

Digital Language Use: Investigating the Impact of Lexical Innovation among Nigerian University Students

Dr. Rotimi Gbenga AKINYEDE

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria,
orcid.org/0000-0001-8219-1557

Abstract

This study examines digital language use among Nigerian university students with the focus mainly on how lexical innovation such as neologisms, slang, code-switching and code-mixing shape the students' language use and academic practices. The rise of different digital platforms has greatly influenced Nigerian university students' language use by increasing their linguistic creativity through various lexical forms which are not limited to the lexical innovation mentioned earlier. The data analysis is done by adopting Heider's (1958) situational sociolinguistic model known as Attribution Theory (AT) which is combined with Booij's (2010) Construction Morphology. Booij's theory explains how neologisms are formed while collaboratively Heider's model explores how the new words are assigned meaning in context. This study reveals that lexical innovation enhances creativity and constructs cultural identity. However, it may be a hindrance to the students' attainment of high level of proficiency in their academic and formal language use.

Keywords: Lexical innovation, Neologisms, Attribution Theory (AT), Construction Morphology (CM), Digital Discourse (DD)

Introduction

Language is as important to human beings as the air they breathe, because without it, human society will be chaotic with nobody understands anybody. Thereby, human language is essential to their survival through their mutual intelligibility. It is also plausible to say that, overtime, the human language grows either in meaning or spelling. Yule (2022) corroborates this assertion by saying that by nature, human language is dynamic. That is, language is not static. This is necessitated by the fact that language evolves on regular basis. One of such changes that have caught the attention of scholars around the globe is lexical creation which is referred to in this study as lexical innovation.

Lexical innovation is one of the prominent features of digital discourse (DD) which may include the process of creating a complete new word/expression or giving new meaning to an old word in any particular language. In other words, DD has changed the narrative of language use in a way that has led to new forms of communication, new codes and the emergence of different varieties of language.

In a nutshell, language as used on the Internet has little or no constraint because it is an informal mode of conversation. Therefore, users are at freedom of using neologisms, derogatory language, pidgin, code alternation, slang, hybridization, etc. Taiwo (2018) lends credence to this by asserting that one of the major concerns of cyberspace interaction is the unconventional use of English, which many people consider an assault on formal written English and the tendency to foster a decline in literacy.

Moreover, Nigerian university students employ so many common chat abbreviations in their Internet discussions. The common abbreviations may include but not only the following:

ETA = Estimated Time of Arrival;	Smh = Shaking my head
DoB = Date of Birth;	Idc = I don't care
Idk = I don't know;	Nvm = Never mind
S2u = Same to you;	ASAP = As Soon As Possible
OIC = Oh I See;	BBL = Be Back Later, etc.

Nigerian university students are very creative in forming many new words through different means which shall be discussed in the subsequent section. The discussions on the dynamic nature of English language shall focus mainly on lexical innovations.

Lexical Innovation

Lexical innovation refers to the introduction of new lexical items into a language system. By extension, it could be the incorporation of new meaning to an old lexical item in a language. Either occurrence is occasioned by having certain new experience. This new experience may be through technological advancement, cultural transformation, etc. This is a focal area of language change/shift in order to adapt to the new experience. Bamigboye (1991) corroborates the above assertion by positing that lexical innovation is a key feature of language evolution.

Lexical innovation shows how human mind conceptualises the new experience they have, and this is seen as a cognitive process which reflects the use of brain in meaning extension. Lexical innovation occurs through different well fact-checked processes which include various morphological processes, such as, clipping, blending, compounding, conversion, derivation, alphabetism and acronym. Nevertheless, the morphological processes are governed by language internal rules, yet they give room to creativity and show how language is flexible.

Factors promoting language use on the Internet

Sociolinguists had investigated many sociolinguistic variables that could influence a speaker's choice of certain lexical items in the course of discussion. Accordingly, Barzallo (2019) attributes such variables that influence code choice to gender, age, sex, status, educational level and occupation. Therefore, these variables necessitate the reasons Nigerian university students deviate a little bit from the standard usage of English.

Furthermore, the type of smart phones the students employ in chatting while online could influence their language use. Some smart phones do not allow more than one hundred and sixty characters per text message while some could even be less, in order to work within this, the interlocutors resort to unnecessary shortening of words, unwarranted acronyms and avoidable abbreviations. Sometimes, Nigerian university students were driven by their age because they want to follow the fashion that is trending online.

It is generally observed that almost all the people on the Internet engage in discussion by employing the English language irrespective of their relationship. They thereafter resort to all sorts of turn and twist (e.g. neologisms, slang, hybridization) when it is obvious that they could not sustain English. Consequently, code-mixing English with any of the Nigerian indigenous languages by interlocutors depending on their linguistic background is seen as being elegant and relevant on the three social platforms selected for this study. Different reasons that include social motivations - language attitude and linguistic identity, linguistic motivation and computer-related reasons shall all be discussed.

Social Motivations

There are social motivations that necessitate code variation on the Internet. They include language attitude and linguistic identity.

(a) Language Attitude

People's attitude for a language could be positive, negative or neutral, and this could really affect how they employ such language to communicate and interact (Baker, 1992). Language attitude (either individual or societal,) is complicated and can be impacted by various factors ranging from individual behaviours and beliefs to feelings, age, sex and status. The attitude of the speakers of a language always plays an important role in the survival or otherwise of such language.

According to Dragojevic et al (2021), language attitudes can be studied by employing three primary methodologies. They put the methodologies as direct, indirect and societal. The direct method is explicitly used to source for information from the respondents through questionnaires and interviews. While the indirect method is more detailed. However, Heller et al (2017) note that researchers prefer, and therefore, go for direct observation in carrying out their studies. For instance, it is often said that in order to successfully learn a language, one needs to have a positive attitude towards that language.

Language attitudes do change too like any other social phenomenon. Ubalde et al (2017) corroborate this assertion when they agree that individual language attitudes change over time, especially in language contact situation, and this may happen due to age and contexts redefining. Moreover, language attitudes change may also occur at the societal level. When a society places premium on a certain language maybe as the language of the elites or for gaining economic or political power. Then, this can lead to positive attitude toward such language.

(b) Linguistic Identity

In linguistics, it is a common knowledge that language attitudes can either positively or otherwise influence people's linguistic identity or social interactions. In a nutshell, people will want to identify with the language of the elites. Basically, it is how people employ language to represent themselves, their culture and what they think about their language with others and their language(s). In accordance to this, Topader (2023) notes that our language is our identity because we use it to express our feelings and thoughts. He further says that we employ it in sharing our culture and history with others.

Linguistic identity can be shaped by various factors which include gender, class, religion, profession, etc. Also, linguistic identity can be formed by the way people employ neologisms in order to associate themselves with people using such coinages or slang as against others who do not understand such new words. Therefore, Nigerian university students who want to have the sense of belonging by joining the ongoing discussion online have to understand the coinages or slang words employ on the Internet. The whole summation of this is that language fosters feeling of group identity and solidarity.

(c) Linguistic Motivations

Naturally, multilinguals tend to be more at home in using their mother tongue than the target/second language. Consequently, the interactants either online or in reality may not be able to exhibit the same level of proficiency in the usage of English as it is in using any of the Nigerian indigenous languages. In order to find a common ground for the flow of the speech, they engage in the use of different kinds of neologisms when they run into difficulty in English which they use to show off.

Empirical Review

Scholars had deemed it fit to investigate all sociolinguistic variables that influence a speaker's choice of certain lexical items in the course of discussion. They had worked on language variation and dynamics of language on the Internet at different times.

Komang et al (2022) aimed to analyse different types of slang words employed by interactants on a live chat show of Valkyrae on Youtube. They employed observation and documentation methods in collecting data from the previous streams of the programme on Youtube. The data were analysed by using the theory of slang by Allan and Burridge (2006). The findings revealed that all five types of slang words were employed by the interactants in the programme. This study is very relevant to our study because it deals with language used online. At the same time, slang is part of the dynamics of language use.

Olojede et al (2018) examine the linguistic attributes of selected chats and updates by some undergraduate students of Yaba College of Technology on the Facebook. The study evaluates the stylistic features in the 'socialised' language, i.e. how the posters used punctuation marks in their chats. Also, how they employed special characters, how words are contracted and why did they use the contracted forms and their meanings. The researchers employed stylistic linguistic concepts tagged Foregrounding and Deviation to discuss language use as contained in the interactions of the undergraduate students' comments on Facebook and the violation of Standard English rules. The study reveals that a larger percentage of time is spent by undergraduates on the Web 2.0 sites and contractive language use is the norm for the purpose of brevity, speed and exclusivity. This study is also relevant to our study. However, the only difference is that the study did not discuss how lexical items are formed.

Nwala and Tamunobelema (2019) examines the dynamism of Facebook (henceforth, FB) as the fastest and easiest means of communication among youngsters. The study employs descriptive design and Technological Determinism (TD) theory to investigate language use on FB. Therefore, the study discovers that the platform is full of many cyber slang, acronyms, morphological shortenings, initialisms, contractions and neologisms. The study further discovers that the style of writing on the FB is a total departure from the usual conventional ways. It is also discovered that language use on FB is flexible, economical and time saving. However, the study discloses that the negative impact is anti-pedagogy and signifies danger to language employability and learning. This study is also relevant because it investigates language use on social media and discovers different language dynamics online.

Adams (2021) tends to show the understanding of the impact of the Internet on language. Descriptive method of data analysis is employed in analyzing the data. The study reveals that the impacts of the Internet on language are like the two-edged swords which are in one hand positive, and in the other negative. The study further reveals that before the advent of the Internet, the written English is devoid of abbreviations and slang but now with the advent of the Internet, the words used in chats have considerably shortened by resorting to abbreviations, acronyms, etc. Consequently, this has completely destroyed the grammar and writing skills of the young generation. Also, the study opines that English dominates the Internet, and this has caused the language to overshadow the number of mother-tongue (MT) speakers globally.

Thombre (2020) inquires if the Internet has changed languages around the world. In order to provide acceptable answer to the question asked, the study explores the impact of the Internet on language use. The primary and secondary data are garnered on the Internet. The study reveals that language change is a natural process which happens due to the changing needs of the people who speak it. The study also reveals that not all change is good with

respect to language, the Internet has led to some deteriorations in once 'pure' language. The study shows that new way to express emotion is through emojis.

All the studies empirically reviewed here have one thing or the other in common with our study. However, none of them discussed and described how the new words or group of words are engineered.

Statement of Research Problem

The study investigates the impact of digital lexical innovation on Nigerian university students' language use. This is of great importance when we realise that language use on the Internet is slightly different from the Standard English employed in real-time. Therefore, it is fascinating to give insight into the world of Nigerian university students and their creative ways of engineering and using neologisms.

Nigerian university students' brand of English is a domesticated variety of English that is peculiar to the Nigerian socio-cultural environment (Ogunsiji, 2004). In the light of this assertion, Nigerian university students' English is greatly influenced by the Nigerian indigenous languages, hence, the tag of NE as *English coated code*. Consequently, this affects the phonological, morphological, lexical, semantics, and syntactic aspects of Standard English language (Odumuh, 1987).

In conclusion, the overt usage of digital lexical innovation by Nigerian university students impacts their language use, which invariably has grave influence on their academic writing, effective communication and language standardization.

Aim and Objectives

The major focus of this study is to investigate the impact of digital lexical innovation on Nigerian university students' language use. Hence, relevant and adequate empirical data are gathered to give insight to the study.

The specific objectives are to:

The objectives of the research are to:

- i. identify common lexical innovations used by Nigerian university students in online communication;
- ii. explore benefits and challenges of lexical innovations used by Nigerian university students in online communication, and
- iii. examine the impact of digital lexical innovation on Nigerian university students' language use in academic writing.

Theoretical framework

It is expedient for language to be considered in respect to society. As a result, two situational sociolinguistic models are chosen in analysing the data for this study. These models are Heider's Attribution Theory (AT) and Booij's Construction Morphology (CM).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory (AT) is a situational sociolinguistic model which is made popular by an Austrian psychologist known as Fritz Heider (1958). Heider's theory has been influential in social psychology, and its applications can be seen in various fields. AT has been built upon by other researchers, such as, Weiner (1972, 1974, 1986, 2010), and Jones et al (1972), etc.

Heider explains the theory to be a process through which results are based on internal behaviours and external events (Thomas, 2024). Thomas suggests the internal causes to

include emotions, talent, traits and other individual attributes. On the other hand, she puts the external reasons to be environmental factors.

In accordance to Stephanie Thomas' assertion above, the Indeed Editorial Team (2024) supports that the AT posits that for a certain behavior to happen, both capacity or ability to do or perform and motivation are the essential ingredients. By capacity, they mean every factor that comes or works together to allow or enact a particular behaviour or a call to action. On the other hand, they refer to motivation as individual desire or passion for behaving in a particular way.

According to the foregoing scholarly descriptions, it is not out of place to argue that there is a great connection between Attribution theory and motivation that propel individual to make a choice. And this is corroborated by Culata (2025) when he agrees that AT is indeed closely linked to motivation. The motivation could be driven by internal factors which are also referred to as *intrinsic*. These are the speakers'/writers' ability, talent, traits and characteristics. Also, the motivation could be an outcome of external factors which are referred to as *extrinsic*. The extrinsic reasons could either be environmental or situational. These are the linguistic background of the language users, government language policy, peer group influence, etc, and they are the major situational factors that influence the language use of Nigerian university students.

Construction Morphology

Booij's (2010) Construction Morphology (CM) is a linguistic model that explains various formations of words and how they are stored in human mental lexicon. CM combines Construction Grammar (CG) and the word formation process (morphology). The major focus of CM is to see word formation as the rules plus lexicon, i.e. words are formed from what is termed 'constructions' which are stored in humans' repertoire of knowledge as patterns that connect the form - which is the *structure* with the *meaning* - which is the area of semantics.

For further clarification, Booij's (2010) states that 'construction' is a conventional pairing of *structure* (i.e. the form of the lexeme) and the *meaning* (i.e. the message lexeme carries). He argues further that CM functions as the link between lexicon and grammar, morphology and syntax, and finally between rules and usage. It is good to know how this theory shows how people employ language in the real sense of it. CM affirms that creation of words is a network of learned form - meaning patterns, rather than a strict system of rules.

Consequently, CM is relevant to this study in a way that this study is all about making meaning in context, rather than being grammatical. Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining how the attributes of cyberlanguage in selected online interactions on insecurity in Nigeria lead Nigerian university students to want to form and employ English language at all cost irrespective of their proficiency of English. **Methodology**

The data are obtained from the three social media platforms chosen for the study with a view to achieving an adequate understanding of some aspects of language dynamics on insecurity in Nigeria as used by Netizens. Different discussions on X (formerly Twitter),

Facebook and Instagram are chosen.

In analysing the data, qualitative method of data analysis is employed because this is a descriptive study where discussion and observation are of great importance. Therefore, this becomes necessary as a result of the data and the nature of the data itself which are series of discussions.

As our guide in analysing the data, Heider's Attribution Theory (1958) combines with Construction Morphology serves as the framework. Booij's theory explains how neologisms

are formed while collaboratively Heider's model explores how the new words are assigned meaning in context.

Data presentation and analysis

Certain factors can shape language attitudes, either societal or personal. Therefore, there are numerous factors that could influence the attitudes of the speakers of a given language, either positively or negatively. These factors may include but not limited to social factors, language evolution and computer-mediated while social interactions, linguistic chauvinism and level of education are subsumed under social factors.

Social Interaction

Basically, language attitude is the perceptions and feelings of people towards a given language or a variety of it. Therefore, this attitude may have significant influence on language use and change. This shall be illustrated as thus:

Text 1

Ds regime is terrible. One day one bad news
of kidnapping or it's like. Soonest, **yawa go gas**.

Yawa go gas is a popular statement in Nigerian Pidgin English which roughly translates to 'a chaotic situation' or 'a situation that is out of hand'. In Nigeria, Pidgin English has attained the status of a widely spoken lingua franca that brings people together. Such string like **yawa go gas** is often used to show emotions and reactions in a subtle way. Here, **yawa go gas** is used to express that the issue of insecurity in Nigeria will soon get out of hand.

Text 2

Throwing **lamba** now & then, shey nah every time
dem they kpai shekau ni.

As used in text 2, **lamba** is a neologism i.e. a new slang in the lexicon of Nigerian university students. Here, **lamba** is used as a noun. Its source is unknown but it is commonly used in informal conversations or everyday language online. In Nigerian context, **lamba** can mean a 'lie', 'deceit' or 'dishonesty'. Therefore, in this context, **lamba** is used to mean that the military are not saying the truth, because they have made claims on several occasions that they have killed (kpai - shall be discussed later on) the kingpin (Shekau) of the insurgent known as Boko-Haram.

In other instance, Netizens used **lamba** as a verb. For instance:

This pple dey **lamba** nigerians.

Here, this could be translated to 'These people are **lying** to Nigerians' or 'These people are **deceiving** Nigerians'.

Language Chauvinism

Interlocutors online employ English/any Nigerian indigenous language-based coinage to show familiarity, and also to show that they 'belong' or 'farm engagement' on the Internet by gaining support and leaving whoever does not understand their language out of their discussion.

Text 3

It is saver to eat at a low key **mama put** than to go a place which will be easy target for a suicide-bomber to kpai many pple.

Mama put is a popular neologisms in Nigerian Pidgin English. **Mama put** is a hybrid word that consists of **mama** which is a Yoruba noun to mean 'a woman' in this context because it is a general belief in Nigeria that it is the duty of women to sell/cook foods, and **put** which is an English verb which could mean 'give', 'add' or 'sell'. **Mama put** is fondly used to refer to food vendors or a woman who sells local or traditional foods that are affordable. In Nigerian context, **mama put** vendors are very crucial in providing spicy and low budget food options. However, to somebody who does not really understand the hybridization **mama put** may find it extremely difficult to relate. Consequently, such people have been left out of the discussion.

Text 4

Has D killing in d SE stopped since
D captured of Simon Ekpa. Oga dis one you
you **dey yarn** now no follow **hoo haa**

In @Nancy1989's post, it will be extremely difficult for anyone who has no linguistic link with Nigerian English-based pidgin to understand or relate the meanings of the two phrases highlighted above. The poster used **dey yarn** (a phrase in Nigerian Pidgin English) to mean 'to talk' or '...are talking' while **hoo haa** meant 'whole heart'. The poster used the sound to represent the actual phrase. This is common among the Nigerian military and para-military personnel to mean 'confidence'.

Level of English Proficiency

Nigerian university students do not have the same luxury of competence in English but because of their positive attitude to English language to show to other Netizens that they are well equipped to use English language. Therefore, they tend to commit various errors ranging from incorrect spelling to wrong demonstrative pronouns as determiners (hereafter Det).

Text 5

Nigeria will be on d **part** to greatness again
if it can win d war against corruption and insecurity

Text 6

Thereafter, their body are dumped in Eza River
for crocodiles to **fist** on.

In text 5, the poster used **part** (N) which could mean 'a section' or 'portion' instead of the appropriate word '**path**' (N) which could be translated to 'a direction, track or course taken'. Likewise, in text 6, **fist** (which could be either noun or verb) instead of a more appropriate word '**feast**' (v) is employed in the sentence to mean 'to feed sumptuously'. Texts 5 and 6 are defective and semantically anomalous because of the 'restriction rules' that state that not all words can occur together in a sentence and still be meaningful. Consequently, **part** and **fist** do not give the expected meanings to texts 5 and 6 respectively. Therefore, this shows the posters' level of proficiency in English.

Text 7

This people has finished Nigeria.

Nigerian university students use English language as it is convenient for them. Text 7 is a testament of many wrong usage of demonstrative pronoun on the Internet. 'This' (which is singular form of 'these') is used as an adjective (Det) before a plural noun 'people'. Also, it is clearly shown that there is no agreement between the noun which is a plural word 'people' and the verb which ought to have been 'have'. In all this, it is evident that the poster has little

knowledge of English grammar. Yet, he is showing off of communicating in English. However, this is showing that the essence of language is basically communication (i.e. mutual intelligibility) and not grammaticality because the message passed is well understood.

Language Evolution

The Internet accelerates language evolution by introducing new words, abbreviations and emojis. Basically, it is pertinent to say that the evolution of language means the origin or history of development of a language over time which may include the emergence of new words and divergence i.e. the dynamic process of change. Any of them may be caused by factors such as progress on technology, cultural exchange, etc. this can be analyzed under lexical change, semantic change and grammatical change.

Lexical Change

This is a language phenomenon that refers to any change in language vocabulary which includes the addition of new words or morphemes and modifications or loss of words.

Text 8

This vicious Fulani herders are
unearthing peoples life in Benue.

Literally, **unearthing** is a verbal word that means to drive or draw something from the earth or to uncover or find/bring out something/someone hidden. Contrary to the aforementioned, **unearthing** in text 8 is used to mean 'killing' or 'stop living or existing'. Clearly here, **earth** is the root word while **un-** prefix and **-ing** suffix are added at word-initial and word-final positions respectively. The **un-** prefix is added to the root word to negate the word **earth** while the suffix **-ing** is added to the root word to turn it from present tense to present continuous tense. Therefore, it can be argued that when people die, they are buried (committed to the mother earth) and no longer on the surface of the earth. Maybe this argument leads Netizens to employ the word 'unearth'.

Also in text 8 above, there is no agreement between the Det 'this' and the head word 'herders' in the noun phrase (NP) which functions as the subject of the sentence. The demonstrative pronoun 'this' is singular while the noun 'herders' it qualifies is plural. This is definitely an anomaly in English language. In Standard English, the determiner is always in an agreement with the noun it qualifies in number.

Text 9

Let d fed govt retire all d ogas for army
and give them warm **send-forth**.

Send-forth in Standard English is a phrase (verbal) which means 'to send or release something'. It is now common in Nigeria in real-time maybe down to the influence of the Internet, to use **send-forth** when talking about retirement from work instead of the Standard English compound word **send-off** because it is a general belief that the retiree is not incapacitated by retiring but projecting to go and do more exploit. Also, Nigerians believe that confession is possession, therefore, one needs to confess positivity always.

Semantic Change

It is also referred to as semantic shift. This is a linguistic phenomenon that refers to a change in meaning of a word or a group of words over time with no distortion to its form. The change can occur through many mechanisms, which may include broadening, narrowing or shift, metaphorical extension, metonymy, etc.

Text 10

If ds robbers were not cut dey
for don **blow** by now.

‘Blow’ as used in text 10 is an example of broadening – expanding the meaning of a word. Literally, the word means to produce or propel by an air current, to burst or explode, to fail at something or spread report. However, the word **blow** (Nigerian English neologism) is used here as a verb to mean ‘being famous and rich.’ This means that when one has more money, he will become more popular and influential.

Text 11

He is planning to **japa** to Russia
if not for the crisis there with Ukraine.

The search light is on **japa** in the text 11 above. **Japa** is a Yoruba slang (colloquial) but which is now made popular among young Netizens. It is used as a noun in the text. Literally, **Japa** consists of two distinct words in Yoruba i.e. **já** to mean ‘run’ or ‘escape’ plus **pa** to show how through ‘exclamation’ or ‘the degree or swiftness in running’. However, **japa** has ever been here but never as a word and meant different things to different people at different situations. Therefore, with Nigeria’s university students, **japa** means to emigrate from one country to another for greener pasture. Since the word has become a ‘national anthem’ in Nigeria, and even the world over.

Grammatical Change

Nigeria’s university Netizens use language as a tool of convenience rather than conviction. Essentially, they prioritize ease over internalised rules. As a result, they do not really bother about grammatical rules because rules are taken as exception. Different mechanisms are employed in discussing the grammatical change. This includes shortening of words, non/wrong usage of punctuation marks, etc.

Text 12

The vice president who is **ur** kinsman
Said **dt** he would tackle insurgency in **D** NE.

In Standard English, there are no such words as **ur**, **dt** and **D**. They are best referred to as alphabets. Instead of these alphabets, there are such words as possessive pronoun ‘your’, demonstrative pronoun ‘that’ and definite article ‘the’. One thing that is common among them is that they can all function as determiners. In this text, the poster replaced ‘your’ with what can be referred to as back-formation **ur**, ‘that’ with **dt** and ‘the’ with **D**. All these representations are best referred to as alphabets and not words. However, it is a common thing for Netizens to resort to the use of shortened words. This may not be unconnected with easy spellings and pronunciation.

Text 13

The **pple** of **Naija** cannot move
around the country freely anymore.

Pple for ‘people’ and **naija** for ‘Nigeria’ are a bit of pronunciation turned into a new form/spelling of the words. This occurs by reducing the length of the word. This may not be unconnected to the limited number of characters they could type in one text. It is generally common with Netizens to employ shortened words in their chat. These shortened words and many are well understood by Netizens because it is observed that nobody amongst the interactants in the comment section ask for their meanings, and the Netizens’ contributions to

the subject matter are not off line. This shows that Netizens are well at home with the usage of the shortened words. **naija** is coined and made popular by earlier Yoruba musicians.

Text 14

Its has been a **loooooong** time and not only today that
kidnappers have been attacking motorist on that road.

The elongated word (**loooooong**) in text 14 is used to emphasize the length or number of times which motorists have been attacked by the assailants. The word is elongated just to make it more prominent in the statement than the other words. Therefore, one can simply put it that the elongated word is used to show emphasis and its importance in the sentence to show that kidnapping has been happening around there not only that day but has become a recurring decimal.

Computer-Mediated Factor

Computer-mediated communication (hereafter CMC) has greatly impacted how Netizens employ language in their daily life activities on the Internet, and also enhances collaboration and connectivity. Computer have expanded vocabulary by engineering new words or giving new meanings to old words. Also, they simplify language by using shortened words, elongated words to show emphasis, etc.

New Word Engineering

This is the deliberate effort at creating new words and modifying the old words. This is done specifically to serve a purpose or occur at a particular context.

Text 15

No one can go to yam market at Gboko
bcus Of d killers Fulani. And no work!
no money nah automatic invitation to **sapa** be dt.

Sapa is a Nigerian slang (colloquial) that means ‘short of cash’, ‘broke’ or ‘financial struggle’. It is new to Nigerian English lexicon but it is trending online. It functions as a noun in this context. The neologism is often used in informal settings such as the Internet, conversation with friends and acquaintances. Nigerian Netizens, including university students, engineered other numerous neologisms which include but not limited to **japa**, **kpai**, etc. Even, Netizens craftily created different tenses for these neologisms. For instance,

Neologism	Present Tense	Past Tense	Continuous Tense
Japa (v)	Japas	japaed	Japaing
Kpai (v)	Kpais	kpaied	Kpaing

Text 16

It is saver to eat at a low key mama put than to go a place which
will be easy target for a suicide-bomber to **kpai** many pple.

In this context, **kpai** is also a Nigeria Pidgin English word which is typically categorized as a verb. It can be employed in describing a state, or an action such as ‘to die’ or ‘to kill’. Nigerian slang add flavour and colour to the language use on the Internet by showing Nigeria’s creative and beautiful culture.

Findings

This study investigates the dynamics of English language usage by the Netizens on insecurity in Nigeria. Therefore, the findings show that;

- netizens are spurred to create neologisms due to various reasons ranging from social interactions, linguistic chauvinism, level of education to language evolution.
- in most cases, the netizens initiate conversation in English language irrespective of their relationship. Thereby making English language the matrix-language on the Internet.
- the interlocutors exhibited great skills in using the codes discussed in this study, i.e. Nigeria indigenous languages, English-based pidgin and English. They exhibited great dexterity by using the languages together in a sentence without its meaning being distorted.
- netizens make correlation between spelling and pronunciation by turning pronunciation into a new form/spelling of words.
- it is evident, with copious examples, in the study that consonant sounds take prominence on the Internet as against the vowel sounds that take prominence in Standard English.

Conclusion

The attitude of people using a language is all about how they feel about the language and its usage. The question to be asked is like, do they love the language, hate it or are they indifferent. When the answer is in affirmation, they try every possible means to show loyalty and interest. People's attitudes towards a certain language can be impacted by various factors that have been mentioned above and many more such as culture, social status, and their backgrounds.

Evidently, attitude towards a particular language is essential, and worth pondering on how language users' attitudes fashion out the way they use language and their interaction with others.

Recommendation

From the data analysed, the interactants switched at will between Nigerian Pidgin English, English and the Nigerian indigenous languages. This showed flexibility in the way they employed the English 'coated' code viz-a-viz Nigerian English. Therefore, The effects of neologisms on language learning should invariably impact the curriculum development in order to be in tandem with the Netizens' educational needs. However, students especially should be warned against the danger inherent in neologisms such as slang words if they turn it to a habit. In conclusion, technology viz-a-viz the internet has never and will never be the problem of language but the attitude of the speakers of such language.

This study is just a tip of what obtains as far as computer-mediated communication is concerned. As a result, further researches are expected to comb the phenomenon of language dynamics on the Internet.

References

- Adams, D. (2021). Understanding the impact of Internet on Language.
<https://www.ccjk.cm>
- Akinyede, R. G. (2018). Computer-mediated code-switching in selected WhatsApp conversations among Yoruba-English bilinguals. MA thesis. Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti.

- Allan, K & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and Language*. Multilingual matters.
- Barzallo, Y.R. (2019). Factors that influence choice of language variation. <https://study.com/academy/lesson>.
- Cambridge English Dictionary. (2014). www.dictionary-cambridge.org
- Culata, R. (2025). Attribution Theory (B.Weiner). <https://www.instructional design.org>
- Dragojevic, M., Fasoli, F., Cramer, J and Rakic, T. Towards century of language attitude. Research: Looking back and moving forward. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 40(1), 60-79.
- Ellemers, N. (2024). Social identity theory. Fact-checked by Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Heller, M., Pietinäinen, S. & Pujolar, J. (2017). *Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods: studying language issues that matter*. Routledge.
- Indeed Editorial Team. (2024). What is attribution theory? (with types and models). <https://www.indeed.com>
- Jones, E.E. and Nisbett, R. E. (1972). The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes behaviour. In E. E. Jones, D. E. Kanouse, H. H. Kelley, R. E. Nisbett, S. Valius and B. Weiner (Eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behaviour*. General Learning Press, 79-94.
- Komang, A.B.A., Made, R. & Anak, A.S.S.S.D. (2022). Slang words used by live chat of Valkyrae live stream on YouTube in ULILALBAB. *Journal Ilmial multidisiplin*, 1(8).
- Merriam-Webster (2013). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slang>
- Nwala, M.K. & Tamunobelem, I. (2019). The Social Media and Language Use. The case of facebook.. www.all.saiac.org.au
- Obadare, F.T. (2023). Curbing National Insecurity through Effective Use of Language. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 8(3). DOI:10.22161/ijels
- Odumuh, E. (1987). *Nigerian English*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press. Pp 1-20.
- Ogunsiji, A. (2004). "Status, Features and Functions of English in Nigeria and their Implications for EL2 Teaching/Learning". *Language and Discourse in Society*. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 83-97.
- Olojede, A.M., Ebim, M.A. & Abioye, A.T. (2018). Language Use on Social Media: A study of Facebook interactions by Yaba College of Technology undergraduates. *International Journal of Cultural Studies and Technology*, 2(3).
- Taiwo, R. (2018). *Beyond The Text: Critical Discourse Analysis and The Quest for Meaning in Cyberspace Interaction: An Inaugural Lecture at O.A.U., Ile-Ife, Nigeria*. 14.
- Thomas, S. (2024). Attribution Theory: Causes of behaviour and errors. <https://www.study.com>
- Thombre, A. (2020). Has the Internet changed Languages around the World? *Science ABC*
- Thurlow, C.; Lengel, L. & Tomic, A. (2005). Triveni Kuchi, *online information review*, 30(2), 194-195.
- Topader, R.A. (2023). My language is my identity. www.newagebd.net
- Ubalde, J., Alarcon, A. & Lapresta, C. (2017). Evolution and determinants of language attitudes among Catalan adolescents. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 60, 92-103.
- Weiner, B. (1972). *Theory of Motivation: From Mechanism to Cognition*. Markham.
- Weiner, B. (1974). *Achievement motivation and Attribution Theory*. General Learning Press.



Weiner, B. (1986). An Attribution Theory of achievement motivation and emotion.

Psychological Review, 92, 548-573.

Weiner, B. (2010). The development of an attribution-based theory of motivation: A history of ideas. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(1), 28-36.