Journal of Modern European Languages and Literature (JMEL) Volume 6 August 2016
ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

SOCIAL NETWORK RELATION AND LANGUAGE USE IN A MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY

By

Sunday Ojonugwa Joseph
Department of English Language AND Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Email: ugwa4christ70@yahoo.com
Phone: 08067223608

Abstract

Technology is clearly having an impact on language and the words we use to relate to one another hence, encouraging the new generation of speakers of this language to adopt new word ideas in the growth and evolution of the English language. With social networks skyrocketing in popularity, individuals or group of individuals, marketers devise strategies of engagement, using social networks for their own purpose. In carrying this study, the researcher explained the different concepts that made up the issue, (language, language use and social network relations), looked at the works of the linguists, conducted interviews, use questionnaire and made personal observations among students of institutions of higher learning and some groups of individuals who are mostly youth. The three institutions of higher learning were used for the investigation. The research therefore established that language as a medium of mobilization and concretization has in recent times faced with a lot of infusions thus, impede the generation of the old speakers to flow with the younger generation. This investigation has also established that, students are now bilinguals or multilinguals in their linguistic dispositions as this permits them to effectively communicate with their friends within and across the region with whom they share common linguistic and social affiliations as a result therefore, this study is recommending that the language of the social network be embraced so as to promote personality development and positive physico-moral, socio-economic and phycho-spiritual - disposition of an individual who uses the language. It equally helps the younger generation speakers of English language to explore their creativity as well as be dynamic in the language they use.

Introduction

Technology has transformed the words we use in into abbreviations and acronyms, and language not just a core or strong instrument for sustaining a man's most priced possession but a major vehicle for self expression and a mark of his personal and group identity undergoes gradual development, language is always evolving, certainly, social networks constantly introducing new words into our vocabulary.

Scanning through numerous literatures on language and social networks, it reveals a quite interesting relationship between the two in the process of communication which is fundamental to all social process. Every society is sustained by the interaction of its members.

Ohaeto (208), maintains "that the numerous communication opportunities made possible by the internet and which support easy and instant linkage between and among users have resulted to the availability of various computer-mediated communication (C.M.C.) such include sorts of synchronous, asynchronous and semi-synchronous means of communication. She further stresses that rooms, internet relay chat, newsgroups, Bulletin boards, e-mail, social networks and Text messaging are equally enshrined in the computer-mediate communication as ways of passing information from one end to another.

Schram qtd. in Nosiri (82) upholds that, a society will cease to exist if the members do not interact. In the role of sustaining the survival of human societies, language and social network relations are intimately related to the point that every information about societies or countries crafted in communicable languages need social networks to put the information across to the target audience efficiently and effectively. Put more precisely, language and the social networks are indispensable tools in the range of ways and means to sustain the survival and development of any human society or country since language hobnobs on the social networks for evolvement.

Language

Language is a priceless asset of fundamental importance to the individual and to society. It can never be adequately described merely by citing the number of people served and the personnel involved, the level of coverage, or the research performed despite the fact that such readily available facts are frequently used as measures of language evolvement. Language is a process essential to the achievement of personal goals and individual aspirations as it is seen as the only visible face of culture.

Bloch and Trager (14) define language as "literary vocal system, by which social groups co-operate". This means that language is the major means of communication among humankind. Broadly speaking therefore, language is the essential precursor of social interaction and behavior. What this means is that "without language very little can be conveyed" and "without such a symbolic medium of communication shared by individuals, frustration, stress, anxiety, lack of trust and insanity characterizes social relations".

Language is a man's most priced possession. It is his major vehicle for self and a mark of his personal and group identity. It is an internal component and at the same time a product of culture. Culture determines the education of the people, and through language, the culture of a given people is transmitted from generation to generation. Culture, such as dressing patterns, habits, different types of food and their modes of preparation, ways of expressing joy and sorrow, hate, or anger, songs, and dances, technologies, transportation, and even ways of hading diseases are described and transmitted through the language of the group. Izuagba & Nwigwe (37).

Language Use

There seems to be trend developing, a some what disturbing one: some people especially the undergraduates of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, some newspapers, TV networks and radio station evidently have lost their regard for the proper and decent use of language (as an adult may call it) in their application of language especially with those they share social boundaries with. Increasingly, words we usually associate with swearing are beginning to find their ways into our vocabulary most significantly in print and broadcasts.

Fortunately, these days' youngsters are likely to use language that in days gone by might have made a sailor blush. The present generation of speakers has considered the floppy use of language as

ordinary. And very difficult to trace the source or assign blame to any one as it is considered to be an integral part of social network relations.

The use of language is not static, and a language such as English is a collection and reinvention of the words of many other languages primarily Latin and Greek, with the Romance language filtering into it. As civilizations grow and change, so do the words in the language. Not all expressions disappear out of the language after they have served their purpose, or the generation who used them assumes adulthood and "puts away childish things". The phase, "hung out", or "hang out" is commonly used today, and not just in casual settings. It has become so inculcated into our society that one can use it, even in an executive board room, and no eyebrows will be raised in response. So, what is the source of "hang out"? Although there is an evidence that the term was used as early as the 1830s to mean "loiter or idle about". The current use of the phase probably has a more recent incarnation.

Some linguists have argued that the social network relation freshens and enhances English language by adding words that describe what people of the era are doing and feeling. According to these groups of linguists, social network relations keep the language from getting stale. What this means is that, though the terms are ordinary and common yet, have vivid expression to describe current life and events.

In other way round, some sociolinguists have argued that social networks kill the use of language, their arguments are innumerable, but they mostly cite the excessive usage of undecipherable initialism, incorrect abbreviations, and courtesy emoticons.

Social Network Relation

Whenever the phase "social network relation" is mentioned, people's minds immediately go to press, the radio and the television. However, this definition is inaccurate as the term social network relations also includes book publishing and in a wider sense, what Nosiri (85) called, all channels of

communication which information is disseminated which constitute an important part of modem process of information gathering and dissemination to member of the public.

Social network is a website on the internet that brings people together in a central location to talk; shard ideals and interest of make new friends. These types of collaboration and sharing of data is often referred to as social media. Unlike traditional network that is limited to 10 people, social network sites contain content that have been created by hundred or even millions of different people. Below are some of the social network sites that are widely used by various users most especially, the undergraduates as highlighted by Miller (28).

i. Bebo (http://www.bebo.com/) a popular social network site whose users can share photo's stories, their journals, and more with friends and family privately or publicly the internet.

ii. Class mates (http://www.classmates.com/) one of the largest and most used websites that brings together and allows people who graduated from high school and allows you to keep in touch with them and any future reunions

iii. Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/) one of the most popular social networking websites on the internet. Face book is a popular destination for users to setup their own pictures, share movies, talk about what you are doing, etc.

iv. Friendster (http://www.friendster.com/) A popular social network that brings together friends, family, and allows to meet new people who share similar interests to you from all over the world.

v. Google+ (http://pius.google.com/) the latest social networking service from Google.

vi. Linkedin (http://www.linkedin.com/) one of the best if not the best locations to connect with current and past co-workers and potential future employers.

vii. Myspece (http://www.myspece.com/) one of the most popular social networks and one of the most viewed website on the internet. This social network was originally created by Tom Anderson and Chris Dewoite to allow online communities and users on the internet to connect and share their journal pictures, and interests with their friends and millions of other people on the internet.

viii. Orkut (http://www.orkut.com/) A popular service from Google that provides you a location to socialize with your friends and family, and meet new acquaintances from all around the world.

xx. Pinterest (http://www.pinterest.com/) an upcoming and popular picture and sharing service that allows anyone to easily share pictures, create collection, and more.

x. Stumble upon (http://www.stumbleupon.com/) this is another very popular community of internet that allows user to rate a site they like or don't like by pressing a thumbs up or thumbs down using a free add on available through the site.

xi. Tagworld (http://www.tagworld.com/) Great clean social network- site that beings uses together who enjoy similar music taste or other similar interests such as Videos etc.

xi. Twitters (http://www.spost.com/) another fantastic service that allows uses to post 140 characters long post from their phones and on the internet.

xii. Windowlivespace (http://spacelive.com/) A service by Microsoft that allows any user to create there own personal blog and social networking site.

xiii. Youtube (http://www.youtube.com/) A great network of users posting video blogs or vlog's and other fun and interesting videos.

Language of the Social Network

A growing body of research is documenting the ways in which primarily, students of institutions of high learning use language via their social networks. Research showed that students have been provided by the social network alternative contexts of language development for undergraduate students of the schools under observation and investigation. What this means is that, students' experiences within an internet chat room can be seen as a process of language socialization and development through which they acquired a particular linguistic variety of English to construct ethnic identifications with whom they share common linguistic and social affiliations and opportunity to explore their creation as well as be dynamic as they employ their knowledge of three languages - English, their mother tongues and pidgin to create virtual language. Ohaeto (197) further stressed that, the virtual language which is filled with hybridized linguistic features and which is often characterized with peculiar morphological, phonological and semantic features, help them to engender social bounding and cohesion among themselves.

The social network language is verily described by linguists as a "pragmatic particle" a word of phrase that is not connected semantically to the context of the sentence but rather indicates the speaker's attitude. The pragmatic particle is an advance level of the language of the social networks as it goes beyond initialize to evolutionary nature of language and the conversation nature of texting social media. If you try to deny either of these realities you will be doing you brand, and worse, current pattern will be far from you and you may be disservice by not adapting to their changing language which serves as a major factor of set-concept across all cultures and ethnicities because people, majorly youth (undergraduates) are using social language as if they are speaking.

The evolution of language through social media or networks has brought a lot. Research has proved that the undergraduates of the institutions sampled now communicate via image without including text. This is already happening to a large extent, and makes sense based on the popularity of Instagram, Vine, Tumble and other image-heavy social channels. Images succinctly deliver a message or express the

person's mood. This grows fastly with the adoption of Google Glass and advancement of other technologies for this enhances the flexibility to test and quickly receive feedback.

In his work on media language as it relates to language Schram (10) posits that communication is always at the very center of existence for any society developing or not, pointing out that the task assigned to the social media are greatly vast than before development. He concluded that social networks have to speed up the flow of information, offer education where it has never been as the users of the networks explore these networks to educate, entertain, and inform those who share linguistic relationship/ boundary with them. This is the only way they can rouse and prepare their populace to climb societal mountains.

In Nigeria today, especially students in the institutions of higher learning have been provided with various ways or avenues of keeping informed.

Many other positions have been canvassed. A professor of English in the University of Uyo, for instance, David Eka, is of the view that there are new "many Englishes" and they be "tolerated" or accommodated.

In the view of this writer, that tolerance has developed a long time, again, since late 1950's into the 1960's in the social networks drama and performance series. All we need is the ear with which to perceive the nuances in their contact and stop arguments about adequacies or inadequacies and show which content or register of usage is appropriate and purposeful for the occasion of usage.

Given this scenario, it is imperative that through the social networks, undergraduates would also have a chance to put across their views and opinions whether of commendation or criticisms with regard to authorities of the institutions vis-à-vis their welfare. Opportunities for this feed-back process are usually offered by the social media. These opportunities are made feasible among language of the social networks.

On the contrary, Henchart, Raine & Lewis (57) asserted that, social networks are bad for youths because it affects students' learning outcome. Also, Grunter & Eldridge (17) opined that, undergraduate students should be discouraged from the use of social networks.

To a very large extent, there exist multi-disciplinary collaborations between fields such as computational linguistics and socio linguistics. Here, the researcher demonstrates an instrument which uniquely describes similarities and differences among groups of people in terms of their differential language use as it relates to social network relations.

The majority of students of Kogi State University, Anyigba, Rivers State University of Science and technology Nkpolu, Rivers State and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka which formed the research base are bilinguals and multilinguals as they speak their mother tongue or language of the immediate community and the official language. A bilingual according to Ohaeto (99), is a person who has a reasonable linguistic command over two languages. Their bilingual dispositions do not only permit them to effectively communicate with their friends whom they share common linguistic and social applications, but equally give them the opportunity to explore their creativity. As well as be dynamic as they employ their knowledge of three languages - English, mother tongue and pidgin to create virtual language.

The researcher uses Differential Language Analysis (DLA) which primarily addresses method of open-vocabulary analysis, which helps the researcher to find language features across millions of Facebook, Whatsapps, Twitter, etc. that distinguish demographic and psychological attribute. From a dataset of 150 messages collected from social networks via volunteers. It was observed by the researcher that the language of the social networks has yield great sources of personal discourse. Besides advantages due to the size of the data, the content is often personal and describes everyday concerns.

This situation is consequential to the youth especially the undergraduates of KSU, RSUST and UNIZIK as it equips them effectively to operate in virtual world and also gives them opportunity to

explore the dynamic and creative uses of the writing system of electronic language and adaptation of the writing system to compensate for inadequacies by manipulating the inherent potential of the languages to suit their communicative intents.

The Data Collected

- Oke, watin b ds? You are not trying at all (mixture of three languages/codes- Igala, pidgin and English). My friend, what does that mean? You are not trying at all. Source = (KSU, Anyigba).
- Oma Igbele fine ooo, ibi la say I wil make step towards her. (Mixture of three language/codes- Igala, pidgin and English). This young girl is beautiful, I will make step towards her. Source (KSU, Anyiba).
- Enema, I no go go church, Uwefa? Will you go? (Mixture of three language/codes - pidgin, Igala and English). Enema, I will not go to church, what about you? Will you go? Source (KSU Anyigba).
- Obume, edi mebidi? Wetin u put 4fire? Should I wait? (Mixture of three language codes- Ahuda East Ekpeye Language, Pidgin and English). Obume, have you eaten? What are you cooking? Should I wait? Source (UST, Rivers State).
- Ne me kasi go-ban, abi u no hear me? (Mixture of three language/codes - Ogoni language in Rivers State, Pidgin and English). Give me that chair or you did not hear me? Source (UST, Rivers State).
- Omisokumen, uruna-nuwa, I de had oo, I will not do it (mixture of three language codes - Engene language, pidgin and English). Onisokumen, have you done your assignment? The assignment is very difficult, I will not do it. Source (UST, Rivers State).

- Nna, Olebino? Biko send me Chidimma's book (mixture of Igbo and English). My friend, where are you? Send me Chidimma's book. Source (UNIZIK, Akwa).
- My dear, I'm so broke, nna ehn I neva even chop since monn. I'm tired of dis (mixture of English, Igbo and Pidgin). My dear, I'm so broke, my friend, I have not even eaten since morning. I'm fed-up with these. Source (UNIZIK, Awka).
- Dis chick, u no de miss me abi? U don change 00. Ke kwanu? U even stingy reach txt msg. yea I don die (mixture of English, Igbo and Pidgin). This baby, so don't miss me? You are now a changed person. How are you? Your over stinginess has restricted you from even sending me a text. You will kill me. Source (Unizik, Awka).

One of the consequential factors to access here is that this term (code-mixing in texting makes communication across the board easy for the students and also afford them the room as they explore the various languages at their disposal as well as circumvent the limited space permitted by the small space of the communicate gadget. This agreed with Green's view (6). He said that social network relation is a vehicle that helps students especially the undergraduates in a way they have never done. He states that shy teenagers are more than likely to be less shy via social network. This research has proved that the environment and advancement of social network has brought the confidence of introverted and anxious people.

According to Ito (4), he opined that a shy undergraduate is given a medium of expression that has never before been available. Through social media, a level of confidence is developed in a particular person and greater ability to express feelings. Studies by Kases, Niemi & Rantianen in Green (19) shows that youth are more comfortable saying "I lv u" via social media than in person.

Method of Data collection

This paper entitled "social network relations and language use utilizes the methodology of double deconstruction in the collection and the analysis of data. The students of the three institutions of higher learning in Nigeria who volunteered to retrieve from their phones messages that they had earlier sent or received in recent weeks.

Questionnaire was also used as one of the tools for data collection. Questions asked were purely based on how social network relations or interactions have improved their language use.

The Findings

Out of 150 undergraduate students sampled from the three Universities, 130 representing (90%) said that social network relation has made them multi-lingual: (English the official language), pidgin (The Lingua Franca) and their mother tongue (Igala, Igbo, Ogoni, Engenni, and Ekpeye). While 20 representing (10%) said that social network relations has nothing to do with their language use. This agreed with the view of Ohaeto which states that "The bilingual and multilingual dispositions do not only permit them to effectively communicate with their friends who they share common linguistic and social affiliations, but equally give them the opportunity to explore their creativity as well as been dynamic as they employ their knowledge of three languages - English, Pidgin and their mother tongue.

Out of the 150 students sampled, 100 representing 75% disagreed that the social network relations has no adverse effects on the learning and usage of English Language among the undergraduate students. While 50 representing 25% agreed. This discovery disagreed with Henhart, Raine and Lewis (57) submission that social network relation is bad for youth because it disconnects them from social development.

Also, out of 150 students, 145 representing 97.2% agreed that social network relations has improved their proficiency as it affords them to speak more than one language. While 5 representing

2.8% said it has nothing to do with their language proficiency. This discovery disagreed with Grunter and Eldridge (13) that said students be discouraged from the use of social networks.

Recommendations

As it can be well attested to from the above findings that social network relations and language use exist side by side thus makes the researcher to recommend that.

Since social network relations is usually nicknamed as socialization and the fact that it has improved the proficiency level of the students sampled in more than one language and the ability to pass information within the limited space of the networks, students at all levels be encouraged to be social network-friendly.

Social network relation or interaction is enhanced by the use of language to promote personality development and positive physico-moral, socio-economic and physico- spiritual disposition to significantly contribute one's quota to the over all progress of the society where one lives. Provision of internet facilities to all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should remain the top priority of government at all levels.

Parents are also called upon to greater commitment to the course of the provision of internet facilities at homes as that goes a long way to afford opportunity for higher-tech and globalized form of language use which would enhance greater creativity.

Conclusion

Social network relations is a two way process between sender and receiver. Information is sent from one end and received at another through language which remains the primary medium of communication. And since language skills are interconnected, proficiency in one aspect impacts positively on the other and since growth and development of all human endeavour, language inclusive, is

driven by technology, students and other social groups become adaptive to this new word ideas in the growth and evolution of the language and since the use of language is not static, students freely manipulate these channels to effectively communicate with their friends with whom they share common linguistic and social affiliations making them all bilinguals or multilingual as they speak-English, lingual franca (pidgin) and their mother tongues.

References

Bloch and Trager. *Language and the Society-Cambridge*. Cambridge University press. 1975:14.

Grunter, R. & Eldridge, M. *Design For the Socially Mobile*. NY: ACM Press. 2003:11-17.

Henhart, A., Raine, L. & Lewis, O. *Teenage Life Online.* Washington DC: ACM publishing Ltd. 2001:53-57.

Izuagba, A.C. and N.V. Nwigwe. *Integrating ICT in English Language Teaching*. A Paper Presented at 2009 Edulearn. Virtual Conference. Madrid, Spain. 2009:30-37.

Miller, G. *Social Scientist Wade into Twitt.* ACM Publishing Ltd. (2011:28).

Nosiri, H.U. "The Media and National Vision" NKA. *A Journal of the Arts, Owerri*. 2011:69-82.

Ohaote, N. Fusion of Languages in Texting "A GR8 Opportunity 4 Yuts". A Paper at the *Awka Journal of English Language and Literary Studies*: AJELLS. 2012:197-208.

Schram, W. *Mass Media and National Development.* Standard: UN Press Cal. 1964:10.