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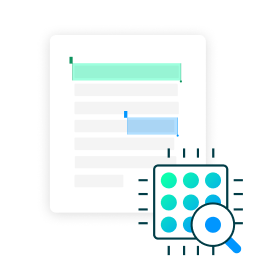
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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LANGUAGE VARIATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

**[Your Full Name]**

A Proposal Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Linguistics of Chuka University

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY SEPTEMBER, 2024**

**DECLARATION**

I, **[Your Full Name]**, declare that this proposal is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in this or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work is free from plagiarism and does not infringe upon any third-party rights. All sources of information, ideas, and data that have been drawn from other sources have been appropriately acknowledged and referenced.

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**Date**:

**RECOMMENDATION**

This proposal has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors. The work presented here has been carried out under our guidance and supervision in accordance with the requirements of Chuka University.

**Signature**:

**Name**: [Supervisor's Full Name]

**Designation**: Lecturer, Department of English and Linguistics, Chuka University

**Date**:

**Signature**:

**Name**: [Second Supervisor's Full Name, if applicable]

**Designation**: Lecturer, Department of English and Linguistics, Chuka University

**Date**:

# ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the effects of the use of social media on youthful people’s language differentiation specifically by determining how the operation of different social multimedia applications influences their linguistic behavior. Indeed, with the rise of social media use especially by the young generation, application like Instagram, twitter and TikTok have become important spaces of language creativity. The study is also interesed in time trends associated with the use of abbreviations, slang, multimodal communication (e. g., emojis, GIFs and memes), as well as language used in the different social platforms. An online and offline survey, face-to-face interviews and analysis of participant’s social media content were used with participants ranging from 18 to 30 years. Recent studies show that social networking entails fast pace of language evolution, as new language characteristics come into existence and quickly disappear. The study also discloses the variations of the type of social media and the type of language that is developed in the social media platforms and the type of language that is used in actual life conversations. Also, the study suggests that the communication that takes place via new media is global, which is evidenced by the fact that people doing new media communication prove to be in the process of converging linguistically. All in all, the findings address theoretical knowledge in sociolinguistics by revealing specific features of language use on the Web and providing insights for educational practice, technology, and social networks.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the Study

One of the most popular examples of the Internet impact is Error in processing text that the overuse of social networks that have grown rapidly has severely affected the interaction between people, especially the younger generation. Applications like Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, Snapchat have become part of the communication flow, thus providing a context to the development of language variation and language innovation. Due to the freedom of speech and rather relaxed style of communication in these social sites, new trends and terms in the languages, have emerged. Such differences as involvement of abbreviation, slang words, emojis and memes are seen as changes in language brought about by the digital age- culture. It has been seen that the effects of such language changes are more pronounced in the youths, indeed, the early technology using social groups. That is why, for contemporary sociolinguistics, learning how social media influence language variations is illuminating, given the dynamics of traditional communication practices in the digital age. This work shall research on the impact which social media has on language usage among the young adults and thus add on the wealth of knowledge which revolves on language change and sociolinguistics.

## Statement of the Problem

The research aims at filling the gap on the effect of the use of social media on language variation especially among young adults. Even though it is a common knowledge that language change is a constant process, with the help of the modern digital platforms, the rate of these changes is drastically different. However, traditional linguistics is a slow process hence cannot be able to follow the rate at which newer forms of expression are

being developed and widely used in social media platforms. The particular research question of interest in this study is whether use of such changed language on social media alters the actual communication between young adults off social media arena and permanently adjust the population’s language use. Additionally, it is essential to know whether such differences extend the gap existing between different ages and the socio- economic status thus exacerbating the communication divide. The study will look at how specifically the usage and interaction with social media impacts the trends within the sociolinguistic context of language development in the current society which is more often than not intertwined with the use of the digital platforms.

## Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study on the impact of social media on language variation among young adults:

* + 1. How does social media influence the linguistic choices made by young adults in everyday communication?
    2. What are the specific language variations (e.g., slang, abbreviations, emojis) emerging from social media use?
    3. To what extent do these variations carry over into non-digital communication settings, such as face-to-face interactions or formal writing?
    4. Do social media-driven language changes differ across gender, socioeconomic, or regional groups among young adults?
    5. What are the long-term implications of these language variations on the evolution of language among younger generations?

Answering these questions will provide insights into how digital communication reshapes linguistic norms, particularly in the context of rapid technological change.

## Objectives of the Study

The goal of this particular research is therefore to establish the extent to which or in what manner social media affects the variation of language among the young adults. In particular, the focus is made on the analysis of various innovative variants that have appeared in the context of the use of social media and investigation into how those variants can affect the daily communication process. The study also aims at finding out if the language deviations are bound to some factors like gender, economic status or region. Another goal is to consider what are the possible long-term effects of such shifts in language, brought on by social media platforms. In this way, the study will provide insights for educators and linguists interested in the trends observable in the communication process in the context of a constantly developing social environment and growing role of the Internet.

## Significance of the Study

This study fills the gap because it tries to establish the correlation between the use of technology and language with emphasis on the young adult population that is most active in the use of the social media. Of interest to linguists, educators and sociologists, knowing how SM affects language variation is directly applicable to communication standards and language curriculum. The results will contribute to sociolinguistics as the study will show how communication Web2 changes language and how these changes can be incorporated into comprehensive Web2 societal communicative patterns. Also, this work has

implications for educational systems because the various linguistic trends underlying the analysis of language teaching and literacy programmes may be changing. Finally, it opens up pathways for future insights into digital communication and impacts that it has on language practices and is useful to have data points to study long-term effects on language development.

## Scope and Limitations

This study will target individuals within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years who still engage in use of Instagram, twitter and tiktok. The study will mostly focus on the manner in which such people employ language in these sites and the difference between bringing the digital and other contexts into the equation. The two main data collection methods that shall be used are questionnaires, interviews and social media text analysis in the study of linguistic trends. Although, there are some limitations of the study as follows: Secondly, it will sample only those using the English language, which is wrong since people from different languages are not the same. Secondly, the target population of young adults only will be used in the study without information from the elder people who might perceive language variation in other ways. Lastly, owing to the dynamic nature of social media trends, the results may be obsolete within a short time due to such factors as changes in trends in the microblogging platforms and/or changing linguistic practices within these platforms. However, there are certain limitations to this study and they are as follows Nevertheless, this has the objective of identifying certain features of modern language based on social media activity.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Overview of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that focuses on linguistic varieties in their social context with focus on social factors including social class, gender, ethnicity and age. It concerns itself with the manner and any of any given people employ language to fashion out social relations as well as how relations of power determine language use and relation. This field covers issues as code-switching, language choice in multilingual societies and dialect variation (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Language variation is another major theme of sociolinguistic research; this branch of study looks at why languages change; whether the change originates from within the linguistic system or from other factors within the society; or as a result of contact with other languages as well as the impact of new technologies. Sociolinguistics later developed its coverage with the introduction of digital communication interfaces where people’s interaction affects language standards. Scholars have pointed out that SMDs are new language contact zones where LID and social connectivity is in progress especially for the youthful generations (Tagliamonte, 2016). In particular, the present research uses sociolinguistic perspectives to examine the role of social media in language variation among young adults.

## Language Variation and Change

Dialectal difference simply means the differentiation of language employed by different people, society or indeed individuals which is as a result of regionalism, class differentiation or generational differences. Language change on the other hand refers to historical transformation of language. There is one model that can be named as one of the

most widely used to describe this process and it is Labov’s work on the linguistic variation where the author pays much attention to how the system of social contacts and communities influence language usage (Labov, 2006). Of particular interest in the last few years has been the impact that fast developing technology namely, the Internet and social networking sites has on language and language changes with special reference to generations Y and Z. Given that new media are the informal, creative and frequently developing language use areas, these contexts have emerged as the strategic sites for Language Variation and Change (Eckert, 2012). This research proposition seeks to explore how social media facilitates language variation and change hence playing a role in enhancing the general discourse on language development in the contemporary society.

## Influence of Technology on Language

Technology continues to be a factor that has impacted on the use of languages, especially with the introduction of the world wide web and the social apps. With the help of these technologies, individuals have developed shorter means of communication that include texting, using an instant message, creating posts in social networking sites among others wherein brevity, swift and creativity is valued. Crystal (2011) has it that new media has not only gifted the world with new kinds of writing, including the emoji, the abbreviations, the memes but also a new way of viewing the writing, the language, the talking in other non- New Media arenas. Furthermore, Baron (2020) explain that due to the tendencies to employ such forms of communication as e-mail or posts in social networks, it is impossible to cite one source and classify it as formal and the other as informal as before. The changes posted by these technologies have influenced the ways in which young adults interact and as a result specific language features have been created based on the technologies’ possibilities

and on the interactions. The subsequent section: technology and language variation new forms – young adults and social media technology, of the literature review will look into how technology especially social media help in creating new forms of language variation among young adults.

## Social Media and Linguistic Trends

Using accounts like twitter, tiktok and instagram as primary sources several researchers found that young people are the main driving force behind the ongoing process of language change. Because of the styles of interaction in these platforms, which give a free and even playful touch, new linguistic means are created, such as acronyms (for example, LOL), slang on the Internet, and multiple communication through memes and emojis (Tagg, 2015). These trends are not unusual as the labTimes and the context in general show sociolinguistic changes where language evolves to a different context. According to Androutsopoulos (2014), social media gives room for variation since different people from different cultures and languages come together and practice the same culture and language. In addition, there is a high likelihood of widespread of linguistic trends on the social media platforms since trending posts and hashtags may take only a few hours to reach a global audience. Finally, this section will discuss how social media has enabled the emergence of such linguistic features thus encouraging language variation among the young adults.

## Previous Studies on Language Variation Among Youth

The prior work on language use among young people has time and again identified peer and social identity influences in service to language usage. Research has pointed out the fact that the youth is always a key agent in the creation of new language forms, and they

are also the key influencers who popularize new forms of language use in their social networks (Eckert, 2011). The bad language use has been equally encouraged by the social media as it offers the young adults a global and instant platform for the use of language. In a study by Jones and Hafner (2012), it was revealed that the use of digital media by youths is aimed at seeking identity of the group, as well as developing a way of making them distinguish themselves from the older generations, and in the process changing to fit the global culture. These studies have provided the initial steps toward investigating how young adult talk linguistic to interact in their social context, however there is still much to uncover about the role of social media. This study is grounded on previous research but it has been narrowed down in terms of the focus based on how young adults engage with digital platforms in the variation and change of their language.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## Sociolinguistic Theories

Sociolinguistics takes a concern with both language and society where it investigates how people of a given age, gender, ethnicity, or class use language. Another theory that forms a base in sociolinguistics is William Labov’s “variationist sociolinguistics” which deals with the systematic approach used in analyzing language variation with regards to social and linguistic factors (Labov 1972). Labov in his study of language in New York City established that the way people choose to speak is predicated on social factors such that an individual changes his or her dialect depending on the social class of the audience. This theory exposes the fact that language is an index of social relations and a fact that people use language to cope with social contextures. Another sociolinguistic theory that has been popular in recent years is Penelope Eckert’s ‘community of practice,’ which shifts away from exploring class in language to the actual social network that people establish and engage in (Eckert, 2000). Language use may not be dictated by existing social categories but is produced during engaging in activities of specific social groups or ‘‘communities of practice’’; These groups use language in a certain manner in order to be distinguished from other groups making language usage to vary.

In the context of social media they are essential for the understanding of how these new media platforms are communities of practice in which new languages are built and disseminated. SNS users being part of the digital society, maintain their own sub-group with specific patterns of social media communication that are expressed in slang, abbreviations, memes and so on. These platforms enable a fast spread and therefore fast adoption of new linguistic forms thereby promoting linguistic creativity. Employing

sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks in this line of context, this study will seek to examine how young adults employ language on social media platforms to manage identity and relational dynamics.

## Language Change Theories

Language change theories aims at providing the reasons as to why there is change in the languages used framed by various internal as well as outside forces. Of the available theories of language change, the ‘wave model’ postulates the diffusion of change from a particular hub in waves ranging through next surrounding regions or groups; as postulated by Schmidt in 1872. In this model, change is local and diffuses out only to more general populations and it synchronically occurs. It has been applied in analysis of phonological processes, processes of lexical expansion and grammatical changes. Another important theory is the “s-curve model” that defines how innovations in the language diffuse. At first, the degree of innovation increases gradually before experiencing a spurt in growth when it becomes momentarily popular before stabilizing at a normative rate. This model is more applicable in the study of language change on these platforms in that new terms and linguistic forms are rather quickly adopted before they diffusion to the rest of the population. Social media are enablers of language change since they enhance the diffusion of linguistic innovations across geographical and social space at a faster rate than was previously the case.

They have scrutinized the social network along with intra and inter-personal communication among the people and more recently, as pointed by Milroy (1992), social networks play an important part in language change. Such networks, whether face to face or via electronic media, afford the necessary framework via which such innovations may

be transported and entrenched. This is particularly the case in digitial communication where a user community co-creates language and enacts scripts that presage the wide use of new forms of linguistic. Theories concerning the use of language are informative regarding the role of social media to the development of new language among youths.

## Digital Communication Models

While the digital communication models capture the way language and communication have been changed by the conditions of the digital environment that ranges from the Internet to the social networks. Another well-known concept in this area is David Crystal’s work in the field of “Internet Linguistics” that explains how the Internet fosters new linguistic means and practices (Crystal, 2011). In my opinion, the internet is a fair place for new varieties of expressing not only they do not endanger the basic language but it is in the Internet that new forms of expressing flourish. It also shows how aspects like short messages, use of multiple media (emojis, images), and the relational mode that define the online interaction especially among the youths. The former in particular is relevant in light of a series: of isolated linguistic phenomena found on social media platforms including the use of hashtags, abbreviations and emoji-based communication which this model clarifies.

Another model worth mentioning is called “Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis” (CMDA), by Susan Herring (2004). CMDA is a methodological approach to the investigation of communication in digital context, as it considers social and technical affordances of communication technology when looking at language use. The model Herring is developed to analyze how the characteristics of communication platforms affect the evaluations thereof. This framework is useful when analyzing social media which is characterized by the imposed style and form of communication. For example, the 280

characters providing limitation within Twitter force people to be in formal and unabbreviated manner, whereas TikTok combines both video and text elements that also affect language. These are the digital communication models which are crucial in explaining how the social media building new linguistic trends among young adults. Through the application of these models, this study will analyse how these digital contexts affect language variation and creativity.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

The methodology that will be used in this study will be an exploratory mixed methods research design entails both the qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study in order to get a holistic understanding on the effects of social media in language variation among young adults. This is achieved through the use of mixed research approach and triangulation of data thereby increasing validity of data in response to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The quantitative part will consist of questionnaires that will provide information about participants’ activity on social networks, their language behavior, and estimation of language change. This will enable quantification to enable comparison of the frequency of the variation between the different factors such as gender or socioeconomic class. The qualitative part, which includes interviews and analysis of social media posts, will allow to better understand the context in which language emerges on technology platforms (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2021).

Altogether, the application of all these methods is useful for this study as social media is a multifaceted category and cannot be studied by using one single approach. Quantitative data is going to give a general knowledge of a linguistic trend while the qualitative part is going to reveal how young adults identify and conduct in interpersonal relationships regarding language use. This design will also facilitate the assessment of how the use of language differs in various social media platforms to have a general understanding of the communication in the digital environment. The information produced will help to advance theoretical and practical debates regarding the functions of social media in language change.

## Population and Sampling

The targeted population for this study will include the youth between the age of 18 to 30 years who are fluent in using the social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and so on. This age group is considered valuable in the current study because they are the most active in the use of different forms of language and use digital platforms for communication most of the time (Bergman et al. , 2021). In this case, purposive sampling technique will be adopted with an aim of getting participants who are most active in their use of social media. This specific type of nonprobability sampling ensures that the researcher targets those participants who are most likely to provide useful information on how social media affects language variation.

The quantitative survey aspect will be in form of questionnaires and will aim at having 200 participants which will enable statistical analysis. As for the qualitative element of the study, 20 participants will be engaged for the purposes of interviews and social media posts survey. Having a smaller sample size will enable the researcher to give a detailed description of language use in different contexts and thus gain a much deeper insight into the various social and language factors that compel change in the social media platforms. All the participants will be approached to participate on social media platforms, university platforms and other affiliations aimed at ensuring that the sample has gender varity, socioeconomic status and geographical distribution. The sampling approach will also make consideration of type of SNS since different SNS may permit and encourage different type of language use. This will make it easier for the study to establish differentiation of language used in the different platforms hence enhancing the goal of increasing knowledge on the different trends in communication in the digital age.

## Population

The target population for this study includes young adults with ages between 18-30 years, termed as the ‘Generation Z’ the aspect that this category is the most social active on social media platforms which include Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Snapchat. Young adults are particularly relevant for this study in case since they constitute the population that is most likely to embrace a novel linguistic fashion, which comes from the online domain (Bergman et al., 2021). This age group is the most active in creating and experimenting on language when on these social media; Therefore making this population the most appropriate for researching on the effects of the digital communication on variation. These features are successfully concretised concentrating on this age group; the Spaces Show how the new forms of language usage, including abbreviations, slang, and the use of emoji, are integrated into both virtual and real-life interaction.

In addition, the subjects can come from different geographical, social, and cultural contexts, so increasing the possibility for studying language in its variation. The influence of cultural and social characteristics of various subgroups within the population may cause differences in the linguistic behavior and contribute to the enhancement of the study’s outcomes. Furthermore, the study will also be using young adults’ data that will encompass various regions thus will be more effective in establishing regional differences in the language used on social media (Smith & Anderson, 2020). For the purpose of sample pool selection social media advertisements and university networks will be used to capture a large and diverse sample. This recruitment strategy makes it possible for the variation in language to be captured so that a variety of young adults is represented in the study.

## Sampling Technique

In this particular study, the researcher will use purposive sampling to pick participants in the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method which targets individuals who have some expertise concerning the research issue under study (Palinkas et al., 2021). When it comes to the selection of participants/usability testers, purposive sampling is essential because the aim of this study is to analyse language variation among young adults who are active social media users only. This approach is useful when discouraged from making conclusions that apply for the entire population in question (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

Korean English as a Foreign Language learners are the target population thus purposive sampling is appropriate for this research given that it aims at targeting specific population that are most likely to provide the information that is required on the impact of social media on language. The sample selection will be aimed at including only those participants who regularly use the social media and actively communicate online. The use of this technique makes it possible for the researcher to gather multiple data concerning the experience of language variation due to social media in this population. In addition, purposive sampling enables the selection of participants across the social-cultural and geological context with a rich capture of data. Consequently, purposive sampling is not complete probability sampling; however, it is an elegant tool in qualitative and mixed method research for the study of phenomena amongst targeted populations over a thorough investigation in contrast to mere fractions of the populations in the entire population.

## Data Collection Methods

This work will use self-completion questionnaires and interviews to acquire data. Questionnaires will be employed to obtain numeric data about the volumes and frequencies of social media, language use and usage of informal languages, new age slangs, abbreviations and emojis among young adults (Bryman, 2021). The survey will be of a Coded type, employing closed-ended questions that give the possibility of statistical analysis and cross-tabulations based on different factors such as gender, geographic location and socio-economic status of the respondent. This method can be useful when a researcher has a large sample to analyse and he or she is interested in establishrelations as to the variation of language on social media platforms (Smith & Anderson, 2020). Apart from survey, other quantitative data will be obtained from interviews with the participants who will be a handful in comparison to the survey participants. These Interviews will create an opportunity to get more understanding of the perception and usage of Language on social media for the young Adults. The use of interviews will help in acquiring an understanding of contextual factors that may be an underlying cause of language variation such as identity, pressure from peers, and norms depending on the chosen platform (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection will enable the study to explore the extended possibilities of the effects of social networking in language variation among youths.

## Surveys

The survey part of this study will be created for the purpose of identifying and documenting the amount and type of activity of the participants in the social media, the frequency of their using certain linguistic features, or having certain attitudes towards language

variation. The survey will consist of multiple sections: On the demographic questions, frequency of social media use, platforms used and on the questions concerning the use of language on social media platforms. This includes the compression of words as in the use of abbreviations, the use of emojis, colloquialisms together with other informal language that is often associated with social media (Bryman, 2021). Due to the pandemic the questionnaire will be conducted online using tools like Google form or through social media accounts with reach to the target population. The significance of the online survey method is that the study is focused on social media users, which makes surveying them the most natural and convenient way of recruiting the participants (Palinkas et al., 2021). In order to reflect clarity and reliability the survey will be pilot-tested before administering it to a larger study sample. It makes it possible to obtain quantitative data that can be later used to recognize some patterns of the language variation caused by social media in specific demographic segments.

## Interviews

Interveiw is one of the most widely used qualitative methods of data collection aimed at obtaining and examining participants’ insights, experiences and perceptions. For data collection in this study, young adults will be interviewed through semi-structured interviews so as to determine their attitudes toward and uses of LVS on SMs. Semi- structured interviews differ from the fully structured interviews by the fact that the interviewer has the freedom to ask specific questions regarding the matter of discussion while at the same time, the participants have a chance to state their opinions in a more informal way (Palinkas et al., 2021). Some of the questions that will be asked in the

interview include whether the participants use abbreviation, emojis, slang or other characteristics associated with variation in digital communication. It also entails the use of electronic media like video IMO conferencing software such as zoom to conduct interviews to make it easy for participants. Interviews will be semi-structured and will take an average of 30-45 minutes each with the participants’ permission the interviews will be recorded for transcription and analysis in the future. In this case, a purposive sampling method will be employed in order to identify interview participants who are conscious active users of social media, hence making the sampling befitting of the purpose of the study. The information, therefore, collected from these interviews will be qualitative and descriptive of different social context factors that influence language variation on such site, such as social identity, peer pressure, or site culture. This type of data is going to complete the results we are going to obtain from the surveys; thus, providing a rich picture of how social media affects language use among young adults.

## Social Media Content Analysis

Social media content analysis is a research method under which the contents of Social Media platforms are analyzed systematically including post, wall posts, comments, and other user-generated content. In this case, language patterns and dialects to be looked at usually form part of the SNS content analysis where one looks on the common social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok and analyze them among young adults. It enables the researcher to examine actual cases of how the language is becoming transformed through different digital interactions and how it is shaped through its usage (Bryman, 2021). In the context of the proposed content analysis, concerns will be paid to such features as the presence of slang, abbreviations, emojis, and particular social media

platform language. These linguistic features will then be coded and classified in order to ascertain the extent to which they have been employed in and for what purpose. There are software that will be helpful in the sorting and analysis of the data, which will help the researcher follow and contrast linguistic conducts on various sites (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2021). In so doing, this study will offer a much-needed analysis of public social media posts on language use among young adults and how the data retrieved fits into a larger tenor of language variation. This analysis will be useful in connecting the quantitative data that was collected from the survey and the qualitative data which was obtained from the interviews so as to come up with a better understanding of the research problem.

## Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this research will involve the use of both quantitative as well as the qualitative analysis of the complied data. The questionnaires for the survey will provide quantitative data that will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to look for characteristics related to the utilisation of social media and language variation in the young adults. By using statistical tools such as SPSS software the descriptive studies which include the frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, and correlation analyses will be conduct to test the various hypotheses that involves age, gender, and frequency of social media use. In terms of the assessment of qualitative data, thematic analysis will be conducted in order to reveal general themes and patterns of the text in the interviews’ protocol and social media posts. Thematic analysis involves indexing the data and arranging the data in categories in form of linguistic patterns or fluctuations (Braun & Clarke, 2021). They include, coding and categorizing of qualitative data using NVivo software that enables the analysis of large data sets and arriving at the right conclusions. In

this sense, by using statistical techniques and thematic analysis at the same time the study will be in a position to triangulate the data collected and therefore understand how social media impacts on language variation. The approach enables both quantitative method of analysis that provides width and the qualitative method that provides depth of the results, which are comprehensive and thoughtful.

## Ethical Considerations

The need for ethical considerations is very important in order to maintain the credibility of the studies. In our case, one of the most important and generic research ethical issues is the issue of informed consent. Participants will be made aware of what the study will be about, how data will be collected and what will be done with the data he/she provides. The following rights will also be observed; the participants will be free to participate in the study and it will be made clear to them that their participation is voluntary and that they can opt out of the study at any time with no consequences (Hammersley & Traianou, 2021). Policies and principles such as confidentiality of all participants’ identities and anonymity of the participants will be observed from the beginning of the study to the end of the research. Individual identifying data will not be disclosed; in case if any, it will be stripped off participants’ identification before submitting the report (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). In case of social media analysis, only the post that are visible to public will be considered for analysis and no individual detail will be taken to maintain the privacy of the individuals. Also, this study will follow the ethical requirement on the use of data collected from the respondents. All data collected will be kept confidential, and any information flow will only be to authorized personnel only. Since the study involves human subjects, ethical

clearance will be sought from the relevant Institutional Review Board in order to stick to the laid down ethics.

# EXPECTED FINDINGS

## Anticipated Trends in Language Variation

Consequently, it is expected that the study of social media on the young adults will unveil viable patterns in language variation which is propelled by digital media platforms. Among the expected findings, the increased use of abbreviations, slangs and acronyms as some of the prominent forms of functioning on the social aps, like tweeter, tiktok, instagram etcetera is predicted. It will be also noted that due to the likelihood of these linguistic forms being originally created for the purpose of making the communication quicker and shorter, they are expected to be most widely used by young people, specifically in the interpersonal online environments (Tagg, 2020). The research will probably confirm that these language forms are used by these users as quicker and short forms of communicating as a result of the dynamic procedure associated with digital media. Another expected pattern is the escalating reliance on multimodal interaction, more so the substitution or supplementation of textual interaction with emojis, GIFs and memes. For example, emojis should incorporate both emotional signaling and sign-functions, which make emojis the part of the process of visualization of language (Danesi, 2021). Nonverbal in form, these symbols enrich the material being transmitted with additional connotations thus creating a method of communication that is more complex and depends on the circumstances. This change toward multimodal communication will further underscore call for new linguistic models to accommodate graphic and verbal interfaces; simple text analysis may not be sufficient to give the existing modern language.

Other changes which can be expected are the different platform-specific linguistic conventions to become more apparent especially in the use of certain forms of

abbreviations and visual language. For instance, depending on the differences in the platform used, one may observe a difference in communicative styles as shaped by technical affordances. With the nature of TikTok with the utilization of short-video format it supports the formation of new catchphrases, short slang as well as hashtags and the same way, Twitter with 280 characters restricts the utilization of abbreviations and acronyms (Georgakopoulou, 2020). These specific norms will probably illustrate how technologies of social media regulate linguistic practices. The other relevant pattern that may be identified in the course of the study is code-switching as well as language mixing. As social media has gone global it is expected that young adults, or multilingual users in particular will often code-switch or disturb between languages or dialects in a conversation. This practice is not only seen in the bi- and multilingual contexts but also is becoming a social enactment of identity in social media (Androutsopoulos, 2020). Switching between different languages in one website could be an indication of the changes that are taking place in the global linguistic trends and people’s identification process. Thus, it is supposed to be found that the forms of language innovation in the social media context are extremely short-lived. As creative in language use has been evidently witnessed in cyber world, the novelty of new vocabularies, terms, slogans or craze-next- door is relatively temporal. While the modern means of communication are newly adapted they may quickly become ‘popular’ or equally as quickly lose this very popularity based on social and cultural frameworks. This transient nature of the language variation means that, through the use of social media, speakers get to build an ever-changing environment for language use, which directly results in fast cycles of linguistic change among the young adults.

## Potential Impact of Social Media on Language Use

Social media is a great influential power and its effect on the use of language is diverse and large-scale. This has also created one of the biggest effects on people, that is standardization of informal language. Facebook and similar utilities are informal means for exchange of information which often implies use of play language. Given that young adults are one of the most active groups on social media, they are more likely to develop language through the forums more than any other age group. A long time from now, the language used informally on social media platforms may be used i

n the formal institutions including learning institutions and work-related contexts (Seargeant & Tagg, 2021). It could entail change in social etiquette, where divergent forms of language used in different occasions are blurred hence, violating people’s expected standards of Interpersonal communication appropriateness. A second possible consequence appears to be the speeding up of language shift. Language is always changing but the manner in which new forms of language are introduced and accepted in the society is rapid especially due to the influence of social media. It has become common to find that a particular slang, abbreviation, and new words or phrases disseminate through the different platforms and different regions within hours since trend goes viral in nature. This acceleration could lead to cycles where new language is created and used and then replaced at much quicker successions since the speed of creating new fashionable ways of expressing ourselves is rapidly increasing (Zappavigna, 2020). This is quite manifest when young adults are involved in the process where they are likely to introduce new words, a trend that leads to the popularisation of the particular words in future among the other groups in the population.

In addition, it erodes distinct linguistic variation and dialects thereby causing language convergence whereby speakers of different languages or dialects are bound to adopt similar linguistic features as a result of their exposure to the large digital worlds through social media. In one platform, such as Twitter or Instagram, the members with different linguistic behaviors meet, and that may lead to identical slangs, idioms, or even patterns (Tagliamonte, 2021). It is possible that this convergence could partly standardize the usage of language where global platforms will spread some linguistic practices that are beyond geographic and cultural specificities. On the other hand, and just as credibly, the adverse effects of social media are that the phenomenon could in fact maintain or even promote linguistic diversity, as people using the internet, and specific cultural groups in particular continue to embrace the use of languages that are distinct from the others in various social media networks. It is also expected that with the use of social media there will be change in perception of how correct some of the used languages are. Heretofore, language correctness is under the conventions which specify how language should be used, written and spoken with correct grammar, spelling and other related aspects. Nonetheless, SNS frequently disrupt these norms as even though rules should be followed behaviours are encouraged to be creative and innovative. Other regard younger people, especially, the intelligentsia, may start perceiving language as something that can be changed deliberately, and does not necessarily have to follow certain rules (Crystal, 2021). This shift of paradigm could change the attitude of the future generations toward language acquisition and usage especially in the educational domain where they usually tend to focus on the manifold formalisms of language.

Finally, this research aims at discovering that social media plays a major role in shaping language identity and persons’ manner of expressing themselves. In this context, it is possible to see that the communicative context of many SM platforms implies the construction of identity in Language, being able to signal inclusion or exclusion, status or antisocial personality traits, etc. For instance, the employment of particular slangs, emojis or jargons specific to certain platforms will indicate a given individual as being in tune with certain societal trends. This aspect of language use is most applicable among the youths, especially the young adults, who spend a lot of time on social media sites, which are somehow personal playpens to them. Therefore, social media may not only affect the choice of language and language use but also affect the ways people potentially perceive their self-positions and roles with regards to language and language(s) (Jones & Hafner, 2020).

# DISCUSSION

## Implications for Sociolinguistic Theory

Therefore, the results of this study hold theoretical importance for sociolinguistic theory especially in terms of language variation and change in the context of digital communication. In sociolinguistic theory, concerns have been taken on how language is used in different aspects of society or by means of some social parameters such as age, class, gender and ethnicity (Van Leuven & Bascone, 2021). However, social media adds other factors that have to be taken into account, including a given site’s conventions, the rate of language evolution, and the international character of the internet. Such factors question conventional sociolinguistic models that are mostly derived from studies of social interactions that occur in a face-to-face setting and within a clearly defined community. This research findings therefore indicate that these digital platforms act as new spheres of structural development where new linguistic features can be quickly integrated, adapted, and passed on by users Wang 2021. This is in line with the Variationist Theory by Labov but takes it a notch further and looks at how language behavior is dictated not only by social factors, but also online environment and communities’ interactions. The blend of text and other forms of communication like the use of emojis, memes and GIFs also mean that when the social models of the future will be developed they will have to accommodate for non-literal forms of communication which are used to make meaning in the online platform (Herring, 2020). These findings suggest that the exploration of language variation cannot confine itself to physical communities only, but also in social networks which are beyond geographical and social compartments. As a result, the theory of sociolinguistics

is likely to develop into a global perspective toward understanding language change resulting from cross-border and cross- cultural interactions that take a few hours today.

## Contribution to the Field of Linguistics

The outcomes of this study will be beneficial to the field of linguistics by giving out dynamic data of how social media impacts language variation and change. In traditional linguistics, most of the emphasis is placed on the oral and written language usage in formal contexts; however, the emergence of social networks imposes informal types of communication in addition to the formal ones (Levy, 2021). By looking into how young adults engage in language use in the contexts of Instagram and Tik Tok, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on language dynamics in digital media and the related process of language change and innovation in the light of technological developments. One of the great strengths of the study is the fact that it addresses the issue of multimodal communication where language is not just word or text based but also iconic, that includes emojis, memes, and GIFs. This broadens the focus of linguistics not only to include texts, but also other stimulus semiotics or signifying visuals and glyphs involved in signification during communication (Danesi, 2021). The work also underlines the necessity for the linguistic theories to evolve in new types of digital referentiality, stressing the fact that Internet stimulates interconnectivity of text and image in a way that verbal or writing language will not allow. Furthermore, the study was limited to analysing the language norms applicable to each of the platforms, which further support a more complex approach to approaching digital dialects. Some of these dialects are as a result of the limitations and possibilities offered by various technology platforms; the use of words, phrases and other expressions on Twitter are different from those in Instagram or TikTok

(Crystal, 2021). Such a differentiation requires advocates of the new media to have a broader perspective of how digital spaces are changing language and linguistic diversity.

## Potential Applications of Findings

Because the population of this study is quite general, the implications of this research are virtually limitless across contexts and disciplines, such as education, technology, and sociolinguistics. The most obvious is the language learning and teaching area, with the outcome being useful for teachers to enhance their understanding of how young adults use language on the internet in particular and build this into the approaches to teaching/spreading knowledge. In similar regard, educators could develop curricula that recognise the linguistic forms creation out of social media networks hence incorporating such forms into language delivery to enhance student relevance (Martinez, 2022). Further, such findings might be useful for designing training resources that could address different aspects of formal and oral forms of language use and prepare students for academic as well as virtual fora. A potentially useful field is natural language processing (NLP) where the results can be applied to enhance the algorithms applied to language processing in the digital environments. Emoticons, abbreviation, slang; all these, which are picked up from the worlds of social media directly, are capable of outsmarting current NLP systems, which, more often than not, are trained on formal English languages (Ding et al. , 2020). Concerning social media, technology developers are in a position to optimize the language identification of NLP relative to the informal language frequently used in the communication platforms.

In the sociolinguistics, these findings will give a more detailed view of how the language changes depending on the digital community, thus supporting the general theories of

language variation and change. For instance, the study focus on the concept of multimodal communication and dialects applied to the various platforms could stimulate the investigation of ways that other types of digital media affect use of language use (Sultana & van der Stoep, 2022). Besides, the information provided in the context of global language convergence may also be of interest to researchers investigating the role of technology- enhanced language across the cultures. Last but not least, these findings hold certain practical implications for SNSs as developers and moderators could apply this information to design the media environments that are embracing various forms of expression in language. This kind of information may help in optimizing the contents moderation tools, with reference to the different linguistic and cultural practices as well as the communicational standard across the various media platforms.

# CONCLUSION

## Summary of Key Points

This research has revealed that social media play a crucial factor in the lives of youth in as much as it influences language variation and usage especially as it introduces new forms and practices of language usage among the young adults. This has postulated that three major linguistic traits that are evident on social media include use of abbreviations, slang, and acronyms due to the timeliness and speed that characterizes the social media communication. Also, the application of the emojis, GIFs, and memes reveal that visuals are increasingly being used and associated with forms of expression within digital language beyond that of text. The study also found that there is existence of platform-specific linguistic norms, whereby there are certain specific behaviors determined by the technical details of the platform in use. For instance, the 280 characters limit of Twitter, the primary method of which is assertion, makes the use of acronyms acceptable, while the visual platforms that are Instagram, and TikTok make the use of images and short phrases acceptable. Furthermore, the analysis also unveiled that the evolution of languages on social media networks is fast and transient with the creation of one or the other innovative languages depending on the trends and culture. This is also true as the research has shown that social networking is borderless and therefore when people from different linguistic backgrounds interact they are likely to adopt similar patterns of communication. This convergence is most apparent among the second language speakers that switch between their first languages and the other languages in an effort to produce a diverse linguistic environment in virtual worlds. These findings enrich the knowledge of how language is used, altered and managed in the sphere of social media and the impact that it has on such

language usage; this is due to the fact that theory-based sociolinguistic data that is derived from face-to-face communication is not applicable in this case.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this investigation suggest several potential directions for further research especially with regards to analysis of current characteristics of growing significance of social media for language. This leads to one particular recommendation which involves identifying more long-term empirical investigations relating to the way language unfolds within social media over time. Such research could tell us if the identified linguistic features including abbreviations and the use of symbols in communication, whether they turn into permanent trends in the language or if they remain temporary trends that keep on changing with time. It would also be useful to analyze the changes in the frequency of the use of new forms and their incorporation in offline communication through longitudinal data. A suggestion for further direction is to look at the effect of the various social media platforms across the various language communities. Although this study briefly mentioned platform-specific norms, the next studies could build upon how exactly the norms of platforms that have different technical potential affect the language of people. For instance, contrasting the language used on image-dominant sites like Instagram with texts- dominant site such as Twitter might unearth a much deeper insight into how each platform influences the use of language. There are also other platforms that scholars may consider for analyzing the role that they play in language variation, for example, Clubhouse or Discord. Further research directions in the topic should expand to the international perspective of social media language change. Subsequent researches could analyze the function of multilingual and switching within language difference on social media especially in societies that do

not use English language. Investigations regarding supply or loss of L1 in the context of internet could be very informative in order to understand minority languages’ stability during extensive internet communication.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Survey Questions

### Demographic Information

* + - * What is your age?
      * What is your gender?
      * What is your highest level of education?
      * What is your current occupation?

### Social Media Usage

* + - * How many hours per day do you spend on social media?
      * Which social media platforms do you use most frequently (Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc.)?
      * How long have you been using social media regularly?
      * How would you describe your level of engagement on social media (e.g., active posting, passive browsing)?

### Language Variation and Use on Social Media

* + - * How often do you use abbreviations (e.g., LOL, OMG) on social media?
      * How frequently do you use slang in your social media posts or comments?
      * How often do you use emojis, GIFs, or memes to communicate?
      * Do you use different language styles on different social media platforms? If yes, please explain.
      * Do you use social media language (e.g., abbreviations, emojis) in real-life communication (spoken or written)?

### Perception of Language Change

* + - * Do you believe social media has changed how you communicate?
      * How do you perceive the impact of social media on formal communication (e.g., academic, professional)?
      * Do you think social media has influenced language in a positive or negative way? Please elaborate.

## Appendix B: Interview Guidelines

### Introduction

* + Thank the participant for their time and participation.
  + Provide a brief overview of the study and its purpose.
  + Explain the structure of the interview and the topics to be covered.
  + Ensure the participant has provided informed consent to record the interview.

### Social Media Habits

* + Can you tell me about your daily social media usage? Which platforms do you use the most?
  + How would you describe your language use on these platforms?
  + Do you consciously adjust your language based on the platform you are using? If so, how?

### Language Variation

* + How do you decide whether to use slang, abbreviations, or formal language on social media?
  + Have you noticed any differences in how people communicate on different platforms?
  + Do you think social media has introduced new ways of communicating that didn’t exist before? Can you provide some examples?

### Influence on Real-life Communication

* + Do you use language from social media (e.g., slang, emojis) in your day-to- day spoken or written communication?
  + Have you noticed any impact of social media on your communication style in academic or professional settings?
  + In your opinion, do you believe the language changes influenced by social media are temporary or permanent?

### Closing

* + Do you have any final thoughts about how social media is influencing language?
  + Thank the participant for their time and contributions.

## Appendix C: Additional Data

### Social Media Content Analysis Categories

* + **Abbreviations/Slang**: Frequency and context in which abbreviations like "LOL," "BRB," or platform-specific slang are used.
  + **Emojis/GIFs/Memes**: Analysis of how visual elements replace or complement words in communication.
  + **Platform-specific Language Norms**: Comparison of language usage across platforms (e.g., Twitter vs. Instagram vs. TikTok).
  + **Code-switching**: Instances where users switch between languages or dialects within the same post or conversation.

### Sample Social Media Post Categories

* + - **Informal Posts**: Posts with heavy use of slang, abbreviations, and emojis.
    - **Formal Posts**: Posts that adhere to standard grammatical rules and formal language.
    - **Hybrid Posts**: Posts that combine informal and formal language, typically seen in professional yet casual social media presences.

### Ethical Considerations in Data Collection

* + - All participants will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with identifying information removed from all data presented in the final report.
    - Only publicly available social media posts will be analyzed to ensure compliance with privacy laws and ethical guidelines.
    - Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.