



Original Research Article

Classroom Translanguaging in Nigerian Higher Education: English–Nigerian Pidgin Alternation at Benue State Polytechnic

Article Section: Education and Language Studies

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Abstract: This study examines reported English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation in tertiary classroom discourse at Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo, Nigeria. It focuses on how often participants encounter such alternation, the functions they attribute to it, perceived educational implications, and attitudes toward its place in formal instruction. The source study describes a descriptive questionnaire survey supplemented by classroom observations and semi-structured interviews across Mass Communication, Business Administration, Public Administration, Computer Science, and Science Laboratory Technology. Of 250 questionnaires reportedly administered to a target sample of 220 students and 30 lecturers, 236 were usable (94.4%). The reported frequency distribution indicates occasional alternation (44.1%), frequent alternation (34.7%), and very frequent alternation (13.1%). Respondents most often identified clarification of concepts (83.9%), encouragement of participation (78.0%), and maintenance of attention (72.5%) as communicative functions. Perceived benefits included improved comprehension (85.2%), more interactive learning (81.8%), and greater classroom participation (79.2%). At the same time, 68.2% expressed concern that excessive use might weaken formal English proficiency. These findings document participants' accounts and perceptions, not experimentally measured learning gains. The paper argues for context-sensitive use of multilingual resources alongside sustained attention to formal academic English, while recognizing the limits of a single-institution descriptive study.

Article Key Information

Keywords: Classroom discourse; English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation; Multilingual education; Nigerian polytechnics; Translanguaging

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1. Introduction

Language is central to teaching, learning, and social interaction. In multilingual educational environments, speakers routinely draw on different linguistic resources even when an institution prescribes one formal medium of instruction.

English is the principal language of instruction in Nigerian tertiary institutions, yet everyday academic exchanges may include Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous languages. The present study investigates one identifiable feature of this ecology: reported alternation between English and Nigerian Pidgin during lecturer–student interaction. Its significance lies not only in whether alternation occurs, but also in the purposes and meanings that speakers attribute to it.

Translanguaging has become influential in research on multilingualism and education because it examines the flexible mobilization of linguistic resources in meaning-making (García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011). It must nevertheless be distinguished analytically from code-switching. Code-switching typically describes alternation between socially identifiable language varieties in interaction; translanguaging offers a broader perspective on how multilingual speakers coordinate their repertoires. Consequently, the frequency with which respondents report English–Pidgin alternation cannot, on its own, establish the full nature or pedagogical efficacy of translanguaging. This study uses the two concepts carefully: English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation names the reported practice, whereas translanguaging supplies an interpretive framework.

Nigeria provides a particularly informative setting for investigating classroom language choice because English, Nigerian Pidgin, and many indigenous languages coexist across educational and social domains. Nigerian Pidgin is used across numerous linguistic communities and functions in interpersonal communication, popular media, and public life (Faraclas, 1996; Deuber, 2005; Mensah, 2012). Its communicative reach should not be confused with linguistic simplicity or inferiority: like other languages, Nigerian Pidgin exhibits systematic patterns and contextually differentiated uses. In tertiary education, students and lecturers may assign different values to English as a formal academic resource and to Nigerian Pidgin as an accessible interactional resource.

The literature provides substantial theoretical and contextual support for multilingual educational practices, but evidence from a particular school type cannot automatically be generalized to Nigerian polytechnics. For instance, Jegede (2024) studies bilingual primary classrooms, while Ugwuona (2020) documents linguistic borrowing and translanguaging in a speech community rather than in tertiary teaching. The issue addressed here is more specific: how members of five programmes at one polytechnic describe the frequency, functions, and perceived implications of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation. This institutional focus is valuable, but claims of a national or sector-wide knowledge gap must be framed cautiously in the absence of a systematic literature search.

At Benue State Polytechnic, the five programmes selected for the investigation were Mass Communication, Business Administration, Public Administration, Computer Science, and Science Laboratory Technology. These programmes encompass disciplinary settings with potentially different communicative routines, such as explanation of technical concepts, discussion-based teaching, questioning, and management of practical exercises. The study report describes a mixed linguistic environment and reports observation of classroom interactions, but it does not provide a coded corpus or discipline-specific results that would support firm comparisons among the programmes. They are therefore treated here as the study setting, not as experimentally compared groups.

The place of Nigerian Pidgin in tertiary instruction raises an important question about the relationship between communicative accessibility and academic language development. An occasional explanation in a familiar variety may enable a student to request clarification, yet that possibility must not be presented as a demonstrated improvement in knowledge or examination performance without independent learning measures. Similarly, concern about English proficiency is a legitimate attitude to investigate, but respondents' concern is not itself evidence of deterioration in English skills. This separation of perception, observation, and measured educational effect guides the analysis.

Language alternation may also carry social meanings such as solidarity, humour, approachability, or reduced formality. Auer (1998) offers an interactional perspective on how switching may organize discourse, whereas Norton (2013) connects language practices with identity and participation. Such perspectives help formulate explanations for the survey patterns, but the present findings cannot identify which mechanism operated in a particular lesson without examples of recorded classroom talk. The paper therefore interprets the available tables as descriptive accounts of participants' experiences and attitudes.

Against this background, the study addresses four linked questions: How frequently do respondents report English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation? Which communicative functions do they associate with it? Which educational benefits or

difficulties do they perceive? What attitudes do they express about its place alongside academic English? The contribution is a context-specific descriptive account drawing on lecturer and student perspectives at a Nigerian polytechnic. It should inform further observational and outcome-based research rather than stand as a causal test of translanguaging pedagogy.

2. Conceptual and Empirical Background

2.1 Translanguaging, code-switching and analytical scope

The term translanguaging originated in bilingual-education discussions and has developed into an account of meaning-making across a speaker's linguistic resources (Williams, 1994; García & Wei, 2014). Whereas code-switching studies may identify the boundaries and sequential placement of named languages, translanguaging scholarship often questions the assumption that those boundaries exhaust what multilingual speakers know and do. These perspectives can be complementary for the present inquiry. The reported alternation between English and Nigerian Pidgin is directly operationalizable in a questionnaire; a stronger translanguaging analysis would additionally require contextualized classroom discourse, including how speakers combine resources to accomplish pedagogical tasks.

This conceptual distinction matters for interpretation. The results do not include transcribed language episodes, sequential analysis, or a coded observation schedule; hence they cannot directly establish how specific classroom utterances created shared understanding. Instead, they show that participants perceive classroom language alternation as occurring and associate it with communicative functions. Canagarajah (2011) and Creese and Blackledge (2010) provide relevant conceptual perspectives, but their claims should not be treated as substitutes for empirical demonstration in the present dataset.

The relevance of multilingual repertoires is particularly apparent where educational policies favor English and participants' everyday communicative resources are broader. Probyn (2009), examining South African classrooms, shows the tensions surrounding code-switching in English-medium instruction; her findings illuminate possible institutional pressures but arise from a different educational setting. Cummins (2007) questions strict monolingual instructional assumptions and outlines complementary bilingual strategies. Together, these sources motivate examination of language choices without predetermining whether any single pedagogical outcome has improved.

2.2 Nigerian Pidgin in social and academic communication

Nigerian Pidgin occupies an established place in the country's multilingual communicative ecology. It has a history of language contact and identifiable linguistic structures and is widely employed for interaction across linguistic communities (Faraclas, 1996; Deuber, 2005). It should not be described as lacking grammatical complexity merely because it is used in less formal settings. Its social meanings and distribution vary according to place, speakers, activity, and expectations of linguistic prestige.

Research on Nigerian Pidgin documents linguistic variation, contact, and the development of grammatical patterns. Deuber (2005) examines its use in Lagos, while Mensah (2012) analyzes grammaticalization, emphasizing language-internal processes. Such studies establish Nigerian Pidgin as a systematic subject of linguistic investigation. They do not directly test the effectiveness of using Nigerian Pidgin in higher-education classrooms; that distinction limits the claims made here about instructional benefits.

Attitudes toward Nigerian Pidgin can vary according to whether the setting is informal conversation, institutional communication, or assessed academic writing. The question in this article is not whether Nigerian Pidgin is intrinsically inferior to English, but how respondents perceive its supplementary use in a system where English retains formal academic responsibilities. This makes the survey items on moderated use and possible effects on English proficiency analytically important.

The study describes lecturers and students using Nigerian Pidgin in explanation, humour, questions, and interpersonal interaction. Without a transcript-based account, these descriptions should be read as contextual observations presented by the original researcher rather than independently reproduced discourse evidence. The distinction does not negate the significance of participant accounts; it indicates the level of inference that the available evidence can support.

2.3 Classroom discourse and multilingual pedagogy

Classroom discourse concerns the ways participants construct instructional meaning through questions, explanations, feedback, reformulation, and other interactional practices. In multilingual settings, the resources used to accomplish these actions may cross named-language boundaries. Creese and Blackledge (2010) examine translanguaging in bilingual educational interaction and connect it with learning and teaching practices. Their study informs the present interpretation, but its context and methods differ from the present questionnaire-led design.

The theoretical importance of language alternation lies partly in its potential to support explanation and participation. However, analytical precision requires separating the function a respondent attributes to an utterance from the function shown by sequential evidence. In a recorded classroom episode, for example, a change of language might precede clarification, humour, or repair; in a questionnaire, respondents can report that they associate alternation with such outcomes. This paper reports the latter robustly from its four tables while discussing observational descriptions cautiously.

Probyn (2009) situates codeswitching within the tensions of English-medium education in South Africa. Cummins (2007) argues that multilingual resources may be used in coordinated ways alongside target-language development. Both contributions make a binary opposition between academic English and all other classroom languages too simple. Nonetheless, the balance between these resources remains an empirical and pedagogical question to be addressed in the specific institutional context.

The possible concern that non-English classroom talk may interfere with formal academic language development should not be rejected or endorsed without evidence. A questionnaire can measure whether respondents hold this concern; tests of writing, oral presentations, longitudinal proficiency, or comparable learning assessments would be needed to determine whether the feared effect occurs. This methodological distinction underpins the interpretation of Table 4.

2.4 English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation in education

English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation in educational environments can arise during explanations, question-and-answer sessions, peer discussions, classroom management, and social interaction. These categories provide an organizing vocabulary for studying classroom language choice rather than proof that each function was directly observed in the present study. In the available results, the six functions in Table 2 are categories endorsed by questionnaire respondents.

Studies of Nigerian Pidgin variation and usage (Faraclas, 1996; Deuber, 2005) make clear that it is a communicatively adaptable resource. An interactional approach to language choice (Auer, 1998) further suggests that alternation can mark changes in stance or discourse activity. These perspectives help explain why lecturers and students might assign communicative value to shifting varieties, but they cannot determine the magnitude of a benefit without observation or outcome data.

At the classroom level, possible functions include clarifying a term, repeating a difficult point, negotiating participation, or reducing interpersonal distance. Because the present results are aggregated by survey item, they cannot establish which function occurred in any particular interactional episode. The proposed pedagogical interpretations are therefore presented as plausible explanations of respondents' reported perceptions, not as direct tests of cognitive mechanisms.

Research focused directly on Nigerian polytechnic classroom interaction remains an appropriate area for further investigation. The present manuscript contributes an institutional case with a relatively large respondent count; however, without a systematic search of all relevant national publications it would be inappropriate to declare this setting entirely unstudied. The strongest contribution is the description of the reported frequency and valuation of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation within the sampled programmes.

2.5 Empirical evidence from relevant contexts

Creese and Blackledge (2010) analyze translanguaging in complementary schools in the United Kingdom, showing how multilingual practices can be understood in terms of pedagogy and identity. Their qualitative design contrasts with the survey-led results examined here; this difference is important because the types of evidence support different kinds of claims. A questionnaire identifying widespread agreement does not replace a close analysis of classroom sequences.

Probyn (2009) examines the complexities of codeswitching under English-medium educational pressures in South Africa. This is especially relevant to the present respondents' simultaneous interest in comprehension and concern about academic English. It does not, however, establish that English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation at Benue State Polytechnic necessarily has the same conversational functions or educational outcomes.

Akinpelu (2020) advances a policy-oriented argument for translanguaging and African languages in Nigerian formal education, while Ugwuona (2020) studies borrowing and translanguaging in the multicultural Obollo speech community. These works provide Nigerian conceptual and sociolinguistic context but differ materially from the present focus on reported classroom behaviour in a polytechnic. Jegede (2024) offers closer educational relevance through a study of Nigerian bilingual primary classrooms, although its level of education is distinct.

Existing scholarship thus supports the importance of multilingual practices without resolving their reported distribution within the five sampled polytechnic programmes. The present study investigates this specific setting, but does not provide the programme-level breakdown necessary to compare technical and non-technical disciplines or generalize across the Nigerian polytechnic sector.

2.6 Evidence gap and contribution

Across the literature, three issues recur: the distinction between named-language alternation and wider multilingual meaning-making; the potential interactional role of flexible linguistic repertoires; and the tension between communicative accessibility and formal language expectations. They supply the conceptual basis for examining reported frequency, functions, perceived effects and attitudes at Benue State Polytechnic. They do not amount to advance proof that classroom alternation produces measurable academic benefits.

A defensible gap is the need for additional, contextually grounded evidence on what participants report about English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation in polytechnic classrooms. The current study contributes one descriptive institutional account. Broader claims that few studies exist across every Nigerian tertiary institution, or that comparisons among disciplines have been completed here, would exceed the manuscript's documented search and analysis.

In this light, the study's contribution lies in bringing together the four kinds of questionnaire evidence shown in Tables 1–4 and interpreting them through current debates in multilingual education. Its mixed-methods description also suggests scope for integration with direct observation, although the absence of interview excerpts, coding matrices and an observation corpus limits independent assessment of the qualitative dimension.

3. Methodology

The study describes a questionnaire-based descriptive survey accompanied by classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative evidence supplied for this publication consists of four aggregated questionnaire tables. The other methods are reported narratively, but their underlying transcripts, coding record, observation schedules, interview numbers, and analytic exemplars were not provided with the manuscript. Accordingly, this report treats the numerical findings as descriptive survey results and the qualitative material as contextual accounts that have not been independently reanalyzed.

3.1 Research design

A descriptive design is suitable for mapping reported experience, attitudes, and perceived functions. It does not by itself support causal conclusions about achievement, comprehension, language proficiency, or retention. The inclusion of more than one data-collection method can add context, but a rigorous mixed-methods claim would also explain the sequencing of strands, how qualitative and quantitative evidence were integrated, and the inference derived from that integration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These details are incomplete in the supplied record.

The observational strand is described as non-participant observation of ordinary lectures. Because the number of observed classes, duration, systematic recording procedure, and coded excerpts are absent, the account cannot be independently reproduced or used to establish discipline-level contrasts. The article therefore avoids claims that the observations statistically corroborated the percentages or independently measured educational changes.

3.2 Study setting

The institutional setting was Benue State Polytechnic in Okpokwu Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. English is the formal language of instruction, and Nigerian Pidgin and other linguistic resources may feature in informal interaction. The study considered five programmes: Mass Communication, Business Administration, Public Administration, Computer Science and Science Laboratory Technology. The selection offers a range of instructional contexts, but the lack of programme-wise results prevents comparative conclusions.

The five programmes were reportedly purposively selected for relevance to multilingual classroom interaction. This choice supports exploration of the selected setting rather than probabilistic inference to all programmes or Nigerian tertiary institutions. The description of the institutional context supplies useful educational background, while the generality of the survey findings remains bounded by the study's reported recruitment procedure.

Polytechnic instruction may include lectures, tutorials, practical activities and discussion, all of which can place different demands on classroom language. The available results do not classify responses by teaching mode or course content. Any suggestions about particularly effective alternation during technical instruction are therefore framed as hypotheses for further inquiry rather than established subgroup findings.

3.3 Study population

The target population is described as lecturers and National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) students in the selected programmes. The study does not state the underlying population totals, eligibility criteria in detail, or actual numbers recruited by programme and level. These omissions limit an independent assessment of sample coverage and response bias.

Students and lecturers were both included because classroom exchanges involve more than one participant role. The reported totals, however, do not identify how many of the 236 usable questionnaires were submitted by each group. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as pooled responses rather than separately verified lecturer and student perspectives.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedure

The original manuscript describes a multistage sampling process: purposive selection of the five programmes, stratification by programme and participant category, and random selection of students within strata. It does not provide the sampling frame, randomization procedure, per-stratum selection numbers or lecturer recruitment details. The present article retains the reported design while making its limited reproducibility explicit (Etikan et al., 2016).

Stratification can improve coverage when each stratum is defined and its sample fraction is documented. The study does not include a stratum allocation table or the distribution of completed responses; the assertion of proportional representation cannot therefore be independently checked. It would be methodologically inaccurate to infer probability-sampling representativeness solely from the name of the sampling technique.

The planned sample comprised 250 respondents—220 students and 30 lecturers. The study reports 250 questionnaires administered and 236 usable questionnaires returned. The target composition must not be mistaken for the verified composition of those 236 usable responses. The source does not present an a priori power or precision calculation, and the available sampling information does not justify statistical generalization beyond the participating sample.

3.5 Research instruments

Data for the study were collected using three major instruments: structured questionnaire, classroom observation guide, and semi-structured interview schedule.

The questionnaire reportedly contained closed-ended and Likert-type items addressing reported frequency of alternation, functions attributed to it, perceived effects on comprehension and participation, and attitudes to Nigerian Pidgin in academic settings. The item wording, response options, full instrument and scoring guide were not included. In particular, Tables 2 and 3 list endorsements whose totals exceed the number of respondents; this is compatible with multiple selections or item-wise endorsement, but the precise item format is not documented.

The classroom observation guide is described as attending to language choice, contexts of interaction, clarification, participation, and classroom management. Its existence and stated scope are reported in the qualitative account, but no completed guide or annotated observations were supplied.

Semi-structured interviews with selected lecturers and students were also reported. The study report explains their intended purpose to contextualize motivations and perceived implications but not the number of interviewees, interview duration, recruitment strategy, question schedule, or de-identified excerpts. As a result, the interview strand remains a description of the reported procedure rather than an independently auditable qualitative dataset.

3.6 Data-collection procedures

Permission was sought from relevant institutional authorities, questionnaires were administered in the selected programmes, and participants were offered clarification of items when required. The reported 94.4% usable-response rate should not automatically be equated with freedom from selection or social-desirability bias.

The researcher reports undertaking non-participant observation during regular lectures and recording notes about language choice and interaction. The number, duration, and distribution of observation sessions are unreported. Thus, the narrative can illuminate the author's field experience, but it does not support exact comparative statements about the frequency of alternation across programmes or teaching formats.

Interviews were reportedly conducted after classes, with note-taking and audio recording by consent. The source materials do not include recordings, transcripts or coded themes that could be inspected or quoted. The study report therefore does not invent dialogue or use implied interview consensus as independent verification of a particular survey percentage.

3.7 Instrument validity and reliability

The study states that specialists reviewed draft questionnaires, the observation guide and interview schedule for content relevance and clarity. Their number, credentials, assessment criteria and revisions were not provided. Expert review is consequently recorded as a reported methodological step rather than a fully documented validation exercise.

A pilot study and a questionnaire Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 are reported in the study report, with a citation to Taber (2018). The pilot sample size, number of scale items, dimensionality, item-level responses and software output were not provided; the coefficient could therefore not be independently recalculated. Cronbach's alpha is an index of internal consistency under particular assumptions, not a comprehensive demonstration of instrument validity or of reliability for every different subscale.

The reported combination of surveys, observations and interviews may offer useful perspectives on the same phenomenon. However, triangulation requires a transparent comparison of evidence, including convergences and divergences, rather than a presumption that using three methods establishes truth. Because the qualitative documentation was not available, its contribution is treated as contextual rather than independently confirmatory.

3.8 Analysis and interpretive scope

The supplied quantitative results consist of frequency counts and percentages. The percentages were independently recalculated for Tables 1–3 using $n = 236$. No inferential tests, regression models, effect sizes, confidence intervals, or learning-outcome contrasts are available and none are introduced in this revision.

The source states that observational notes and interview responses were transcribed, coded, and grouped into themes. The survey describes the distribution of perceptions across participants, while the qualitative strands were intended to provide context for interpretation.

3.9 Research ethics

The study reports that participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained for questionnaires, observations, and interviews. It also reports institutional permission and confidentiality measures. These assertions are retained as descriptions of the reported conduct of the study; copies of the approval record, a formal ethics-review determination or exemption, participant information sheet and consent documentation were not supplied for independent inspection.

The study reports that names and other direct identifiers were excluded from the presentation of results and that participant information was handled confidentially. The publication does not reproduce quotations or individual-level interview material. Data-sharing decisions must still take account of participant consent and potential identifiability in small departments.

The observation setting was described as ordinary scheduled teaching without interruption. Ethical adequacy depends on the actual institutional requirements and participant-consent arrangements, which cannot be independently determined from the text alone. No institutional review number or exemption should be invented.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The findings are presented and interpreted together under four research-question themes: reported frequency, perceived communicative functions, perceived educational implications, and attitudes toward classroom use of Nigerian Pidgin. Tables 1–4 presents the numerical evidence while Figures 1–4 visualize those same tables. Interpretation is integrated with relevant literature, while distinctions are maintained between respondents' reports, the narrative description of classroom observations, and independently verified instructional outcomes.

Of the 250 questionnaires administered, 236 were considered usable, giving a reported usable-response rate of 94.4% ($236/250 \times 100$); 14 were not included. Consequently, the analyses below concern the pooled 236 responses.

4.1 Frequency of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation

Respondents' ratings of how often English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation occurred during classroom interaction are reported in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1. The frequency item has five mutually exclusive response categories, for which the reported counts total 236. The distribution should be read as perceived regularity rather than as a direct observation-based rate of language switching.

Table 1. Reported frequency of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation (n = 236)

Response category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very frequent	31	13.1
Frequent	82	34.7
Occasionally	104	44.1
Rarely	14	5.9
Never	5	2.1
Total	236	100.0

Note. Percentages for the five response categories sum to 99.9% owing to rounding; total is 100% before rounding.

As Table 1 and Figure 1 show, “occasionally” was the largest category (104 respondents; 44.1%), followed by “frequent” (82; 34.7%) and “very frequent” (31; 13.1%). Together, these categories account for 217 of 236 responses (91.9%). Only 14 respondents (5.9%) described alternation as rare and five (2.1%) reported that it never occurred. Thus, the survey indicates widespread recognition of some classroom alternation, but the predominance of “occasionally” over “frequent” or “very frequent” argues against describing Nigerian Pidgin as the routinely dominant instructional medium.

This pattern can be interpreted within García and Wei's (2014) conception of multilingual speakers drawing on an integrated repertoire to meet interactional needs. It is also broadly consonant with Probyn's (2009) account of tensions between official instructional language and actual language practices in South African classrooms. The contexts and designs are not equivalent: Probyn examined classroom code-switching in a different national and educational setting, whereas the principal quantified evidence here is respondents' categorical frequency judgements. The comparison therefore supports the relevance of context-sensitive language choice as a research question, not an inference that identical practices or effects were demonstrated.

A further distinction is needed between the descriptive term English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation and the wider theoretical construct of translanguaging. As Auer (1998) shows, the interactional meaning of switching depends on its sequential position and conversational uptake. Without coded excerpts of actual lecturer–student exchanges, Table 1 and Figure 1

cannot establish whether a particular switch was planned, spontaneous, used for repair, associated with humour, or connected with a specific instructional outcome. Nor do the undifferentiated totals justify ranking the five sampled academic programmes according to their use of Nigerian Pidgin.

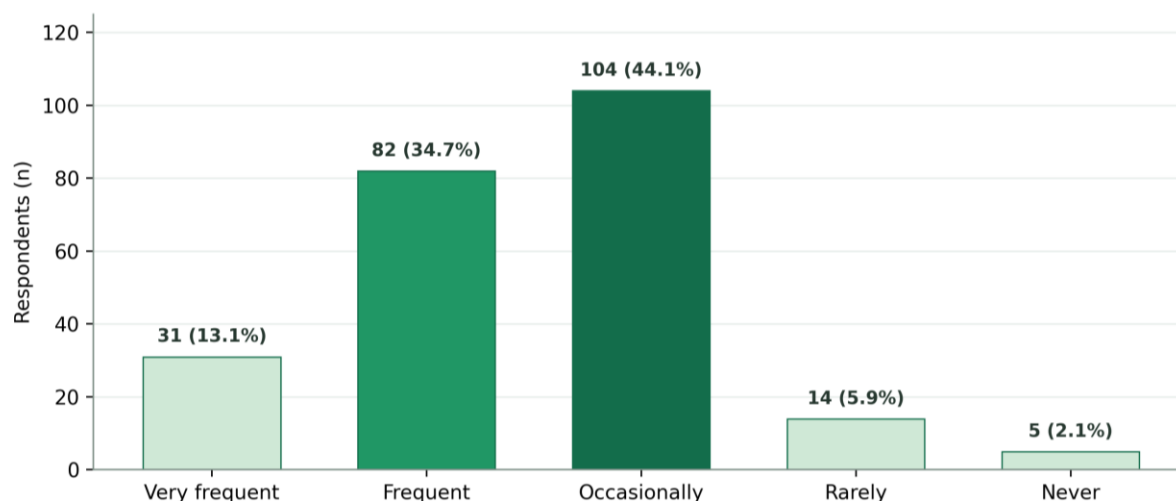


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' reported frequency of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation (n = 236). Data plotted from Table 1.

The strongest conclusion for this research question is therefore that English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation was familiar to most respondents, commonly perceived as intermittent, and potentially sensitive to classroom context. This conclusion is descriptive but important: it locates the practice within the reported linguistic experience of the institution without assuming its continuous use or pedagogical efficacy.

4.2 Perceived communicative functions of classroom alternation

Table 2 reports six communicative functions attributed to English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation; Figure 2 displays their relative endorsement levels. Table 2. Communicative functions attributed to language alternation by respondents (n = 236).

Perceived communicative function	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Clarification of concepts	198	83.9
Encouraging student participation	184	78.0
Maintaining students' attention	171	72.5
Reducing classroom tension	163	69.1
Promoting lecturer–student familiarity	156	66.1
Classroom management	148	62.7

Note. Percentages refer to endorsements of separate functions. Items are not mutually exclusive.

The leading function in Table 2 and Figure 2 is clarification of concepts (198/236; 83.9%). Encouraging student participation ranks second (184; 78.0%), followed by maintaining attention (171; 72.5%). Reducing tension (163; 69.1%), promoting lecturer–student familiarity (156; 66.1%), and classroom management (148; 62.7%) also received substantial endorsement. The pattern suggests that respondents assign both instructional and interpersonal functions to alternation: the three most frequently endorsed items concern explanation and participation, while the remaining items concern the social organization of instructional interaction.

The particularly strong association with clarification accords at a conceptual level with Canagarajah's (2011) discussion of translanguaging and meaning negotiation and with Creese and Blackledge's (2010) account of bilingual pedagogical practices. These works provide reasons to examine multilingual explanations as interactional resources. They do not,

however, transform the 83.9% endorsement into a measured increase in understanding. The original account describes lecturers using familiar language to restate difficult material, but no transcript-linked clarification sequences or independent comprehension tests were supplied to verify their consequences.

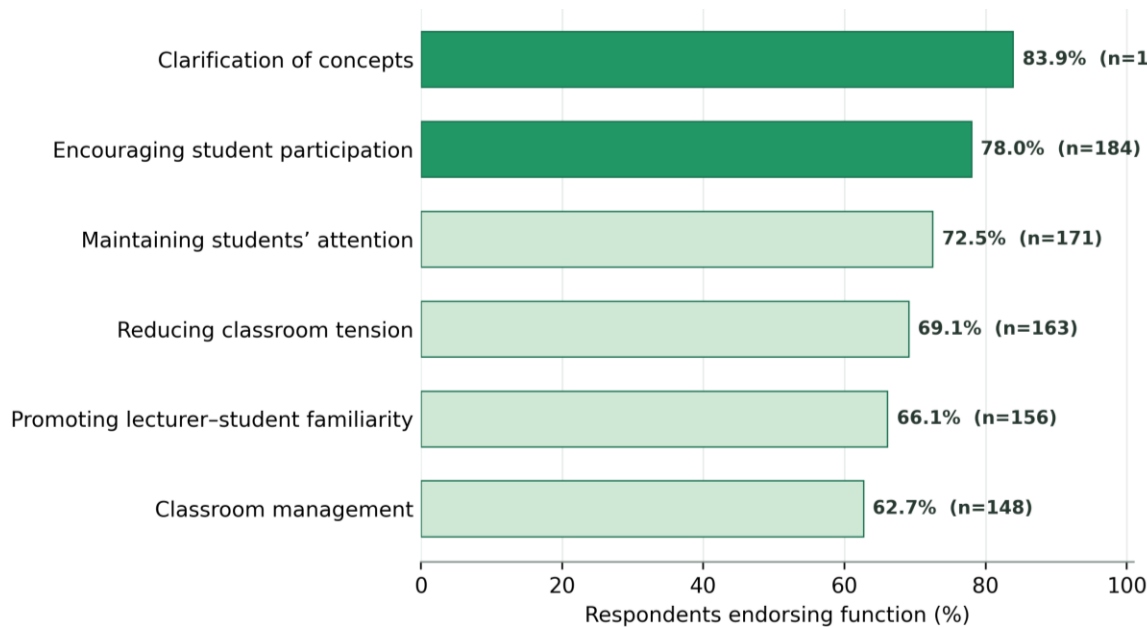


Figure 2. Endorsement of perceived communicative functions of classroom language alternation (reported denominator $n = 236$). Data plotted from Table 2.

The 78.0% endorsement of participation suggests that respondents perceive language flexibility as a means of making contributions easier or more acceptable. Auer's (1998) interactional perspective helps explain why a switch might signal a shift in footing, solidarity, or activity type; nevertheless, this study did not record numbers of student questions, turns, or participants before and after switches. The percentage consequently supports a perception about participation rather than a measured increase in classroom talk.

Maintaining attention (72.5%) may involve perceived novelty, register change, restatement, or interpersonal responsiveness. Similarly, the endorsements of tension reduction (69.1%) and familiarity (66.1%) suggest that language selection is regarded as part of the classroom's affective and social climate. Norton's (2013) discussion of identity and participation supplies a useful conceptual lens, but the present instrument did not independently operationalize identity, anxiety, or learner investment. Causal interpretations would therefore exceed the available evidence.

The relatively lower but still substantial endorsement for classroom management (62.7%) highlights the possibility that language alternation can be associated with giving directives, inviting responses, or marking transitions. Whether this is an intentional teaching strategy or a conventional feature of interaction is not demonstrated. Taken together, Table 2 and Figure 2 establish a ranked profile of the communicative functions respondents attribute to alternation; they do not establish a hierarchy of objectively observed instructional effects.

4.3 Perceived educational implications

Respondents' evaluations of five possible educational implications are summarized in Table 3 and plotted in Figure 3. The table is deliberately designated "perceived" because it records endorsement of statements concerning comprehension, interaction, participation, retention, and confidence. The study supplies neither achievement-test comparisons nor longitudinal assessments of these outcomes. As with Table 2, the responses are not mutually exclusive, and percentages describe endorsements of the separate items.

Table 3. Perceived educational implications of classroom language alternation (n = 236)

Perceived educational implication	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Improves comprehension	201	85.2
Makes learning more interactive	193	81.8
Enhances classroom participation	187	79.2
Improves retention of concepts	173	73.3
Increases confidence during interaction	165	69.9

Note. Percentages record perceptions, not independent measurements of comprehension, participation, retention, or confidence.

Table 3 and Figure 3 show that improved comprehension received the strongest endorsement (201/236; 85.2%). More interactive learning followed (193; 81.8%), then enhanced classroom participation (187; 79.2%), perceived improvement in retention (173; 73.3%), and greater confidence during interaction (165; 69.9%). This ordering is notable because respondents gave relatively stronger support to immediate interpretive and interactional benefits than to retention or confidence.

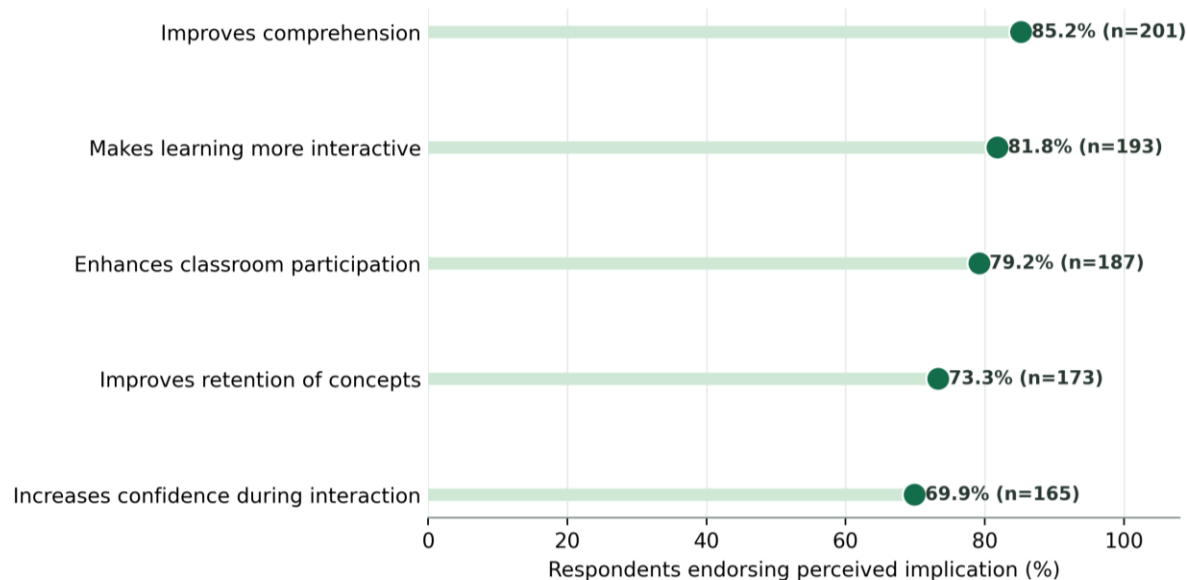


Figure 3. Perceived educational implications of English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation (reported denominator n = 236). Data plotted from Table 3.

The prominence of comprehension can be read alongside García and Wei (2014), who theorize the mobilization of familiar linguistic resources in meaning-making, and Cummins (2007), who challenges rigid monolingual instructional assumptions. These perspectives make it reasonable to investigate strategic reformulation into Nigerian Pidgin. Nevertheless, the survey does not isolate language alternation from concomitant features of effective teaching, such as paraphrasing, repetition, analogy, simplification, pacing, or feedback. The result therefore demonstrates perceived comprehensibility, not independently established learning gains.

The interactivity item (81.8%) and the participation item (79.2%) overlap conceptually with the participation-encouragement function in Table 2 (78.0%). The convergence is substantively interesting: across related questions, respondents generally associate alternation with easier classroom engagement. Yet these responses are not independent replications of an outcome, and they should not be averaged or combined without the original item wording and matched respondent records. Creese and Blackledge (2010) provide a relevant comparative pedagogical framework, but direct observational measures would be needed to determine whether more students actually spoke or whether their contributions became more conceptually accurate.

Perceived retention (73.3%) is especially vulnerable to overstatement. The study did not administer delayed-recall assessments; therefore, it would be incorrect to conclude that language alternation objectively strengthened memory or long-term retention. A defensible interpretation is that many respondents believe explanations using accessible language help them remember disciplinary ideas. Similar caution applies to confidence (69.9%): Norton's (2013) identity-oriented account can motivate further inquiry into willingness to participate, but this study did not administer a validated confidence scale or track behaviour over time.

These results offer a basis for improving research design as well as classroom practice. A subsequent study could compare recorded multilingual explanations with matched English-only explanations and independently measure concept interpretation, terminology use, participation turns, and delayed recall. Such suggestions are prospective; they should not be confused with analyses conducted in the present study. Within its design, Table 3 and Figure 3 support a coherent but bounded finding: the respondents predominantly perceive the practice as educationally helpful, especially for immediate comprehension and interaction.

4.4 Respondents' attitudes and the English-proficiency concern

The fourth research question investigates attitudes toward Nigerian Pidgin in lectures and toward the appropriate balance between accessible explanation and formal academic English. Table 4 contains agreement and disagreement percentages for four statements; Figure 4 presents the same values as paired portions of four 100% response bars. The chart reproduces reported proportions rather than an independently verified count distribution.

Table 4. Attitudes toward Nigerian Pidgin and language alternation in the classroom

Attitudinal statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Nigerian Pidgin makes lectures easier to understand	84.3	15.7
Translanguaging improves lecturer–student interaction	79.7	20.3
Nigerian Pidgin should be moderately allowed in classroom interaction	72.5	27.5
Excessive use of Nigerian Pidgin may weaken English proficiency	68.2	31.8

Note. The submitted manuscript provides percentages but not original response counts or full response-scale information.

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 4, 84.3% reportedly agreed that Nigerian Pidgin makes lectures easier to understand, while 15.7% disagreed. Agreement that translanguaging improves lecturer–student interaction was 79.7%, against 20.3% disagreement. These attitudes are compatible with the high endorsements of comprehension and interactivity in Table 3, although the items reflect the same broad respondent pool and cannot establish improved performance through cross-item similarity alone.

The positive evaluation of accessible classroom explanation can be situated within Nigerian Pidgin's established communicative repertoire and sociolinguistic development, examined by Faraclas (1996), Deuber (2005), and Mensah (2012). These sources help contextualize why Nigerian Pidgin may be recognizable and socially functional for multilingual participants. They do not establish that every student has equal proficiency in the variety or that it is invariably the most inclusive resource in a given class. That distinction is pertinent to institutional decisions about language choice.

Of particular interpretive importance, 72.5% agreed that Nigerian Pidgin should be moderately permitted in classroom interaction, whereas 27.5% disagreed. The term “moderately” is not operationally defined, so the response cannot prescribe a specific proportion of lecture time or a fixed threshold for appropriate use. Nevertheless, it supports an understanding of Nigerian Pidgin as a potentially supplementary resource, rather than an unqualified demand to displace the official academic medium. García and Wei (2014) and Cummins (2007) offer contrasting but broadly complementary grounds for considering flexible multilingual support alongside development of formal academic language.

At the same time, 68.2% agreed that excessive use of Nigerian Pidgin may weaken English proficiency, while 31.8% disagreed. The simultaneous prevalence of support for moderate use and concern about excessive use is the most analytically revealing feature of Table 4 and Figure 4.

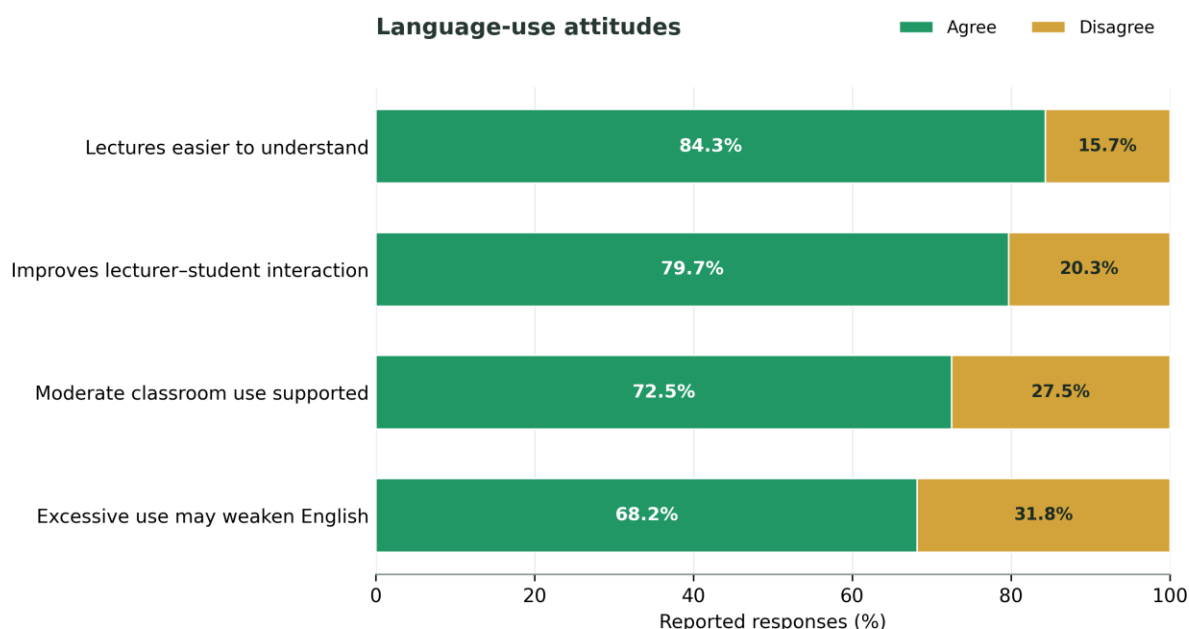


Figure 4. Percentage agreement and disagreement concerning Nigerian Pidgin use in classroom interaction (frequencies not supplied). Data plotted from Table 4.

The proficiency concern should not be interpreted as evidence of an actual decline in English ability. No proficiency assessment, academic-writing analysis, longitudinal tracking, or comparison group was supplied. Accordingly, both the reported benefits and the feared disadvantages remain attitudes rather than demonstrated causal effects. The issue instead highlights a practical tension between the sociolinguistic value of Nigerian Pidgin and English's role in examinations, technical writing, and professional communication; the language ecology described by Deuber (2005) and Mensah (2012) offers a relevant background without resolving the specific effects of classroom practice.

Taken together, Table 4 and Figure 4 indicate conditional rather than absolute endorsement. Respondents generally perceive the use of Nigerian Pidgin as helping comprehension and interaction, but a substantial majority also express a preference for moderation and concern about overreliance. This combination argues for pedagogical judgement based on the communicative task, the learners' actual linguistic repertoires, and the continuing need to develop assessed academic-English competence.

4.5 Integrated interpretation and implications for tertiary teaching

When the four tables and their corresponding figures are considered together, three interrelated findings emerge. First, the practice is widely recognized but typically described as occurring occasionally rather than continuously (Table 1; Figure 1). Second, respondents assign it a range of explanatory, participatory, interpersonal, and management functions, with clarification ranked highest (Table 2; Figure 2). Third, favorable perceived educational effects coexist with an explicit preference for bounded use and concern about formal-English proficiency (Tables 3–4; Figures 3–4). The combined pattern is stronger as evidence of perceived institutional practices and attitudes than as evidence of causal learning effectiveness.

The pattern provides a grounded setting-specific contribution to the literature already reviewed. Canagarajah (2011) and García and Wei (2014) emphasize the potential of flexible language resources for meaning-making; Creese and Blackledge (2010) illustrate multilingual practice within classroom participation; and Probyn (2009) records pressures arising from a gap between official language expectations and classroom realities. The present polytechnic survey extends discussion of these issues to a sample that includes technical and non-technical programmes at one Nigerian institution. It neither proves that every programme behaves similarly nor establishes that the effects observed elsewhere recur under the same conditions.

An appropriately cautious practical implication is that lecturers may consider brief, purposeful reformulations in students' accessible linguistic resources when explaining unfamiliar concepts, checking understanding, or inviting clarification,

while retaining precise English technical terminology and opportunities for students to practise formal academic expression. The data do not warrant replacing English as the medium of instruction or mandating Nigerian Pidgin in all courses. Decisions should be informed by learner language profiles, disciplinary demands, and locally evaluated outcomes, not by favorable attitudes alone.

Research and policy should distinguish three outcomes that the present questionnaire tends to bring into the same discussion: language use in interaction, learner perceptions of its usefulness, and independently demonstrated educational performance. A next-stage investigation could combine consented classroom audio, sequential discourse coding following interactional principles (Auer, 1998), student interviews, and controlled comprehension or terminology assessments. Such triangulation would help determine which forms of alternation are helpful, for whom, and in what instructional contexts, while maintaining transparent limits on generalization.

4.6 Study limitations and evidentiary boundaries

The study covers a single polytechnic and five selected programmes. Although 250 participants were planned or approached and 236 usable responses are reported, the valid-response distribution by lecturer/student status, programme, study level, and linguistic background is absent. No national sampling frame or programme-level comparison is provided. These limits preclude generalizing the observed response proportions to all Nigerian tertiary institutions or making defensible claims about programme or participant-group differences.

Survey responses may reflect recall error, social desirability, and different interpretations of terms such as “frequent,” “moderate,” “improved,” and “excessive.”

Most importantly, none of the four tables supplies an independent measure of learning, retention, confidence, or language proficiency. The present findings should therefore be understood as descriptive reports and perceptions rather than evidence of causal instructional effects. Explicit recognition of these boundaries does not invalidate the reported attitudes; it locates their appropriate contribution to scholarship and identifies the evidence needed for stronger claims.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined English–Nigerian Pidgin alternation as reported by a pooled sample of lecturers and students in five programmes at Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo. The 236 usable questionnaire responses portray classroom alternation as recognizable, most commonly occasional, and associated by respondents with conceptual clarification, participation, and attention. Positive perceptions of comprehension and interactivity occur alongside support for moderated use and concern about extensive reliance on Nigerian Pidgin.

The data therefore suggest a pragmatic position rather than a stark choice between English-only teaching and wholesale replacement by Nigerian Pidgin. Respondents regard English as important for formal academic and professional communication while also assigning value to supplementary multilingual resources. These conclusions are descriptive and context-specific.

The study does not show that students’ academic performance, measured comprehension, long-term retention, or formal English competence changed because of classroom alternation.

Taken on its proper evidentiary terms, the article contributes a useful institutional account of language practices as experienced and valued by participants. It points toward further work that combines recorded interaction, transparent sampling, and direct learning assessments to test when and why multilingual explanations might be educationally helpful.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations follow from the survey’s descriptive findings and the limits of the current evidence:

Lecturers may consider brief, purposeful reformulation in familiar linguistic resources when it helps clarify a difficult point, but should make the corresponding academic-English terminology explicit and assess understanding directly rather than assuming that comprehension has improved.

Institutional discussions about classroom language use should distinguish permissible communicative support from the formal language of assessment. Any policy should be locally developed and evaluated in consultation with students and teaching staff rather than inferred directly from pooled favorable responses.

Professional development can help lecturers differentiate explanation, translation, paraphrase, and translanguaging, and select practices appropriate to discipline, learning outcomes, and students' actual repertoires.

Academic English should remain actively taught and assessed as required for disciplinary writing and professional communication. Supplementary Nigerian Pidgin use need not be described as its replacement, nor should harm to English competence be asserted without language-proficiency evidence.

Students should receive explicit support in moving between informal classroom explanation and formal disciplinary expression, especially in technical vocabulary, report writing, oral presentations, and assessed academic tasks.

Future research should report a transparent sampling frame, participant-group response counts, item wording, observation sessions, interview evidence, qualitative coding, and direct comprehension or language-proficiency measures. Multi-institutional studies could also investigate variation across programmes without assuming that this single-site sample represents the sector.

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Data availability. Data is available upon reasonable request.

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