types or qualities of a child.

Interpretation

Data 23(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener's baby is already growing

Data 23(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener's child is beautiful

Data 23(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener is still a child

Data 23(iv) interprets the speaker telling the listener that a particular child is an ugly child.

Data 24: chop**Example**

- (i) I don chop rice
- (ii) My mama chop bread
- (iii) The girl chop beans
- (iv) You go chop yam?

Explanation:

In data 24, "chop" (food) includes specific food items like "rice," "beans," "yam," and

Interpretation;

Data 24(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she has eaten rice.

Data 24(ii) interprets the Speaker telling the listener that he or she's mom ate bread

Data 24(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the lady has eaten beans

Data 24(iv) interprets the speaker asking the listener if the listener will eat yam.

Data 25: Runs

Example

- (i) The guy dey do plenty runs
- (ii) The girl Dey do runs

Explanation

In data 25, "runs" (hustle) includes specific illegal or informal activities like "scam" and "prostitution."

Interpretation;

Data 25(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that a particular guy does many illegal activities.

Data 25(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that a particular girl is into prostitution.

Data 26: Lamba

Example

- (i) That lamba sweet die
- (ii) You don hear the lamba whery wizekid jus drop?

Explanation:

In data 26, "lamba" (talk) includes "story" and "music," showing forms of spoken or performed content.

Interpretation;

Data 26(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the story is interesting

Data 26(ii) interprets the speaker asking the listener has listened to the song wizkid just released.

Data 27: MAGA**Example**

- (i) That girl na my maga
- (ii) You be maga oh see as them riz you.

Explanation

In data 27, "MAGA" (a fool) includes hyponyms like "someone that can be easily deceived" and "a victim of scam," pointing to people who are tricked.

Interpretation;

Data 27(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that a particular lady is his scam victim

Data 27(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that this listener can be easily deceived because the listener was scammed.

Data 28: Motor

Example

- (i) Make we go enter motor.
- (ii) I don buy motor.
- (iii) The motor whey carry us travel almost have accident.

Explanation:

In data 28, "moto" (vehicle) includes types of transport like "car," "okada," "keke," and "bus."

Interpretation:

Data 28(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that they should go and enter tricycle.

Data 28(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she just bought a car.

Data 28(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the bus he or she used to travel almost had accident.

Data 29: waka

Example

- (i) Make we quick waka reach that side
- (ii) We just Dey waka Dey go
- (iii) You no go like that waka fast fast?

Explanation

In data 29, "waka" (movement/travel) includes actions like "trek," "run," "stroll," and "japa," which show different ways or reasons for moving.

Interpretation

Data 29(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that they should quickly go to that area

Data 29(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that they were just strolling

Data 29(iii) interprets the speaker asking the listener if the listener won't run fast.

Data 30: Shakara

Example

- (i) You too Dey do shakara
- (ii) Oya do shakara for me
- (iii) Your own sef plenty, your shakara too much

Explanation:

In data 30, "shakara" (showing off) includes "flaunt," "pose," "overdo," and "form," which all describe forms of attention-seeking behavior.

Interpretation:

Data 30(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener forms

Data 30(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener to pose for him or her

Data 30(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the listener over does

Data 31: Kasala

Example

- (i) Kasala don burst
- (ii) Kasala don sup oh, me Dey run commot
- (iii) Which kind Kasala be this?

Explanation

In data 31, "kasala" (trouble) includes "fight," "wahala," "police case," and "gbege," which all show types of problems.

Interpretation:

Data 31(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that there is a fight outbreak

Data 31(ii) interprets the speaker telling the speaker that there is a police case and he or she is leaving

Data 31(iii) interprets the speaker asking the listener what kind of problem they've fallen into

Data 32: Tori

Example

- (i) You don see the new Tori?
- (ii) You never gist me about the Tori
- (iii) The new Tori whey just Dey reach us be say Adia don born

Explanation:

In data 32, "tori" (story/news) includes "gist," "rumour," "update," and "gossip," showing different kinds of shared information.

Interpretation;

Data 32(i) interprets the speaker asking the listner if he/ she has heard about the new upadate

Data 32(ii)interpretes the speaker telling the listener that the listner hasn't gisted him/ she about a particular gossip.

Data 32(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listner that new rumor flying around is that Adia has put to bed.

This pattern of grouping specific meanings under general terms shows how Nigerian Pidgin structures its vocabulary in a clear and meaningful way.

4.1.4 Analyzing Polysemy in Nigerian Pidgin

Table 4

S/N	Word	Meaning 1	Meaning 2
33	Dey	Exist (dat tin still dey?)	To be certain about something (I dey house)
34.	Run	Move quickly (she don run commot)	To operate (the girl dey run quickly)
35.	Hold	To hold something physically (hold this bag)	To have something (you dey hold cash?)
36.	Cut	To give something (cut soap for me)	To cheat (them cut my money for market)
37	Flow	To move somothly (the river dey flow well)	To perform well (the rapper dey flow well die)
38.	Scope	To observe or check (I dey scope the new car)	To understand something (you don scope Wetin he talk?)
39.	Ginger	To motivate or energize (the speech dey ginger me)	To the exite (the Dj ginger the party)
40.	Chop	Eat (I dey chop rice)	Take advantage of something (you dey chop my money)
41.	Big	Large (dis house big)	Important (you na big man)
42.	Flex	To show off wealth (he dey flex him new car)	To relax (I go flex for beach last weekend)
43.	Hand	Human body part	to give
44.	Hot	Anger	When somebody is looking organized
45.	Show	Come	To teach
46.	Abeg	Please	As a means of insult
47.	Sha	Well, in any case	Just, to give good impression
48.	For	Would have	Multipurpose pre position
49.	Toh	Well	In that case
50	Con	eventually	started

Using the structural semantics theory, which examines how meanings are built through relationships and shared semantic features within a language system, the following Nigerian Pidgin polysemous words reveal systematic meaning extensions.

Data 33: Dey

Example

- (i) That phone still Dey?
- (ii) I Dey come
- (iii) I Dey house
- (iv) I Dey

Explanation

Dey in data 33 conveys both existence and continuous action unified by the semantic feature [+present state].

Interpretation

Data 33(i) explains the speaker asking the listener if the phone is still functioning

Data 33(ii) explains the speaker telling the listener that he or she is coming

Data 33(iii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she is at home

Data 33(iv) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she is fine

Data 34: Run

Example

- (i) She don run commot
- (ii) The girl Dey run things quick quick

Explanation

Run in data 34 includes physical movement and operation linked by [+activity] and [+motion/process].

Interpretation;

Data 34(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the lady ran away

Data 34(ii) interprets tge speaker telling the listener that the lady is fast at what she does.

Data 35 : Hold

Example

- (i) Help me hold this bag
- (ii) You Dey hold cash?

Explanation

Hold in data 35 covers physical grasp and possession connected by [+control/retention].

Interpretation

Data 35(i) interprets the speaker telling the listner to help him or her hold a bag

Data 35(ii) interprets the speaker asking the listener if the listener is in possession of money.

Data 36: Cut

Example;

- (i) Cut soap for me naa
- (ii) Omo them cut my money for market

Explanation:

Cut in data 36 spans giving and cheating through [+division] and metaphorical shift from literal to social context

Interpretation:

Data 36(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener to give him or her financial assistance.

Data 36(ii) interprets the speaker explaining to the listener that he or she got cheated in the market

Data 37: Flow

Example

- (i) The river Dey flow well well
- (ii) The rapper Dey flow well die

Explanation:

Flow in data 37 refers to smooth physical movement and smooth performance [+smooth progression].

Interpretation:

Data 37(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the river is flowing perfect

Data 37(ii) interprets the speaker telling the listener that the rapper has smooth performance

Data 38: Scope

Example

- (i) I Dey scope the new car
- (ii) You scope Wetin just happen?

Explanation

Scope in data 38 merges observation and comprehension (with the feature [+mental attention]).

Interpretation

Data 38(i) interprets the speaker telling the listener that he or she is observing the car

Data 38(ii) interprets the speaker asking the listener if he or she just understood what happened.

Data 39: Ginger

Example

- (i) The speech Dey ginger me well
- (ii) The Dj ginger the party well.

Explanation

Ginger in data 39 indicates motivation and excitement both involving [+emotional stimulation].

Interpretation

Data 39(i) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that he or she felt motivated by the speech

Data 39(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listner that Dj made the party exciting.

Data 40: Chop

Example

- (i) I dey chop rice
- (ii) You Dey chop my money

Explanation

Chop in data 40 ranges from eating to exploitation tied by [+consumption].

Interpretation:

Data 40(i) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that he or she is eating rice.

Data 40(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that he or she is extorting money from him

Data 41: Big

Example:

- (i) Dis house big dieee
- (ii) You na confirm big man

Explanation:

Big in data 41 expresses physical size and importance via the shared feature [+prominence].

Interpretation:

Data 41(i) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that the house is large physically

Data 41(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that the listener is someone of importanc.

Data 42: Flex

Example

- (i) He Dey flex him new car
- (ii) I go flex for beach last weekend

Explanation:

Flex in data 42 includes showing off and relaxing connected through [+display/enjoyment].

Interpretation

Data 42(i) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that he flauts his new car

Data 42(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that he went to enjoy at the beach last weekend.

Data 43: Hand

Example

- (i) You hand fine o
- (ii) How far, hand me that bag

Explanation

Hand in data 42 expresses human body part and (noun) and to give (verb)

Interpretation;

Data 43(i) interpretes the speaker telling the listener that his hand is beautiful

Data 43(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listener to give him the bag

Data 44: Hot

Examples

- (i) Why your body Dey hot like this?
- (ii) Omo, see as you just Dey hot this period

Explanation;

Hot in data 44 show anger (now) it also expresses beauty, wealth depending on the context that it is being used.

Interpretation;

Data 44(i) interpretes the speaker asking the listener why he or she is angry

Data 44(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listner this he or she looks very beautiful currently.

Data 45: Show

Examaple

- (i) You still Dey show today? Make we for reach that side
- (ii) Come show me how them Dey play this game Abeg

Explanation

Show in data 45 includes come (verb) and the act of teaching (verb)

Interpretation

Data 45(i) interprets the speaker asking the listener if the listener will still come or be available so they can go somewhere together.

Data 45(ii) interpretes the speaker telling the listener to come and teach him how to play a game

Data 46: Abeg

Example

- (i) Abeg, come help me buy something
- (ii) Abeg Abeg you too Dey talk .

Explanation

Abeg in data 46 expresss please and it can also be seen a word of insult.

Interpretation

Data 46(i) interpretes the statement please help me buy something

Data 46(ii) interpretes the statement (you are over doing, you over talk)

Data 47: Sha

Examples

- (i) Sha, make we dey go
- (ii) Sha tell me when you don finish
- (iii) That girl fine shaaaa

Explanation

“Sha” this is a pidgin words that originated from Yoruba. It has its roots from yourba etymology. “Sha” in data 47 can be use as (in any case) it can also be used as (just) and it can also be used as a means of expression

Interpretation

Sha in data 47 (i) interpretes the statement “in any case, let’s be going.”

Sha in data 47(ii) interprets the statement “Just tell me when you are done”

Sha in data 47(iii) shows the speaker telling the listener that the lady is very beautiful.

Data 48: For Examples

- (i) If to say you tell me say you Dey come, I for don cook
- (ii) E Dey for my second shop
- (iii) For you mind na, you think say you smart

Explanation

For is an English word that was borrowed by pidgin English and it can be used as “would have”, it can also be used as a multipurpose preposition.

Interpretation

For in data 48(i) interpretes the sentence “if you told me you were coming, I would have cooked

For in data 48(ii) interpretes the statement “it’s in my second shop”

For in data 48(iii) interpretes the statement “in your mind now, you think you are smart.”

Data 49: Toh

Examples;

- (i) Toh, hin say hin go go
- (ii) Toh, na to go be that Nahhh
- (iii) Speaker A: Sheybi you say you buy motor,
Speaker B; Toh.

Explanation

Toh in data 49 reflects as an adverb which means (well), it can also be a means of self expression a word that can be used for (in that case)

Interpretation

Data 49(i) interpretes the statement “Well, he said is was going to go”

Data 49(ii) interpretes the statement “In that case, we should be going.”

Data 49(iii) interprets the statement “I thought you said you were going to buy a car”
Speaker b would then reply “I heard it too”. “Toh” in this scenario means I heard it too.

Data 50: Con

Example

- (i) I con say make I go house
- (ii) I con Dey think say Wetin I do
- (iii) He con Dey make me wonder Wetin I do
- (iv) I con tell am say I no wan do

Explanation

Con is an adverb word in Nigerian Pidgin English and it can be used for “eventually”, “started” “began” it can also be used for “then”

Interpretation

Con in data 40(i) interprets the statement “I eventually said, let me go home”

Con in data 40(ii) interpretes the question “I started to think, what did I do?”

Con in data 40(iii) interpretes the statement “ he began to make me wonder what I did.”

Com in data 40(iv) Interpreys the statement. “ I then said I was no longer interested.”

Each pair reflects how core semantic features expand through context, supporting structural semantics’ view of meaning as relational and feature-based.

4.2 LINGUISTIC SOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO THESE SENSE RELATIONS

The sense relations observed in Nigerian Pidgin, as shown in the data, come from several linguistic sources. These sources help shape the meaning, usage, and variety of expressions found in the language. This section explains the main linguistic sources that contribute to the sense relations of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy.

4.2.1. Borrowing from English and Indigenous Languages

One major source of Nigerian Pidgin vocabulary and meaning is borrowing, taking words from English and Nigerian local languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and others. For example: Words like "press" and "chop" come from English but are used in new ways in Pidgin. "Gbege" and "wahala" come from Yoruba and Hausa and now mean "trouble" in Pidgin. Because these words come from different language backgrounds but now carry similar or related meanings in Pidgin, they often become synonyms (e.g., no yawa / no wahala) or show polysemy (e.g., chop meaning both "eat" and "exploit").

4.2.2 Slang and Street Language

Another strong source is slang, especially among the youth and in urban areas. Nigerian Pidgin grows quickly in informal settings like the streets, music, social media, and comedy. This is where new words and expressions are formed or change meaning. Words like "japa" (to flee) or "pepper" (to live well or succeed) come from modern slang. These expressions often create synonyms, antonyms, and even polysemous meanings based on how people use them in daily conversation.

4.2.3 Sound Symbolism and Reduplication

Nigerian Pidgin often uses sound to show meaning. This includes sound symbolism (where the sound suggests meaning) and reduplication (repeating sounds or words). Words like "kom-kom" and "kpangolo" (both meaning container) use sound to give the listener an idea of what the word refers to, even before understanding its full meaning.

These often help form synonyms or related terms within the same semantic field (group of related meanings).

4.2.4 Contextual and Social Usage

In Pidgin, many words change meaning depending on the social setting, speaker, or tone. This allows for a lot of contextual variation. "Mom-cee" and "maleh" both mean "mother," but might be used in different social groups. "Scope" means to look at something or to understand something, depending on the context. This is a good example of polysemy.

So, social and cultural context helps shape both synonyms and polysemy.

4.2.5 Metaphorical Extension

Many Pidgin words gain new meanings through metaphors. This means the word is used in a new way, based on its original meaning. "Cut" means to divide something physically, but in Pidgin, it also means to cheat someone ("them cut my money"). "Flex" means to relax or to show off, both meanings come from the idea of stretching or

showing movement. This process creates polysemy and helps the language remain expressive and flexible.

4.2.6 Binary and Oppositional Thinking

For antonyms, Pidgin often uses pairs of words that come from opposite ends of social experience, such as poverty vs. wealth or intelligence vs. foolishness. For example, "hammer" vs. "broke" shows the contrast between being rich and being poor. These opposites reflect social values and real-life experiences, which help structure Pidgin vocabulary using contrast.

4.2.7 Word Formation and Creativity

Nigerian Pidgin is rich in creative word formation. Speakers often make new words or phrases by combining English with local expressions or by twisting existing meanings. Terms like "run things" (to be in charge) or "fall hand" (to fail or disappoint) show this creative use of language. This adds to both synonymy and antonymy, as new words are made to match or oppose existing ones.

4.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT AND USAGE OF LEXICAL SENSE RELATIONS IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN

Language does not exist in a vacuum. It grows and changes based on the people who use it and the environment they live in. Nigerian Pidgin, like many other languages, reflects the culture, lifestyle, and daily experiences of its speakers. The use of lexical sense relations such as synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and polysemy in Nigerian

Pidgin is deeply shaped by social and cultural factors. These factors influence not just the words people use, but how they use them, and what they mean in different situations.

4.3.1 Social Class and Identity

One major factor that shapes the development of sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin is social class. For example, words like “ajebutter” and “ajepako” are antonyms that describe two opposite social classes: a pampered child vs. a streetwise child. These words are not just about describing people, but also about showing identity and background. Pidgin speakers use such words to connect with others from similar backgrounds or to separate themselves from others. Also, some synonyms like “mugu” and “maga” reflect how people from different classes or groups describe the same idea (a fool or someone who is easily tricked). The use of these terms often depends on social settings and who is speaking.

4.3.2 Youth Culture and Slang

Young people play a big role in shaping language in Nigeria. New slang terms often become popular and develop multiple meanings. For example, the word “japa” (to flee) is a recent addition that has become a synonym of older expressions like “run comot”. Youths also influence polysemous words. For instance, “flex” can mean to show off or to relax meanings shaped by the youthful lifestyle of enjoyment and self-expression. This culture of slang and code-switching among the youth encourages creativity in language, which leads to the development of new synonyms, antonyms, and multiple meanings for existing words.

4.3.3 Urbanization and Street Life

The rise of urban centers in Nigeria has brought together people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Nigerian Pidgin acts as a bridge language, especially in the cities. Because of this, words in Pidgin often develop new meanings based on urban experiences. Terms like “hammer” (to make money) and “broke” (to be poor) are antonyms that come from city life where hustle and survival are common. Urban life also leads to the use of words in different ways, depending on context. For example, “chop” can mean to eat, but it can also mean to take advantage of someone. This is common in city settings where corruption, fast living, and business dealings affect how words are understood.

4.3.4 Popular Culture and Media

Music, movies, and social media have a strong influence on how Pidgin is used. Artists and influencers often coin new words or give new meanings to old ones. Words like “blow” (to succeed) and “fall hand” (to fail or disappoint) are examples of how popular culture spreads certain lexical relations. These words become part of everyday speech and add to the synonyms or antonyms in the language. Music, especially Afrobeats and street music, also influences polysemy. Words like “ginger” now have emotional meanings like motivation or excitement because of how they are used in songs.

4.3.5 Cultural Values and Beliefs

Nigerian Pidgin reflects cultural attitudes, especially toward success, struggle, respect, and relationships. For example, synonyms like “wahala” and “gbege” both mean

trouble, but “gbege” sounds more dramatic. This reflects how Nigerians often exaggerate or use strong expressions to describe situations. Also, terms like “scope” and “mugu” reflect the cultural reality of smartness vs. being deceived — a theme common in stories, scams, and daily interactions. These terms form part of the social conversation about being sharp and not falling victim to tricks, which is common in Nigerian society.

4.3.6 Ethnic and Regional Influences

Even though Nigerian Pidgin is a unifying language, it borrows heavily from local languages and reflects regional differences. For example, some synonyms or hyponyms are used more in certain regions or ethnic groups. “Mom-cee” and “maleh” both mean mother, but their use might vary based on cultural or tribal background. This regional influence helps expand the vocabulary and sense relations in Pidgin.

4.3.7 Humor and Informality

Pidgin is often used in informal settings, where humor, sarcasm, and playfulness are common. This encourages the use of multiple meanings and slang. For instance, a word like “cut” can mean to give something or to cheat someone. The change in meaning often depends on tone or situation, and speakers use this flexibility to be playful, funny, or sarcastic. This culture of informality helps keep the language alive and flexible, allowing old words to develop new uses and meanings.

4.4 VARIATIONS IN LEXICAL SENSE RELATIONS ACROSS DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN USE

Nigerian Pidgin is a rich and flexible language that draws from different languages and cultures in Nigeria. Its words often change meaning or show different relationships depending on how, where, and by whom they are used. These relationships between words are called lexical sense relations. In this research, four types of these relationships are studied: synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and polysemy. Each of them shows how Nigerian Pidgin adjusts and expands to fit different social and communication needs.

In Nigerian Pidgin, many words mean the same thing but are used in different situations, places, or by different people. For example, “kpai” and “kpeme” both mean “to die”. They can be used interchangeably, depending on the speaker’s preference or the region they come from. Some words like “mugu” and “maga” both mean a fool, especially someone who falls for scams. While they mean almost the same thing, the one you use may depend on whether you're joking or being serious.

Other examples like “no yawa” and “no wahala” both mean “no problem,” and they are often used casually to show that everything is fine. This shows how Pidgin allows for stylistic and social variation, where people can say the same thing in different ways based on their background, mood, or purpose. Antonyms in Nigerian Pidgin reflect the realities of life, especially in terms of money, intelligence, lifestyle, and social image. For instance, “hammer” (to make money) is the opposite of “broke” (to be poor). People

use these words to describe life situations, and they reflect the speaker's status or experience. In some cases, the opposites are not just about meaning but also about how people behave or present themselves. For example, "package" (to present yourself well) and "scatter" (to be disorganized) talk about how someone looks or carries themselves. These kinds of opposites help to express judgments, comparisons, or expectations in society. Also, words like "sabi" (to know) and "mumu" (to be foolish) show mental sharpness versus dullness, which are common themes in Nigerian daily talk, especially when joking or mocking someone.

In Nigerian Pidgin, there are general words that have smaller, more specific types under them. For example, "pikin" means "child," but there are many ways to describe a child, like "baby," "fine pikin," or "ugly pikin." The word "moto" (vehicle) can refer to cars, buses, okadas, or kekes. Depending on what kind of transport you are talking about, the specific word changes, but they all still fall under one group. Another example is "kasala" (trouble), which can mean fight, wahala, police case, or gbege. Each of these words points to a different type of problem. This use of hyponyms shows how Nigerian Pidgin breaks down general ideas into real-life examples that people can relate to.

Many words in Nigerian Pidgin have more than one meaning, depending on the sentence or situation. For example, "chop" means to eat (as in food), but it can also mean to take advantage of someone, like spending their money. The word "run" can mean to move fast, but it can also mean to operate something, like "dey run business." Another example is "big," which can mean large in size or important in status (e.g., "big man").

These examples of polysemy show how Nigerian Pidgin speakers use the same word in creative ways to talk about different ideas. The context (what's happening in the conversation) tells you which meaning the word has. This gives the language flexibility and helps people communicate more expressively.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis shows that Nigerian Pidgin is a very expressive and flexible language, rich in word relationships that help people communicate clearly and creatively. From the study, we see that synonyms like "kpai" and "kpeme" or "no yawa" and "no wahala" are used to say the same thing in different ways, depending on region, mood, or social setting. Antonyms such as "hammer" and "broke" reflect real-life contrasts like wealth versus poverty, and show how Pidgin expresses strong feelings about life situations. Hyponyms, such as types of "chop" (food) or "moto" (vehicle), show how general words can be broken into smaller, familiar parts that people easily understand. Also, polysemous words like "chop," "run," or "cut" show how one word can have many meanings depending on the situation. This makes the language very adaptable. The research also shows that these word relationships come from many sources like English, local languages, slang, popular culture, and urban life. Young people, social media, and everyday struggles help shape how words are used and understood. In all, Nigerian Pidgin uses synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and polysemy to reflect real-life experiences, make conversation lively, and allow for social and cultural expression.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding four chapters of this work, we examined lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin. The methodology, theoretical framework and the analysis of the data were also examined. This concluding chapter presents the summary of the study, findings, conclusion and recommendations

5.1 SUMMARY

This research study was designed to look into lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin. The first chapter focused on the background of the study. The chapter stated the aim and the objectives of the study as well introduce the topic and the language of the research. It also looked at the statement of the research problem and the significance of the study. The data relied on primary and secondary data. The second chapter reviewed some relevant literatures as related to the present study. The chapter was divided into three main sections, they are: conceptual review, previous studies, and concern of the present study. The third chapter focused on the theoretical framework which was the structural semantics by Trier (1931). The fourth chapter has as its main concern the data presentation and analysis. The analysis was drawn from the presented data. The theoretical framework was used to analyze the data.

5.2 FINDINGS

The findings reveal the following:

1. Lexical Sense Relations in Nigerian Pidgin: Nigerian Pidgin displays rich lexical sense relations, including synonymy (e.g., *kpai/kpeme* for "die"), antonymy (e.g., *hammer/broke*), hyponymy (e.g., *moto* as a general term for car, *okada*, bus), and polysemy (e.g., *chop* meaning "eat" and "exploit"). These relations reflect the dynamic and context-driven nature of the language.

2. Linguistic Sources: These sense relations are shaped by borrowing from English and indigenous languages, slang, sound symbolism, and creative word formation. Words like *wahala* (from Hausa) and *gbege* (from Yoruba) show how Pidgin blends diverse linguistic inputs to form meaningful connections.

3. Socio-Cultural Influences: Pidgin's vocabulary reflects social class, youth culture, urbanization, media, and humor. For example, antonyms like *ajebutter/ajepako* show class contrast, while polysemous terms like *flex* capture urban lifestyle and popular culture.

4. Contextual Variations: Lexical sense relations vary by region, speaker, and situation. For example, *no yawa* and *no wahala* both mean "no problem" but may be used differently depending on the speaker's background. Context also determines the meaning of polysemous words like *run* or *cut*.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study shows that Nigerian Pidgin is rich in lexical sense relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and polysemy. These word relationships help speakers express different meanings in creative and flexible ways. The language draws from English, local Nigerian languages, slang, and sound-based expressions to build its unique vocabulary. Social and cultural factors like class, youth lifestyle, and media also shape how words are formed and used. For example, words like *ajebutter* and *ajepako* reflect class differences, while *flex* shows modern youth culture. Meanings often depend on context, region, and the speaker's background, making Pidgin highly adaptable. This means one word can have many meanings based on how and where it is used.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommend further study on this research work and other lexical sense relations in Nigerian Pidgin not touched in this research work be carried out by scholars, linguists and any other person interested in the sense relations of Nigerian Pidgin.

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