

Exploring the Meaning of Pidgin English on Social Media: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Nigerian Pidgin Hashtags as Adapted Speech

Mosunmola Oluyinka Adebayo
University of Africa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
bayinkmola@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of Pidginised English in social media, with a specific focus on Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Nigerian Pidgin English hashtags on social media. The findings expand our understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics, cultural expressions, linguistic features, and communicative impact of Pidgin English in the digital era, thereby enriching our knowledge of language variation and communication practices in the online space. Forty Pidginised hashtags on social media constitute the data, including surveys, and interviews. The study analyses the meanings of the hashtags within the Nigerian Pidgin context, the linguistic factors that necessitated their use, as well as the sociolinguistic and cultural implications of the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. The study adopts the Variationist Sociolinguistics theory to analyse the data. The findings suggest that pidginised English in social media is a reflection of linguistic diversity and cultural identity, but also serves as a means of social commentary and political critique. This study contributes to the understanding of language use in digital spaces and highlights the impacts of the use of hashtags on social media platforms to promote linguistic and cultural diversity.

Keywords: adapted speech, hashtags, Nigerian Pidgin, sociolinguistics analysis, social media

Mosunmola Oluyinka Adebayo; Email : bayinkmola@gmail.com.

1. Introduction

It is worth noting that Pidgin English is a variety of English that has been adapted and simplified to facilitate communication between speakers of different languages. It is commonly spoken in West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon, among others. Pidginised English is associated with informal and casual communication, and its use is often linked to social identity and cultural belonging.

Pidgin English is a form of communication that has been shaped by historical, social, and cultural factors and has developed as a result of language contact and multilingualism. Nigerian Pidgin, for example, is a Creole language that has evolved from the mixing of English, Portuguese, and local Nigerian languages. This unique linguistic blend has given rise to a distinct form of Pidgin English that is widely used in Nigeria, particularly in informal settings such as social media platforms. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media serves as a platform for people to interact, create, share, and exchange comments with each other on various networks.

In recent years, Nigerian Pidgin hashtags have become increasingly popular on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram; providing a platform for linguistic and cultural expression, and serving as a means of social commentary and political critique. The use of Pidgin English in social media is not only a reflection of linguistic diversity and cultural identity, but it also challenges dominant linguistic norms and promotes linguistic and cultural pluralism.

Social media has transformed the way people communicate, providing new opportunities for language use and cultural expression. One phenomenon that has emerged in this context is the use of Pidgin English, a linguistic style that blends English with local languages and dialects. This study focuses on Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, exploring how the use of Pidgin English in social media reflects linguistic, cultural, and social factors in Nigeria. By analyzing the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of language use in digital spaces and to shed light on the potential of social media to promote linguistic and cultural diversity.

The use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags on social media as a form of Pidginised English presents a fascinating linguistic phenomenon with significant sociolinguistic and cultural implications. While previous research has acknowledged the existence and popularity of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, there remains a need to explore their meanings, linguistic factors influencing their use, and the broader sociolinguistic and cultural implications associated with their adoption in online communication. The study aims to investigate the nuances of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags within the digital realm, shedding light on their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural dimensions. By analysing the meanings of the hashtags, examining the linguistic factors that drive their utilization, and exploring their broader sociolinguistic and cultural implications, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of language use in digital spaces and the

promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity in online communities. These lead to the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the meanings of different hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media.
2. To analyse the sociolinguistic and cultural implications of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media.
3. To identify the linguistic factors that facilitate the use of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media.
4. To explore the impact hashtags have on the way people communicate and express themselves on social media.

2. Research Questions

1. What are the meanings of different hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media?
2. What are the sociolinguistic and cultural implications of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media?
3. What are the linguistic factors that facilitate the use of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media?
4. What impact do hashtags have on the way people communicate and express themselves on social media?

3. Literature Review

While previous research has explored the status and attitudes of speakers towards Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English, there is a dearth of empirical investigation into the use of pidgin hashtags and their sociolinguistic and cultural implications in the Nigerian context. Additionally, limited attention has been given to the exploration of pidgin hashtags as a means to promote cultural diversity and identity on social media platforms. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by examining the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags as an adapted speech and investigating the sociolinguistic and cultural factors contributing to the evolution of Pidgin English in the digital sphere.

Language is a complex system of communication that encompasses a range of mutually understandable varieties. It serves as a repository of a community's history and culture, with various regional, occupational, and social definitions. According to Halliday (1964), language is inherent in all human interactions, serving as the medium through which humans communicate and interact with one another, whether through orally-auditory symbols or other forms of semiotic signs.

Pidgin languages are often viewed with complex attitudes, as they are seen by some as a degraded or corrupted version of standard languages, as noted by Ndimele (2011). Nigerian Pidgin has evolved into a first language for some minority groups in Nigeria, as observed by

Igboanusi (2008), and it is also the language with the utmost number of speakers in Nigeria (Faraclas, 2008; Jibril, 1995). This stance is also supported by Osoba (2015: 131) describing as... “the widest spoken indigenous language in Nigeria today.” Unlike English, which is taught through formal education and follows standardised orthography, Nigerian Pidgin is acquired informally and lacks a standardised writing system. Deuber (2005: 51) asserts that the highest advantage of NPE over English and the other inherited languages is that “it is the most neutral language in Nigeria: it has neither the elitist connotations of English nor the ethnic connotations of the indigenous languages.”

Hitherto, educated Nigerians, in particular, may consider Nigerian Pidgin as inferior to Standard English, and may discourage their children from using it, as highlighted by Elugbe and Omamor (1991). Todd (1974) describes Pidgin as “a marginal language which arises to fulfil certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language” (p. 1). Deuber (2006) examines the variation in spoken Nigerian Pidgin among educated speakers and concludes that there is no evidence of a continuum of dialects between Nigerian Pidgin and English. Historically, it was considered of low prestige in Nigeria and primarily used by those with limited education. Igboanusi (2001) notes that Nigerian Pidgin is often associated with a negative image as a “bad” form of English. However, in recent times, there has been a shift as educated individuals, including those in tertiary institutions, are increasingly embracing Nigerian Pidgin as a form of communication (Adebayo, 2022). Moreover, Nigerian Pidgin has unique grammar rules that distinguish it from Standard English. These grammatical differences highlight the distinct nature of Nigerian Pidgin as a separate language with its own set of rules and structures. Egbokhare (2001) asserts that the ability to communicate effectively in Nigerian Pidgin is increasingly becoming indispensable for practical communication in Nigeria.

Despite linguistic recommendations for Nigerian Pidgin to be recognised as Nigeria's official lingua franca, its lack of social advantage for speakers, as noted by Elugbe and Omamor (1991), has contributed to its limited status. However, Akande (2010) showcased that Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) is a distinct language, based on the analysis of the verb phrase in Standard English (StdE) and NPE. The study draws data from 30 Nigerian University graduates from three ethnolinguistic regions and illustrates that the NPE verb phrase differs significantly from that of StdE, and since the verb is central to the clause and governs its argument, it can be argued that NPE, with its radically different verbal grammar from English, is a distinct language. Moreover, the clustering pattern of NPE verb phrases with other NPE verb phrases or other characteristic features of NPE further demonstrates its separate linguistic identity. Finally, the subjects' alternating use of StdE and NPE, resembling bilinguals' code-switching behavior, reinforces the idea that NPE is a distinct language. Although, some scholars have previously acknowledged NPE as a language (Adebayo, 2022; Agheyisi 1971; Elugbe & Omamor, 1991). Adebayo (2022:55) further emphasises that “The NP should be given consideration of becoming the lingua franca of the country as its pervasive use is not only found among several people of the older generation but also among the 21st-century generation, in both formal and informal domains.”

Agbo and Plag (2020) focus on 67 conversations in Nigerian English by educated speakers from the International Corpus of English(ICE), Nigeria, (Wunder, Voormann, & Gut, 2010), and use the variability in copula usage as a basis for analysis. The results show that the use of variants is not randomly distributed among speakers and that particular clusters of speakers use specific combinations of variants. The study identifies this situation as a continuum of style, where code-switching is one of the stylistic devices used by speakers, influenced by social factors such as formality, setting, participants, and interpersonal relationships.

Certainly, several scholars have contributed to the study of Pidgin English in social media, providing valuable insights into its emergence and evolution. For instance, Tagg and Seargeant (2014) conducted a study on the use of Pidgin English in Nigerian online forums and discover that it is frequently used as a marker of identity, solidarity, and humor. Danesi (2016) affirms that language enables individuals to create a model of themselves, shaping their concept of social identity. Danesi further states that “social identity is a crucial aspect of the social meaning of particular linguistic constructions” (p. 163). Furthermore, researchers have highlighted the potential of social media to promote linguistic and cultural diversity (Zappavigna, 2012).

Rauschnabel, Sheldon, and Herzfeldt (2019) in their research, confirm the significant role that hashtags play as an integral element of communication via social media. They conducted six empirical studies to assess the motivations for using hashtags and identified ten different motivations, such as amusing, organising, bonding, and endorsing. They also discovered a relationship between these motivations and the various patterns of social media behavior. In the same vein, Yang (2016: 13) discovers that hashtags are so powerful that it is perceived as the “power of digital activism in shaping public discourse” Also, Burgess and Baym, (2020) describe hashtags as a “powerful part of the world's cultural, social and political vocabulary” (pp. 61-62) while Yang (2016) further highlights the significance of the hashtag in terms of its narrative agency, explaining it “as the capacity to create stories on social media ... in a way that is collective and recognised by the public”(p. 14).

According to Goswami (2018), the hashtag movement has become a vital tool for engaging in socio-political events, serving as a knowledge tag for advocating and connecting social media users to participate and voice their support for campaigns across platforms through concise messaging. The researcher highlights the effectiveness of this approach through the #Kony2012 campaign.

Overall, these studies provide important insights into the use of Pidgin English on social media, highlighting its role in identity construction, cultural expression, and linguistic innovation. Also, on Nigerian Pidgin English, previous research has primarily focused on the status and attitudes of speakers towards the co-existence of Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English, for instance: Akande (2010), Akande and Salami (2010), Osoba, (2014) and Amakiri & Igani (2015), with a limited empirical investigation into their use as an adapted speech on the social media. However, a few studies have focused specifically on the use of pidgin hashtags to promote cultural diversity and identity in social media, in other words, there is a dearth of scholarly works in the area of pidginised hashtags as an adapted speech, particularly in

the Nigerian context. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags (adapted speech) as a means of exploring the sociolinguistic and cultural factors that contribute to the evolution of Pidgin English in social media.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the meaning of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags on social media platforms. It employs a combination of data collection methods and analysis techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this study consist of social media users who posted content containing Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. Additionally, ten Nigerian social media users were involved in a survey to provide their perspectives on the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags.

4.3 Research Instruments

- i. Data collection involved keyword searches on social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) to identify posts containing Nigerian Pidgin hashtags.
- ii. The survey instrument comprised a set of questions administered to the ten Nigerian social media users. The survey aimed to gather information on their usage and interpretation of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, perceptions of the language, and opinions on the socio-cultural implications of its use on social media.

4.4 Research Procedures

- i. Data collection: The researcher conducted keyword searches on social media platforms to gather posts that contained Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. The collected data were then filtered to include only posts in the Nigerian Pidgin language. A total of forty posts were randomly selected for analysis.
- ii. Linguistic analysis: The researcher analysed the selected posts using a Variationist sociolinguistics theory. The focus was on understanding the meanings of the hashtags, examining sociolinguistic and cultural implications, and identifying linguistic factors influencing their use on social media.
- iii. Survey administration: The researcher administered the survey to ten Nigerian social media users. The participants were asked questions related to their usage and interpretation of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, their perceptions of the language, and their opinions on the socio-cultural implications of its use in social media.

- iv. Data analysis: The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic features of the Nigerian Pidgin language in social media posts. The survey data were also analysed to complement the linguistic analysis and gain insights into participants' perspectives.
- v. Interpretation: The researcher interpreted the findings from both the linguistic analysis and the survey data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags on social media and their socio-cultural implications.

4. Variationist Sociolinguistics Approach

Variationist sociolinguistics is a theory that seeks to understand how language varies and changes within different social contexts. The theory was first developed by William Labov in the 1960s and has since become an important framework for studying language variation and change.

At its core, Variationist sociolinguistics is based on the idea that language is not a fixed, static system, but rather a dynamic and constantly changing one that is influenced by a variety of social factors. These factors can include things like age, gender, social class, ethnicity, geographic location, and more. One of the key insights of Variationist sociolinguistics is that linguistic variation is not random, but rather systematic and patterned. In other words, certain linguistic features are more likely to occur in certain social contexts, and these patterns can be studied and analysed to better understand how language works. Another important aspect of Variationist sociolinguistics is the notion of the speech community. According to Labov, a speech community is a group of people who share a set of linguistic norms and practices, and who use language in similar ways. These communities can be based on a variety of factors, such as geographic location, ethnicity, or social class.

Overall, the Variationist sociolinguistics framework provides a powerful tool for understanding how language varies and changes within different social contexts. By studying the patterns and trends of linguistic variation, researchers can gain valuable insights into the social dynamics that shape language use and change over time. This study focuses on the definition of a speech community by Labov. Instagram is a speech community defined by different factors, and certain linguistic features are expected to occur in certain contexts. In social media, pidginised hashtags are commonly used among bilingual youths to achieve their goals which differ, and range from advertisement to critique, educate, humour, etc. for positive results.

5. Findings

The examples below, demonstrate how hashtags can incorporate Pidgin English as a means of communication and expression on social media.

Pidginised Hashtags with Sociolinguistic and Cultural Implications

1. **#NaGodwin** (It's God that made it possible)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of gratitude and humility, as it is often used to acknowledge and give credit to a higher power for one's success or blessings. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of religiosity and spirituality, as the phrase "Na God" is a common way of expressing faith and trust in a higher power.

2. **#NoShaking** (No problem)

The use of hashtag suggests a sense of calmness and reassurance, as it is often used to express that everything is under control and there is no need to worry. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of resilience and optimism, as the phrase "No shaking" is a common way of expressing the belief that even in the face of difficulty, things will eventually work out.

3. **#IJGB** (I Just Got Back)

The use of hashtags may suggest a sense of pride and excitement, as it is often used by Nigerians who have recently returned from abroad to announce their arrival and reconnect with their home country. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of identity and belonging, as the phrase "I just got back" is a common way of affirming one's Nigerian identity and connection to the country.

4. **#HustleGoPay** (Work will pay off)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of determination and perseverance, as it is often used to encourage and motivate others to keep working hard and not give up. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of hard work and resilience, as the phrase "Hustle go pay" is a common way of affirming the belief that success comes from hard work and perseverance.

5. **#EChoke** (It's suffocating/overwhelming)

This hashtag became popular in 2021 and is used to express excitement or appreciation for something. The use of this hashtag may also suggest a sense of frustration or dissatisfaction, as it is often used to express discontent or displeasure with a situation. The context of use determines its meaning. The use of Pidgin in this context reflects the language's role as a marker of Nigerian youth culture, as the hashtag is primarily used by young people. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of humor and irony, as the phrase "Echoke" is a common way of making

light of difficult or uncomfortable situations. Additionally, it may reflect the informal and expressive nature of the language, which is often used to convey strong emotions.

6. #NoBeToday (It's not today)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of patience and endurance, as it is often used to acknowledge that a particular situation or challenge has been ongoing for a long time. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of perseverance and endurance, as the phrase "No be today" is a common way of expressing that difficult situations are not new and can be overcome with time and resilience.

7. #JahBless (God bless)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of gratitude and appreciation, as it is often used to express thanks and appreciation for blessings and good fortune. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of religiosity and spirituality, as the phrase "Jah bless" is a common way of invoking divine blessings and protection.

8. #WetinDeyOccur (What's happening?)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of curiosity and interest, as it is often used to inquire about current events or ongoing activities. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of social connectedness and community, as the phrase "Wetin dey occur" is a common way of staying informed and connected to what is happening in one's environment.

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10. #SmallButMighty (Small but powerful)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of pride and confidence, as it is often used to assert that even though something may be small or seemingly insignificant, it can still be impactful. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of resourcefulness and ingenuity, as the phrase "Small but mighty" is a common way of affirming the belief that even with limited resources, one can still achieve great things.

11. #EyesDonClear (I understand now)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of clarity and understanding, as it is often used to indicate that one has gained new insights or knowledge. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of education and lifelong learning, as the phrase "Eyes don clear" is a common way of expressing that one has gained a deeper understanding of a particular subject or situation.

12. #OmoNoBeJoke (It's not a joke)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of seriousness and urgency, as it is often used to emphasize the gravity or importance of a situation. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of resilience and strength, as the phrase "Omo no be joke" is a common way of acknowledging the seriousness of a situation while still maintaining a sense of humor and optimism.

13. #NaTheMatterWeDeySettle (That's what we're dealing with)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of responsibility and accountability, as it is often used to acknowledge and address a particular problem or issue. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of community and collective responsibility, as the phrase "Na the matter we dey settle" is a common way of acknowledging that everyone has a role to play in solving societal problems.

14. #EGoBetter (It will get better)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of optimism and hope, as it is often used to encourage people to keep pushing through difficult times and to have faith that things will improve. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of resilience and perseverance, as the phrase "E go better" is a common way of expressing the belief that even in the face of adversity, one can still have hope for a better future.

15. #MakeWeJolificate (Let's celebrate)

The use of the may suggest a sense of joy and festivity, as it is often used to encourage people to come together and celebrate a particular occasion or achievement. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of communal celebration and togetherness, as the phrase "Make we jolificate" is a common way of inviting people to join in the festivities and share in the joy.

16. #NaOnlyGodSabiam (Only God knows)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of uncertainty and mystery, as it is often used to express that the answer to a particular question or situation is unknown or beyond human comprehension. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of faith and trust in a higher power, as the phrase "Na only God sabi am" is a common way of acknowledging that there are some things that are beyond human understanding and control.

17. #OyaComeMakeWeGo (Let's go)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of urgency and excitement, as it is often used to invite someone to come along and join in on a particular activity or event. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of communal participation and socialization, as the phrase "Oya come make we go" is a common way of encouraging people to come together and engage in shared experiences.

18. #WetinYouWantMakeWeDo (What do you want us to do)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of openness and willingness to listen, as it is often used to ask someone what they would like to happen or what they need. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of hospitality and concern for others, as the phrase “Wetin' you want to make we do” is a common way of expressing the desire to meet someone’s needs or fulfill their desires.

19. #HustleMustPay (Hard work must pay off)

The use of the hashtag may suggest a sense of determination and perseverance, as it is often used to encourage people to continue working hard towards their goals. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of hard work and determination, as the phrase “Hustle must pay” is a common way of expressing the belief that if you work hard enough, you will eventually be rewarded for your efforts.

20. #ChopKnuckles (Fist bump)

The use of this hashtag may suggest a sense of camaraderie, as it is often used to greet someone with a fist bump or express solidarity. It reflects the Nigerian cultural value of social connection and interaction, as the phrase “Chop knuckles” is a common way of expressing closeness and connection between individuals.

21. #JollofRiceWars (Food rivalry debate)

This hashtag is often used in discussions about friendly competition among different West African countries (Nigerians, Ghanaians, Senegalese, etc.) over who makes the best jollof rice dish. It reflects the continued interest in this debate and the ongoing efforts by different countries to claim the title of “best of jollof rice.” The use of Pidgin in this context reflects the role of food in African culture and its ability to bring people together and create a sense of community and identity. In other words, it reflects the role of the language in Nigerian cultural identity and its ability to convey humor and satire in discussions about regional cuisine.

22. #NoWahala (No problem)

The use of the hashtag suggests a shared linguistic and cultural identity among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to express a sense. The use of this hashtag suggests a cultural norm in Nigerian society of not making a big deal out of small problems or issues.

23. #UnaSabidey (You know what’s up)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of camaraderie and shared knowledge among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to acknowledge a mutual understanding of a particular situation or issue. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of acknowledging shared knowledge or understanding in Nigerian society. It implies that the person

using the hashtag is speaking to a group of people who are all aware of a particular situation or event.

24. #CorrectGuy (The right person)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of pride and self-assuredness among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to describe themselves or others as the right person for a particular task or situation. The use of the word “correct” in this context reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian youth culture and its ability to convey nuanced social meanings.

25. #NaWeWeyDeyHere (We are the ones here)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of belonging and shared identity among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to assert their presence and participation in a particular space or community. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of claiming ownership or responsibility in Nigerian society. It implies that the person using the hashtag is part of a particular group or community.

26. #NoBeLie (It’s true)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of honesty and authenticity among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to confirm the truth of a particular statement or claim. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of emphasising the truth or honesty of what is being said in Nigerian society. It implies that the person using the hashtag is telling the truth.

27. #Ehen (Okay)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of agreement and understanding among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to acknowledge and affirm a particular statement or claim. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of affirming or acknowledging what someone else has said in Nigerian society. It implies agreement or understanding.

28. #WetinYouDeyFind (What are you looking for?)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of curiosity and inquiry among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to ask others what they are searching for or seeking in a particular situation. It can also be used in a teasing or playful manner to ask someone why they are doing something. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of asking straightforward questions in Nigerian society. It implies that the person using the hashtag wants to know what someone is looking for or what they are trying to achieve.

#Kampe (In order/Alright)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of agreement and compliance among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to signify that they are willing to go along with a particular plan or decision. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural value placed on order and discipline in Nigerian society. It implies that things are under control or in order.

29. #AreaFada (Neighborhood leader)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of respect and admiration among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to describe someone influential and respected in their local community. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural practice of recognising and respecting community leaders in Nigerian society.

30. #SoroSoke (Speak louder)

The use of the hashtag suggests a sense of activism and political engagement among speakers of Nigerian Pidgin English, who use this phrase to call for increased social and political awareness and action. It was popularised during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria in 2020, as a call for people to speak up against police brutality and injustice. This pidginised hashtag reflects the cultural value placed on speaking out against injustice in Nigerian society. It implies that people should speak up and speak out about issues that affect them and their communities.

31. #NoShishi4Bribe (no money for bribery)

This hashtag is used to promote the idea that people should not give bribes to officials to get what they want. The use of the word “shishi” in this hashtag is significant because it is a common word in Nigerian Pidgin and highlights the language’s role as a marker of Nigerian identity. It reflects the linguistic diversity of Nigeria and the importance of local languages in everyday communication.

32. #MagaNoNeedPay (a victim of fraud)

This hashtag is used to promote the idea that people should not engage in fraud or scams. The hashtags suggest that there is a collective understanding that “magas” should not have to pay for their losses. The use of the word “maga” in this hashtag reflects the role of Pidgin in the Nigerian street language and its use as a means of expressing resistance and subversion. The hashtag helps to foster a sense of national pride and unity among Nigerians who use Nigerian Pidgin English as a common language.

a#NaijaNoDeyCarryLast (will not come last)

This hashtag is used to express a sense of pride in Nigerian achievements and accomplishments. The phrase “Naija No Dey Carry Last” means “Nigeria doesn’t come last.” It reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian national identity and its use as a means of conveying patriotic sentiments.

33. #ShineYourEye (be alert)

This hashtag is used to encourage people to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings. It reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian everyday discourse and its use as a means of conveying practical advice and common sense.

34. #HustleNoDeySleep (hustle continues)

This hashtag is used to promote the idea of hard work and perseverance. The phrase “Hustle No Dey Sleep” means “The hustle never stops.” It reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian popular culture and its ability to convey motivational messages.

35. #EaziPezi(easy task)

The hashtag is used to describe something that is easy or easy to accomplish. It is a colloquial way of saying that a task or activity is not difficult to complete. The use of the hashtag highlights the importance of Pidgin in Nigerian everyday discourse and its ability to convey a relaxed and informal tone. It reflects the influence of Pidgin on Nigerian popular culture and its use as a means of expressing a laid-back and casual attitude. It can help to create a sense of cultural identity and pride that Nigerians have in their language and culture.

36. #DemNoReach(not my equal)

This hashtag is used to express a sense of superiority or self-assurance. The phrase “#Dem No Reach” means “They can’t compete” and reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian competitive discourse and its ability to convey social status and power.

37. #Choplif(enjoy life)

This is often used to encourage people to enjoy life and have fun. The phrase “Chop Life” means “Live life to the fullest” and reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian popular culture and its use as a means of conveying a carefree and optimistic attitude.

38. #OmoBetter(successful person)

The hashtag is used to refer to someone who is successful or doing well. The use of the word “omo” (meaning child) in this context reflects the role of Pidgin in Nigerian youth culture and its ability to convey a sense of youthfulness and energy. The analysis above has served

multiple purposes. It has helped Nigerians express themselves more authentically in their native language, reflecting their cultural identity and pride.

The use of Pidgin English in hashtags reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of Nigeria and highlights the role of social media in shaping language use and identity in the digital age. Several linguistic factors contribute to the emergence and evolution of Pidgin English on social media, these include:

1. **Code-mixing and code-switching:** Speakers of Pidgin English often mix different languages and dialects to create new words, phrases, and expressions. This code-mixing and code-switching can result in the creation of new forms of Pidgin English.
2. **Lexical borrowing:** Speakers of Pidgin English often borrow words and phrases from other languages and dialects to fill gaps in their own language. This can lead to the creation of new vocabulary in Pidgin English.
3. **Simplification of grammar and syntax:** Pidgin English often simplifies the grammar and syntax of the original languages and dialects that it is based on. This simplification can make the language easier to use and understand, and can also result in the creation of new grammatical and syntactical forms.
4. **Creativity:** Speakers of Pidgin English are often highly creative, and use language in novel and innovative ways. This creativity can lead to the creation of new words, phrases, and expressions that are unique to Pidgin English.
5. **Internet and social media:** The rise of the internet and social media has provided new platforms for the use and development of Pidgin English. The use of hashtags on social media, for example, has allowed speakers of Pidgin English to create and share new forms of language that can spread rapidly and evolve quickly.

The use of hashtags in socio platforms has had a significant impact on the way people communicate and express themselves. One impact is the creation of a unique digital culture and identity, which is often associated with the use of specific hashtags. This digital culture and identity allow individuals to express their opinions, feelings, and beliefs in a way that is often not possible in other settings.

Its use has also contributed to the spread of linguistic diversity and creativity. The hashtags often incorporate elements of Pidgin English, which is a form of English that incorporates local or regional languages and dialects. This has resulted in the emergence of a hybrid form of English that is unique to the digital environment. Furthermore, hashtags have enabled individuals to communicate complex ideas and emotions in a concise and easily understandable format.

However, the use of hashtags in socio platforms has also raised concerns about the potential for misinterpretation and miscommunication. The brevity and informality of these forms of communication can lead to misunderstandings and ambiguity, particularly when used in professional or formal contexts. Therefore, it is essential to be mindful of the context in which these forms of communication are used and to be aware of the potential for misinterpretation.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the linguistic, cultural, and social factors underlying the emergence and evolution of pidginised English in social media, specifically focusing on Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. The analysis of the hashtags revealed several patterns and implications related to the research objectives.

In relation to the first objective, the findings of this study reveal the meanings associated with various hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media. Through analysis, it was observed that hashtags incorporating Pidgin English phrases such as “No wahala,” “Eazi pezi,” and “Chop life” convey specific meanings and serve as shorthand expressions to communicate certain ideas or emotions. These hashtags act as linguistic markers that allow users to express gratitude, make requests, encourage enjoyment, and address various social situations. The meanings attributed to these hashtags reflect the cultural and linguistic context in which Nigerian Pidgin English is used on social media platforms.

As regards the second objective, the sociolinguistic and cultural implications of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media are evident. The use of Pidgin English hashtags allows social media users to express their affiliation with the Nigerian linguistic community and reinforce their cultural identity. These hashtags serve as markers of social identity, solidarity, and humor, reflecting the cultural background and linguistic diversity of the users. These sociolinguistic implications align with previous studies that have highlighted the role of Pidgin English as a means of expressing social identity and reinforcing cultural norms in online contexts.

In relation to the third objective, the findings indicate several linguistic factors that facilitate the use of hashtags in Nigerian Pidgin English on social media. The analysis reveals the frequent occurrence of linguistic features such as code-switching, lexical borrowing, and simplification of grammar and syntax in Pidgin English hashtags. These linguistic devices contribute to the distinctiveness and creative expression of Pidgin English on social media platforms. Previous studies, including Agbo and Plag (2020), have also identified similar linguistic features in the use of Nigerian Pidgin on social media, highlighting their role in shaping the language and enabling communication in online environments.

Concerning the fourth objective, the impact of hashtags on communication and self-expression on social media is evident. Hashtags serve as powerful tools for organizing content, expressing ideas succinctly, and facilitating online interactions. In the context of Nigerian Pidgin

English, hashtags enable users to communicate and express themselves in a culturally relevant and linguistically specific manner. They create a sense of community, encourage participation, and foster engagement among users who share a common linguistic and cultural background.

Comparing these findings to previous studies, we can observe several similarities and support for the existing literature. Studies by Burgess and Baym (2020), Danesi (2016), Tagg and Seargeant (2014), Yang (2016), and Zappavigna (2012) have all highlighted the importance of Pidgin English and hashtags in expressing social identity, reinforcing cultural norms, and fostering linguistic innovation on social media platforms. The present study aligns with these findings and further extends the understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and social factors involved in the emergence and evolution of pidginised English in the Nigerian social media context.

The Variationist sociolinguistics approach has shown how the use of Pidgin English in hashtags varies across different social groups and contexts. For instance, the use of Pidgin English hashtags may be more common among younger social media users who are more likely to be exposed to this language in their daily lives. Additionally, the use of Pidgin English in hashtags may vary depending on the topic or theme of the post, with some hashtags being more associated with certain topics or communities than others. From the hashtags analysed, they are used to meet the immediate social needs of the users, which includes criticisms, solidarity, etc

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of literature by providing insights into the use of Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, and their implications for sociolinguistics and cultural expression on social media. It underscores the significance of linguistic and cultural diversity in online spaces and emphasises the role of social media platforms as agents of linguistic innovation and cultural reinforcement.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the use of Pidgin English in social media, with a specific focus on Nigerian Pidgin hashtags. Through a sociolinguistic analysis of the data and surveys the study reveals that the use of Nigerian Pidgin in social media is a reflection of linguistic diversity and cultural identity, as well as a means of social commentary and political critique.

The analysis of the data highlighted the importance of analysing linguistic features and cultural references in Pidgin English on social media, as well as the potential impact of social media on language use and culture. The findings of this study support previous research on the use of Pidgin English in social media and contribute to the understanding of language use in digital spaces. The use of Nigerian Pidgin English has gained popularity not only as a spoken language but also as an adapted form of communication in various online platforms, including the use of hashtags.

It is important to note that Nigerian Pidgin hashtags, like any other form of online communication, can evolve and change overtime. New phrases and slangs emerge, and different hashtags gain popularity based on current events, or trends. These hashtags contribute to the dynamic nature of Nigerian Pidgin and reflect the ever-evolving linguistic landscape of social media.

Overall, this study highlights the important role that social media has played in the use of Nigerian Pidgin. The Nigerian Pidgin hashtags serve as a unique expression of Nigerian culture, fostering a sense of belonging, humour, and shared experiences among Nigerians both within and in the diaspora. They add vibrancy and authenticity to online conversations while reflecting the linguistic richness and diversity of Nigeria. Its use on social media platforms has also helped to promote and reinforce its status as a language as affirmed by Goswami (2018). Additionally, Nigerian Pidgin has been used to create a sense of community, express cultural identity, and resist linguistic domination. Future research could continue to explore the linguistic features of Nigerian Pidgin on social media and its role in promoting and popularising Pidgin English.

About the Author

Mosunmola Oluyinka Adebayo is a lecturer at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Her qualifications include a BA (Linguistics) from the University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria; a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE); an MA (English Language); and a PhD (English Language), all from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Her teaching interests include Phonetics and Phonology, Syntax, Sociolinguistics, and Pragmatics. She has published in several academic journals in Nigeria and international learned journals. Emails: bayinkmola@gmail.com, and mosunmola.adebayo@uat.edu.ng

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