Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)
A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Journal
http://www.rjelal.com; Email:editorrjelal@gmail.com

Vol.4.Issue 2.2016
(Apr-Jun)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA
2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGLISH IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a study on 'Social Media English in Nigeria'. The content analysis framework was used in the study. Data were collected online through the Facebook wall and Twitter handle of the researchers, message archives of Nairaland website, readers' comments/posts on Nigerian Punch online website as well as messages received through the researchers' email address which were accompanied by copies of Google online questionnaire. In all, fifty (50) text samples on each of the platforms were used for the study. The data were analysed with the aid of Antconc concordance (version 3.2.4w) – a computer aided text analysis and harvesting software. The analysis revealed that social media English in Nigeria has a mixture of features of internet language, Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin and codes from Nigerian indigenous languages. It is also relatively informal although texts by Level Three subjects were observed to be more formal than the texts written by subjects in Levels One and Two. Respelling/Shortening, Alphanumeric and Nigerian Pidgin features were found to be the commonest features of social media English in Nigeria. The T-test statistical analysis showed that both Facebook/Twitter data and Web post (Nairaland and Nigerian Punch) data were similar.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social media is a term used to describe different web-based platforms, applications and technologies that facilitate people's social interaction with one another. Media simply means instruments of communication (like a newspaper) and social media means social instruments of communication (Nation, 2012). Its current meaning is associated with social interaction on the internet. Some of the popular social media sites are Facebook, Yahoo, Twitter, Google Chat, MSN etc. (Baron 2003). These sites have content based on user participation and user generation (i.e. user-generated content). Social media offers people different means of communication ranging from text and voice chat to message boards and private messaging. Communication has undergone changes in the past two decades and the change is still on (Thioune, 2003; The New Media Consortium, 2007). These changes are accelerated by internet communication which has introduced varying creative uses and adaptations through the various platforms. No matter the form or instrument, social media communication is primarily facilitated by language hence its association with internet language. Popular social media platforms in which language is employed in diverse ways in Nigeria are Facebook, Twitter, Nigerian Punch online newspaper and Nairaland forum. These areas are the focus of this study.

Language use on the internet has been studied from the sociolinguistic perspective (Baron, 2003; Posteguillo, 2003; Crystal, 2005). Specifically, social media language has attracted the attention of

scholars in recent times due to the usefulness of Facebook as a meaningful learning environment capable of enhancing students learning of the English language (Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010) and the perspective on Facebook's creation of a literacy platform with emphasis on its support for practice in writing (Reid, 2011). In Nigeria, Lamidi (2012) studied the features of Nigerian English on the Nairaland forum which is an internet-based forum. Data for this study were collected from the archives of the Nairaland website. According to Lamidi, the analysis shows that there is an evolving cyber language that is peculiar to Nigerians because of its affinity with the features of Nigerian English. He concludes that this English "is a variety of Nigerian English" based on the presence of features of language contact phenomenon in relation to lexis, grammar, phonology, semantics and pragmatics (p. 97). This variety of English is also considered suitable for informal interaction. The term *Naija English* is suggested by Lamidi as an appropriate name for this variety of Nigerian English.

Lamidi identifies that this variety exhibits features of internet English namely, shortening, use of symbol in form of address (e.g. @), &, abbreviations, sound based interactions (e.g. LOL) etc., in spite of having the features of Nigerian English. Second, Lamidi observes the need to properly name this identified variety. However, the suggested name *Naija English* is a name that does not appropriately capture the essence of this variety of Nigerian English. The term "Naija" (suggested by the author) is a sound based informal coinage/slang for Nigeria which its meaning is associated neither with the internet nor with the computer/electronic communication. The use of this term may create ambiguity because it means exactly the same as Nigerian English, although informally. Following Crystal's (2005) definition of internet linguistics, coupled with the fact that the language of communication on Nairaland forum is part of the language of the internet, 'Nigerian online English' seems to be an appropriate term for this emerging variety.

Apart from Lamidi's investigation, there is no study known to the present authors that has examined the variety of English for Facebook, Twitter, Nigerian Punch and Nairaland communication in Nigeria. The gap is what this study intends to fill. The English Nigerians use on websites sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Nairaland forum, and Nigerian Punch online newspaper etc, represent what is termed social media English in Nigeria. The findings in this study will determine the features of social media English in Nigeria as well as refute or corroborate the findings by Lamidi (2012) in addition to other studies on internet language.

1.1 Background on Nigerian Punch and Nairaland

While Facebook and Twitter are two globally known social media websites, in Nigeria, the Nigerian Punch online newspaper and Nairaland forum are two popular social media platforms through which Nigerians interact. Nigerian Punch newspaper is a national daily owned by Punch Nigeria Limited. According to wikipedia (online encyclopaedia), the newspaper was founded between 1971 and 1973 by two friends James Aboderin, an accountant and Sam Amuka, a columnist and editor with Daily Times. However, they started printing their trademark daily Punch newspaper in November 1976. The online version of the newspaper came with the emergence of the internet in Nigeria and through its website: www.punchng.com. The website provides online news and an interactive section for readers comments after every news item. This has become a discussion forum for readers who comment on topical issues and daily news.

Nairaland is the most popular Nigerian based online community (forum) open to all Nigerians and friends of Nigeria (Lamidi, 2012). The forum is owned by Seun Osewa who found it in 2005. The website provides discussion threads that transcend all fields of human endeavour on different topical issues. Past comments and posts by members are also archived which provides research materials and reference to those who may be interested especially as it affects the social media English in Nigeria. The Punch online newsreader's comments and the contributions on Nairaland forum website form part of the data for the present study on social media English in Nigeria.

2.0 Research Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

Data from Facebook and Twitter subjects were collected through posts to the researchers' Facebook wall and Twitter handle which were created mainly for this study. Some of the respondents also forwarded their Facebook/Twitter posts to the email inboxes of the researchers. The requests for the data were accompanied with a Google online questionnaire for the purpose of getting information regarding the respondent's age and educational background. The data were grouped into two. Facebook and Twitter data were grouped together as Group 1 while the Nigerian Punch online newspaper reader's comments and Nairaland Forum were in Group 2. The grouping became necessary in order to determine the way Nigerians use language (English) while communicating on internationally known social media sites and the way they do also when using social media sites that are entirely Nigerian. These data were collected between 2012 and 2014. In all, fifty text samples each of the two groups were used for the study.

2.2 Analytical Method

The collected data were converted to rich text formats which were uploaded to a text analysis programme (concordance). The concordance is a computer aided text analysis and harvesting software and the type used is Antconc (version 3.2.4w). The rich text format (rtf) is the software's acceptable format. The data were further analysed using simple percentages and T-test statistical methods. While the simple percentages showed the frequency distribution of the occurrence of the coded content features. The T-test was used to determine the difference between the English used by Nigerians in their social media communication in Group1 (Facebook and Twitter) and Group 2 (Nigerian Punch and Nairaland forum) platforms. A hypothesis was formulated to guide the research. The hypothesis was stated in its null state assuming that there is no difference between the way Nigerians use English in Group 1 and Group 2 social media platforms. This hypothesis was tested statistically

3.0 Theoretical Perspective

The study is anchored on the Content Analysis framework. Content Analysis is a scientific method used in the study of the content of any piece of communication (written or recorded) to show the presence of certain concepts and words in the text or sets of texts. It involves the quantification and analysis of the presence, meaning, and relationship of the words and concepts to determine the set objectives of the researcher. The development of content analysis is traceable to Alfred R. Lindesmith in 1931 (Prasad, 2011). It is also associated with Lasswell (1965).

There are two main types of content analysis. These are conceptual and relational content analysis techniques. Conceptual content analysis establishes the existence and frequency of concepts in a text. Content analysis has been traditionally associated with conceptual analysis (Palmquist, 1980). In conceptual analysis, the researcher is only interested in quantifying the words and concepts and not in examining how they are related. In other words, the researcher examines the presence of certain words in relation to his/her research question and put these words in their categories.

The relational content analysis uses the conceptual content analysis as its base. It builds on what the conceptual analysis has provided by examining the relationship between and among concepts in a text. Both the conceptual and relational content analyses have been applied in this study. This framework has been used in the identification; coding/classification, and the analyses of the content features of the English used by Nigerians in their social media activities on the internet.

4.0 Data Analysis and Findings

Data were coded and analysed based on the features of internet language (Crystal, 2005 & 2011; Posteguillo, 2003). Some features of Nigerian English which includes features of language in a contact situation such as English in Nigeria's multilingual environment (Bamgbose, 1995; Okoro, 2004; Dadzie, 2004) were also coded. To account for internet language lexical forms, the following content features were identified: Acronym/Initialism

(AI), Alphanumeric Features (AF), Respelling and Shortening (RS). Deviant Spelling (DS) was added to account for the forms with unique spelling that run contrary to methods of reduction or shortening resulting from the need for space management which Awonusi (2004) referred to as the "law of Energetics". Neologism (N) was added to help in the investigation of possible new word forms present in the data.

The introduction of graphics and sound effects which make written texts to approximate spoken language is one feature of internet language identified by some previous studies (Posteguillo, 2003; Shortis, 2007; Baron, 2008). Three different but related types namely Sound Simulation, Emoticon and Symbols/Ellipsis were identified and merged into Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices. The multilingual nature of Nigeria's environment informed the inclusion of Nigerian Pidgin (NP), Code Switching/Mixing, and Idioms and Proverbs as part of the content features. The following table contains the data distribution.

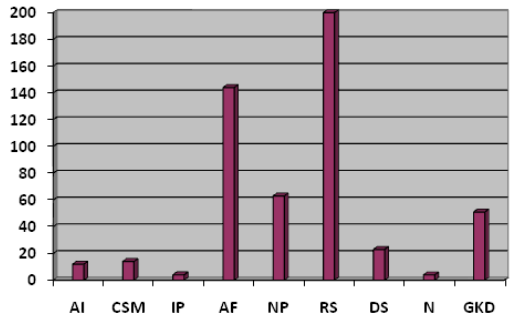
Table 1: Content Features Frequency Table of Group 1 and Group 2

Features	Facebook and Twitter		Punch and Nairaland	
	No. of occurrence	% of occurrence	No. of occurrence	% of occurrence
Acronym and Initialism	12	0.41	28	0.77
Code switching/mixing	14	0.48	23	0.63
Idioms and Proverbs	4	0.13	5	0.14
Alphanumeric Features	144	4.95	98	2.7
Nigerian Pidgin	63	2.16	74	2.04
Respelling & Shortening	200	6.87	152	4.19
Deviant Spelling	23	0.79	9	0.25
Neologism	4	0.13	3	0.08
Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices	51	1.75	20	0.55
Total Feature Frequency	515	17.67	412	11.35
Total Word Tokens	2911		3628	

4.1 Facebook and Twitter Data

The data in Table 1 shows that the frequency of Respelling/Shortening (RS) is the highest in the Facebook and Twitter data. This is followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF), Nigerian pidgin (NP), Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD), Code Switching/Mixing, Acronym and Initialism, and Deviant Spelling (DS) respectively. Idioms/Proverbs (IP) and Neologism (N) have equal frequencies and are the lowest content features in the frequency table. The data in Table 1 above is presented below in a chart to show at a glance the Facebook and Twitter content features frequency. The content features are abbreviated to facilitate the chat presentation.

Fig. 4: Chart Showing Facebook and Twitter Data Frequency



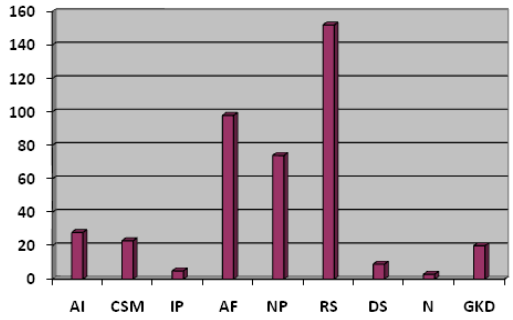
Key:

AI:	Acronym and Initialism	DS: Deviant Spelling
CSM:	Code Switching/Mixing	N: Neologism
IP:	Idioms and Proverbs	GKD: Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices
AF:	Alphanumeric Features	
NP:	Nigerian Pidgin	
RS:	Respelling/Shortening	

4.2. Nigerian Punch and Nairaland Data

The Punch and Nairaland data in Table 1 above shows also that the subjects used more of Respelling & Shortening (RS) as it has the highest frequency in the data analysed, and is seconded by Alphanumeric Features (AF). This is followed by Nigerian Pidgin (NP) has the third highest number, Acronym and Initialism (AI), Code Switching/Mixing (CSM), Graphical and Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD), Deviant Spelling (DS) and Idioms/Proverbs (IP). Neologism (N) has the least number of occurrences in the data analysed. The data in Table 1 above is presented below in a chart to show at a glance the web post/page frequency. The content features are abbreviated to facilitate easy presentation in the chat.

Fig. 1: Chart Showing the Punch and Nairaland data Frequency



Key:

AI:	Acronym and Initialism Respelling/Shortening	RS:	
CSM:	Code Switching/Mixing Deviant Spelling	DS:	
IP:	Idioms and Proverbs Neologism	N:	
AF:	Alphanumeric Features Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices	GKD:	
NP:	Nigerian Pidgin		

4.3 Facebook and Web Post Education Levels Analysis

The Facebook and Web Post data whose writer's levels of education were known (based on the returned questionnaire for Facebook) were isolated from those that had no indication of the level of education of their writers. The ones written by subjects whose levels of education were indicated, were further grouped into three based on their writers levels of education. Level One is for senior secondary school (SSCE) graduates and those seeking admission into the university and first year students of tertiary institutions. Level Two comprises undergraduates of tertiary institutions (from second year), OND/HND holders and university degree holders. Level Three comprises Master's degree holders and PhD holders. The aim is to see the content feature distribution of the texts written by these subjects and to determine their language behaviour in relation to the Facebook and Web post platforms. The following table represents the result of the analyses based on this grouping.

Table 2: Education Levels Distribution of Content Features

Features	Facebook/Twitter Frequency in %			Punch/Nairaland Frequency in %		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Acronym/Initialism	0.98	0.30		5.12	0.56	0.94
Code Switching/Mixing	0.98	0.75		0.05	0.56	
Idioms/proverbs			0.27			
Alphanumeric	7.80	5.28	1.34	4.65	7.24	0.94
Nigerian Pidgin	4.89	4.52			0.28	
Respelling & Shortening	10.73	6.18	4.30	13.49	15.60	2.36
Deviant Spelling		0.45	0.27	0.05	0.56	
Neologism	1.46	0.45				
Graphical & Kinaesthetic Devices	1.46	3.02	0.54			
	Total Freq. = 28.29%	Total Freq. = 20.97%	Total Freq. = 9.41%	Total Freq. = 23.36%	Total Freq. = 24.80%	Total Freq. = 4.25%

Key:

Level 1: SSCE graduates, JAMB/ UTME candidates and first year tertiary institution students.

Level 2: 2nd Year Undergraduates of tertiary institutions, OND/HND holders and university degree holders.

Level 3: Master's degree holders and PhD holders.

4.3.1 Facebook and Twitter Education Level Data

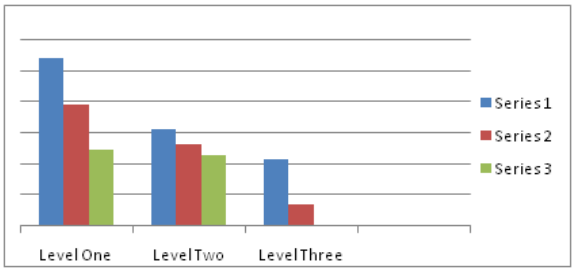
The data in Table 2 shows that the Facebook and Twitter Level One data contains seven content features out of the nine coded in this study. Of these seven features, Respelling & Shortening (RS) occurred most, followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF). Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is in the third position while Neologism (N) and Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD) have equal frequency. Acronym/Initialism (AI) and Code Switching/Mixing (CSM) both share the last position with the lowest frequency. There were no occurrences of Idioms/Proverbs (IP) and Deviant Spelling (SP) in the Level One data analysed.

Table 2 also contains the analysis for Level Two group of the Facebook and Twitter data. This level has a record of eight content features. Again, Respelling & Shortening (RS) has the highest frequency, followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF), Nigerian Pidgin, Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD), and Code Switching/Mixing (CSM). Deviant Spelling (DS) and Neologism both occupy the seventh position. However, Acronym/Initialism is at the lowest position as there is no occurrence of Idiom and Proverbs (IP).

For Level Three Facebook/Twitter data in the table, only five (5) content features were identified. The feature with the highest frequency is Respelling & Shortening (RS), followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF), Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD). Idioms and Proverbs (IP), and Deviant Spelling (DS) both share the last position. There is no occurrence of Acronym/Initialism (AI), Code switching/Mixing (CSM), Nigerian Pidgin (NP) and Neologism (N) in the Level Three Facebook and Twitter data analysed.

The Facebook/Twitter education level data analysis shows that three internet language features are prominent based on the three levels of education. These are Respelling & Shortening (RS), Alphanumeric Features (AF) and Nigerian Pidgin (NP). Of these three content features, Respelling/Shortening (RS) has the highest frequency in the three levels analysed followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF). However, while these two features occured at all the levels of education analyses, there was no presence of Nigerian Pidgin (NP) in the Level Three data. The three prominent content features identified in the three educational levels analyses in Table 2 above are represented in the chart below. Levels One and Two have three bars each which represent Acronym/Initialism, Alphanumeric Features, and Respelling/Shortening. However, Level Three has only two (2) bars because of the non-occurrence of Nigerian pidgin in the Level Two Facebook/Twitter data analysed. The bars are labelled series 1, 2, and 3 respectively following one another in succession. The following is the bar chart for the three levels showing the prominent content features of Facebook/Twitter data.

Fig. 3: Facebook/Twitter Level of Education Chart



Series 1 = Respelling & Shortening
Series 2 = Alphanumeric Features
Series 3 = Nigerian Pidgin

From the chart above, it is evident that Level One has the highest number of the content features at the three levels of education-based analyses hence its prominence. This is followed by Level Two. Level Three records the lowest frequency and has frequencies for only Respelling/Shortening (RS) and Letter/Number Homophone (LH) in the chart as it does not contain any Nigerian Pidgin (NP) content feature. Level Three also has the lowest number of internet codes in the Facebook/Twitter data analysed based on the education parameter. This implies that the content features observed at this level are extremely low in our education based Facebook/Twitter data analysis.

4.3.2 Nigerian Punch and Nairaland Education Level Data

Table 2 above shows that the Nigerian Punch and Nairaland Level One data contains five content features out of the nine coded in this study. Respelling/Shortening (RS) has the highest number of occurrence out of these five features observed in the Level One data analysed. This is followed by Acronym and Initialism (AI), and Alphanumeric

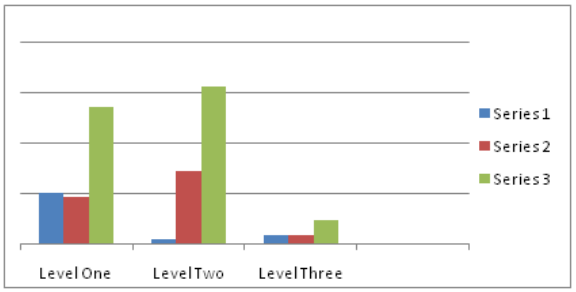
Features (AF) respectively. Code Switching (CS) and Deviant Spelling (DS) both have equal frequency and occupy the last position. From the table above, three content features stand out in Level One. These are Respelling & Shortening (RS), Acronym and Initialism (AI), and Alphanumeric Features (AF). Nigerian Pidgin, Idioms/Proverbs, Code Switching, Neologism or Graphical/Kinaesthetic Devices were not observed in the data analysed at this level.

The table also indicates that there are six content features in the Punch and Nairaland Level Two data. Respelling and shortening (RS) has the highest number of word tokens in the Level Two data analysed. This is followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF). Acronym & Initialism (AI), Code Mixing/Switching (CS) and Deviant Spelling (DS) all have equal frequency hence they occupied the third position. Nigerian pidgin (NP) has the lowest content feature occurrence. Respelling & shortening, and Alphanumeric Features stand out on the table of this level's data.

From Table 2 above, three prominent content features can be identified in the Punch and Nairaland data analysed for Level three subjects. These are Acronym & Initialism, Alphanumeric Features, and Respelling & Shortening. Of these three content features, Respelling & Shortening (RS) has the highest number of word tokens, while Acronym & Initialism (AI) and Letter/Number Homophones (LH) both have equal number. There are no other content features in the data analysed at this level.

The isolation of some of these data and their subsequent grouping into levels of education has brought to the fore the presence of Acronym/Initialism, Alphanumeric Features, and Respelling & Shortening devices which are three content features common to internet language globally (Crystal, 2004; Shortis, 2007). Following this analysis of the education based data, we observed that the use of these three content features by Nigerians cuts across the three levels of education used for the Nigerian Punch and Nairaland study, though with some variation. The three prominent content features identified are presented in a chart below. Levels One, Two and Three are represented in the chart while each level has three bars which represent Acronym/Initialism (AI), Alphanumeric Features (AF), and Respelling/Shortening. The bars are labelled series 1, 2, and 3 respectively following one another in succession.

Fig. 3: Punch and Nairaland Levels of Education Chart



Series 1 = Acronym & Initialism
Series 2 = Alphanumeric Features
Series 3 = Respelling & Shortening

From the chart above, respelling/shortening (RS) lead at the three levels of education based analysis. This is followed by Alphanumeric Features (AF) although this content feature is very low among the Level Three subjects who have Master's degree and PhD. Incidentally, Level Three has a minimal number of internet codes in this group of data analysed on the three content features. This implies that the content features of this level are extremely low in the data analysed. However, Level Two (holders of Ordinary National Diploma [OND] and other graduates of tertiary institutions) has the highest Respelling/Shortening frequency as well as highest number of Alphanumeric features at the three levels of education analysed. The highest frequency of Acronym/Initialism is recorded by Level One subjects.

4.4 T-Test Analysis of Facebook/Twitter and Punch/Nairaland Data

Table 3: T- test: Two Sample Assuming Unequal Variance

	Group 1	*Group 2*
Mean	57.22222	45.77778
Variance	4842.194	2643.944
Observations	9	9
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t Stat	0.396814	

P(T<=t) one-tail	0.348547
t Critical one-tail	1.75305
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.697093
t Critical two-tail	2.13145

4.4. 1 Facebook/Twitter and Punch/Nairaland T-Test Data Analysis

From the T- test statistical analysis in Table 3 above, the mean of the Facebook/Twitter data is 57.2 and that of the Punch/Nairaland is 45.8. The variance for Facebook/Twitter is 4842.2, while that of Punch/Nairaland is 2644. Both the mean and variance of the Facebook/Twitter are higher than the Punch/Nairaland data. However, the calculated t-value of 0.4 is significantly lower than the t-critical value of 2.13. The P- value of 0.697 is also higher than the alpha (α = 0.05) at 5% confidence interval. These indicate that it cannot be stated with 95% certainty that there is a difference between the way language is used for Facebook/Twitter communication and the Punch/Nairaland communication in Nigeria. The researchers are therefore 95% confident that the content features in the two sets of data analysed are similar. The null hypothesis stating that there is no difference assumed prior to the T-test analysis is therefore upheld.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

Following the analyses of the data, nine content features were identified in the social media English in Nigeria (see Table 1 above). Three features were relatively high in the two sets of data (Facebook/Twitter and Punch/Nairaland). These are Respelling/Shortening, Alphanumeric Features and Nigerian pidgin. However, the occurrence of Respelling/Shortening was the highest in the two platforms. This may be attributed to the high use of short codes in internet language. Some examples of observed Respelling/Shortening features are: *Hv* – have, *tnks* – thanks, *ppl* – people, *bn* – been or being, *frnd* – friend etc. Alphanumeric Features also use the shortening and reduction principle which may be why its occurrence is also high. Examples of this feature are: *y* – why, *u* – you, *gud9t* – good night, *d8t* – date, *4ge*t – forget etc. As for Nigerian pidgin, the only explanation for its high occurrence is the informal nature of internet language coupled with the high number of youth who are also found to use mostly informal language in their social media interactions.

The occurrence of the other coded features was not evenly distributed in the data. For instance, while the Graphical and Kinaesthetic Devices (GKD) (e.g., *@* - at, *&* - and, *B...h* – bitch, *hahahahaha, laffoooo, ?????*, the use of emoticons, and smiley's (crying) was the fourth highest content feature in the Facebook/Twitter data, followed by Code switching/Mixing; Acronym and Initialism (such as *IJN* – in Jesus name, *LLnP* – long life and prosperity, *TG* – thank God, *FB* – Facebook) was the fourth highest feature in the Punch/Nairaland data. Code Switching occupied the fifth position in the Punch/Nairaland data as it did in the Facebook/Twitter data. Deviant Spelling was higher in the Facebook/Twitter data than in the Punch/Nairaland data. Some examples are: *seriozz* – serious, *byound* – beyond etc. The least observed features in the two platforms were Neologism and Idioms/proverbs. For Neologism, this may be due to the fact that new word forms take some time to emerge and a longer time to gain currency (e.g. *forming* – claiming to be whom or what one is not). For the low number of Idioms/Proverbs, this may be attributed to the required typing speed of internet language which social media English is part of. Social media subjects do prefer using shorter forms and expressions to longer ones.

Regarding the education level analyses, Punch/Nairaland subjects used less number of the coded content features than their Facebook/Twitter counterparts. In addition, there was no occurrence of Nigerian Pidgin codes in the data of Level One and Two subjects. Although Nigerian pidgin codes were found in the Level Two data, the number was very low. This indicates that the Punch and Nairaland English is more formal than the Facebook and Twitter English. Punch and Nairaland subjects used only three internet language codes namely: Acronym/Initialism, Alphanumeric and Respelling/shortening features. This is an indication that these three features are the regular and most popular internet language codes used by Nigerians in their social media English.

5.1 Nigerian English Features

The findings in this study corroborates Lamidi's (2012) conclusion that internet communication on Nairaland website has brought about the emergence of a new cyber English that is peculiar to Nigerians because of its affinity with the features of Nigerian English; and that this English "is a variety of Nigerian English" based on the presence of features of language contact phenomenon in relation to lexis, grammar, etc. However, it should be added that this language is not only used on the Nairaland website, but includes all other areas of internet communication such as Facebook and Twitter which are the most popular social media sites used by Nigerians.

Social media English in Nigeria shares almost all the features of Nigerian English with the exception of the phonological features. This is because the same Nigerians who speak and write Nigerian English are equally the ones who use the online variety. Some of the identified Nigerian English features include the reduplication of lexical items such as *now now*, *very very*, *softly softly,* etc. (although this is minimal), the use of peculiar Nigerian idioms and proverbs. Examples are: *to separate the whiff from the chaff* (instead of the *wheat*), *a stitch in time saves lives* (instead of 'saves nine'), *he held the knife and yams* (he was in charge or in control), *do not put sand in my garri* (don't ruin my chances) etc. These sometimes undergo internet language modification.

Another feature of Nigerian English observed in the social media data is the pragmatic transliteration of Nigerian coinages. Examples include: *take in* (to become pregnant), *been to* (one who has travelled abroad especially to England), *sufferhead* (a luckless person), *bride price* (money paid by the groom's family when marrying a woman), *boys quarters* (rooms at the back or corner of a building), *cash madam* (rich woman), *head tie* (hair scarf), *big man* (rich/wealthy man or an important personality), *invitees* (invited guests), *chewing stick* (stick used for cleaning teeth), *you will see* (a challenge or threat denoting a negative repercussion) etc. The replication of numerous indigenous greetings (Bamgbose, 1995) was also observed in the data. Some of such greetings are *welcome*, *sorry* (used even when one is not the cause or offered for sneezing). Others are *well done* (greeting to someone performing a task), *sorry for yesterday*, *till tomorrow* etc. However, the Nigerian English pragmatic feature which involves the use of multiple titles to reflect the social status of the addressee to avoid offending him/her (such as Honourable Chief Dr. XYZ, High Chief XYZ etc) was very minimal in the data. This may be due to the nature of internet communication which abhors verbosity and requires speedy typing of texts. Such honorifics as Mr., Mrs., Sir, Madam, Dr., Prof., etc., were equally observed. Another feature of Nigerian English which has been observed in this study is the omission of determiner/articles. Examples are: *i'm using laptop* (omission of 'a'); *u cannot b without phone* (omission of determiner 'a'); *during church service* (omission of 'the') etc.

Social media English in Nigeria is a blend of Nigerian English, internet English codes, code mixing/switching with Nigerian languages including Nigerian pidgin and is relatively informal depending on the interpersonal relationship of interlocutors. However, the level three subjects use English that is more formal than the other levels especially on the Punch and Nairaland platforms. This may be due to the nature of the comments on these platforms which involves communication beyond two persons but among many participants on the forum, such as the comments on Nairaland and Nigerian Punch websites. The comments are contributions based on the writer's understanding of the topic or news items and his/her personal opinion. In addition, readers of newspapers (whether online or offline) are believed to be educated, and the level three subjects are in this educated category.

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