

Language Use and Social Network: An Emergent Variety

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ABSTRACT

This paper entitled “Language Use and Social Network: An Emergent Variety” examines the use of language in social network sites. The paper adopts the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as its theoretical framework. This framework is an approach to sociolinguistic study. A central theoretical principle is that any act of communication involves choices. Languages used in the social network sites are a system of choice and a variety. However, this theory has been useful as it helps the researcher look into the choice of language by students over the social network sites. Data were elicited through the instrument called “Language and Social Network Questionnaire” and analysis done using percentage and frequency counts. The results of findings reveal that presently languages used by students over the social network have shifted from the act of fine writing, correct spelling and pronunciation to the use of graphemes. Students’ response to this is evident in the uncontrollable use of undecipherable initials, abbreviations, numerical slangs among others to effect communication. Findings also reveal that this usage is appealing to students and the resulting effects are noticeable mostly in students’ academic work. Interestingly, it is also revealed that these lexemes/graphemes reveal a phonological process called ‘deletion’ in particular as well as some phonetic and syntactic features. In view of this therefore, it is opined that seeing to the excessive use of these undecipherable initials, abbreviations, numerical slangs among others, their continuous use should be minimized and context of usage should as well be taken into consideration.

Key words: Language use, social network, choice, student, Systemic Functional Grammar SFG

Abbreviations

Full Meaning

(i)	SNSs	-	Social Network Sites
(ii)	SNLs	-	Social Network Languages
(iii)	SNA	-	Social Network Analysis
(iv)	SNCs	-	Social Network Concepts

- | | | | |
|------|------|---|----------------------|
| (v) | SNNs | - | Social Network Nodes |
| (vi) | SMS | - | Short Message System |

1. Introduction

*“Moses, gd evng morrow’s class
wil start at 11am... pls inform all
Tnx; Prof Urua”
16th September 2015 @ 8:51pm.*

The above cited quotation aptly describes a linguistic phenomenon that has become popular for a short time of electronic text messaging the world over especially in Nigeria. Perhaps one of the most commonly used words among social network users are tnx, 101, gud, ery, a.m, p.m, 2nite, LAG etc. This usage throws into sharp focus a number of issues and problems like register as style in linguistic economy, and linguistic theory, informality, discourse feature in Nigerian English etc. The use of lexemes such as gud, p.m, a.m, tnx, tinz above exemplify some sort of inspired usage that forms part of linguistic style which has moved away the literary notions of fine writing, good or bad style, concord making etc to stylistics aptly described by crystal (1980) as the study of the features of situational distinctive use (varieties) of language”. Labour (1972) advocate the quantitative studies of style which perceives speech as constituting a linear continuum of style, ranging from formal to informal i.e. micro-style.

Language use over the social network like whatsapp, Blackberry Messenger, 2go, Facebook, wechat, instagram, twitter etc are gaining prominence over the conventional use of language. Conventional wisdom (thanks to Chomskian Linguistics) shows that economy remains one of the important goals of linguistic theory. At the micro level of usage, the notion of economy suggests or points to a speaker’s ability to utilize the minimally necessary number of lexemes to express comprehensively the communication import of his/her speech thereby maximally impacting on his/her hearer. At this point brevity is seen and used as a tool for achieving comprehensive and comprehending information. Interlocutors’ use of language in the social network domain overtly shows and indicates the relationship between them. Though the decoder is expected to decode every lexemes in the text, this however seems not totally realistic as at some point some lexemes may appear new to the decoder. The

new lexemes having totally different meaning – this notwithstanding shows creativity in language use despite the fact that it shows extremity and or even breach in communication.

Research Questions:

- (i) What are social networks and SNLs to the University of Uyo Students?
- (ii) What appeals students' use of social network languages?
- (iii) What are the effects of social network languages on students of University of Uyo?

Given the wide range of usage of language of social network as language of communication among people especially undergraduate students; this study seeks

- (i) To investigate the use of social network language by students.
- (ii) To find out how such usage appeals to students.
- (iii) To ascertain their effects on the users.

2.1 Language use

Language has been defined in various different ways by linguists and language enthusiasts. Every language has considered internal variations and speakers make constant use of the many different possibilities offered to them. People constantly exploit the nuances of the language they speak for a wide variety of purpose. Varieties that people use according to Wardhaugh (1986) reflect such matters as their regional, social or ethnic and even possible their sex (gender) and their particular way of speaking. Choice of words and even rules for conversing are in fact highly determined by certain social requirement. Dennis (2006) quoted in Okeke (2011) see language as a structured system of arbitrary vocal sounds and sequences of sounds which is used in interpersonal communication by an aggregation of human beings and which rather exhaustively, vocalizes and catalogs things, events and processes in human environment. Emphasis is placed on the social function of language according to this definition. It also portrays language as a distinctive human activity which enables people to communicate. This is to explain that language can be use to express feelings, thoughts, emotions, desires, requests, and communicate effectively with one another. Firth (1957a) believes that the description of a language could not be complete without some reference to the context of situation in which language is used. In view of above we relate social network language employ by SNS users.

SN languages employ by users ranges from phonetic representation to text multilingualism to effect communication in the site. It should be noted that one of the idiosyncratic aspects of SN users aside from hairstyle and fashion, is their forms and use of language. This usage is becoming unique, acceptable and influential among users and even beyond its domain of usage to academic or official domain.

2.2 Social Network Sites

Review of existing literatures on SNSs reveals that it has attracted millions of users due to affordance and reach. A network is a set of factors connected by a set of tie (Borgatti and Foster, 2003). The elements of network is often referred to as vertices nodes or actors and the size of a network is the total number of nodes and contacts that compound the network (Martinez – Lopez et al; 2009). The actors can be people, teams, organizations concept, etc. Ties connect pairs of actors and can be directed (ie, potentially one directional as in giving advice to someone) or undirected (as in being physically proximate) and can be dichotomous (present or absent as in whether two people are friends or not) or valued (measured on a scale as in strength of friendship) Borgatti and Foster, 2003).

Social media is a powerful new form of communication and the number of users on popular social media sites is growing at exponential rates. Millions of people are using social media tools as part of their everyday lives for work, studies and play because of its ubiquity. Social network sites (SNSs) have grown and are expected to continue growing at a dramatic rate. Nowadays, on facebook alone, there are more than 500 million users registered to the site (BBC, 2010). Moreover, 200 million users log on to Facebook everyday (Facebook, 2010) second behind Google (Alexa-com 2010a). Given the continued emergence of new social network sites like Whatsapp, 2go, Myspace, Wechat, Palmchat, Linkedin, twitter to mention but a few. The numbers of users are expected to drastically increase. It has been found that students spend around 3 hours on social network site each day (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke 2008). Using social network sites has been to enhance individual's self esteem and well-being (Valkenburg Peter & Schouten, 2006), social trust, civic engagement, political participation (Valenzuela Park & Ree, 2009), social capital (Ellison, Stainfield & Lampe, 2007), and so forth.

Different social network names have been interchangeably used such as obtain in (fig 1). This seems problematic. This paper adopts the social network site (SNS) based on the observation made by Boyd and Ellison (2008) that although forming a new relationship online is not unusual it is not a primary objective of users –an observation proved to be valid in several studies (e.g Ellison, et al, 2007); Thelmall, 2009). Boyd and Ellison (2008, p211) define SNS as “web-based service that allow individuals to:

- (i) Construct a public or semi-public profile within a boundary system
- (ii) Articulate a list of other users with who they share a connection and
- (iii) View and traverse that list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site”. The well known example of SNS is Facebook. From Boyd and Ellison position we can deduce that actors are needed to form list and share a connection which a define boundary. Tapscott and Williams (2006) consider social network as a part of a wider trend in communication landscapes. In view of this definition, we can say that social network usage has come to stay as a communicative medium in the communication landscape. Conclusively, Boyd and Ellison (2008) – summarized recent research social network history. They consider social network as increasingly attractive for researchers, fascinated for their usefulness, audience size and market research potential. They defines social network as a web-based services that allow users to build a public and semi-public within a system; articulate a user list with shared relationships; and observe the list of relationships of those persons with other people within the system” (Boyd and Ellison, 2008)

3. Theoretical Framework

The use of language is frequently a social activity. The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is the Systemic Function Grammar (SFG). Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is an approach to linguistics that considers language as a social semiotic system. S.F.G was developed by Michael Halliday who took the motion of system from his teacher J.R Firth (Halliday 1964). Firth considers system to refer to possibilities subordinated to structures. Halliday (1994), in certain sense “liberated” the dimension of choices from structure and made it the central organizing dimension of the theory. For him, a central theoretical principle is that any act of communication involves choices. Language use is a system of choices available in any language variety. However this theory has been useful as it helps the

researcher to look into the choice of language by students over the SNSs to achieve their communicative goals.

4. Instrumentation and Methodology

This work adopted the descriptive research design. The population comprised all the students of University of Uyo, Uyo. Out of this population, a sample of 180 students was taken and selected through the stratified random sampling techniques (is a possibility sampling technique in which the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups, then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different faculties). This sample was made up of 8 faculties with 22 students selected per faculty. An instrument called “Language Use and Social Network Questionnaire” was used to obtain data on the independent and dependent variables presented in both sections A and B of the questionnaire. While section A measured the demographic data of the respondents such as name, gender and faculty and section B measured the independent variables. The content validity of the instrument was determined by experts in test and measurement who marched the items of the instruments with the research questions in order to determine whether or not the instruments measured what they were supposed to measure. The reliability was determined through experts in test and measurement and statistics were given the instrument for rating in respect of the consistency with the research objectives. Items in which at least two experts agreed upon were regarded as suitable, the reliability coefficients was 0.85 and was considered substantially high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The exercise took two weeks. The data collected were analyzed using percentages and frequent counts.

5.1 Data Presentation

SN	Conventional English	Approximated Forms	SN	Normal	Approximated Forms
1	Having	Havin, avin	65	Cold	Kold
2	Confirm	Confam	66	Church	Churcli
3	Nothing	Ntin	67	Show	Shw
4	Think	Fink, tink	68	From	4rm, frm

5	That's	Datz, das	69	Touch	Toh
6	Was	Wz, wos	70	Love	Lv, luv
7	This	Dis	71	Food	Fud
8	Thank	Tnx, tnk, fnx	72	Phone	Fone
9	Father	Fada	73	Your	Ur
10	Money	Moni	75	Yours	Urs
11	Defeated	Defetd	76	Help	Hlp
12	Cast down	Casdown	77	Don't	Dnt
13	Destroy	Dstroy	78	Sometime(s)	Symtm(s)
14	Times	Tym(s),tyme, tim	79	Calling	Calin, coli
15	Believe	Beliv , belif	80	Of course	Ofcuz
16	Turning	Turnin	81	Handle	Handul
18	Friend(s)	Frđ, frenz, frns	82	Relationship	Rlatnship
19	Doubt	Dght	83	Wanted	Wntd
20	Has	Hs	84	Were	Wia
21	Already	Alredy	85	Because	Bcos ,cos,cus
22	My	Mai , ma	86	Prayers	Prayas(z)
23	Good	Gud	87	Need	Nid
24	School	Skul	88	Weather	Weda
25	Come	Cum ,cm,com, kom	89	Very	Vry,veri
26	Sweet	Swit ,swt	90	Well	Wela
27	Fine	Fyn	91	Established	Xtablishd
28	Cool	Col ,kul	92	Through	Tro
29	Show	Shw	93	Person	Prsn
30	Street	Strt	94	Roommate	Rommy ,rm

31	Great	Grt	95	Sister	Sista
32	Typist	Typis	96	Fatherly	Fadali
33	Letter	Leta	97	Where	Wia
34	Its	Tz	98	Welcome	Welcm
35	Should	Shud	99	People	Pple
36	Sleep	Slip	100	Better	Beta
37	Boy	Boi	101	Girl	Gal ,gul
38	Than	Dan	102	Hope	Hp ,op
39	Life	Lyf ,lif	103	Wish	Ish
40	Picture	Pic , pis	104	Cousin	Coison
41	So	Szu ,zu	105	Omw	On my way
42	Together	Togada, 2gada	106	Brd	Be right back
43	Otherwise	Odawise	107	Light	Lait
44	Fight	Fait	108	Hbd	Happy birthday
45	Mother	Moda	109	Brother	Broda
46	Climb	Clim	110	Oyo	On your own
47	Place	Plc	111	How	Hw
48	Work	Wrk	112	Business	Bis (z)
49	Up to	Uptu	113	Too	Tu
50	Someone	Sm1, smone	114	Be	B
51	Take	Tek	115	Laugh out loud	Lol
52	And	n	116	Here	Ya
53	Please	Pls ,pliz	117	Same	Sem
54	Said	Sed	118	Again	Agen
55	See	C	119	Even	Evin

56	Goodnight	Gudnit	120	Beg	Bek
57	Better	Beta	121	Another	Anoda
58	Advise	Advis	122	Street	Strit
59	Make (ing)	Mek (in)	123	u- turn	u-ton
60	Should	Shud	124	Tomorrow	Moro ,tumoro
61	Not	Nut ,nt	125	Fine	Fyn
62	Work	Wrk	126	Smiling	Smiling
63	Let me	Lemme	127	Feelings	Filiz
64	compd	Compound	128	Isorait	It is alright

5.2 Phonetic representation

D - The
U - You
Y - Why
C - See

5.3 Total abbreviations

bhk - check
Brd - boards
Nig - Nigeria
Hos,hus- house
Pls,plz - please

Phonetic spellings

nid - Need
tot - Thought, Taught
dis - This
no - Know

partial abbreviations

bhalf - behalf
psoup - pepper soup
smthing - something
smbdy - somebody
urself - yourself

5.4 Orthographic Representations.

Tx, thanx, tnx, - thanks
@ - at
Luv - love
Najia - Nigeria
N - and
Cc - copy

5.5 Numerical slangs:

- 9ja – Nigeria -str8 – straight - 4get – forget - 4rm
- from
- 2nite – tonight -vik3 – victory. - 2 moro – tomorrow - good2go
- ready

- Ovr^{9th} – overnight -1 in town – latest - 4rm – from - nta10 -
entertain

6. Result and Discussion

Social network has dramatically increased in number; thus enjoying patronage the world over. Social network language among students of University of Uyo and by extension the general public is a language variation which enjoys acceptance and recognition by the students. Students have come to embrace and use maximally language in SNS. This is evidence in its daily usage by students to effect communication as seen belong:

‘I wnt 2 tan u 4 erytin hv njoy
n beneifitd 4m uI appreciate it. May God blez u & ur
famili a milion tims. I beliv tinz wil b turnin
ard 4us mai frd. Hapi wiknd. C u leta’.

The above extract clearly shows language employ by social network users for communicative purposes, especially by students of University of Uyo. The extract shows that these languages are actually in use and that user or visitors to SNS are at increase daily. The students employ all sorts of written form ranging from phonetic representation, partial and total abbreviation, and orthographic representation, telegraphic to text multilingualism. (Awonusi 2001). These languages are couched in racy, semi-formal or informal telegraphic styles occasion by constraints of time and space as well as economic (monetary) consideration. (Awonusi 2001). These usages are full of linguistic features like

6.1 Phonetic representative:

D - The, Y – why, B – be
U - You, C – see, R – are

One striking feature of the telegraphic code characterizing this lect of English is the exploitation of surface diagraphia (Awonusi, 2001) or pronunciation spelling. It is significant that a majority of SNS users use capital letters to denote words. There are also other phonetic spellings in use, e.g dat - that, nid - need. Dis-this, no - know. Tot or thot - thought, taught. The phonetic spelling also point in the direction of pronunciation in Nigerian English, d is used to represent the (RP/ð/) in this and that because Nigerian English articulation of the words is /dis/and /dat/.

6.2 Orthographic Representation: SN languages are characterized by many forms of sensational spelling. This may be attributed to influence from the press or media English, Americanisms and computer languages. These abbreviated spellings are immensely popular among/with students. The abbreviated spelling falls into two categories: total and partial abbreviation. This corresponds to a process in morphological analyses called deletion; for example:

- (i) **Total abbreviation:** cos -because; dif - different; Hos,hus -house, btw - between etc
- (ii) **Partial abbreviation:** bcos - because; urself – yourself;

6.3 Telegraphic Forms: Students also make used this form in SNSs to effect communication. Names of people, places, things are reduced to initials, pet-names, nicknames, anglicized form etc e.g Id (Idara, Idongesit) Ud (Udeme, uduak) Uk (Ukeme, Uko, Ukoh) Edy (Edet, Edem) Vero (Veronica) vivi (Vivian) etc. Names of places are also reduced; LAG (Lagos) PH (Port Harcourt) CALIS (Calabar) NY (New York) such abbreviations can also be found in register of business, commerce; technology example, System (computer); TV (television), A/C (air-conditioner); 100k (one hundred thousand etc

6.4 Text Multilingualism: This involves the use of English, indigenous and pidgin English to construct words. Sometime the codes are mixed or switched e.g ‘mis u, mis ur whala’, ‘Why u no come sch 2day’, Oga called, ‘Tia love wan kill me’, ‘Smbody wan see u’, ‘was in ur off yesterday’. Awonusi (2001). SNS users are frequently found using these.

Let sample what Okon and Ansa (2011) called numerical slangs. This is the admixture of numerals and/or letters to coin new spellings. For examples

- 9ja – Nigeria
- str8 – straight
- In2 – into
- 2 moro – tomorrow

The SNSs is flooded with the above mentioned numerical slangs. This is becoming popularized by daily usage from both students and other SNSs users. At this point it is important to state that these usages are not without grammatical peculiarities. For instance punctuation peculiarities and syntactic peculiarities like ‘missing you’, ‘been down with fever’ among others.

6.5 Formality and Informality of Usage: SNS is characterized by informal use of lexemes occasioned by what Awonusi (2001) called contraction of auxiliary and modal verbs, as in the domain of informal English.

I'll b in Schl 2moro
Daddy doesn't wear...
I've recharged

In addition to this is the fact that lexemes employed currently by students in SNSs is becoming more informal and alarming; that no single text can be send without these lexemes been utilized. For example:

'Casdun bt nt destroy
somytmz dscorag bt not dfeted
Casdun bt nt destroy. Frenz lt me dw
I stil bliv,It turnin ard4me.'(whatsapp status)

The use of these lexemes has overlap boundaries of fine writing, correct spelling, and effective communication. However, a number of the text message over the SNS uses Hello Sir, Dear Sir, I will be there sir, and it is sometime next year, by this time tomorrow. This forms of usage signal formality, although the context is person-to-person communication. This is to be interpreted as a case of dependence on culture as intervening variable where power relations are involved. When messages are sent to superiors, people of lower status unconsciously introduce their perceived politeness through the use of Sir, Madam-forms.

Research Questions 1

What are social networks and SN languages to University of Uyo Students?

Percentage analysis of the uses of social network languages among University of Uyo Students

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Do you have more than one social network in your mobile phone/computer	40	22.22	35	19.44

2	During chatting I create my own SNL	24	13.33	11	6.11
3	Do you use slangs when chatting with friends and family members	15	8.33	10	5.56
4	Do you spell words correctly in social network when chatting	16	8.89	12	6.67
5	I use code and signs to communicate with friends/colleagues chatting.	17	9.44	10	5.56
	Total	112	62.22	78	4.33

Table 1 shows that forty (40) respondents representing 22.22% have more than one social networks in their mobile phone/computer while thirty five (35) of the respondents representing 19.44% said NO, twenty four (24) respondents representing 13.13% of the respondents said that during chatting they create their own SNL while eleven (11) respondents representing 6.11% said NO, fifteen (15) respondents representing 8.33% affirm that they use numerical slangs when chatting with friends and family members while ten (10) respondents representing 5.56 stated otherwise. Sixteen (16) respondents representing 8.89% spelt words correctly in social network when chatting while 12 of the respondents representing 6.67% said NO, while Seventeen (17) respondents representing 9.44% use code and signs to communicate with friends/colleagues chatting while 10 of the respondents representing 5.56% said NO.

Research Question 2

What appeals students' usage of social network languages?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of what appeals students' usage of social network languages

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Do Social network languages serve time of writing words correctly?	39	21.67	20	11.11
2	Does social network languages usage bring about speed in communication?	16	8.89	14	7.78
3	Students use SNL during chatting to preserve the life span of their battery.	15	8.33	14	7.78
4	Student uses SNL during chatting to conserve their network data	16	8.89	13	7.22
5	I use SNL to make chatting lively and interesting	18	10	15	8.33
	Total	104	57.78	76	42.22

Table II shows that thirty nine (39) respondents representing 21.67% Social network languages serve time of writing words correctly while twenty (20) of the respondents representing 11.11% said NO, sixteen (16) respondents representing 8.89% of the respondents said that social network languages usage bring about speed in communication while fourteen (14) respondents representing 7.78% said NO, fifteen (15) respondents representing 8.33% affirm that they use SNL during chatting to preserve the life span of their battery. While fourteen (14) respondents representing 7.78% stated otherwise. Sixteen (16) respondents representing 8.89% uses SNL during chatting to conserve their network data while thirteen (13) of the respondents representing 7.22% stated NO, while eighteen (18) respondents representing 10% use SNL to make chatting lively and interesting while fifteen (15) of the respondents representing 8.33% said NO.

Research Question 3

What are the effects of social network languages on students of University of Uyo?

Table 3: Percentage Analysis of the effects of social network languages on students of University of Uyo

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Have you been misunderstood because of these usages?	41	22.78	14	7.78
2	Do you think social networking languages is affecting the way you speak or write in your everyday life	16	8.89	17	9.44
3	Have you misquoted your colleagues because their using these short forms?	19	10.56	12	6.67
4	Does social network languages usage bring about speed in typing?	16	8.89	10	5.56
5	Do you think social media sites are changing your habits in many ways?	22	12.22	13	7.22
	Total	114	63.33	66	36.67

Table III shows that forty one (41) respondents representing 22.78% said that they have been misunderstood because of SNL usage while fourteen (14) of the respondents representing 7.78% said NO, sixteen (16) respondents representing 8.89% of the respondents said that think social networking languages is affecting the way they speak or write in your everyday life while seventeen (17) respondents representing 9.44% said NO, nineteen (19) respondents representing 10.56% affirm that have been misquoted by their colleagues/friends because of using short forms While twelve (12) respondents representing 6.67% stated otherwise. Sixteen (16) respondents representing 8.89% say that social network languages usage bring about speed in typing while ten (10) of the respondents representing 5.56% while

twenty two (22) respondents representing 12.22% think that social media sites are changing their habits in many ways while fifteen (15) of the respondents representing 8.33%.

7. Implication for Language Use

The use of these social network lexemes (Lol, pls, tnx etc) introduces new words into English language. Abbreviations, alphabets, numerical slangs, numerals form this collection of new words having new meaning. As a means of communication, the use of these lexemes among students has been found to be effective, particularly for the following reasons:

- (i) They found these lexemes interesting because they have no syntactic, phonetic, morphological & phonological semantic restrictions.
- (ii) They serve time during writing/typing.
- (iii) They see it as a convenient and comfortable medium/Style of communication.
- (iv) They are useful in making transfer of texts faster at some point.

The use of SNLs by students is not without its challenges. One of the outstanding problems is that some of these lexemes can be fossilized and as such do not augur well for the learning of English spellings and pronunciations in particular. Difficulties associated with the spelling and pronunciation of some English words may be compounded. Semantically, meaning of lexemes may be misinterpreted, misquoted and misapply.

Notwithstanding, SNLs has been considered in some quarter to be one of the “productive source of lexical items in a speech community (SNSs). This is true of its uses on our campuses. It has been found to be a veritable source of producing lexical items in English in the SNL domain and other environment where they are used. For instance, Fromkin et al (2007) quoted in Okon and Ansa observe that slang words and phrases are often “invented” in keeping with new ideas and customs. Being in the same frame like slang, SNLs are “innovated” to achieve some level of convenience in communication. Let us digress a little and discuss numerical slangs which are considered a sub-class of SNLs. The use of numerical slangs also introduce into English new lexemes by combining numbers and some English words or alphabet to produce new meaning. Slang has formed a means of communication mostly among students of higher institutions and as such it gaining entry into English. As students interact between themselves with other community members, this has aid the spread of S.N.L vis-à-vis numerical slang. This slang has permeated the Nigerian society and SNS thereby become a part of the linguistic resource of the society. Instances of

this innovative use of language can be drawn from common expression like 50/50 to mean ‘equally’, 24/7 to mean 24 hrs a week and most commonly “419” to described a fraudster or fraudulent activities to mention but a few.

8. Advantages

- (i) They serve as a source of new lexical items.
- (ii) Fromkin et al (2007) in Ansa (2011) – often invented in keeping with new ideas and customs.
- (iii) They are invented to achieve some level of convenience during communication.

9. Challenges

- (i) Lexemes can be fossilized.
- (ii) They can add to the problem of inconsistency in English Language.
- (iii) Text misinterpretation, misquotation and misapplication envelop this kind of usage.

10. Findings

First, findings reveal a shift from the act of fine writing, correct spellings and punctuations to the use of undecipherable initials, graphemes, symbols among others.

Secondly, SNL is appealing to students and the resulting effects are noticeable mostly in students’ academic work.

Lastly, interestingly, it is also reveal that these lexemes/graphemes undergo a phonological process called ‘deletion’. Phonetic and syntactic features are also revealed.

11. Conclusion

In this study it is observed that students in the University of Uyo specifically were not only familiar with these lexemes use in social network sites, but also used them frequently. Students’ response to this is evident in the uncontrollable use of these lexemes to facilitate communication. As stated earlier, the use of these lexemes lack linguistic restrictions at whatever context they are appear. Unfortunately, the study also discovers that the use of these lexemes has immense effects on the academic documents of students as students unconsciously apply these lexemes in official documents. It is in this light therefore, that it seeks to advice students and the general public on the consequences of such usage as the effects cannot be overemphasized; given the excessive use of undecipherable initials, incorrect abbreviation among other forms by interlocutors involved. Its usage in official document especially academic documents cannot be overlooked as well.

Findings also reveal that greater numbers of social network users (students), do not have the cognitive knowledge of all these lexemes and may not decode all the lexemes employs in the SNSs. It is this light therefore that it urge that its continuous usage should be subject to context and or situation.

12. Recommendations

Given the conclusion above, the following are some of the vital recommendation:

First, excessive use of undecipherable initials, abbreviations, telegraphic, symbols should be minimized.

Secondly, the context of usage should be taken into consideration.

Lastly, notwithstanding these challenges however, some of these lexemes can be codified and use formally.

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