

Social Media's Impact on Language Evolution: Analysing Posts from Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp Users

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Abstract

This research investigates the interplay between social media and language evolution, focusing on the linguistic innovations observed in posts by Namibian users across prominent platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study aims to uncover linguistic innovation by examining the strategies employed and motivations driving language evolution within this digital landscape. Through the analysis of fifty selected conversations using Discourse Analysis, the study reveals a distinctive pattern of informal structures prevalent among Namibian youth, deviating from the conventions of standard English. These linguistic innovations include the use of emojis and emoticons, code-switching, colloquialisms and slang, vulgar language and acronyms. The research concludes that the choice of linguistic innovation strategies is influenced by platform-specific features, such as text limits and the visibility of conversations or posts. The findings reveal that linguistic creativity on social media is not a departure from established norms but an evolution that reflects the rich diversity of global English varieties. This research contributes to an understanding of the relationship between social media, linguistic innovation, and the cultural context within which language evolves.

1. INTRODUCTION

New forms of communication, sometimes known as electronic discourse, have emerged because of the electronic communication revolution. Because it "creates a kind of semi-speech between speaking and writing, and it has its own features and graphology," AbuSa'aleek (2015) categorises this electronic discourse as a new language variety (p. 135). The new language variety known as electronic discourse, or e-discourse, causes changes in the written language structure (AbuSa'aleek, 2015). The language is known as "electronic discourse" (Davis & Brewer, 1997; Panckhurst, 2006), "electronic language" (Collot & Belmore, 1996),

"Computer-Mediated Communication" (Herring, 1996), "interactive written discourse" (Werry, 1996), "Netlish," "Weblish," "Internet language," "cyberspeak," "netling" (Thurlow, 2001), "cyberlanguage" (MacFadyen, Roche, & Doff, 2004), "netspeak" (Thurlow, 2001; Crystal, 2006), and "virtual language" (Pop, 2008).

Given that language is always changing, linguistic innovation is unavoidable. It is not unexpected that language has changed over time because society is always evolving and our exposure to different cultures, languages, and lifestyles is bound to have an ongoing impact on how we speak and interact. Social media, which gives users access to a variety of information and/or other people, further facilitates exposure. According to Kershaw, Rowe, and Stacey (2015), language evolution is visible in the evolving forms of social media colloquialisms, where innovations have been ingrained in speech patterns and daily life. To raise awareness of the impact of this linguistic element of society, it is worthwhile to investigate this new variety from a sociolinguistic perspective if linguistic innovations are a part of our daily lives and speech patterns. "Humans have evolved methods to better comprehend worldly phenomena over the past millennia" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 10). Therefore, the need to create methods for comprehending language as a worldwide phenomenon is not exclusive to sociolinguists.

It was essential to investigate how society influences language since sociolinguistics include "cultural norms, expectations, and context on the way language are used" (Coupland, 2016, p. 1). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine electronic discourse methods in a selection of Namibian postings on social media and evaluate how much the innovative language differs from standard English forms. The study was directed by the following research questions: 1. What kinds of linguistic innovation or creativity do Namibians exhibit on social media? 2. How do Namibians construct or innovate these forms?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was of a discourse analysis nature because it examined conversations among Namibians on social media. According to a thorough review of the literature, it would be inappropriate to categorise this study as either pragmatics or discourse because the language used on social media is not in standard forms that could be used as a guide to classify this study. This study is of a discourse analysis nature because it examines conversations among Namibians on social media. According to Drid (2015), discourse is defined as conversation and "it conveys a number of significations for a variety of purposes, but in all cases, it relates to language and describes it in some way" (p. 20). Although discourse analysis was simply used as a data analysis technique, it was pertinent to this investigation.

According to Coupland (2016), sociolinguistics focusses on understanding how language and society interact. Because the goal of this study was to examine how the Namibians use language, the sociolinguistics theory was pertinent. According to Cameron (2009), the theory is transdisciplinary and applicable to the social sciences and humanities. Sociolinguistics research can be integrated into in-depth single case investigations, according to Holmes and Hazen (2014). The only case in this study, which examined linguistic originality and creativity on social media, was chosen postings from Namibians.

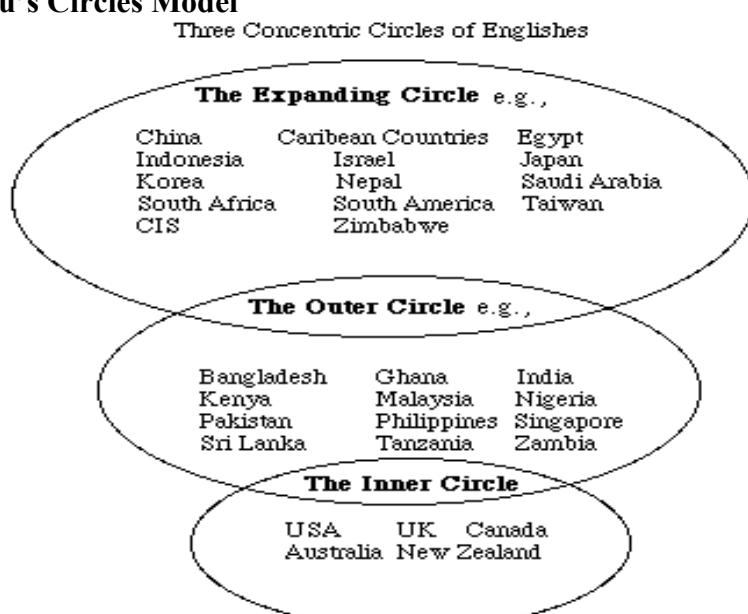
2.1. Varieties of English and other Languages

English is separated into three rings, according to Xu (2017): the Expanding Circle (foreign language), the Outer Circle (second language), and the Inner Circle (mother tongue). Given that English is spoken as a second language in Namibia, it can be categorised as belonging to the Outer Circle. According to Xu (2017), the countries that belong to the Outer Circle and have English as a second language are of a similar sort. In situations where English is not a first language, the speakers are non-native speakers who either speak English as a second language, where it is also an official language and a medium of instruction, or as a foreign language as a means of international communication (Xu, 2017). Because English is the official

language and a medium of instruction in Namibian schools and higher education institutions, this is the case there.

The Three Circles of Kachru have been contentious and influential, claims Bolton (2006). When discussing standardisation, codification, and linguistic inventiveness, the model can be "presented as a digression to preface the discussion" (Bolton, 2017, p. 3). The Kachruvian paradigm must be discussed to ascertain the dispute or influence, since some of the factors of this study include codification, standardisation, and linguistic originality. The languages Circle is further illustrated in Kachru's Cicles Model as follows:

Figure 1: Kachru's Circles Model



Source: Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, p. 30).

Namibia may be categorised as part of the Outer Circle due to its multilingualism and African society, even though it is not included among the nations. As previously indicated, English has also attained a certain level of governmental recognition as an educational and official language (medium of instruction). Since Namibia is not represented in any of the three circles, as shown in Figure 1, the circle descriptions allow for the classification of English in Namibia. The fact that African nations are categorised in both the Expanding Circle and the Outer Circle, as shown in the Figure, makes it clear that it would be dangerous to rely solely on the Outer Circle's classification of nations based on their continent. Relying on the circle's description and comparing it to the language policy or class of the nation is actually safer.

2.2.English Standard

"Regarded or acceptable" is how Bolton (2006) defines "standard"; hence, a standard language is a variation that, in many ways, is regarded as more correct and acceptable than other varieties" (p. 8). Standard English, as used in this study, is the accepted, proper version of English that is more widely used than other English dialects. Books, newspapers, journals, and any other print in English employ Standard English, according to Xu (2017). Determining how much the innovative language differs from Standard English was one of the study's goals. Therefore, it is essential to go over the definition of Standard English, the viewpoints of linguists and socio-linguists, and examples of the different Englishes' standards and how they differ from Standard English.

According to Hickey (2013), "variations exist in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary in those forms of language that would be regarded by its users as standard throughout the English-speaking world." Although Namibian English follows the conventional patterns for both written and spoken English, particularly in professional contexts, there are other contexts,

particularly casual ones, where the English language is not utilised officially. According to Stell (2019), English had little local history prior to Namibia's independence, despite being the country's only official language. Nonetheless, the official language and teaching medium is English (Stell, 2019). However, standardisation has been largely successful in spelling (where minimal variation is tolerated) and at least in pronunciation (because many highly varied English dialects live happily ever after), according to Cheshire and Milroy (2014).

Since the goal of the study was to determine how much e-discourse deviates from Standard English, it was vital to talk about language standardisation, particularly in relation to the English language. Social media users are not expected to use formal English because it is not a formal platform. Given the demand for uniformity, the primary focus was on examining the degree to which e-discourse is tolerated.

Trudgill and Hannah (2013) provide a proactive response to the topic of how to differentiate between standard English and the nonstandard form, stating that the two are different due to their status and history. Therefore, the main focus is on analysing the ways in which Standard English differs from the nonstandard dialect of English, namely that Standard English has several grammatical quirks that set it apart from other dialects.

2.3. World English and Englishes

According to Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008), research on international English concentrates on English dialects that are not native to the country. Conversely, "world Englishes" refers to regional variations of the English language used around the world, particularly in Africa (Bolton, 2013). From a sociolinguistic standpoint, the idea of world Englishes has impacted English studies, particularly linguistics. Because of its impact on e-discourse as a sociolinguistic study, it was therefore essential to promote and accept the e-discourse variety and to talk about world English and Englishes. Due to its localised nature and presence in Namibia, an African country, e-discourse may be categorised under global Englishes under the distinction between world English and world English.

Bhowmik (2015) argues that the variety of the English language – hence world Englishes – has made it impossible to trace the norms for Standard English. This argument is valid because it might be challenging to determine which variety is acceptable when language users strive for language tolerance. There is a need to avoid the negative attitude towards certain varieties because, even though these attitudes have their roots in the past and, especially, in the two dispersals of English.

English can be categorised as an international language (EIL), English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL), or English as a native language (ENL) wherever in the world (2013). Immigrant dialects and "English-lexified contact languages" are examples of world English (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, p. 1). The term "world Englishes" can be used in both broad and specific settings; the former encompasses different methods of studying Englishes in situations where English is considered a foreign or second language (Bolton, 2005). The broader method proved suitable for this study because it examines speech and genre in the Namibian context.

2.4. Namlish among Creoles and Pidgins who speak English

English is "associated with the slave trade and the development of pidgin and creole languages" in West Africa, according to Jenkins (2015) (p. 6). Pidgins become creoles when utilised over time (Ozouorcun, 2014). Although Namibians speak and write in a linguistic variety known colloquially as Namlish, this kind of variety is not officially accepted in Namibia. The term "language community" is defined by Doyle (2010) as a language shared by a particular community, whereas language culture include texts, literature, pragmatic presumptions, and practices as well as the required literacy or other communication abilities. The aforementioned

definition makes it clear that Namibia is a linguistic community with a distinct language culture, regardless of whether it is categorised as a kind of Creole, Pidgin, or Namlish.

Pidgin and Creole dialects "indicate language development at a lower level of maturity," according to Doyle (2010). Pidgin English "uses a trading language or lingua franca," according to Xu (2017), and it may end up becoming the "sole language in the community and passed on to the next generation of children that it later becomes their native language" (p. 617). Although Creole and Pidgin may still be considered a form of New English Variety, they do not appear to be similar enough to Namlish to be categorised as such. However, considering the continued disdain for Namlish's nonexistence, it is still unclear if it will be recognised and standardised.

2.5. Internet linguistics: e-discourse's impact on linguistic creativity

Electronic discourse is a "new variety of language that leads to significant variations in the written structure of language," according to AbuSa'aleek (2014) (p. 135). Social media provides language users with a digital platform to freely express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings without being constrained by grammatical restrictions, which helps foster language development (Ahmed et al., 2023; Alrefae et al., 2025). Thurlow (2006) provides numerous instances of the "moral panic" portrayed in the media, which is attributed to lexical shortenings, haphazard punctuation, and unusual spellings commonly associated with young people's text messages.

Another researcher, Chabvonga (2017), studied linguistic innovation among young socialists in Zimbabwe, examining how language has evolved through the lyrics of dancehall music. The study shows how slang is utilised in relation to socioeconomic, political, and gender issues. Because males are absolute and women are hushed and regarded as the subject, it also shows how patriarchy still rules society. In light of these results, it is necessary to determine whether socioeconomic, political, and gender factors, like those found in Zimbabwean dancehall music, have an impact on language innovation on social media. In "Are proper grammar and spelling still important?" Danesi (2017) notes that written words are now widely used in communication on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Danesi (2017) draws attention to the fact that people utilise condensed words and phrases to convey as much information as possible without taking grammar correctness into account. However, the question still stands: why do people favour linguistic forms that disregard proper grammar?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case-study design within an interpretive paradigm to explore how Namibian social-media users innovate and adapt language in everyday digital communication. The interpretive orientation was selected to focus on meanings, practices, and motivations behind linguistic creativity rather than on measuring frequencies or producing generalisable data. Data were collected from three major platforms, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, because they represent distinct yet complementary online spaces: Facebook for long-form posts and debates, Twitter for short and witty public commentary, and WhatsApp for more private conversational exchanges. Together, they provided a balanced view of language evolution in both public and semi-private digital contexts.

A convenience sampling strategy was used to gather naturally occurring content from the researchers' own networks between 2018 and 2019, yielding a purposive sample of 50 items (20 WhatsApp conversations, 15 Facebook posts and threads, and 15 Twitter tweets and replies). This approach was chosen for accessibility, contextual relevance, and ethical practicality, particularly in obtaining consent for semi-private WhatsApp conversations. While convenience sampling limits representativeness, the study's strength lies in offering context-specific insights into local linguistic practices, providing a foundation for future broader research. Data were documented in three stages: identifying instances of linguistic creativity,

archiving items via anonymised screenshots with unique codes, and selecting the final 50 items based on clear evidence of innovation, relevance, and contextual clarity.

Analysis followed Discourse Analysis, supported by thematic coding, to uncover both patterns and social meanings of language innovation. Items were reviewed multiple times and coded for emojis, abbreviations, slang, code-switching, and non-standard spellings, with NVivo software used for organisation. These codes were grouped into broader themes such as emotional expressiveness, cultural identity, and economy of expression, interpreted within their social and platform-specific contexts. Comparative analysis showed, for example, how Twitter's brevity encouraged abbreviation, while WhatsApp enabled more intimate forms of code-switching. Ethical considerations were central: informed consent was sought for WhatsApp data, only publicly visible Facebook and Twitter posts were used, all identifying details were removed, and the focus remained on linguistic features rather than individual identities.

4. 5RESULTS

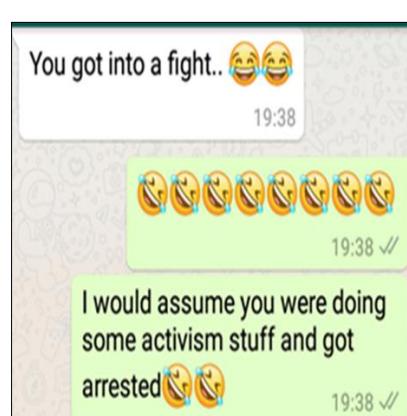
4.1. Using emoticons and emojis to foster creativity and innovation

The study examined ten posts in total: two (2) WhatsApp conversations, four (4) Facebook posts, and four (4) Twitter tweets, in order to pinpoint emojis and emoticons as language innovation and creative tactics used by Namibians on social media platforms. According to the study's analysis of two (2) WhatsApp conversations, Namibians primarily utilise the "Face with Tears of Joy" and "Rolling on the Floor, Laughing" emojis, as shown in the conversations that were examined (Figures 2 and 3). Since emojis are "visually and emotionally expressive and have become a core aspect in a digital world; they convey its meaning through their graphical resemblance to a physical object" (Annamalai & Abdul Salam, 2017, p. 91), they are frequently referred to in words based on their physical descriptions and the emotions they express. For example, the emojis "Face with Tears of Joy," "Rolling on the Floor, Laughing," "Loudly Crying Face," and "Face with Rolling Eyes."

Figure 2: WhatsApp conversation 1



Figure 3: WhatsApp conversation 2



The study's findings show that emoji usage varies depending on the conversation's context. Because of the funny backdrop of the talks mentioned above, the participants are laughing at the topics they are discussing. The participants utilise emojis to suggest that they are laughing at something rather than explicitly stating it in words. Emojis take the place of the participants' words, hence it can be inferred that emojis are used instead of words. Emojis are innovative linguistic innovation and creativity methods since this tactic is imaginative. Both participants

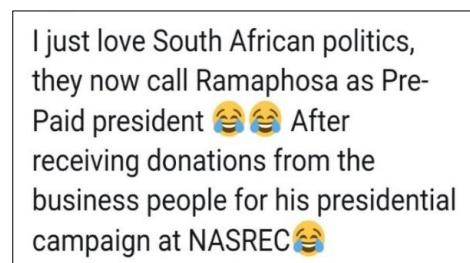
in the two WhatsApp discussions that were examined appeared to find the exchanges amusing, and they were obviously hilarious.

Participants were asked what crime they believed each other to have done, and this led to a discussion. Simply put: "*What crime would you assume I committed if you saw me in a police car?*" Every participant appeared to find amusement in what the others believed they were capable of. Since the problem of alcohol abuse among young people has been popular on social media, the goal of Facebook Post 2 was to make people laugh. It is amusing because it suggests that the suspected alcoholism sufferers would be made public on social media, even though it does not necessarily make sense for the user to "tag" the symptoms of alcoholism, perhaps what they meant to say was tagging the people she believes to be suffering from alcoholism. The concept of revealing buddies on social media is amusing. The emoji is added by the participant to show that they are only kidding and won't reveal anyone who is exhibiting signs of alcoholism.

Figure 4: Facebook post 1



Figure 5: Facebook post 2



The data findings also showed that, depending on the context of the information being stated, the "Face with Tears of Joy" emoji is frequently employed to convey comedy. The participant appeared to be intrigued by the fact that President Ramaphosa is being referred to as a "prepaid president" in the context of Tweet 1 (Figure 6). This makes people who are familiar with South African politics laugh, as does anyone who is not, as it is amusing to call a president a "prepaid president."

Figure 6: Tweet 1



The "Face with Tears of Joy" and "Rolling on the Floor, laughing" emojis are used for different purposes depending on the context, according to the posts and conversations that were studied. Emojis are used in three ways: first, to signal or indicate that the communicator is joking and that no offence is implied; second, to make the audience laugh by sharing a joke; and third, to respond to a communicator by expressing that they understood the joke and are not offended.

Hamukwaya (2016) describes the participant's indirect comment in Facebook Post 3 as an impressive persuasive strategy. Therefore, using the "Face with Rolling Eyes" emoji is a linguistic innovation and creative tactic in which the emotion or response is indicated rather than expressed explicitly. The "Face with Rolling Eyes" is used as seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Facebook Post 3



In addition to the findings, the study discovered that Namibians also use other emojis, including the "Expressionless Face," "Weary Face," "Smiling Face with Heart-Eyes," "Dancing", "Red Heart" and the "Kissing Face" emojis, as shown in the Tweet 2. Some of these emojis can be used as a single emoji, as shown in Figure 8, or as other kinds of related emojis.

Figure 8: Tweet 2

I can smell the second and third goal already   

In this tweet, a dancing woman , a red heart , and a face with heart eyes , function as multimodal markers that intensify the writer's excitement and anticipation beyond what words alone could convey. Instead of explicitly stating emotions such as joy, love, or admiration, the user employs visual symbols to complement and even replace linguistic expressions, thereby creating a more expressive and context-rich message. This illustrates how emojis contribute to the evolution of e-discourse by blending visual and textual modes of communication, making interactions more dynamic, immediate, and emotionally charged. From a sociolinguistic perspective, such practices show how Namibians adapt and innovate within the global digital space, embedding cultural and contextual nuances into the evolving variety of English used online.

4.2. Innovation and creativity through code-switching/mixing

To better investigate linguistic creativity and innovation, the study examined ten articles to determine how Namibian youth used code switching and mixing to be creative and innovative on social media. Two (2) Facebook postings, and two (2) WhatsApp conversations were examined for instances of code-mixing or code-switching from English into other Namibian languages and from Namibian languages into English. The two primary languages spoken in Namibia are Oshiwambo and Afrikaans. The sections that follow offer the data from various social media networks separately.

Namibians primarily code-switch or mix from Oshiwambo or Afrikaans into English, or from English into Oshiwambo or Afrikaans, depending on the languages of those involved and their relationship, according to the study's analysis of the two (2) WhatsApp conversations. The communicators' code alternated or blended between Oshiwambo and English during the talk (see Figure 9). The foundation of the language is that both communicators are aware that they speak and understand the two languages.

Figure 9: WhatsApp conversation 3



The WhatsApp exchange in Figure 9 illustrates how Namibian social media users employ code-switching and linguistic creativity for humorous and expressive effect. The first participant writes in Oshiwambo: “*Someone tapopi vati si niw*” (*someone says apparently*). The second participant responds with laughter emojis and recalls a humorous incident from the television show *Big Brother Africa*: “*...ateleka olwishi vati ‘do you like my lice?’*” (*cooked rice apparently, ‘do you like my rice?’*). In this context, the word *lice* is used instead of *rice* to highlight Namlish (Namibian English) pronunciation, which often deviates from Standard English.

The interplay of Oshiwambo, English, and Namlish in this conversation reflects the hybrid nature of online discourse in Namibia. The communicators intentionally blend languages to create shared humor that relies on cultural knowledge, bilingual fluency, and the playful distortion of Standard English. The emojis (😂🤣) further enhance the humorous tone, serving as paralinguistic markers that substitute for laughter.

This example emphasises how code-switching in digital spaces is not merely functional but also creative and performative. The joke works precisely because the participants draw from multiple linguistic repertoires, Oshiwambo, English, and Namlish, to craft a message that resonates with their shared cultural background. Such instances demonstrate how social media fosters linguistic innovation by normalizing mixed codes and reshaping communicative norms among Namibian youth.

The Facebook post in Figure 10 below demonstrates how Namibian social media users employ code-switching as a strategy for both emphasis and cultural resonance. The first participant begins in English: “*This question needs to be discussed locally.*” This is immediately followed by an Oshiwambo phrase: “*Otshithima shino otsha pumbwa okukundathanwa kuseni aakalimo, unene tuu aapopi yOtshiwambo.*” Translated into English, this means “*This porridge needs to be discussed by us the citizens, especially the Oshiwambo speakers.*”

The switch from English to Oshiwambo is deliberate and functional. While English sets the broad frame of the conversation, Oshiwambo grounds the discussion in a cultural and linguistic identity, highlighting that the matter at hand is of particular concern to Oshiwambo-speaking communities. The use of the metaphor “*otshithima*” (porridge) as shorthand for a pressing issue reflects a cultural conceptualisation of social matters as shared resources that must be managed collectively. By adding “*unene tuu aapopi yOtshiwambo*” (“especially the Oshiwambo speakers”), the participant narrows the audience further, making the appeal both communal and identity-specific.

This code-switching achieves multiple sociolinguistic functions. First, it enhances solidarity by addressing speakers in their home language, thereby reinforcing shared cultural belonging. Second, it conveys urgency and seriousness through the metaphor of porridge, a staple food central to Oshiwambo culture, thereby framing the issue as essential to survival and everyday life. Third, it exemplifies linguistic creativity in e-discourse, where the alternation between English and Oshiwambo allows users to balance inclusivity (via English as the wider lingua franca) with cultural specificity (via Oshiwambo as the heritage language).

Figure 10: Facebook post 4

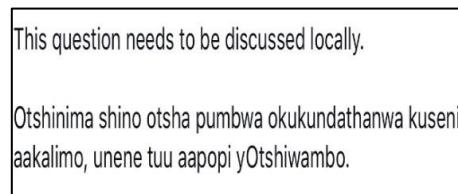
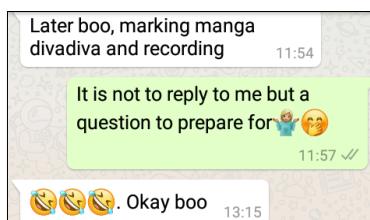


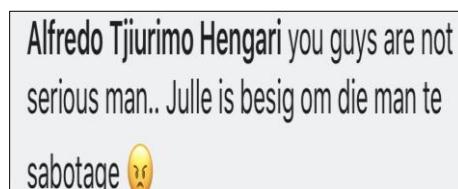
Figure 11 below illustrates how Namibian social media users employ code-switching between Oshiwambo and English as a strategy for innovation and creativity in digital communication. The first participant writes in Oshiwambo: “*Later boo, marking manga divadiva and recording*”, which translates to “Later my love, I am marking and recording marks for now quickly.” The second participant responds in Oshiwambo: “*Inopumbwa okuyamukula paife ondekupula ashike wiilongekidhe*”, meaning “It is not to reply to me but a question to prepare for.” The third reply then shifts back to English with “*Okey love.*” This exchange demonstrates how participants fluidly shift between Oshiwambo and English to achieve intimacy, humour, and efficiency in their interaction. The inclusion of endearments such as “*boo*” and “*love*” shows how local languages blend with global English expressions of affection, creating a hybrid form of Namibian e-discourse. By embedding Oshiwambo phrases within predominantly English sentences, users signal cultural belonging while maintaining accessibility for bilingual interlocutors. Thus, Figure 11 exemplifies how code-switching functions as both a communicative tool and a marker of identity, reinforcing the argument that social media accelerates the evolution of language through informal, hybridised expressions.

Figure 11: Facebook post 5



In Figure 12, the participant code-switched from English to Afrikaans and then code-mixed with English. The target language in this post is Afrikaans, indicating that the recipient of the message is obviously able to understand or speak the language.

Figure 12: WhatsApp conversation 4



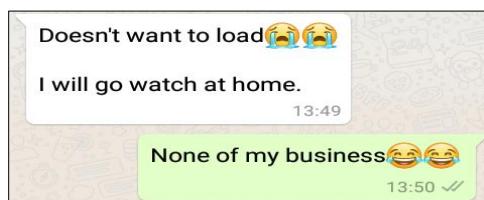
In order to directly address the target of the communication, Hamukwaya (2016) discovered that incorporating a language that the target understands works well. Furthermore, it is verified that the participant is speaking directly to the target because the target is tagged in the post. Thus, code-switching and code-mixing, using the target language to address the post's target, are ways to generate linguistic originality and innovation. As seen in Figure 13, communicators employ both code-mixing and code-switching techniques in their linguistic invention, demonstrating that they are not limited to just one of these approaches.

4.3. Innovation and creativity through other forms

The study examined 15 items to find additional types of creativity and innovation in order to make sure that the majority of linguistic innovation and creativity techniques are investigated. Five (5) WhatsApp talks, five (5) Facebook postings, and five (5) Twitter posts made up the ten items. The postings and chats were examined for linguistic innovation characteristics, such as the use of emoticons and emojis and code-switching/mixing, that were not found in the previously examined themes.

Below is a discussion of the three social media sites' findings. Phrases and unfinished sentences that are frequently conveyed in chunks rather than paragraphs are characteristics of the creativity and analysis of the five (5) WhatsApp conversations that were examined for this study. The communicators in WhatsApp conversation 5 left out the topics in (1) the first communicator's line, "Doesn't want to load," and (2) "None of my business." The sentences violate the semantic rules of sentences since the subject is omitted. "It doesn't want to load" and "That is none of my business" are the appropriate sentences.

Figure 13: WhatsApp conversation 5



Because the goal of digital communication is to convey the message, rather than to be accurate, this approach is popular in instant messaging and is acceptable. Additionally, it is appropriate as the communicators are at ease with one another and do not feel the need to employ proper grammar and semantics. However, this tactic of leaving out the subject of a sentence is less prevalent on WhatsApp than on Facebook and Twitter. This could be because WhatsApp conversations are interpersonal and communicators are not required to use subjects because it is clear who is being addressed or what the phrase or sentence is referring to.

Conversely, posts on Facebook and Twitter are often impersonal and focus on a single concept or viewpoint. Communicators believe that posts should make it clear to the reader who is being addressed. For example, it is clear from the subject line of the Facebook post and tweet below (Figures 14 and 15) who is being addressed. To ensure that the message is understood as intended, it was also essential to clearly identify the subjects and objects in the phrases. If the subjects and objects in the tweet are not specifically addressed and referred to as story characters, the narrative would not make sense.

Figure 14: Tweet 3

My son is at the village for holidays and is doing the most. If he is not trying to "ponda" the goats then he is chasing the chickens and if they are too fast he goes for the eggs. My mom keep sending damage fees bills everyday 😩

Figure 15: Facebook Post 6



One feature of linguistic innovation and originality on WhatsApp is the removal of subjects and objects in conversations. This occurs when communicators fail to identify who or what is being addressed or referred to because it is frequently clear in the interpersonal conversation. The omission of subjects and objects of a sentence is less common on Facebook and Twitter than it is on WhatsApp, however, because posts on these platforms are typically not interpersonal or interactive enough to require identifying who is saying what and who is being addressed or referred to in the conversation.

On Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, vulgarity was detected. The use of the term "fucking" as a humorous emphasis word, without necessarily insulting the audience, is how vulgarity is accomplished in Tweet 4. The initialism "WTF," which stands for "What/why/who/when The Fuck," is used in Facebook Post 7 to convey obscenity. This is more of a reaction to a situation to show frustration than to genuinely offend someone. WTF has a humorous effect as well, and censorship has been made possible by its abbreviation. Therefore, vulgarity is a language innovation and creativity approach because young people avoid using the word directly for censorship, and it is creative in that it only applies to pertinent communication circumstances. In WhatsApp conversation 6 (Figure 18), the term "kick-ass" often refers to someone who gets beaten up for being offensive. The pejorative meaning cannot be taken literally because the profanity is not directed at any specific person. It is also possible to overlook vulgarity because it is regulated using a variety of techniques, which leads to linguistic innovation and inventiveness. The figures below display the tweets, posts, and chats.

Figure 16: Tweet 4

if you see me counting on my fingers for math literally mind your fucking business

Figure 17: Facebook Post 7

People in my Fantasy team already have 116 points on Game Weak 1

WTF?

Figure 18: WhatsApp conversation 6

I will be like, she just kicked some ass and git arrested.. 😂

The word "man" in WhatsApp conversations 7 used to identify the usage of slang and colloquialisms in WhatsApp discussions. In these conversations, "man" serves as a sentence suffix to highlight the person being addressed in the conversation.

In addition to the slang in Tweet 4, the "k" in 12k is used to denote 12 000 (thousand). Since they can also subtly instil jargon or a language code in young people, slang and colloquialisms are a powerful tool for linguistic invention and originality. The study only discovered one (1) case of the use of slang and colloquialisms as a linguistic innovation strategy on Facebook from the items that were studied. This clearly shows that slang and colloquialisms are not as frequently used on Facebook as they are on Twitter and WhatsApp.

Figure 19: WhatsApp conversation 7

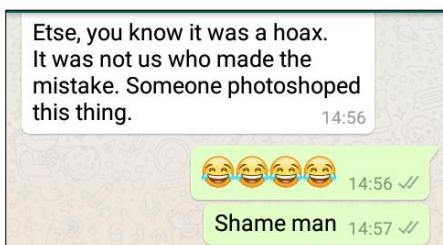


Figure 20: Tweet 4

To say people who earn 12k has no business in marrying is somehow stupid. So be it if you prefer people with high salaries, that's your preference. The 12k and less will marry each other anyways. Who said they wants you even? #smdh

In addition to the slang and colloquialisms in the post, tweet and conversation presented above, the study also found the following words as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Slang and colloquialism usage

| Social media platform | Word/phrase | Contextual meaning/synonym in Standard English |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| WhatsApp | Bucks | Money – used in equivalence of a certain currency. |
| | Zula | Struggle to ask or put something together. |
| | Stuff | Matters/issues |
| | Thing | Aspect/element |
| | Telly | Television |
| Twitter | Cracked a joke | Share jokes |

The study discovered that Namibians' social media posts and discussions exhibit these traits when it comes to abbreviations, initialisms, and acronyms as language innovation and creative methods. The results of the use of acronyms and abbreviations/initialisms are shown in Table 2 below.

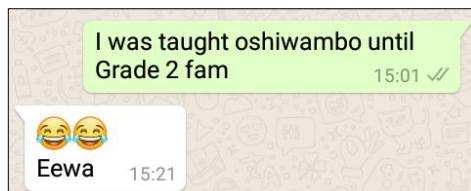
Table 2: Using abbreviations and acronyms as a strategy

| Social media platform | Acronym | Abbreviation/initialism | Other shortcuts | Synonym/Contextual meaning/meaning implied |
|-----------------------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------|
| WhatsApp | LOL | | | Laughing |
| | | LMAO | | Laughing |
| Facebook | | | U | You |
| | | | Fr | For |
| | | | Hv | Have |
| | | | Nt | Not |
| | | | Yr | Your |

| | Frm | From |
|---------|--------|------------------------------------|
| | WTF | What/how/why/when is it that... |
| | Pls | Please |
| Twitter | ADD | Attention Deficiency Disorder |
| | NASREC | |
| | HT | Heard Through |
| | DM | Direct Message |

With the exception of "fam," which was detected in a WhatsApp discussion and is shown in Figure 21 below, the analysis did not find many postings or conversations in terms of clippings.

Figure 21: WhatsApp conversation 8



Young people use "fam," which is the abbreviated form of "family," to refer to a close friend, a family member, or a close friend's circle. On social media, it's also used to highlight civility and speak directly to a person or group of people. Therefore, even though clipping was not frequently mentioned in the items that were examined for the study, it is a tactic of language invention and creativity.

Namibians use a variety of linguistic innovation and creativity strategies, as evidenced by the data presented in the section on other forms of linguistic creativity and innovation. These strategies were examined by identifying the traits or features of the posts, conversations, and tweets that were sampled for the study. It was also evident that language originality and creativity are influenced by the kind of social media platform. The study summarised the characteristics of each social media platform and its influence on language innovation by analysing the techniques. The following part presents and analyses these data.

4.4. Social media platforms' influence

According to Verheijen (2017), youths' use of social media is influenced by the features of the site. When creating a table that was pertinent to the presentation and analysis of the social media platforms that were sampled for this study, these attributes, as categorised by Verheijen (2017), were helpful. This data is displayed below in Table 3.

Table 3: Social media platforms' influence

| Social media platform | Characteristic | Influence on innovation/creativity | linguistic |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|------------|
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|------------|

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WhatsApp | No character limits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows users to type long texts, which discourages them to instead type in chunks. - Leads to the omission of certain linguistic items. |
| | Interactivity: one-to-one | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enables interpersonal communication. - Leads to the omission of certain linguistic items such as subjects and objects. - Allows users to freely express themselves, including the use of vulgar expressions. |
| | Visibility: Private | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlimited content. - Uncensored content. |
| Facebook | No character limit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows unlimited content. - Leads to code-switching and code-mixing. |
| | Interactivity: one-to-many. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables users to address a specific audience. -Code-switching/mixing can be indirectly employed to exclude a certain audience. |
| | Visibility: the public. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Users address the audience or exclude a certain audience. - Censorship is required. |
| Twitter | Character limit: 140 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited content. - Leads to a need to use shortened versions of words. - Leads to the omission of linguistic items. - Users are forced to be perspicuous and concise. |
| | Interactivity: one-to-many. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Users address or refer to subjects and objects directly. - Less omission of subjects and objects. |
| | Visibility: the public. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Censorship required. - Clever wordplay and linguistic creativity to foreground or deviate. |

The social media platform's features have a significant impact on linguistic originality and creativity, as Table 3 above demonstrates. The setting and features like the character restriction, interactivity, and visibility influence the language innovation and creativity tactics that were mentioned in the earlier sections.

4.5. Deviation from standard forms of English

Ten items were evaluated based on the features of the innovated language as strategies in order to determine the degree to which the innovative and developed linguistic forms differ from

standard forms of English. To determine how these tactics differ from standard forms and whether they affect standard forms of English, they were then contrasted with the standard forms. The information is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: English variations from conventional forms

| Creativity/innovation strategy | Deviation from standard forms | Impact on standard forms of English |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emojis and emoticons | Replaces words and phrases. | - Open to misinterpretation. - Open to misuse. |
| Code-switching/mixing | Replaces English words or phrases in the communication. | - Excludes an audience. - Emphasises on who is being addressed or referred to. - May lead/reflect to linguistic shortcomings. |
| Acronyms and abbreviations | Provides a shortened version of the original word. | - Can cause misinterpretation to those who are not aware of the acronym or abbreviation. |
| Vulgar expressions | Deviates from communication rules such as politeness. | - Can be misinterpreted or taken out of context. |
| Slang and colloquialisms | Informal and unfamiliar terms | - may lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation. |

According to the study, there is a significant deviation from traditional forms of English in the innovative and creative language. Messages and the communication process may be affected by this divergence, particularly if one of the communicators is unfamiliar with the term, expression, or emoji being used. When a message's sender utilises words, phrases, or emoji incorrectly to the point where the intended meaning is not understood, linguistic innovation and creativity are also likely to affect communication.

4.6.Differentiating between "incorrect" English

The words and phrases that were considered incorrect according to standard spellings were examined based on whether they were incorrect in the contexts in which they were used and whether they affected the communication's message in order to examine the difference between the innovated and created language and "incorrect" forms of English. The statistics on improper linguistic innovation and creativity forms, together with the effect those forms have on the context's message, are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Differentiating between "incorrect" English

| Incorrect form | Intended meaning | Impact on the message |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Git | Got | None |
| Pls | Please | None |
| Gelrfrnd | Girlfriend | None |
| Hv | Have | None |
| Nt | Not | None |
| Th | The | None |
| Frm | From | None |
| Till | Until | None |
| Ur | Your | None |
| U | You | None |

Because spellings that stray from conventional forms are considered improper, the data findings show that incorrect forms of linguistic innovations and originality are not different from incorrect forms of English. When employed in a context where Standard English is required, these words and/or sentences would be incomprehensible to anyone who are not familiar with the lexical terms. However, in the internet setting, where users are not necessarily bound by grammatical norms, the spellings are acceptable.

The results show that innovative and developed objects have little effect on meaning in the communication setting. According to Bolton (2013), sociolinguists should accept language variants, including what is considered "poor" or "broken" English, even though grammatical innovation and originality are not different from wrong forms of the language. Therefore, depending on the audience and context, using erroneous forms on social media is allowed.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media has created a unique space where Namibian users engage in dynamic linguistic practices that both challenge and extend conventional norms of Standard English. The frequent use of emojis, abbreviations, and multimodal markers, as highlighted in the results, illustrates the argument of AbuSa'aleek (2015) that e-discourse represents a new variety of language with its own features and graphology. Rather than being a degradation of language, these practices align with Crystal's (2006) view of "netspeak" as an evolution shaped by digital affordances. For instance, the "Face with Tears of Joy" emoji functions as a substitute for verbal expressions of laughter, demonstrating how visual symbols can enrich communication by conveying paralinguistic cues absent in traditional text. These innovations confirm the sociolinguistic perspective that language adapts to its context, evolving in response to technological and cultural shifts.

Equally significant is the role of code-switching and code-mixing, which the study found to be a prevalent strategy among Namibian youth. This practice resonates with Coupland's (2016) assertion that sociolinguistic behaviors reflect cultural norms, expectations, and context. Switching between English, Oshiwambo, Afrikaans, and Namlish not only enables efficient communication but also reinforces cultural identity and solidarity in online spaces. The creative manipulation of multiple linguistic repertoires, such as humorous plays on Namlish pronunciation or the metaphorical use of Oshiwambo terms like otshithima (porridge), demonstrates how digital discourse blends global and local influences. This echoes Bolton's (2013) framework of World Englishes, which recognises the legitimacy of context-specific varieties that emerge from multilingual communities. In this sense, Namibian social media users are not abandoning Standard English but enriching it with cultural nuances that reflect their lived realities.

The findings also affirm Kachru's Circles Model (Xu, 2017) by situating Namibian English within the Outer Circle, where English functions as a second and official language while coexisting with strong indigenous linguistic traditions. The creativity observed in Namibian social media posts illustrates how Outer Circle communities actively negotiate their linguistic space, producing hybrid forms that are both functional and expressive. The playful distortion of English, whether through deliberate misspellings, abbreviations, or code-switching, reflects Bhowmik's (2015) view that the variety of Englishes makes it difficult to uphold rigid norms of Standard English. Instead, Namibian users embrace linguistic tolerance and innovation, constructing a digital discourse that is inclusive, identity-driven, and culturally resonant. Thus, the study underscores that social media is not eroding linguistic standards but is accelerating the evolution of English in Namibia toward a more pluralistic, creative, and contextually grounded form.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that social media platforms significantly influence how Namibians innovate and adapt language in digital communication. As shown in Figures 2–3, emojis such as “Face with Tears of Joy” and “Rolling on the Floor, Laughing” are not merely decorative but serve as substitutes for words, adding emotional depth and humour while reshaping communicative norms. Similarly, Figure 8 demonstrated how multimodal markers like the dancing woman  and red heart  express joy and admiration beyond the limits of words, illustrating the creative fusion of textual and visual modes. These examples reinforce the conclusion that platform-specific features encourage linguistic experimentation, whereby users construct meanings that are immediate, expressive, and culturally resonant.

In addition, the results revealed that code-switching and mixing play a central role in linguistic creativity across platforms. For instance, Figure 9 highlighted how a WhatsApp exchange combined Oshiwambo, Namlish, and English to create humour rooted in cultural knowledge, while Figure 10 demonstrated the use of Oshiwambo metaphors such as “otshithima” (porridge) to convey urgency and shared responsibility within a cultural frame. Similarly, Figure 11 illustrated how participants alternated between Oshiwambo and English with affectionate terms like “boo” and “love” to achieve intimacy and efficiency. These findings collectively suggest that social media discourse in Namibia is not a break from Standard English but an evolution shaped by bilingual repertoires, cultural identity, and platform affordances. Thus, linguistic innovation on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp reflects the broader trajectory of global Englishes, showing how digital spaces enable the localisation of language while contributing to its continuous transformation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- The English department at the universities should encourage students to pursue studies in the area of linguistic innovation.
- English scholars should explore the impact of linguistic innovation on language and development, in order to give the area due recognition of its contribution to sociolinguistics.
- English scholars must contribute to the literature in the area of linguistic innovation so that there is availability of Namibian content.

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