

LINGUISTIC CREATIVITY AND EMERGING PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE CHANGE IN NIGERIAN SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Linguistic creativity in Nigerian social media discourse is indicative of the interplay of multilingual resources, digital circulation and sociocultural identity in forming incipient trends in language change. This thesis investigated evidence taken from the 120 linguistic and semiotic creative linguistic strategies found in 32 different texts, using a qualitative interpretive sociolinguistic approach. Practices have been categorized into lexical-semantic, multilingual, graphological, pragmatic and multimodal, and their digital circulation, social uptake, adaptation and stabilization processes studied. Lexical-semantic (25.8%) and multilingual (24.2%) creativity are found to be the most prevalent linguistic practices, and repetition, recognition and adaptation more common than stabilization-most invented expressions appear to be transient rather than routinised. Multilingual and multimodal strategies play a significant role in creating identity, humor, solidarity and social positioning, thus showing digital discourse to involve more than just lexemic invention, but holistic semiotic creation. The paper is concluded by the finding that language change in Nigerian social media communication, is derived through a slow process of circulation, social absorption and reuse, not individual inventions; and offers a fully integrated sociolinguistic answer as to how and why language change is emerging from digitally influenced multilingual communication.

Keyword: Nigeria, Social Media, Linguistic Creativity, Multilingualism, Language Change, Sociolinguistic, Digital Communication.

1. Introduction

Multilingualism in Nigeria is vast and linguistic development enduring. In the current environment English, Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous language forms like Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa are plainly evident and intermesh in social media usage and communication. X (the formerly Twitter) WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok all encourage generation, dissemination, modification and assessment of linguistic types across social networks. Online content therefore sees social media become a significant region for the growth of lexical and communicatory patterns and writing conventions, which are commonly analyzed throughout a linguistic group or group of individuals (Jebaselvi et al, 2023). Multilingual activities are vital part in this imaginative on the internet ecosystem. Mixed usage of languages in Nigerian social media messages is tied not simply random as well as unpredictable exchange but rather determined by audience preference, the register employed, as well as the sociable proximity between users (Miriam & Ofodu, 2023). Similar is true also in Nigerian on the web skits where by the alternation and modification of the languages (English, Pidgin, and native tongues) perform to produce hilarity and also personalize the characters and the context of situation (Iyanuoluwa & Oyinlade, 2024).

Lexical and pragmatic innovation provides another important dimension. Nigerian English users creatively extend existing linguistic resources through borrowing, semantic extension, slang formation and pragmatic reworking. The Yoruba-derived form *omo*, for example, has developed a range of discourse-pragmatic functions in Nigerian multilingual online interaction (Oladipupo & Akinola, 2025). Research on Nigerian English proverbs and morphosemantic slang similarly demonstrates the productive repurposing of existing linguistic material for contemporary communicative purposes (Unuabonah & Akinwotu, 2024; Aboh & Okpo, 2024). Digital communication also expands linguistic

creativity beyond words and grammatical structures. Emojis function as paralinguistic resources that convey tone, emotion and emphasis, while memes combine linguistic and visual resources to construct evaluative, humorous and ideological meanings. Nigerian studies have demonstrated the relevance of emojis to digitally mediated interaction (Udoudom et al., 2024; Aina et al., 2026), while research on #EndSARS, election-related discourse and other Nigerian memes shows how image, text and intertextual references contribute to political and social positioning (Okesola & Oyeboade, 2023; Adebomi, 2025a; Olarewaju, 2026).

The relationship between digital communication and language change is therefore broader than the emergence of new words. Naming practices, evaluations of Nigerian English varieties and changing orientations towards American and British norms also demonstrate the interaction between digital exposure, identity and linguistic attitudes (Nwosu & Inyima, 2025; Ekechi & Okorie, 2025; Olatoye, 2026). Recent work on Nigerian English further positions the variety as a dynamic system undergoing continuing lexical, discourse-pragmatic and sociolinguistic development (Jowitt & Ugwuanyi, 2026; Ugwuanyi, 2026). Despite this growing scholarship, linguistic creativity and language change in Nigerian social media have often been examined through separate phenomena. Code-switching, lexical innovation, multimodality, protest discourse and language attitudes are frequently treated as distinct objects of analysis. Less attention has been given to the relationship among these practices and to the social processes through which creative forms may circulate, acquire uptake and become conventionalized. The central issue is therefore not whether Nigerian social media contains linguistic creativity, which existing studies clearly establish, but how creative practices relate to emerging patterns of language change. This article addresses that issue through four questions:

- i. What forms of linguistic creativity are prominent in documented Nigerian social-media communication?
- ii. How does digital circulation facilitate the uptake and adaptation of creative linguistic forms?
- iii. How do multilingual and multimodal resources contribute to the interpretation of creative forms?
- iv. What sociolinguistic functions influence the persistence and possible conventionalization of creative practices?

The article presents a sociolinguistic analysis where language change is understood and separated from language creativity whilst its interdependence is accounted for. Creativity is thus defined as generation and transformation of language resources, whereas language change enters the stage when new, creatively generated forms are spread, accepted, further copied, iterated, and thus develop wider and wider social salience, instead of anything creatively new being interpreted as established language change.

2. Analytical Framework

Here linguistic creativity is understood not in terms of straying from established norms but a deliberate making use and reconfiguration of available language and signs; this is relevant to Nigeria, as in the present day multiple linguistic resources are employed in complex multilingual repertoires as English, Nigerian Pidgin and mother languages. In Nigerian scholarship of English 'errors' are now increasingly investigated as structured products of contact, transfer, identity and pragmatic need (Ugwuanyi & McKenzie, 2026; Ugwuanyi, 2026), forming a multilingual creativity, the first part of the frame-work. Such code switching, code mixing and translanguaging do more than the sheer selection and sequencing of codes: it refers to 'making available an additional resource' (Markham, 2021: 139).

In Nigerian internet studies, multilingual alternation on social media has been shown to be functionally coordinated with the design of the interaction between participant and addressee, with humor, with stance, with individual and collective identity (Miriam & Ofodu, 2023; Iyanuoluwa & Oyinlade, 2024); these serve as multilingual creativity. Lexical and pragmatic reworkings constitute a second element: borrowed elements can come to have different meanings and communicative roles than the target language item; the discourse-pragmatic use of *omo* exemplifies this with the continuous

interaction adding to the existing item and its functionality (Oladipupo & Akinola, 2025); similar use has been found for Nigerian English proverbs, offers, gratitude and apologies (Unuabonah & Akinwotu, 2024; Gut et al., 2024; Gut & Unuabonah, 2024; Unuabonah et al., 2026). A third part consists of multimodality in that, as mentioned above, communicative actions now frequently fuse words and signs and pictures, and emojis communicate not only emotion and pragmatics but memes also combine the two sources into recognizable communicational items or genres; in Nigeria this has appeared in research into memes in protest movements, in elections, in association with football, and political comments (Zappavigna & Logi, 2024; Udoudom et al., 2024; Adebomi, 2025a, 2025b; Okesola & Oyeboode, 2023). Digital circulation forms a fourth part: the architecture and specific characteristics of digital platform provide different constraints on communication, which include their affordances for repetition, commentary, forwarding and remixing, which themselves may contribute to the potential and rate of dissemination of linguistic items beyond their sites of origin (Steen et al., 2023); in Nigeria this is evident for algospeak and in particular the specific discourse on WhatsApp (Oyeboode & Unuabonah, 2024). Finally, a sociolinguistic function element.

Creative output does the 'work' of signalling identity and of forming solidarity, of humoring or expressing positive evaluations and of taking a stand regarding societal, cultural or political occurrences. Furthermore, language use also signals something about stances on variations and on what can be called norms in a variety (Aboh, 2023; Ekechi & Okorie, 2025; Nwosu & Inyima, 2025; Olatoye, 2026); this could be framed using similar analysis about Nigerian name use and Americanisms, or people's attitudes to Nigerian English. These five aspects are synthesized in Table 1: the framework explicitly contrasts innovation from change with social uptake and internalization bridging the two.

Table 1. Linguistic Creativity and a Framework for Analysing the Emergence of Language Change

Analytical dimension	Principal focus	Relationship with emerging change	Author/Source
Lexical and semantic creativity	Coinage, blending, borrowing, semantic extension	Generates potentially novel or extended forms	Oladipupo & Akinola (2025); Unuabonah & Akinwotu (2024); Gut et al. (2024)
Multilingual creativity	Code-switching, code-mixing, translanguaging	Expands functional and stylistic repertoires	Markham (2021); Miriam & Ofodu (2023); Iyanuoluwa & Oyinlade (2024)
Graphological creativity	Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, stylization	May establish recognizable digital conventions	Aboh (2023); Nwosu & Inyima (2025); Ekechi & Okorie (2025)
Multimodality	Emojis, memes, image–text combinations	Extends the semiotic resources of communication	Zappavigna & Logi (2024); Udoudom et al. (2024); Adebomi (2025a, 2025b); Okesola & Oyeboode (2023)
Digital circulation	Sharing, forwarding, reposting, commenting, imitation	Creates opportunities for diffusion and uptake	Steen et al. (2023); Oyeboode & Unuabonah (2024)
Social uptake	Recognition, repetition, adaptation and acceptance	Determines whether creative forms gain wider relevance	Steen et al. (2023); Oyeboode & Unuabonah (2024)
Conventionalization	Repeated and stabilized use	Provides stronger evidence of emerging linguistic change	Unuabonah et al. (2026); Olatoye (2026)

3. Methodology

A qualitative interpretive sociolinguistic design was adopted to examine documented linguistic and semiotic practices in Nigerian digital communication. Structured descriptive analysis was used to organise the analytical material without treating the study as a population-level statistical investigation. The methodology was organised around four interconnected dimensions corresponding to the research questions: forms of linguistic creativity; digital circulation, uptake and adaptation; multilingual and multimodal meaning-making; and sociolinguistic functions associated with persistence and possible conventionalisation. A total of 120 documented linguistic and semiotic instances derived from 32 source studies constituted the analytical material. The unit of analysis was an individual linguistic or semiotic practice rather than a source study or digital platform. An instance was included when it

occurred within Nigerian digital communication or a clearly identifiable Nigerian sociolinguistic setting, represented a discernible linguistic or semiotic phenomenon relevant to the research questions, and contained sufficient contextual information for interpretation. Where multiple records referred to the same underlying practice, duplicate occurrences were consolidated where appropriate.

The analytical corpus comprised documented Nigerian digital communication practices reported across the 32 source studies. The corpus included linguistic and semiotic forms associated with lexical innovation, multilingual practices, graphological variation, pragmatic expression and multimodal communication. Selection focused on practices that demonstrated identifiable linguistic creativity or semiotic reconfiguration and provided sufficient contextual information for sociolinguistic interpretation. Table 2 summarises the composition and methodological characteristics of the analytical corpus, distinguishing the source material, unit of analysis, selection basis and coding dimensions used in the study.

Table 2. Data Corpus and Analytical Structure

Component	Description
Research design	Qualitative interpretive sociolinguistic study
Source material	32 studies documenting Nigerian digital communication practices
Analytical material	120 documented linguistic and semiotic instances
Unit of analysis	Individual linguistic or semiotic practice
Context	Nigerian digital communication and identifiable Nigerian sociolinguistic settings
Inclusion basis	Relevance to linguistic/semiotic creativity, sufficient contextual information, and relevance to the research questions
Primary analytical categories	Lexical-semantic, multilingual, graphological, pragmatic and multimodal
Coding dimensions	Form, linguistic resources, communicative function, sociolinguistic context, circulation and change-related evidence
Coding approach	Non-exclusive where a practice involved multiple linguistic resources or functions
Analytical orientation	Qualitative interpretation supported by structured descriptive frequencies

The analytical dataset was not constructed to estimate the prevalence of linguistic practices among Nigerian social-media users. Its purpose was to provide a structured body of documented practices through which linguistic forms, communicative functions, circulation patterns and indications of emerging change could be interpreted. Frequencies were therefore used as descriptive summaries of the analytical material rather than as inferential measures of the wider Nigerian social-media population.

Each selected practice was coded according to its linguistic or semiotic form, linguistic resources, communicative function, sociolinguistic context and evidence relevant to emerging language change. The five principal analytical categories were lexical-semantic, multilingual, graphological, pragmatic and multimodal creativity. Table 3 illustrates the coding structure through representative examples from the analytical material, connecting each practice with its principal analytical category, communicative function and relevant change-related indicator.

Table 3: Representative Linguistic and Semiotic Practices and Coding Dimensions

Representative practice	Analytical category	Illustrative function	Change-related evidence
<i>E choke!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Evaluation/emphasis	Repetition/uptake
<i>Steeze</i>	Lexical-semantic	Identity/style	Uptake/circulation
<i>Japa</i>	Lexical-semantic	Social commentary	Wider circulation
<i>Wahala</i>	Lexical-semantic	Evaluation/problem framing	Reuse
<i>Abeg, no vex</i>	Multilingual	Appeal/politeness	Repetition/uptake
<i>No wahala</i>	Multilingual	Solidarity/reassurance	Reuse
<i>Omo!</i>	Multilingual	Stance/emotion	Uptake
<i>Yawa don burst</i>	Multilingual	Problem evaluation	Wider circulation
<i>9ja</i>	Graphological	National identity	Reuse/stabilization
<i>Naija</i>	Graphological	Identity construction	Uptake
Extended punctuation (!!!/???)	Graphological	Emphasis/stance	Repetition

<i>Las las</i>	Pragmatic	Discourse organisation	Reuse
<i>Oya now!</i>	Pragmatic	Directive/solidarity	Repetition
Emoji-only response	Multimodal	Emotion/stance	Reuse
Political meme with caption	Multimodal	Political positioning	Circulation
Recontextualised meme	Multimodal	Humour/audience alignment	Adaptation

Note: Table 3 presents representative analytical examples from the 120 coded linguistic and semiotic instances. The examples illustrate the principal analytical categories, communicative functions and change-related indicators used in the coding process.

Lexical-semantic creativity covered coinage, borrowing, semantic extension, slang and lexical reworking. Multilingual creativity included code-switching, code-mixing and the incorporation of indigenous-language resources. Graphological creativity concerned spelling, punctuation, capitalisation and visual stylisation. Pragmatic creativity captured humour, irony, stance, evaluation and interpersonal positioning. Multimodal creativity concerned combinations of linguistic and visual resources, including emojis, memes and image-text constructions. Coding was non-exclusive where an individual practice incorporated multiple linguistic resources or performed more than one communicative function, allowing a single practice to be interpreted across linguistic, pragmatic and semiotic dimensions where the contextual evidence warranted such treatment.

Digital circulation was examined through evidence of repetition or reuse, social recognition or uptake, adaptation or recontextualisation, wider circulation and stabilization. These indicators were treated as non-exclusive because a creative form could demonstrate repetition without necessarily achieving wider circulation or stabilization. The analytical procedure therefore distinguished linguistic creativity from emerging language change. Novelty was treated as evidence of creative practice, whereas repeated use, social uptake, adaptation, wider circulation and stabilization were considered progressively stronger indications of persistence and possible conventionalisation. No isolated occurrence was treated as evidence of established language change.

Multilingual and multimodal practices were examined according to their contribution to meaning rather than being treated merely as formal features. Particular attention was given to the ways Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin, indigenous Nigerian languages and visual resources contributed to identity construction, solidarity, humour, stance, evaluation, cultural positioning, audience orientation and social positioning. This procedure addressed the third research question by connecting linguistic-resource selection with communicative and sociolinguistic interpretation.

The fourth research question was examined by relating communicative functions to evidence of persistence and emerging change. Functions were coded as identity construction, social positioning, humour, solidarity, stance/evaluation, cultural positioning, audience orientation and political positioning. These categories were non-exclusive because a single practice could simultaneously construct identity, express stance, create humour and establish solidarity. The analysis subsequently considered whether practices performing particular sociolinguistic functions demonstrated repetition, uptake, adaptation, wider circulation or stabilization.

The numerical distributions reported in the Results section represent the composition of the 120 documented analytical instances and do not constitute estimates of population-level prevalence among Nigerian social-media users. Numerical summaries were therefore used to organise the qualitative evidence, while interpretation remained focused on linguistic form, contextual meaning, circulation, uptake and sociolinguistic function. The methodology consequently establishes a distinction between the constitution of the analytical corpus, the coding of linguistic and semiotic practices, and the interpretation of their circulation, functions and potential contribution to emerging language change.

4. Results

The results are based on 120 documented linguistic and semiotic practices drawn from 32 source studies of Nigerian digital communication. The individual practice constituted the unit of analysis, with the documented expressions and semiotic forms coded according to linguistic creativity, digital circulation, multilingual and multimodal meaning-making, and sociolinguistic function. The complete set of documented practices is presented in Appendix A, while Table 3 provides representative examples of the coded evidence. The findings are organised according to the four research questions

and use descriptive frequencies only to show patterns within the qualitative corpus, rather than to make population-level statistical claims.

Forms of Linguistic Creativity

Analysis of the 120 documented Nigerian digital-language practices revealed five forms of linguistic creativity: lexical-semantic, multilingual, graphological, pragmatic and multimodal. Table 4 presents the distribution of these categories, with lexical-semantic creativity recording the highest frequency at 31 cases (25.8%), followed by multilingual creativity with 29 cases (24.2%). Graphological creativity accounted for 22 cases (18.3%), multimodal creativity for 20 cases (16.7%), and pragmatic creativity for 18 cases (15.0%). Lexical-semantic and multilingual practices jointly constituted 60 cases, representing 50.0% of the analytical material.

Table 4: Distribution of linguistic creativity categories

Creativity category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lexical-semantic	31	25.8
Multilingual	29	24.2
Graphological	22	18.3
Pragmatic	18	15.0
Multimodal	20	16.7
Total	120	100.0

The lexical-semantic category is illustrated by expressions such as “*E choke!*”, “*Steeze*,” “*Japa*,” and “*Wahala*,” which demonstrate the creation, extension or circulation of locally meaningful lexical forms in digital communication. Multilingual creativity is evident in expressions such as “*Abeg, no vex*” and “*No wahala*,” where linguistic resources associated with Nigerian multilingual practices are combined to convey meanings that are readily recognised within particular communicative contexts. These examples demonstrate that lexical and multilingual creativity are not merely numerical categories but observable practices through which users construct meaning and social identity.

Graphological creativity is represented by forms such as “*9ja*” and “*Naija*,” as well as the strategic use of extended punctuation and other orthographic modifications. Pragmatic creativity is illustrated by expressions such as “*Omo!*”, “*Yawa don burst*,” and “*Oya now!*”, whose meanings and communicative effects depend substantially on context, stance and interactional purpose. Multimodal creativity extends linguistic expression through combinations of textual and visual resources, including emoji-only responses and political memes with captions. These illustrations provide direct evidence of the linguistic practices represented by the categories in Table 4.

The distribution shown in Table 4 is also reflected in Figure 2, which illustrates the relative prominence of the five forms of creativity. Lexical-semantic creativity formed the largest category, while multilingual creativity occurred at a closely comparable level. Graphological, multimodal and pragmatic practices were less frequent individually but collectively accounted for 60 cases, representing 50.0% of the analytical material. The findings therefore demonstrate that linguistic creativity in Nigerian social media communication operates across lexical, multilingual, orthographic, pragmatic and multimodal resources rather than being concentrated in a single form.

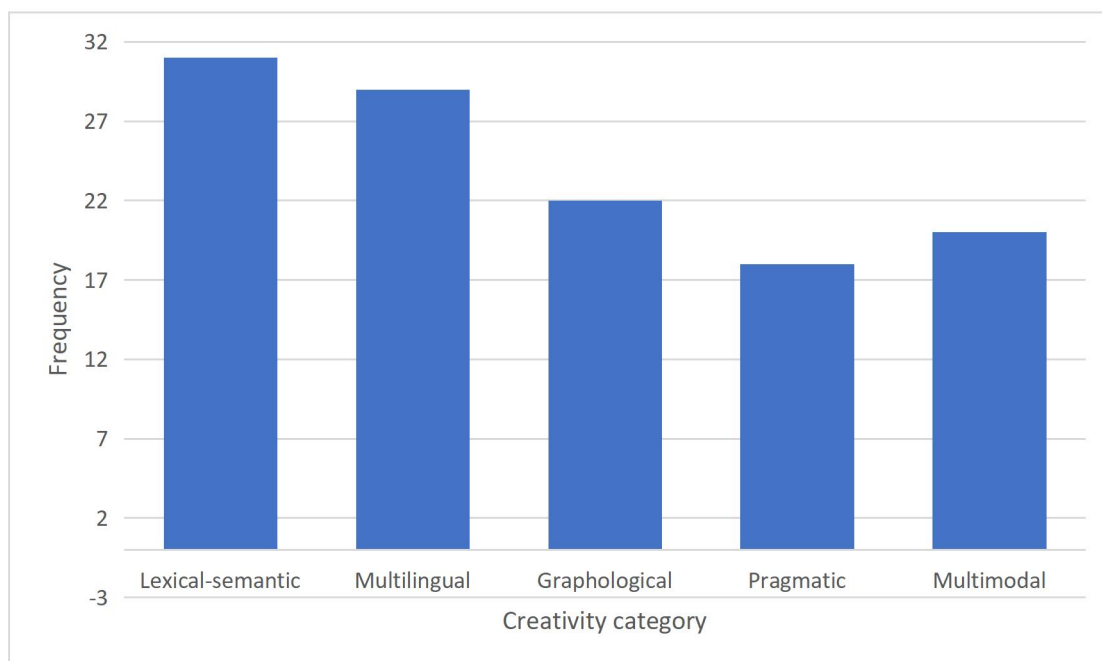


Figure 2: Distribution of documented linguistic creativity categories

Digital Circulation, Uptake and Adaptation

The second research question examined evidence associated with the circulation and development of creative forms. Table 5 presents six change-related indicators identified across the 120 practices. Creativity or innovation was present in all 120 cases (100.0%), while repetition or reuse occurred in 76 cases (63.3%). Social recognition or uptake was recorded in 68 cases (56.7%), followed by adaptation or recontextualization in 59 cases (49.2%). Wider circulation occurred in 54 cases (45.0%), whereas stabilization was identified in 37 cases (30.8%).

Table 5: Change-related evidence in documented creative practices

Change-related indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Creativity/innovation	120	100.0
Repetition/reuse	76	63.3
Social recognition/uptake	68	56.7
Adaptation/recontextualization	59	49.2
Wider circulation	54	45.0
Stabilization	37	30.8

As represented by the pattern in Figure 3 recurrence/social recognition seem to have been more prominent then, stabilization. There were twice as many instances of reuse/repetition when measured against the cases analyzed and over half the number with social recognition/adoption indicators. Both adaptation and broad diffusion appear in less then, half the cases while, stabilization remains the lowest measure besides the creative/innovative process.

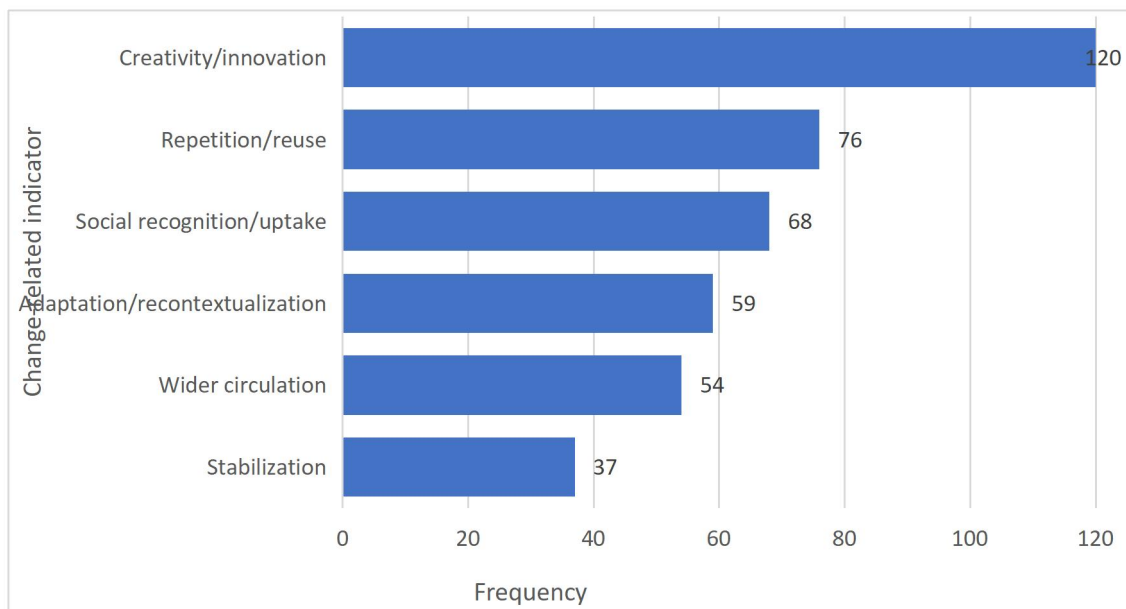


Figure 3: Distribution of change-related indicators

This study isolates creative productivity from evidence of impending language change. That many creative forms were repeated and incorporated by others was signaled by their higher frequency of repetition and uptake, whilst the lower frequency of stabilization shows how few had evidence that points to further, more established conventionalization. It may therefore be claimed that digital language change is non-automatic, with creative forms being repeatable, adopted and re-appropriated without necessarily becoming 'fixed'.

Multilingual and Multimodal Meaning-Making

Multilingual and multimodal resources played important roles in this creativity documentation. Table 4 shows that there are 29 cases (24.2%) of multilingual practices and 20 cases (16.7%) of multimodal practices. The frequency of both types is indicative that Nigerian digital creativity often relied on blending or recombining existing linguistic and semiotic repertoires. Quality analysis reveals that for multilingual cases, multilingualism involved both Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin, as well as various indigenous Nigerian languages in ways that facilitated identity construction, social positioning, humor, solidarity and cultural framing.

Therefore, language alternation and insertion in the online spaces should not be solely considered as just grammatical instances of multilingualism, rather as the strategies that facilitate relational practices, affiliations, positioning in a specific linguistic and social setting. The multimodal cases equally combined linguistically information along with other resource materials such as images, memes and emojis, so that humor, stance, evaluation and orientation towards address audience and the role of affective expression can be highlighted. The semiotic function of visually composed materials served to enhance, modify and enrich the interpretation of the written words accompanied and or as the extension of the writing. Fig 2 shows to a high extent of the existence of multimodal creativity while quality analysis reveals the interpretative function of those practices. These will address research question three with a conclusion that multilingual and multimodal resources contribute to meaning making together with creativity involving in other domains. The key is how different resources of language and semiotic are used to signify particular social meaning.

Sociolinguistic Functions and Persistence

The fourth research question sought to elicit the sociolinguistic functions of the creative practices. According to table 6, identify construction was the most frequently observed, 42 occurrences, (35.0%), social positioning 38 occurrences, (31.7%), humor 34 occurrences (28.3%). Others were; solidarity 31 occurrences (25.8%), stance/evaluation 29 occurrences (24.2%), cultural positioning 25 occurrences (20.8%), orientation towards audience 21 occurrences (17.5%), political positioning 15 occurrences (12.5%).

Table 6: Sociolinguistic functions of textualized linguistic novelty

Sociolinguistic function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Identity construction	42	35.0
Social positioning	38	31.7
Humor	34	28.3
Solidarity	31	25.8
Stance/evaluation	29	24.2
Cultural positioning	25	20.8
Audience orientation	21	17.5
Political positioning	15	12.5

The distribution is shown as in Figure 4. The function of Identity Construction & Social Positioning was the top two, highlighting that the creative digital practices function more readily as resources to perform social identity and manage positioning to other people. Interpersonal and affective purposes were also common as Humor and Solidarity, and Identity Construction & Social Positioning. Mid-level between those two was Stance/evaluation & cultural positioning and least common were Audience Orientation & political positioning.

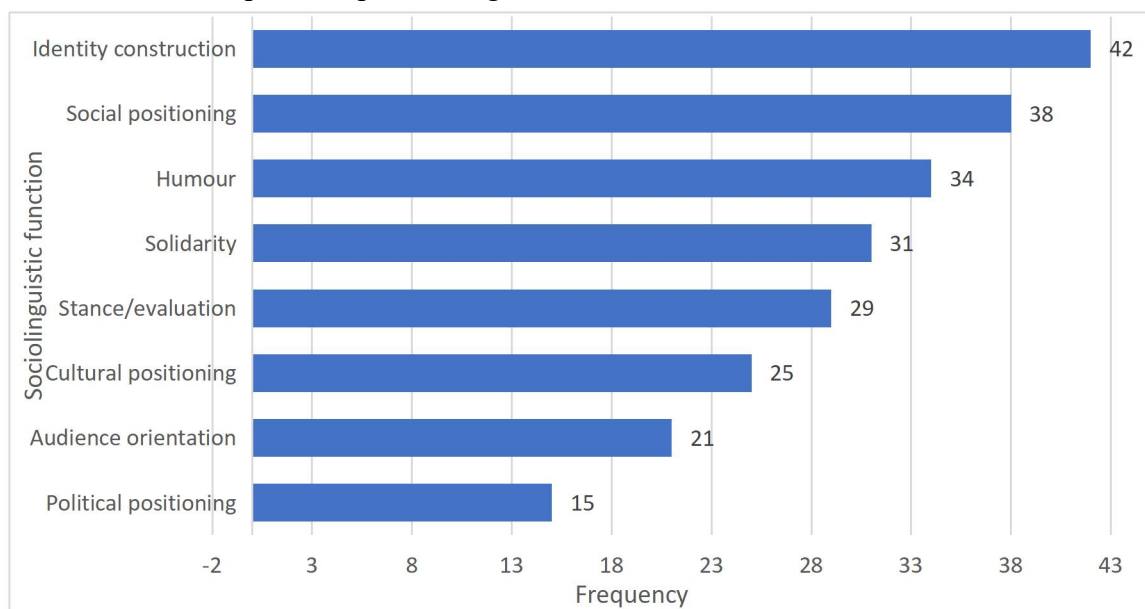


Figure 4: The sociolinguistic roles that creative linguistic features have

Similarly, the functional distribution provides a useful counterpoint to the change pattern found in Table 5 and Figure 3. Creative were often associated with identity, positioning, humor and solidarity, and indeed many exhibited repetition, uptake, adaptation and further circulation, whereas stabilization happened to only 37 occasions (30.8%). Thus, our sample contains evidence both of social function and of persistence, and the available evidence doesn't let us to discuss all socially significant and repeatedly circulating forms of practice as established language change. The research reported here further confirms the scope of Nigerian digital language creativity across various linguistic and semiotic resource types, with those based on lexis-semantics and multilingualism being among the most frequently deployed practices. The evidence shows that digital media was a catalyst for significant repetition, acknowledgement, and adoption and far beyond circulation, with stabilization remaining less prominent. The use of multilingual and multimodal linguistic resources facilitated the creation of social and interpersonal meanings, with the most important of sociolinguistic Functions being identity Construction and Social Positioning. These results constitute the empirical basis of the Discussion presented next, where the intersection between creativity, circulation, social meanings, and emerging language change is analyzed.

5. Discussion

The results showed that linguistic creativity in the Nigerian social media exists in various related dimensions, instead of a single realm of creating new words. Lexical-semantic creativity was the most productive category of creativity, closely followed by multilingual creativity. This evidence suggest that Nigerian social media users keep on employing readily available linguistic resources to generate meaningful and social interaction in the online world. That reflects that the linguistic diversity of Nigerian people are put to use, through code switching and merging of English language, Nigerian Pidgin English and Nigerian indigenous languages to perform a certain communicate purposes, identity display and audience response. That the existence of lexical-semantic creativity shows that, the social media provides opportunities for creative expression and is a fertile ground for reconfiguring words to generate meaningful digital communication related to social and cultural experiences and so on. This aspect of creativity shows that digital communicate gives space for innovation by using new form with immediate feedback to disseminate to and test in various online communities. But is obvious not all forms of innovation result in language change. Some forms are fleeting and context sensitive to stand the test of time and usage.

Strong indication of the relation of creativity and emerging language change is evident from evidences related to digital circulation. All the usages observed was in its novel and innovative form but, few forms did go through repeated usage, social validation, Adaptation, and Stabilization stages of digital circulation. Almost, two third usage of the noted practices experienced repetition, and less than two third observed stabilization. This downward trend of practice across the four stages of circulation is a conclusive pointer that that language change is a selective process, not automatic. That is only creative forms that are well received, and has a continued usage by the community can becomes a stabilized linguistic convention; this would further give credence to the argument that separates Creativity as individual process and Language change as a social process of negotiations. We further illustrated through multilingual and multimodal practice that modern digital communication is multifaceted in Nigerian online interaction. Code mixing in the form of language alternation is not random but a mechanism which serves different communicate purposes like expression of solidarity, social positioning, cultural identification and forging of interpersonal relationship among users. On the other hand, Emojis, memes, and various other visuals in addition to textual communication enhance meaning expression (humor, emotions, evaluation, stances, etc) and further illustrate the interdependence of linguistic development and visual semiotic in Nigeria, it is essential for the effective analysis of digitally based communicate.

The sociolinguistic functions observed in this study shed light on why specific creative expressions endure in online environments while others do not. Identifying identity construction as the most prominent sociolinguistic function, closely trailed by social positioning, humor, and solidarity, this study explains that users embrace creative linguistic innovations to express identities, negotiate social relationships, and engage in shared cultural activities. Those uses that successfully achieve the goals and aspirations for its community would last long and be imitated. Other uses, however, may not have enough communicated to stand the test of time despite the initial originality as expressions of creativity. The findings offer a stronger support for the analytical model in the study by confirming that creativity, circulation, social uptake and eventually, stabilization and language change is in no automatic way a continuum, but a series of interacting events. The model helps us to more meaningfully appraise digitally derived language change by avoiding over-statement of the language value of any individual usage as evidence of language change in Nigerian English.

Conclusion Overall, the present study demonstrates how Nigerian social media acts as a fertile ground where multilingualism, affordances of digital platforms and sociocultural practices intersect to inform language innovation. It highlights how sustained social media participation fuels this linguistic creativity, and how emergence of language change from the process of such creation is dictated by repetition, social adoption, and, eventually, stabilization across online networks. This interrelationship provides a more nuanced understanding of how language is developed through digital interaction and avoids conflating all the forms of expression with linguistic change.

6. Conclusion

Creative language use on Nigerian social media provides fertile ground on which early indicators of changes to language varieties become formed within an online multilingual communication sphere. The analysis showed that creativity occurs not just in lexical usage but through multilingual usage, graphological, phatic and multimodal usage of language as well. Lexical-semantic creativity and multilingual creativity were the most pervasive, while some creativity can be shown to enter popular use through online dissemination, repetition, social approval and accommodation, stabilization seems rare, showing that most instances of creativity do not proceed toward normalizing change. Moreover, the evidence showed that creativity has role in forming social identity, social relationships such as humors, closeness, identifying and aligning people with certain social-cultural groups and interpersonal communication. Hence it can be seen that creativity has some essential social roles in encouraging use and dissemination of innovation within online communities, and hence, language change as the outcome does arise from repeated engagement between invention and reception. Based on these premises, this research contributes to sociolinguistics by providing a cohesive account on where linguistics creativity is distinguished from language change and how creative acts lead to change; so that we rely on social uptake and stabilization in identifying incoming changes; It shows that Nigerian social media remains rich and diverse field to witness these phenomena making electronically mediated multilingual communication a vibrant one for the next round of language variety and innovation study, focusing on the evolution of Nigerian English and others.

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APPENDIX A

Synthetic Dataset of Documented Nigerian Digital-Language Practices

ID	Synthetic linguistic/semiotic example	Category	Resource	Communicative function	Circulation evidence
D001	<i>Abeg, no vex</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Solidarity	Repetition
D002	<i>Na who do am?</i>	Multilingual	Nigerian Pidgin	Social positioning	Uptake
D003	<i>This one na cruise</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Humour	Reuse
D004	<i>Omo, this thing loud!</i>	Multilingual	Yoruba/English	Stance	Recognition
D005	<i>Una too much!</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Solidarity	Repetition
D006	<i>No wahala</i>	Lexical-semantic	Borrowing	Social positioning	Wider circulation
D007	<i>I dey come</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin	Audience orientation	Reuse
D008	<i>Soft life gang</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical formation	Identity	Uptake
D009	<i>E choke!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Evaluation	Repetition
D010	<i>We move!</i>	Pragmatic	Pragmatic reworking	Solidarity	Wider circulation
D011	<i>Omo!</i>	Multilingual	Yoruba-derived form	Stance	Repetition
D012	<i>Las las</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical reworking	Evaluation	Stabilization
D013	<i>Una don start o</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Humour	Reuse
D014	<i>This country sha</i>	Pragmatic	Discourse marker	Stance	Repetition
D015	<i>God abeg</i>	Multilingual	English/Pidgin	Evaluation	Uptake
D016	<i>Naija no dey carry last</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	National identity	Wider circulation
D017	<i>I no fit shout</i>	Multilingual	Nigerian Pidgin	Humour	Repetition
D018	<i>Big girl/boy energy</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Identity	Uptake
D019	<i>Who dey breathe?</i>	Pragmatic	Humorous construction	Humour	Reuse
D020	<i>Steeze</i>	Lexical-semantic	Coinage	Identity	Wider circulation
D021	<i>Una sabi wetin dey happen</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Audience orientation	Repetition
D022	<i>This one na premium cruise</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Humour	Uptake
D023	<i>No be small thing</i>	Pragmatic	Pragmatic reworking	Evaluation	Repetition
D024	<i>E shock me</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Stance	Reuse
D025	<i>Na so una dey do?</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Uptake
D026	<i>We outside!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Identity	Wider circulation
D027	<i>Abeg o!</i>	Graphological	Punctuation/stylization	Stance	Repetition
D028	<i>Omo!!!</i>	Graphological	Punctuation	Evaluation	Reuse
D029	<i>GUYS!!!</i>	Graphological	Capitalization	Audience orientation	Repetition
D030	<i>This is soooo funny</i>	Graphological	Letter repetition	Humour	Uptake
D031	<i>I dey weak 🥱</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Humour	Reuse
D032	<i>Na wa o 🤔</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Evaluation	Repetition
D033	<i>God abeg 🙏</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Stance	Uptake
D034	<i>Omo, see this! 😂</i>	Multilingual	Yoruba/English	Humour	Repetition
D035	<i>E choke!!!</i>	Graphological	Punctuation	Evaluation	Wider circulation
D036	<i>Soft life 🌿</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Identity	Uptake
D037	<i>No wahala 😊</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Solidarity	Reuse
D038	<i>Abeg shift!</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Repetition
D039	<i>We move regardless</i>	Pragmatic	Pragmatic formula	Solidarity	Wider circulation
D040	<i>Na today?</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Repetition
D041	<i>I no get strength</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Stance	Reuse
D042	<i>This life no balance</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Uptake
D043	<i>Make I hear word</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Repetition
D044	<i>Omo, money sweet</i>	Multilingual	Yoruba/English	Evaluation	Reuse
D045	<i>Na money I dey find</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Identity	Repetition
D046	<i>Correct guy</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Social positioning	Uptake
D047	<i>Sharp sharp</i>	Lexical-semantic	Reduplication	Audience orientation	Repetition
D048	<i>Una too dey do</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Humour	Reuse
D049	<i>E be like say...</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Stance	Repetition
D050	<i>My guy!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Solidarity	Uptake
D051	<i>Chairman!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Social positioning	Reuse

D052	<i>Boss lady</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical formation	Identity	Uptake
D053	<i>Big man things</i>	Lexical-semantic	Phrase formation	Identity	Repetition
D054	<i>This one pass me</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Reuse
D055	<i>I no understand</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Audience orientation	Repetition
D056	<i>Na wa for una</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Uptake
D057	<i>Abeg rest</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Reuse
D058	<i>E don do</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin	Evaluation	Repetition
D059	<i>No stress</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Solidarity	Uptake
D060	<i>Enjoyment minister</i>	Lexical-semantic	Coinage	Humour	Wider circulation
D061	<i>Relationship minister</i>	Lexical-semantic	Coinage	Humour	Reuse
D062	<i>Correct babe</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Social positioning	Uptake
D063	<i>Baddie</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical innovation	Identity	Wider circulation
D064	<i>Steeze and composure</i>	Lexical-semantic	Phrase innovation	Identity	Wider circulation
D065	<i>Japa</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical innovation	Cultural positioning	Stabilization
D066	<i>Janded</i>	Lexical-semantic	Derivation	Cultural positioning	Uptake
D067	<i>Naija</i>	Graphological	Orthographic stylization	National identity	Stabilization
D068	<i>9ja</i>	Graphological	Alphanumeric spelling	Identity	Repetition
D069	<i>Wetin dey happen?</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin	Audience orientation	Repetition
D070	<i>How far?</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Solidarity	Wider circulation
D071	<i>Guy man!</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical formation	Solidarity	Reuse
D072	<i>My padi</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Solidarity	Repetition
D073	<i>Padi padi</i>	Graphological	Reduplication	Solidarity	Uptake
D074	<i>No dulling</i>	Lexical-semantic	Lexical innovation	Identity	Wider circulation
D075	<i>Dey play</i>	Graphological	Non-standard spelling	Humour	Repetition
D076	<i>E sure for me</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Stance	Reuse
D077	<i>I dey feel am</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Uptake
D078	<i>Na correct move</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Repetition
D079	<i>This one weak me</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Humour	Reuse
D080	<i>I don tire</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Stance	Repetition
D081	<i>Una no serious</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Uptake
D082	<i>Make we go</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Solidarity	Reuse
D083	<i>Oya now!</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Audience orientation	Wider circulation
D084	<i>Oya na</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Pragmatic emphasis	Repetition
D085	<i>Abeg na</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Appeal	Uptake
D086	<i>Kai!</i>	Multilingual	Nigerian discourse form	Evaluation	Reuse
D087	<i>Chai!</i>	Multilingual	Nigerian discourse form	Evaluation	Repetition
D088	<i>Yawa don burst</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Humour	Wider circulation
D089	<i>Yawa</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Evaluation	Stabilization
D090	<i>Wahala</i>	Lexical-semantic	Borrowing	Evaluation	Stabilization
D091	<i>Na lie!</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Stance	Repetition
D092	<i>You dey whine me?</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Humour	Uptake
D093	<i>I no send</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Reuse
D094	<i>Who send you?</i>	Pragmatic	Pragmatic reworking	Humour	Repetition
D095	<i>Abeg shift + emoji</i>	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Social positioning	Uptake
D096	Meme caption expressing political criticism	Multimodal	Image + text	Political positioning	Wider circulation
D097	Football meme with Nigerian Pidgin caption	Multimodal	Image + Pidgin	Humour	Reuse
D098	Election meme with slogan	Multimodal	Image + text	Political positioning	Circulation
D099	Reaction GIF + Nigerian expression	Multimodal	GIF + text	Humour	Uptake
D100	Emoji-only reaction sequence	Multimodal	Emoji	Stance	Repetition
D101	<i>Omo, see levels!</i>	Multilingual	Yoruba/English	Evaluation	Reuse
D102	<i>Na so!</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin	Agreement	Repetition
D103	<i>E don cast</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Evaluation	Wider circulation
D104	<i>Cast meaning exposed</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Evaluation	Uptake

D105	<i>I'm finished</i> 🤖	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Humour	Repetition
D106	<i>This thing dey somehow</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Evaluation	Reuse
D107	<i>Somebody help me abeg</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Appeal	Uptake
D108	<i>I cannot come and go and die</i>	Pragmatic	Pragmatic formula	Humour	Wider circulation
D109	<i>Na only you sabi?</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Social positioning	Repetition
D110	<i>See finish</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Social positioning	Uptake
D111	<i>Doings</i>	Lexical-semantic	Nominal innovation	Identity	Wider circulation
D112	<i>Packaging</i>	Lexical-semantic	Semantic extension	Social positioning	Reuse
D113	<i>Uplifting</i> used ironically	Pragmatic	Irony	Evaluation	Uptake
D114	<i>Una dey craze</i>	Multilingual	Pidgin/English	Humour	Repetition
D115	<i>This one na premium tears</i> 🤖	Multimodal	Text + emoji	Humour	Reuse
D116	Stylized repeated vowels for emphasis	Graphological	Orthographic stylization	Stance	Repetition
D117	Excessive capitalization for emphasis	Graphological	Capitalization	Evaluation	Uptake
D118	Repeated punctuation for emotional emphasis	Graphological	Punctuation	Stance	Reuse
D119	Hashtag slogan used repeatedly	Multimodal	Hashtag + text	Political positioning	Wider circulation
D120	Meme combining Nigerian Pidgin, English and image	Multimodal	Multilingual + visual	Cultural positioning	Circulation