
The Impact of Social Media on Language Change and Variation: A Contemporary Analysis

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Abstract

Language changes when its users develop a variation that does not conform to its grammatical norms. However, the non-conforming variant need to be transmitted to a wider audience before language change is facilitated. Unfortunately, little or no interest has given to the communication channel that can facilitate language change and variation in contemporary society. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine and identify the impact of social media on language change and variation. Data are collected through the observation method from four WhatsApp groups for students and lecturers at Federal College of Education, Technical, Umunze, after the interactions of the members are studied. Collected data are analysed qualitatively, using the descriptive approach. Labov's Golden Age Principles provides the theoretical anchor for identifying, categorising, and describing data, whereby the study discovers the use of non-conforming variety of the English language

in the studied interactions. The findings of the study reveal that both students and lecturers use acronyms, abbreviations, fragmented sentences, new terms, and non-conforming spelling pattern in their social media interactions. The study, therefore, concludes that social media facilitates language change and variation and recommends further studies on the permeation of social media-facilitated changes in a speech community.

Introduction

Language is an arbitrary system of communication that enables people to pass information easily and efficiently. It can come in the form of writing, spoken words, or even signs. Its invention has made information sharing easier because it embodies meanings, which can be transmitted to people that use it. This points to the fact that the arbitrary nature of language requires that members of every speech community should assign meanings to a group of sounds or letters, which will help them to deliver any intended message. Put differently, the meanings assigned to words and expressions in a speech community are conventional.

The time language was invented is still unclear but what is certain is that language is not static (Yang, 2000; Bahri et al., 2023). Studies have shown that language change occurs even though the changes are slight and may not be explicitly observed the moment they are taking place (Lightfoot, 2010; Mgbemena, 2015). Factors that cause these changes are being debated but social and cultural contacts have been identified by sociolinguists, including William Labov, who is considered the father of sociolinguistics (Matsumoto, 2019; Harya, 2016). The introduction of new concepts or objects and the development of technology are also observed to bring about language change (Mantri, 2010). Nevertheless, even with these latter identified factors, changes introduced into a language by a

particular group of users cannot diffuse across the speech community or be transmitted to other users except there is an avenue by which there is a close interaction between the users.

Speaking of how social and cultural contacts influence language change brings to the mind that digital communication, through social media, has provided an avenue for faster and cheaper communication (Zhou, 2021; Samuel & Pulizala, 2020). Social media provides the platform for people from diverse backgrounds, ages, and genders, to connect and interact. Studies have shown that social media users' device different communicative strategies, including modifying language and using visuals, to ensure quicker and efficient communication (Bahri et al., 2023; Stapa & Shaari, 2012). This means, therefore, that social media could be a factor that causes language variation and, possibly, language change.

Several studies have examined the impact of social media on languages but then, much interest has not been given to how the communication channel facilitates language change. Considering that language change is caused and transmitted through contact and the fact that social media provides room for contacts between diverse individuals, there is a need to discover if this digital communication channel plays a key role in language change. This is the focus of the current study.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine and identify the impact of social media on language variation and language change. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to identify aspects of language variation and language change found on social media and to discover how social media encourage transmission of language change. To do this, the research questions that guide the study are (1) what aspects of language variation and language change are found on social media? and (2) how does social media encourage transmission of language change? The findings of this

study add to the current literature on factors that influence language change and the impacts of social media on language change.

Language Change and Language Variation

Languages vary. People speak different languages across the globe. According to Sharma and Dodsworth (2020), variation in language does not only occur across cultural and ethnic groups but also across individuals. This happens because people have varying experiences in their social encounters, which influence their language choices and how they speak (Bahri, et al., 2023; Lightfoot, 2010; Mgbemena, 2015; Mantri, 2010). It is also observed that experiences can limit an individual's communication pattern unless he moves into a social network, which can expand his use and style of language (Mantri, 2010; Bahri et al., 2023; Sharma & Dodsworth, 2020). Carrio-Pastor (2009) also explains that language users embed their understanding of the world in their language when they interact with others. In addition to that, she explains that an individual's socio-cultural background and knowledge of other languages can also influence how he uses language. Another factor that can lead to variations in the use of language and choice of words among people of the same linguistic community is the context, in which information is delivered. Nevertheless, language variation is known to take place geographically, culturally, contextually, and socially (Sharma & Dodsworth, 2020; Mgbemena, 2015; Yang, 2000; Lightfoot, 2010).

The relationship between language change and language variations has attracted the attention and interests of researchers since the 1960's (Matsumoto, 2019; Anderwald, 2016). Prior to that, scholars have attempted to determine how language change diffuses and spreads through communities (Sharma & Dodsworth, 2020). Sharma and Dodsworth (2020) disclose that scholars, such as

Bloomfield and Milroy, paid attention to these phenomena and suspect that social networking may be the channel through which language change occurs and spreads. This observation is still under debate because some researchers argue that meeting and interacting with people of different linguistic and socio-cultural experiences may not eventually lead to language change (Lightfoot, 2010; Yang, 2000; Matsumoto, 2019; Harya, 2016).

While some researchers attempt to disconnect language change from social contact, many others uphold the viewpoints of Bloomfield and Milroy and have been carrying out research to affirm their positions. Matsumoto (2019), for example, insists that the relationship exists between the two phenomena but explains that language variation occurs only when there is language change. He states that when language change occurs, the users of the affected language tend to use both variations (that is, the old and the new variants) simultaneously. This, according to him, is language variation, which may introduce language change. However, he explains that language variation does not necessarily mean there is a language change because some variations are short-lived.

Among the group that does not believe language variation can usher in language change is Mgbemena (2015). She perceives language change as a phenomenon that occurs where there is a communication within a community. To her, a speech community accepts or creates a new word when they need a lexical item to identify a concept. This submission is debateable because it can only explain situations, where language change features on the vocabulary of the speech community (Bahri et al., 2023; Yang, 2000). According to researchers, such as Bahari et al. (2023), Yang (2000), and Mantri (2010), language change can be phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical, or semantic. Mantri (2010) further observes that changes can occur in the spelling system of a

language. If the observations of these scholars are brought into consideration, it can be debated that language variation and language change have a close tie that should not be ignored. In addition, as Bahari et al. (2023) posit, the introduction of a new term into the linguistic stock of a speech community has created a variation since the new word may be used only by a section of the speech community. Nevertheless, they do not conclude that every form of language variation results in language change.

An interesting perspective on the relationship between language change and language variation comes from Carrio-Pastor (2009). She perceives language change and language variation as the same phenomenon. She observes that when there is a deviation in the standardised style of a language, it can be said that the deviation is both language change and language variation. This description may be found wanting, considering that language change occurs over a period of time, when the existing linguistic items and features of a language are gradually replaced with new ones (Yang, 2000; Mgbemena, 2015). In other words, a short-lived deviation from the standard rule of a language cannot be regarded as language change.

Scholars have further debated on the factors that cause language change and language variations. Lightfoot (2010), basing his argument on the cue-based approach to language acquisition, states that language change occurs when children attempt to learn the use of language. He states that while children are attempting to pronounce the sounds of their language, they tend to modify those sounds according to the internal language they have developed in their minds. This assertion may be correct but it can only explain phonological category of language change. Yang (2010) is of the opinion that language is influenced by both internal and external factors, such as the grammar of the language (internal force) and

interaction of individuals within their social environment. Furthermore, Mantri (2010) identifies several factors, including politics, socio-cultural encounters, and technological innovations, as capable of introducing language change through the introduction of new words. However, as explained by Sharma and Dodsworth (2020), if there is no room for contact and interaction among members of a speech community within their social environment, any identified causal factor may fail to introduce language change.

Language change and language variations, as identified by this study, enjoy a close relationship that is inseparable. This is because language change causes language variation and, in turn, language variation may lead to language change (Matsumoto, 2019). As a result, in this study, the presence of language variation is considered as signalling language change.

Empirical Review

The development of the internet and social media as a means of communication has introduced innovations to the use of language. According to Tan and Rungrojsuwan (2022), the popularity of the social media has made it the favourite and most efficient way of exchanging information. They observe that many social media users visit their accounts regularly to receive information and updates of different kinds, which they use for different purposes. Gangwar (2022) further asserts that this channel of communication has become an integral part of human existence because of how it makes communication easier and faster. She explains that, with social media, people find it easier to connect and communicate without facing the restrictions caused by geographical and physical boundaries. These observations made by these authors show that social media is a useful asset in communication.

Since social media enables people from different geographic locations to communicate without restrictions, it has become a powerful invention and tool that can influence language (Bahri et al., 2023). Researchers, such as Raghava et al. (2022), Saha (2021), Bahri et al. (2023), and Stapa and Shaari (2012), disclose that social media enables people from different cultural and language groups and backgrounds to find a common ground to interact with one another.

They observe that the use of different communication features, such as emojis, memes, and emoticons, which are found on social media, has encouraged and enabled communication among people of diverse cultures. Tan and Rungrojsuwan (2022) assert that this communication channel is an online community, which is capable of being autonomous from any natural and physical human community that is formed within cultural and geographical boundaries. They argue that it has some characteristics, which gives it the power to have impacts on language.

According to these authors, social media (1) enables communication between people in different areas; (2) encourages connections between users, who may be strangers in the real world, and encourage them to establish a lasting relationship; (3) provides the avenue for people from all walks of life to interact, exchange ideas, and learn from one another; (4) encourages users to post contents, which could contain different kinds of messages; (5) provides the opportunity for different kinds of contents to be posted regularly; and (6) enables users to view, read, access, and react to different kinds of contents. These features, according to Tan and Rungrojsuwan, provide room for social media to encourage the invention of language that can be used to deliver messages to its diverse users.

Speaking of invention of language, Raghava et al. (2023) argues that the use of emojis is a type of language invention because it is a new form of digital language. They argue that these tiny images enable interactions between social media users from different language groups. However, they observe that the major way social media has impacts language is through the introduction and spread of new words. They particularly observe that terms related to technology and technological advancements are usually introduced and transmitted through social media. This way, they argue, social media helps to expand the vocabulary of its users and further causes them to expunge words that are rarely used in the digital interaction from their vocabulary banks. Furthermore, Bahri et al. (2023) state that the language variety used on social media does not always conform to the grammatical rules of the variety used outside the social media. They observe that social media users modify phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic forms of language to enable ease of communication.

Social media, as a widespread means of communication that is used by people of different age groups, cultures, occupations, genders, and social classes, encourages the exchange of information and messages, which is the basic function of every communication medium. However, since it enables communication between people of different orientations and backgrounds, it provides room for the exchange of different variations of a language (Bahari et al., 2023). Since it enables communication to flow quickly without physical, social, cultural, and spatial restrictions, it provides a fertile ground for the exchange of culture-related, which can permeate the language of the contact groups (Bahri et al., 2023). This, in extension, means that social media can help its users to stay updated with the trends in their language.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Golden Age Principles, also known as the Golden Age Theory. This theory was postulated by William Labov in 2001 and further ended by the sociolinguist in 2010 (Anderwald, 2016; Labov, 2001; Labov, 2010). It is one of the models of Labov's Principles of Language Change. The Golden Age Principle first featured in Labov's book, *Principles of Linguistic Change, Vol. II: Social Factors*, which was published by Blackwell in 2001. However, Labov extended the theory in the third edition of the book, *Principles of Linguistic Change, Vol. III: Cognitive and Cultural Factors*, published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2010.

With the Golden Age Principles, Labov argues that language change is a constant phenomenon because there are agents of change and diffusers of the change. According to him, when there is a change in the grammar or sound of a language, it automatically attracts negative reactions from the conformists in the speech community. This rejection occurs because the change is perceived as ungrammatical, since it fails to conform to the norms or rules guiding the language (Labov, 2001; Anderwald, 2016). However, the agents of change may decide to continue with the alteration while the diffusers see to the transmission of the change across the speech community and, indeed, other speech communities far and near.

According to Labov, language change occurs as a result of the linguistic influence experienced by children and adolescent but the changes are spread by adults, who come in contact with other children and adults, who they interact with (Labov, 2001; Labov, 2010; Anderwald, 2016). He postulates that when children are taught how to use language by their adult caregivers, they begin to formulate their own hypothesis about the language, based on how their minds perceive and create the language. With time, the children

begin to identify variations in the language, especially the formal versus information varieties dichotomy, which they may not perceive as a form of social stratification. Labov explains that these children begin to perceive informal variety as better and more accommodating than the formal variety, which they may view as the language of authority and punishment. Consequently, they tend to interact more with the informal variety of their language.

When children turn into adolescents, the adults around them begin to expose them language class stratification, whereby they are taught that informal language are for the socially low. However, as Labov (2001) explains, the adolescents tend to ignore the expectations of the conforming adults around them and continue to use the informal variety of their language. This explains the reason the variety of a language used by a younger generation tends to be different from that of the older generation.

This theory further argues that the transmission of the changes created by children and adolescents is carried out by adults (Labov, 2010). Labov explains that language change diffuses into speech communities as a result of contacts. He states that this contact can be between individuals from different speech communities, whereby some items of their languages are exchanged. However, he argues that major diffusers of language change are adults, who come in contact with children. This is because children learn how to use language from these adults, who communicate with them regularly. This, in essence, means that these adults speak to the children in informal language, which may contain items of language change already in use.

In summary, the tenets of the Golden Age Principle are:

1. Children and adolescents use the variety of a language that do not conform to the norms and rules guiding the language;

2. Language change occurs as nonconformity to the grammatical norms of the related language.
3. Adolescents use the new variant of a language to interact among themselves and the adults around them.
4. Though the conforming adults in the concerned speech community attempt to resist the nonconforming variant and avoid communicating with adolescents with it, they, the adults, use it to communicate with children, thereby using it to teach children how to use the language.
5. The new variant, therefore, diffuses or is transmitted through the contact between adults and children, adolescents and adults, and adolescents and their peers.

This study adopted these five principles of the theory for data analysis and discussion. They provided the theoretical anchor for studying the collection of data to identify cases of nonconformity to the grammatical norms of the English language in the social media interactions of adults and adolescents. This helped the study in reaching an informed conclusion on the impact of social media on language change and language variation.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive qualitative research design, which enabled the categorisation, identification, and description of the data collected for the study. Data for the study were collected from four WhatsApp groups for students and lecturers of Federal College of Education, Technical, Umuze. These participants and social media platform were selected because they allowed the identification of social media interactions done by young (the students) and old (the lecturers) users. This gave room for collecting data that align with the postulation of The Golden Age Principles by William Labov.

The observation method was used to collect data from the selected WhatsApp groups. The interactions that took place on these platforms from September 2023 to October of the same year were closely observed to identify instances of non-conformity in the use of the English language. The purposive sampling method was used to select terms and expressions that do not conform to the grammatical norms of English.

The data collected for this study were analysed qualitatively, using the descriptive approach. Labov's Golden Age Principle was adopted as the theoretical anchor for the study. This theory provided the study with the needed theoretical perspective for identifying, categorising, describing, and discussing non-conformity in the use of English in the observed interactions of students and lecturers. Based on these, data were sub-categorised into "Acronyms and Abbreviations," "Omissions and Fragmentations", "New Terms", and "Changes in Spellings".

Data Analysis

The aim of this study is to identify the impact of social media on language variation and language change. As a result, the study is guided by two research questions, which seek to find out aspects of language variation and language change found on social media and how social media causes language change. This study, therefore, analyses data in order to answer the research questions. However, to ensure proper categorisation of identified non-conformity in the observed social media interactions by students and lecturers, this section is divided into two major groups, one for each of the observed major groups.

Identification of Non-Conformity in Students' Interactions

The non-conformity in the use of the English language found in the observed social media interactions of students include the use of acronyms and abbreviations to refer to something. Others include the omission of content words, use of sentence fragments, the presence of newwords, and changing the spelling pattern of some words.

a. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Students used acronyms and abbreviations during their interactions. Among the identified expressions that featured these characteristics are:

S/N	Acronym/Abbreviation	Full Form
1.	VN	voice note
2.	nd	and
3.	bk	back
4.	u/ur/urs	you/your/yours
5.	DM	direct message
6.	dr	dear
7.	fgt	forget
8.	9ja	naija
9.	lol	laugh out loud
10.	ppl	People
11.	yr1/yr2	Year 1/Year 2
12.	m	I'm/I am

Table 1: Use of Acronyms by Students

b. Omissions and Fragmentations

Instances, where students omitted some words in a sentence as well as where they communicated in fragments of sentences were identified. Among these expressions are:

S/N	Expression	Remarks
1.	Will make more better	The speaker omitted the subject and object of the subject.
2.	Worth doing?	The student omitted the subject and main verb.
3.	How your nite?	The student omitted the verb.
4.	Will talk to her.	The subject was omitted.
5.	On point	The subject and verb were omitted

Table 2: Omissions and Fragmentations in Students' Interactions

c. New Terms

It was observed that students used words that were considered unconventional in their interactions. Examples of the identified new terms in the interactions are:

S/N	New Terms	Remarks
1.	Voice note	This refers to a new way of using audio form to record and deliver messages on social media.
2.	Woto woto	The researcher is unsure of the meaning of this expression.
3.	Catch cruise	The researcher is unsure of the meaning of this expression.
4.	Direct message	This refers to the act of contacting a member of the social media group privately.
5.	Video call	This is a technological invention, whereby there is use of the audio-visual form of communication on social media.

6.	Giveaway	Students used this term to refer to the act of giving out cash gifts to random persons.
7.	Hookup	Students use this term to refer to the act of prostitution.
8.	k	This alphabet is used in the company of an Arabic figure to refer to ‘thousand naira’. For example, 20k refers to <i>twenty thousand naira</i> (N20,000).
9.	Jappa	This term refers to the act of migrating out of Nigeria.

Table 3: Presence of New Terms in Students’ Interactions

d. Changes in Spelling Patterns

Students have also been observed to change the spelling patterns of some English words. Among the words that were affected by this trend include:

S/N	Misspelt Words	Correct Spelling
1.	Oda/odas	Other/others
2.	Tin/tins	Thing/things
3.	Tin	Think
4.	Skul	School
5.	Supoz/spoz	Suppose
6.	Ansa	Answer
7.	Nite	Night
8.	Vawulence/vayulens /voyolens	Violence
9.	Buriful	Beautiful
10.	Dis/dat	This/that
11.	Kum/com	Come

12.	Am	I'm
13.	Waris	What is
14.	Buh	But
15.	No	Know

Table 4: Wrong Spellings in Students' Interactions

Identification of Non-Conformity in Lecturers' Interactions

Some lecturers were also observed to use English in ways that do not conform with the grammatical norms of the language. Just as in the case of students, the lecturers used acronyms and abbreviations, omitted words and used fragmented sentences, used new and unconventional terms, and also misspelt some English words.

a. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Lecturers used acronyms and abbreviations to deliver messages on social media. Examples of the identified acronyms and abbreviations found in their interactions include:

S/N	Acronym/Abbreviation	Full Form
1.	U	You
2.	mk	Make
3.	VN	Voice note
4.	Pls	Please
5.	Bro/sis	Brother/sister
6.	Dept	Department
7.	lol	Laugh out loud
8.	DM	Direct message
9.	FYI	For your information

Table 5: The Use of Acronyms and Abbreviations in Lecturers' Interactions

b. Omissions and Fragmentations

A few instances, where words are omitted or sentence fragments are used were also identified in the interactions of lecturers. The observed expressions in this case are:

S/N	Expression	Remarks
1.	Will let the dept know	The lecturer omitted the subject of the sentence.
2.	Looking forward to hearing about this.	The subject and the main verb of the sentence were omitted.
3.	No worries.	This expression is a fragment.

Table 6: Omissions and Fragmentation in Lecturers' Interactions

c. New Terms

A few instances of the use of unconventional and new words were found in the social media interactions between lecturers. These examples are found below:

S/N	Expression	Remarks
1.	K	This is used with an Arabic numeral to signify 'thousand naira'.
2.	Jappa	This means the act of migrating out of Nigeria.
3.	Direct message	This is an act of privately contacting a member of a social media group.
4.	Voice note	This is the use of audio form to deliver messages on social media.
5.	Baddest	This is a way of saying that something is extremely bad.

Table 7: New Words in the Lecturers' Interactions

d. Changes in Spelling Patterns

Some of the interactions of lecturers also depict their attempt to deliver messages with altered orthography of words. Some of the identified cases of this practice include:

S/N	Misspelt Words	Correct Spelling
1.	Shuu/shulai	Should/should I
2.	Dis/dat	This/that
3.	Wen	When
4.	Datz	That's/that is
5.	Nah/nope	No
6.	Am	I'm/I am
7.	Pipu	People
8.	Huu	Who

Table 8: Misspelt Words in Lecturers' Interactions

Discussion of Findings

Social media, as a form of digital communication, is known to enable ease of communication across geographical locations. The communication channel has also made it possible for people of diverse cultural and social experiences to come together and interact with one another (Tan & Rungrojsuwan, 2022; Bahri et al., 2023). Researchers, such as Bahri et al. (2023) and Raghava et al. (2023) observe that social media users invent language varieties that can help them interact easily and effectively with other users, irrespective of the differences in their cultures and social backgrounds. According to Bahri et al. (2023), social media users tend to modify the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, forms of language to enable communication. This study affirms their claim because it also observes that some social media users use words and expressions that fail to conform to the

grammatical norms of the English language. These observations are further discussed below.

What Aspects of Language Variation and Language Change Are Found on Social Media?

The Golden Age Theory by William Labov (2001) postulates that language change occurs when a variety of a language that do not conform to its grammatical norm is developed and spread throughout a speech community. Bahri et al. (2023), Mantri (2010), and Yang (2000) observe that this non-conformity can be phonological, morphological, syntactical, or semantic. Though Matsumoto (2019) argues that it is not every form of language variation that leads to language change, evidence has shown that language change do occur when a new variation is formed (Labov, 2001, 2010; Anderwald, 2016). Nevertheless, this study has identified the presence of language variations in social media interactions of students and lecturers.

The data collected for this study show that students and lecturers use acronyms and abbreviations while delivering messages (Tables 1 and 5, respectfully). They also tend to deliver their messages in fragmented sentences (Tables 2 and 6, respectfully). It has further been observed that new words are found in the expressions of both students and lecturers (Tables 3 and 7, respectively) and some of the items appear in both conversations. For example, the terms, *voice note*, *direct message*, *k*, and *jappa*, were used by both students and lecturers. Instances of this are found in the use of nonconforming spelling patterns by students (Table 4) and lecturers (Table 8). These are cases of non-conformity of the use of the English language, which is believed to lead to language change (Labov, 2001, 2010; Anderwald, 2016) and language variation (Bahri et al., 2023; Yang, 2000; Mantri, 2010).

How Does Social Media Encourage Transmission of Language Change?

According to William Labov's Golden Age Principles, language change occurs constantly because of the agents of its diffusion across a speech community. But, as observed by Sharma and Dodsworth (2020), for these diffusers to be able to transmit language change, they need to come in contact with other members of their speech communities. In other words, the new variations of a language that can bring about language change can only circulate among the users of the language through a channel. This study has identified social media as a tool for transmitting language change through contact.

Social media, as a form of digital communication, provides access to cheaper, faster, and more efficient means of communication. This channel allows individuals from different socio-cultural groups and backgrounds to interact with one another. In addition, users exchange messages with varieties of language, some of which fail to conform to the grammatical norms of a language. In this study, it was observed that students (Tables 1 – 4) and lecturers (Tables 5 – 8) use words and expressions that do not conform to the rules of the English language. They do not consider the diversity of the group, which may contain people from different language groups, ethnicity, religion, and social experiences. Based on Labov's Golden Age Principle, the use of these non-conforming language varieties in the observed interactions will cause other members of the groups to adopt and use the modified or altered varieties while interacting with other adult or adolescent social media users or, as Labov (2010) posits, while interacting with children in the real world. This will lead to the diffusion of those variations.

Conclusion

Language is a system of communication that enables the effective and efficient delivery of messages. However, it tends to vary from society to society and from individual to individual. As people use language and come in contact with other language users, they share and exchange language features, adopt and use the linguistics features of the languages they come in contact with, and develop a language variety they can use in their present reality. This can lead to language change if the environment is favourable.

However, the variations of language that can lead to language change needs to be transmitted to other members of the speech community. For this to happen, there is a need for the users of the new variant to connect and communicate with the non-users, whereby there will be an opportunity to transmit and diffuse the changes taking place in the language. Since the invention of social media has made communication faster, easier, efficient, and cheaper, people tend to use it often to connect and communicate with one another. This communication channel also gives its users the opportunity to interact with wider audience and persons from different socio-cultural backgrounds. In addition, it has been observed that some social media users tend to communicate with the non-conforming variety of a language. This means that social media facilitates language variation and language change.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Further studies should be conducted to discover if people interact with children with the non-conforming variety of the English language found on social media.
2. Studies should be conducted to identify the changes in the use of the English language in Nigeria that must have originated on social media.

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