

**SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE OF CHUKA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON
WHATSAPP PLATFORMS**

MIRITI GERVASIO


**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Fulfilment of the Requirement for
the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics of Chuka
University**

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY
SEPTEMBER, 2019**

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION


Declaration

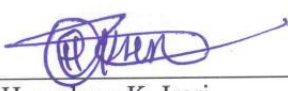
This thesis is my own work and it has not been presented for the award of a degree in this or any other university.

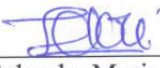
Signature  _____ Date 11/09/2019
Miriti Gervasio
AD13/19092/15

Recommendation

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as the University supervisors.

Signature  _____ Date 11/9/19
Dr. Mary Karuri
Department of Humanities,
Chuka University, Kenya.

Signature  _____ Date 11/09/2019
Dr. Humphrey K. Ileri
Department of Humanities,
Chuka University, Kenya.

Signature  _____ Date 12/09/19
Prof. Colomba Muriungi
Department of Humanities,
Chuka University, Kenya.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my late wife Grace Kambura, my son Evans Mutwiri and my daughter Abigael Mukami.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I convey my heartfelt gratitude to the almighty God for giving me sufficient grace, peace of mind and more importantly keeping me alive as I worked on this document.

I feel immensely indebted to my supervisors; Dr. Mary Karuri, Dr. Humprey K. Ileri and Prof. Colomba Muriungi, who relentlessly provided me with informed guidance and constantly encouraged me through the ups and down of this research. Their contributions towards this research are indispensable.

My special appreciation also goes to Prof. Peter Muriungi and Prof. John Kobia who assisted me in conceptualization of this research. I am equally grateful for the kind of support that Dr Christine Atieno, Dr Hilda Kinyua and Dr Nancy Mbaka offered me as I worked on this document.

I sincerely appreciate Mr Timothy Bariu, Mr James Thiaine, Ms Fiona Kathure and Chuka University students especially the administrators of various WhatsApp groups. Were it not for you, collection of data could not have been a reality.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my parents, Mr and Mrs Joseph Itiri Mboroki for having sacrificed their little income to take me to school. I also express gratitude to my son Evans Mutwiri and my daughter Abigail Mukami who endured my absence as I worked on this research.

ABSTRACT

Social media influences the way people communicate with one another and it is gaining popularity owing to the technological milestones made in the world of communication. As people communicate via social media interaction platforms, language naturally and inevitably experiences some changes. Therefore, there was a need to undertake a linguistic study to account for such changes and developments in language use. The main concern of this study was to analyse the university students' social media discourse. The discourse analysed sprang from WhatsApp interaction platform. The WhatsApp groups utilized were those formed by Chuka University students in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Particularly, the following objectives guided the study: analysing the politeness strategies used in social media discourse, describing the unique features of language inherent in the university students' social media discourse and explaining how identities are marked in the social media discourse. The study employed an eclectic approach whereby three theories; Genre Theory by Macken et al, Social Identity Theory by Tasfel and Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson were used in analysing data. Genre theory was used to examine the distinctive features of language, Social Identity Theory analysed the data on how linguistic identities are marked through language in social media while Politeness Theory shed light on politeness strategies used in the social media discourse. Some of the features that the study sought to analyse included phonological and morphological conditioned word formations, the nature of sentences, code switching and mixing, how paralinguistic and suprasegmental features are represented in social media discourse. A descriptive research design and the qualitative technique was employed to analyse data. Both Snowball and purposive sampling procedures were used. Snowballing was used to establish the WhatsApp groups that were used by the students, while purposive sampling procedure was used to selectively collect texts from WhatsApp groups. The texts that were purposively selected were those that showed politeness strategies, indicated how the university students created identities and those with linguistic features that characterized university students' social media discourse. The researcher collected a total of 116 texts and this sample was adequate for this study. The rationale for choosing WhatsApp was the fact that there was a paucity of linguistic studies based on this interaction platform despite its popularity. This document contains seven chapters; chapter one, two and three which comprise the introduction, the review of related literature and research methodology respectively. Chapter four presents the features of language at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. The study findings revealed that social media discourse is a hybrid between written and spoken discourse that uses language in a distinctive manner and it is characterized by such features as phonographic, semasiographic, logographic, prosodic, paralinguistic, word formation processes, code switching and mixing and these features are depicted in a peculiar manner. Chapter Five entails the creation of identities by the university students. The study findings in chapter revealed that identities are created by using a special register/ jargon, multimodality, and through indexicality. Chapter Six deals with politeness in social media and the findings indicated that four categories of politeness strategies as postulated in the politeness theory were manifested in social media discourse of the university students. Chapter seven provides the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. This study sheds light on the language usage and its dynamics. It will hopefully enrich knowledge on the various tenets of the three theories used: Genre Theory, Politeness Theory and the Social Identity Theory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3 Purpose of the Study	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	7
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.6 Justification of the Study	8
1.7 Scope of the Study	8
1.8 Assumptions of the Study	9
1.9 Definitions of Terms	10
CHAPTER TWO :LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Social Media Discourse and Language of Electronic Mediated Communication (CMC).....	12
2.3 Salient Linguistic Features of Social Media Discourse	17
2.3.1 Word Formation Processes.	18
2.3.2 Phonological Processes.....	21
2.4 Semantic Features and Language Context Analysis	27
2.4.1 Conceptual Meaning	28
2.4.2 Connotative Meaning.....	29
2.4.3 Social and Affective Meaning	30

2.4.4 Reflected and Collocative Meaning	31
2.4.5 Collocative Meaning	32
2.4.6 Associative Meaning.....	32
2.4.7 Thematic Meaning	33
2.5 Formality in Social Media Discourse	34
2.6 Code Switching.....	40
2.7 Language and Identity.....	41
2.7.1 Online Language and Identity.....	44
2.8 Politeness in Different Contexts.	47
2.8.1 Politeness Strategies in the Online Context	52
2.9 Theoretical Framework.....	55
2.9.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT).....	55
2.9.2. Politeness Theory	56
2.9.3 Genre Theory.	60
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	63
3.1 Introduction.....	63
3.2 Research Design.....	63
3.3 Population	63
3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size	63
3.5 Data Collection Procedures.....	65
3.6 Data Analysis	65
3.7 Ethical Considerations	66
CHAPTER FOUR: DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF LANGUAGE INHERENT IN CHUKA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE	67
4.1 Introduction.....	67
4.2 Phonographic and Paralinguistic Features	67
4.3 Semasiographic Features	74
4.4 Lexical Features	79
4.5 Logographic Features.....	83
4.5.1 Use of Letters	84

4.5.2 Use of Letters and Numbers	85
4.5.3 Formation of Words, Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	86
4.5.4 Use of Symbols	87
4.6 Word Formation Processes	88
4.6.1 Coinage	88
4.6.2 Blending.....	89
4.6.3 Clipping.....	90
4.6.4 Compounding.....	92
4.7 The Interplay of Linguistic Features at Morphological, Phonological and Syntactic Levels of Language Study.....	92
4.8. Semantic and Language –Context Analysis Features.....	94
4.9 Discourse Features	99
4.10 Code Switching and Code Mixing.....	100
4.11 Intertextuality of Social Media Texts.	102
4.12 Conclusion	108

CHAPTER FIVE: MARKING OF IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE..... 110

5.1 Introduction.....	110
5.2 Convergence	110
5.3 Use of Common Languages.....	111
5.4 Paralinguistic Features	112
5.5 Use of slang, Colloquial Variants and Kenyan Pidgin “Sheng”	113
5.6 Social Media Sentences and Marking of Identity	118
5.7 Multimodality of Social Media Messages	120
5.8 Informality in Social Media Discourse	123
5.9 Active Vs Passive Constructions	123
5.10 Contractions	124
5.11 Nominalization vs Verbalisation.....	124
5.12 Syntactic and Lexical Complexity	125
5.13 Indexicality.	126
5.14 Divergence	128
5.15 Conclusion	130

CHAPTER SIX: POLITENESS STRATEGIES	132
6.1 Introduction.....	132
6.2 Positive Politeness Strategies.....	132
6.3 Negative Politeness Strategies	143
6.4 Bald on Record	148
6.5 Off -Record Strategies	150
6.6 Conclusion	158
CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	159
7.1 Introduction.....	159
7.2 Distinctive Linguistic Features in Social Media Discourse.....	159
7.3 Marking of Identities by the University Students.....	160
7.4 Politeness strategies	162
7.5 Conclusions.....	163
7.6 Suggestions for Further Studies	163
REFERENCES	164
APPENDIX I: GUIDING CARD FOR DATA TRANSCRIPTION.....	Error!

Bookmark not defined.

LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
Table 2.1: Word Formation Processes	19
Table 2.2: Types of Elision	25
Table 2.3: Politeness Strategies	59
Table 4.1: Social Media Orthography Vs Phonetic Transcription.....	69
Table 4.2: Emoticons for Gestures.....	74
Table 4.3: Emoticons for Facial Expressions	76
Table 4.4: Emoticons for Body Movement.....	77
Table 4.6 Lexical Features	83
Table 4.7 Logographic Features	86
Table. 5.1 Use of Sheng	115
Table 5.2: Code Mixing Analysis	116
Table 5.3: Acronyms and Abbreviations	117

LIST OF FIGURES

	PAGE
Figure 5.1 Multimodality of Social Media Messages	121
Figure 5.2 Multimodality of Social Media Messages	122

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CMC	:	Computer Mediated Communication
CMD	:	Computer Mediated Discourse
D	:	Distance
EFL	:	English as Foreign Language
EM	:	Electronic Media
EMC	:	Electronic Mediated Communication
FTA	:	Face Threatening Act.
H	:	Hearer
MUD	:	Multi- User Dungeon
P	:	Power
R	:	Rank
S	:	Speaker
SM	:	Social Media
SMS	:	Short Messaging Service
T	:	Text

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Interaction within the social media platforms has become inevitable especially for the young generation. The emergence of laptops, tablets, I pads, and smart phones have for instance impacted the way of learning, teaching, socialising, the way many employees work in various sectors, and most importantly, the way people interact with one another (Perez-Sabater & Montero-Fleta, 2015). Language plays a pertinent role in social media interactions just like in any other form of interaction. In the process of interaction via social media, language unavoidably experiences some changes because of contextual variations in its use. This study analyses the university students' social media discourse using Whatsapp interaction platform with a purpose of shedding light on language usage in such platforms of interaction.

Interaction in social media is made a reality by the existence of various interaction platforms that have emerged over time. The social media users make use of these interaction platforms to share all manner of information, videos, pictures and voice calls on a daily basis. The commonly used interaction platforms include: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. This study chose Whatsapp because of a number of reasons that I will point out, but not before the information on the origin and the founder of this application is given.

The WhatsApp application was developed by Brian Acton and Juan Koum who are former employees of yahoo after leaving it in 2009. In 2009, after purchasing an Iphone, Koum had a vision; he wanted to see an entire industry based on mobile applications. With this vision, he explored the possibility of creating an App that would enable mobile users to interact and engage with friends, family and business contacts. The company is based in Mountain View California. As of October 2014, it had employed 55 people. It is the most popular messaging application with 200 million users and logs over 100 million voice calls daily according to companies' blog. WhatsApp offers an alternative to short messages service (SMS). Through WhatsApp, it is possible to send and receive a variety of media including: texts, photos, documents, videos, location as well as voice calls. Its messages are secured with end-to-end encryption meaning that

no third party can listen or read them. The application runs on mobile devices but is also accessible from desktop computers when they connected to the internet (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WhatsApp> 2009).

WhatsApp interaction platform is constantly gaining popularity. The fact that it has not been in existence for long is a pointer to the paucity of research in this area. Perez-Sabater (2012) posits that with the developing of the social media networking and its increasing prominence in the academic world spurs the need to do scholarly research on the area. This paucity coupled with the increased importance of social media and its influence on the academic arena underscored the need for this study to be undertaken.

WhatsApp has become a popular interaction platform. Contemporary life is characterized by the use of smart phones that enable people to use WhatsApp application to interact with one another. The infiltration of smart phones into the market has led to an increased use of the WhatsApp platform as a means of communication not only for students but also for groups of teachers and their students as well. Indeed, it is very easy for teachers to create a group for their students and this constitutes a type of simple social network for a class (Fischer, 2013).

The adoption of WhatsApp as the main channel of communication instead of the other alternatives such as SMS or other social network platforms is due to a number of factors. Church and de Olivara (2013) list possible factors that have made WhatsApp so popular. They include: its immediacy, low cost of the application combined with its ability to send an unlimited number of messages, the desire to belong to what is trending since others have already adopted the application, WhatsApp also offers the ability to chat with multiple friends simultaneously, the knitting together of friends and its sense of privacy in relation to other social networks.

A study done in South Africa among a class of university students indicated positive feedback on the use of WhatsApp. The students claimed that it was very easy for them to communicate with their teachers and the other students in the class. They also considered it as being productive which resulted to fruitful discourse on relevant issues both in the formal and informal environment, further it enabled learners to learn

intimately and authentically and lastly, it was fun (Bere, 2013). In fact, it was felt that the cooperation between the teachers and the students bridged the gap in knowledge and physical distance. Moreover, the platform enhances accessibility, it encourages cooperation and initiates motivation to participate actively in doing academic assignments (Bere, 2013; Chipunza, 2013). These studies underscore the important role that is being played by WhatsApp as an interaction platform in the university context and more importantly how robust this platform is. However, the nature of discourse emanating from this kind of interaction has not been examined exhaustively and therefore this study embarked on analysing the social media discourse on WhatsApp in a Kenyan university context.

The selection of university students and not any other group is due to their immense use of social media, particularly WhatsApp. This may be occasioned by a number of factors that include and not limited to the following: its low cost, its ability to send unlimited messages simultaneously, the desire by the students to remain in touch with their friends at a low cost and the fact that university students form part of the young generation, which is conversant with this technology and the longing by the students to always be informed on new trends and advancements in technology.

Participants in the internet do not necessarily follow any language policy when making choices of the language(s) to be used. Sometimes the interactants end up using several languages at the same time depending on what suits them. Multilingualism on the internet is therefore a common phenomenon that is irreversible and inevitable (Lebert, 1999). This study discerned how university students exploit the languages available to them in their social media interactions. The study found out that students exploit several codes (English, Kiswahili and Sheng and local languages) in their social media discourse which enable them communicate and pass information amongst themselves or even to those outside the university.

The effects of social media and the language use have been underscored by various studies so far done. For instance, there has been a concerted effort to analyse the discourse mediated by computer and transmitted via the internet. Georgakopoulou (1997) argues that the use of internet via computer network has enhanced interaction

over time and taken the world of communication by storm. Similarly, Perez- Sabater (2012) posits that the evolution of social media especially Facebook and WhatsApp has greatly shaped the way people, particularly the 21st generation converses/interacts. The inclusion of the new electronic genre to academic world has had an effect on the use of established traditional modes of communication exchange in university organizations. This study was geared towards investigating how this change has occurred in the linguistic realm.

Social media language has been analysed from divergent interaction platforms. Crystal (2001) analyses the language of the internet using various interaction platforms such as emails, chat groups and websites. The current study focused on language of the internet but situating it in a university context. In analysing the language of the internet, the current study specifically made use of WhatsApp interaction platform. Perez-Sabater (2012) carry out a study on the writing conventions on Face book at the Ohio State University. The research examined the comments posted on the official Face book sites to determine the formality/ informality level of online communication in English and the findings reveal that the native participants use either very informal greetings or no greeting formulae. The current study is also carried out in a university set up and it dwells on issues of identity, politeness and linguistic features that characterize social media discourse using WhatsApp interaction platform.

Adel, Davoud and Ramezanzadeh (2016) conduct a study on strategies of politeness using Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in a class blog. In the study, the four politeness strategies (positive politeness, negative, bald-on-record and off record politeness strategies) as postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987) are analysed. The study findings reveal that blogging made it easy for teachers and learners to negotiate explicitly their powers. Similarly, the current study analysed the four politeness strategies using Brown and Levinson (1987) framework and found that students used the four types of politeness in the process of interacting with one another.

The creation of affordances and constraints in digital media is through four main ways: agency, divergence, multimodality and conceptualization (Cope & Kalantzis, 2010). Agency is concerned with the way users are perceived as active generators of their own

media content and how they differentiate themselves further through their speech, the way they see, think or act. As communicators, they actively construct their own language practices which leads to divergence as their discourse becomes less mutually intelligible. Multimodality, which is the ability to construct meaning through a variety of modes which include, images, video, sound and music, has become cheaper and easier allowing diverse representation of self. To produce new media texts requires one to have new skills of thinking not just in terms of conceptualization but also on how to navigate a media environment that seems to have choices that are infinite. This study uses divergence and multimodality to show how identities are marked by the university students, which is one of the major concerns for this study.

Ling's (2005) study is concerned with the sociolinguistic analysis of the linguistic practices of EMC (Electronic Mediated Communication). The study reveals that females, teens and young adults are the most active users of the (EMC). Young teenage females appear to have a broader register of linguistic variants when transmitting text messages than their counterpart males. In the same study, it is also observed that the different forms of abbreviations used are viewed as ways of identifying group membership. Using a different context, the current study focused on the use of language by the young people at the university with a view of describing the linguistic aspects inherent in social media discourse and how students form identities as well as the politeness strategies they employ.

The findings from the studies done in the online context using a variety of languages have demonstrated that there is explicit evidence that several informal writing conventions of EMC occur in multiple languages besides English. However, the researchers note that more synchronous models of EMC tends to exhibit features that are more informal and "speech-like" than more asynchronous ones. In addition, several features are shared across various models (for instance emoticons, abbreviations (Danet & Herring, 2007; Herring, 2001). The findings of this study explain how such aforementioned linguistic features are exhibited on WhatsApp interaction platform as used by the university students in Kenya. This study found out that aspects of informality and speech like features are common in social media discourse by the

university students. The discussion of these unique linguistic features are discussed in chapter four.

Howe (2013) does a study on language variation in text-based messages where he differentiates the representation of speech and orality. The participants used were American university students in the 18-38 years range. The study findings indicate that there is a considerable variation in language use across all age groups but all the participants exhibit features oriented to phonographic in nature. Phonographic features include graphs used to represent the phonetic features in a language such as syllables, sound segment and features of articulation. Semasiographic features are also found to be very common among the participants. Semasiographic features entail the use of graphs used to represent concept not directly linked to the spoken language. It is observed from the study that only logographic features of language can be associated with age. Logographic features entail the use of graphs used to represent morphemes, lexical items and parts of words such as “c”, “u”, “lol”. In analysing social media discourse for this study, similar features were observed to characterize the students’ interactions as discussed in chapter four of this study.

Sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender and personality in social media have been investigated. For instance, Perez-Sabater and Montero-Fleta (2015) use mobile instant messaging such as WhatsApp to study the sociolinguistic determining factors in cross-cultural and cross generational context where naturally occurring data of WhatsApp messages from the view of oralisation and deviation from the norms are investigated. The languages used were English and Spanish where chats from English and Spanish teenagers aged between 12 and 17 years were used as well as chats from English and Spanish adults aged approximately 40 years. This study similarly used chats from WhatsApp groups formed by students whose age bracket was between 18 and 25 years implying that in both studies, the young generation has been used resulting to findings that exhibit similar traits to some degree as evident in chapter four of this study. Unlike Howe’s (2013) study that used texts written in English and Spanish, this study was carried out in a Kenyan multilingual situation, where English, Kiswahili, Sheng and other local languages are the linguistic codes commonly used even in social media text-based communication among the youth.

The aforementioned studies have been carried out in contexts where texts are written mainly in one language such as English, Spanish, and French and were conducted in countries such as America, France and Spain. The current study was carried out in Kenya, where multilingualism, even in text-based messages, is common. The study established the features of language that were typical of university students in the Kenyan situation since little has been done on the nature of social media discourse that stems from this category of people especially in the Kenyan context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Social media has become a popular platform through which people interact with one another. This is due to technological advancements that the world has witnessed especially in the communication realm. Studies in social media have centred on linguistic features such as orality, informality, phonographic, logographic and semasiographic that show how language is used uniquely. These studies have been carried out mostly in countries such as America, Spain and France where texts analysed were written in one language such as English, French or Spanish. It was therefore necessary to carry out a study in a multilingual context such as Kenya to see how these linguistic features and more others are presented in social media. The study sought to reveal dynamics of language usage in WhatsApp and enrich Genre, Politeness and Social Identity theories that seek to explain human behaviour in interactions.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to analyse the language of social media discourse used by the university students in Kenya in their interaction on WhatsApp platform. This is will hopefully shed light on the dynamics of language in the social media.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To describe the distinctive features of language inherent in Chuka university students' social media discourse.
- ii. To explain how Chuka university students mark identities in their social media discourse.

- iii. To analyse the politeness strategies inherent in Chuka university students' social media discourse.

1.5 Research Questions

This research was guided by the following research questions;

- i. What are the distinctive features of language inherent in Chuka university students' social media discourse?
- ii. How do Chuka university students mark identities in their social media discourse?
- iii. What are the politeness strategies inherent in Chuka university students' social media discourse?

1.6 Justification of the Study

Electronically- Mediated Communication (EMC) is affecting the way people interact and use language. There is therefore a need for people to be acquainted and informed on the new dynamics of language usage in the emerging diverse contexts for meaningful interaction by members of the society. Evidently, social media has changed the way language is being used in our society. As such, there was a need for such changes to be incorporated in the social media discourse studies to shed light on the manner in which language is used particularly on WhatsApp interaction platform. This can be important to the educators and language learners since changes in the way language is being used can affect language learning.

1.7 Scope of the Study

There are varied social media interaction platforms such as Face book, Instagram and Twitter among others but this study did not make use of all the platforms. It particularly focused on WhatsApp groups formed by Chuka University students. Secondly, the study did not focus on all WhatsApp groups in Chuka University. Instead, it focussed on the groups formed by the undergraduate students whose age bracket ranged between 18 and 25 years. This study made use of the texts extracted from university WhatsApp groups. Since university students come from different linguistic backgrounds, they could only interact using English, Kiswahili and Sheng as these are the linguistic codes

that the students share. The interactions in these codes are the ones which were extracted and analysed.

However, there are few instances whereby the students deviate from the norm and exploit their local languages especially when diverging in their communication for various reasons. I therefore found it necessary to analyse the discourse in whichever local languages featured.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

This research made two assumptions. The first one is that Chuka University students have WhatsApp groups that they use to interact with one another. Secondly, the language used by students in their WhatsApp group is unique.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

- Bald on-record:** These are strategies that do not try to play down the threat to the hearer's face but are usually used in contexts where the speaker has a close relationship with the audience such as close friends or family.
- Distinctive Features of Language:** these are unique features of language that can be used to identify group of speakers or even an individual.
- Identity:** Identity is a way a person understands his/her relationship with the world, how that relationship is constructed across space and time and how the person understands the future possibility.
- Logographic Features:** Use of graphs to represent morphemes, syllables, parts of words or lexical items.
- Multi- user Dungeon:** This is an inventively structured social experience on the internet that is managed by a computer programme.
- Negative Politeness Strategies:** These are strategies that are oriented towards the hearer's negative face and they emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer.
- Off-record:** It is an indirect strategy that employs language in an indirect manner which helps to remove the speaker from the potential of imposing.
- Phonographic Features:** use of graphs to represent the phonetic features in a language such as syllables, sound segment and features of articulation
- Positive Politeness Strategies:** These are strategies which are used to make the hearer feel good about himself/herself, his/her interests or possessions and they are mostly used in contexts where the audience is fairly familiar with each other.

Semasiographic Features:

Use of pictures, signs or icons rather than words

Sheng:

A Kenyan popular slang emanating from the interaction of English, Kiswahili and local languages

Social Identity:

It encompasses participants' positions, roles, reputations, relationships and other dimensions of social personae that are conventionally linked to epistemic affective stances.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section brings to the fore related literature review that is geared towards giving some insights into this study. In this section, the literature is organized as follows: general literature on Electronic Mediated Communication (CMC). This is followed by literature that builds on the distinctive features of language that focused on various aspects such as salient linguistic features of social media discourse, word formation processes, phonological processes, semantic features and language- context analysis. Literature that deals with the marking of identity is reviewed where we have language and identity, online language and identity and finally informality. Literature on the politeness strategies is also reviewed under politeness strategies in different contexts and politeness in the online context. Finally, the theoretical framework is discussed whereby the three theories: Genre theory, Politeness theory and Social Identity Theory are explained in detail.

2.2 Social Media Discourse and Language of Electronic Mediated Communication (EMC)

Electronically Mediated Communication (EMC) takes place through electronic gadgets such as computers and phones. By using such devices, people are able to communicate using different platforms which include: emails, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Whatsapp. Interactants are able to interact, build and maintain social relationships using such platforms. By use of these platforms whose applications are installed in the electronic devices, people can interact with each other; hence, social media discourse. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) forms the major component of EMC. Some researchers use the words “electronic opportunism” to describe the feature of CMC (Rocco & Warglien, 1995). In this sense, CMC may be regarded as a process whereby social actors or a group in a given situation bargain the meaning of the different situations, which may arise between them (Stasser, 1992).

Numerous fascinating aspects are inherent in the kinds of conversations that take place in CMC. One of the most striking aspects of the language of social media is that it exhibits some traits that are associated with both written and spoken discourse. Barner

(2003) observes that the language of Electronically Mediated Communication (EMC) is a mixer of both writing and orality. Common features of EMC in English include rebus writing (“b4” for before), emoticon to represent objects or concepts (in this case a smile), colloquial variants to represent socially marked features of speech (“gonna” for going to), use of exaggerated spelling and marks of punctuation (sooooo!!!) to express paralanguage and prosody (“lol” for laugh out loud) (Anis, 2007; Herring, 2001; Palfreymen & Alkhahi, 2007). This study addresses issues of paralanguage, spellings, punctuations and prosody among other linguistic features in the social media discourse which are found to characterize the social media discourse among university students as discussed in chapter four.

The study of language that is used in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) has focused mainly on the features of emails (Baron, 2000; Yates, 2000). On the language used in emails, although written, its style is described as written speech (Maynor, 1994). However, interactions in social media are characterized by use of language in a way similar to people conversing in face-to-face especially where the participants are online at the same time. The dialogue nature of genres in the online platform is closely related with the concept of literary theory by Bakhtin (1986), whereby literature is given emphasis as being in communication with other previous or future works, and a dialogic character of language is also viewed as being in response to what is said. The emphasis for this study is not on the emails but on WhatsApp interaction platform. Linguistic aspects inherent in university students’ social media discourse are analysed and described where orality as a feature is found to characterize students’ social media discourse.

Comments posted on social media pages like those of WhatsApp rarely concentrate on a specific topic religiously unless a topic is prescribed like in the case of TV stations where viewers are directed on what to comment about. Perez-Sabater (2012) observes that Facebook as an online communication platform is used to share information in fields of interest like politics, sports, education, scientific, entertainment or commercial among others. It should be noted that linguistic variation may be evident in such discussions, for instance, linguistic variability may be perceived in the interaction of profanity or in football compared to fora involving serious political topics (Montero –

Fleta et al., 2009). The researcher was interested in the language usage in social media especially by the university students in their WhatsApp interaction platform. The analysis of language use is done in chapter four of this study.

Language used in social media is normally informal and has variety. Blattner and Fiori (2009) observe that interactants on the social media platforms such as Facebook employ colloquial language in their speech acts and tools and this kind of language usage exposes learners to language varieties that language textbooks and departments cannot match. This kind of argument is echoed by Crystal (2001) who posits that discourse that takes place in electronic mediated communication is described as a new species of communication that is more than just a hybrid of speech and writing since it is complete with its own grammar, graphology, lexicon and conditions of usage. Others argue that the language use in electronically mediated communication is best perceived as a unique register filled with a plethora of distinctive varieties of language use (Squires, 2010). This study confirms the existence of a variety of linguistic features where grammar, lexicon and graphology are depicted in a peculiar manner as discussed in chapter four of this study.

Georgakopoulou (1997) posits that another focus of inquiry concerns the way in which participants interact as members of on-line-communities. On-line users for instance, develop over-time shared codes and norms of communication as well as language use in order to affirm or negotiate interpersonal relationship such as intimacy, power or control. The current study focused on how participants distinctively use language in negotiating their personal relationships using WhatsApp as a social media interacting platform. This study found out that students have developed their own unique ways of interacting with one another. They have for instance come up with their own vocabularies and short forms of words coupled with their ability to make use of various modes such as pictures, video cliffs, emoticon and even music as they interact. These features are discussed in details in chapter four.

CMC typically combines features that are common with the spoken discourse particularly the face-to-face communication with the properties of written language (Herring, 2001). Similarly, Georgakopoulou (1997) notes that studies on the written

and spoken features of CMC have given insights on the discourse composition of its varied types such as electronic chat, e-mail, e-conferencing and e-journals. In all of them, a dynamic interplay between written and spoken genres that is strategically adapted to the medium has been documented as part of their emergent and fast evolving discourse norms. The interplay between spoken and written discourse in social media discourse has affected the language usage as it results to the emergence of peculiar linguistic features that this study confirmed.

CMC does not in any way guarantee that an identity that a particular user uses is his/her true or real identity. In fact, users tend to use false identities especially in Multi-user Dungeon (MUD) (Curtis, 1996; Mantovan, 1995; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Spears & Lea, 1992). In this case, CMC is regarded as a form of virtual conversation that it is pared down or perhaps more accurately rarefied form of communication which lacks rules upon which effective interaction is anchored. Therefore, CMC creates an asymmetrical imbalance in the sender-receiver relationship; meaning the sender can transmit information, get cooperation under way but he/she has no guarantee that the receiver receives the transmission while the receiver on the other hand has no guarantee that the sender's declared identity is the real one (Curtis, 1996; Mantovan, 1995; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Spears & Lea, 1992.)

Computer Mediated Communication mainly uses textual devices, abbreviations and smiles as well as MUD meta-commands to reproduce the meta-communicative features (emotions, illocutionary force) of face-to-face conversation. The most common abbreviations in English are "CUL" (see you later), "HOWRU" (How are you) "2B" (To be), "IMHO" (in my humble opinion) and "WRT" (With respect to). Many of the abbreviations are normally used to add an emotional dimension to the literal meaning of the messages. For instance, IMHO adds humour to a sentence. Also, graphic symbols depicting a stylized smiling face are commonly used, to convey positive emotion, negative emotion and surprise (Dix, Finlay, Abowd & Beale, 1993). These kind of language features make the social media discourse stand out as a peculiar way of writing and this study found that there are numerous features of this kind among the university students as discussed in chapter four of this study.

Studies carried out over the years demonstrate that context mostly determines the kind of discourse that emanates from a given social platform. In sociolinguistics, social context refers to the immediate social and physical settings that influence speakers' linguistic style. Social identities are indexed by speakers' language use in text and talk, and thus, social contexts can point to certain "local" (objective and subjective) norms that restrict linguistic style (Coupland, 2007). This study examined the linguistic features peculiar to the social media discourse among the university students and found that students have their unique style of writing in social media that is characterized by the use of special jargon, being informal and ability to use three linguistic codes effectively as shown in chapter four of this study.

Some studies done have focussed on the type of media which motivates variants forms of language use, or how external social factors can be identifiable through content or through user names (Baron, 2008; Herring, 2001). Herring (2001), for instance, argues that information about participants' levels of educational is unconsciously given off by their use of language that may be sophisticated and adherence to some prescription norms. Similarly, age may often be revealed through preoccupation and life experience that is communicated in the message content. Because students are mostly of the same age bracket, their manner of using language is similar as depicted by the kind of grammar and paralinguistic features evident in their discourse. These students are able to decode messages sent by one another which is an indicator that they share some common knowledge on the features used.

Georgakopoulou (1997) observes that research increasingly acknowledges and explores distinctions that are related to style, register, genre, or systems specifications that determine the speed, manner, length and ability to store different types of CMC. In a similar view, increasing emphasis is being placed on contextual analysis that indicates how different parameters of context shape and how they are involved in the discourse of various types of CMC. Language variation can occur due to the alteration of participant's identity and their membership with one or more groups. Considering that language does change with the alteration of the context, it was tenable that this study established aspects of language that are unique to the context in which the interactants

found themselves in. Having reviewed literature on language variation according to the context, let us proceed to linguistic features that are common in social media discourse.

2.3 Salient Linguistic Features of Social Media Discourse

Crystal (2001) observes that distinctive features of a language variety are of several types but many stylistic approaches identify five main types for written language. They include: graphic features, that encompass the general organization and presentation of the written language; the orthographic (graphological) features which are the factors defined in terms of the distinctive use of the alphabet, the capital letters, spelling, punctuation and ways of expressing emphasis; grammatical features that involve morphological and syntactic features combined; lexical features that concern a language's vocabulary defined in terms of the words and idioms used within a variety; and finally, the discourse features that entails how a text is structurally organized in terms of factors such as coherence, relevance, paragraph structure among others. The aforesaid categories were factored in analysing the language variety and its linguistic features inherent in social media discourse by the university students.

Katamba (1993) establishes the connection between syntax and morphology where he observes that the lexicon indicates the meaning of words and morphemes. In addition, it stores other kinds of information relevant to the application of syntactic and phonological rules. Syntax therefore needs to have access to morphosyntactic properties. In the analysis of social media discourse for this study, the researcher attempted to find out the linguistic features exhibited across the various levels of linguistics which includes phonology, morphology and semantics. This approach is further supported by the views posited by Katamba (1993) where the relationship between morphology model and the lexical phonology is clearly drawn. Therefore, there exists symbiotic relationship between the rules that guide the morphological structure of a given word and the phonological rules responsible for the way that particular word is pronounced. The lexicon houses all these rules whereby they are organized in blocks referred as strata. This study analyses the linguistic features that emerged because of the interplay and the interdependence between lexicon and other levels of linguistic study in the social media. Since word formation processes are vital

in revealing the linguistic features in a given discourse, it is necessary to give some insights into some of them.

2.3.1 Word Formation Processes.

Word formation processes embody/ envisage that integral part of language which one cannot overlook if they need to understand the language usage in a given community of speakers/ participants. Generally, there are many word formation processes, which include: compounding, blending, borrowing, acronym, clipping, backward formation, coinage, conversion among others. As people interact via social media, dynamism in language is evident through the lexical processes as discussed in our next chapter.

Katamba (1993) argues that one of the goals of a morphological theory is to account for the varied ways used by speakers to understand and create not only ‘real’ words that occur in their language but also potential words which are not instantiated their utterances. In the process of interaction via the internet, participants who share such things as education, experience, culture and age normally device a mechanism or means of communication that is peculiar to them. One of the devices that these people use is to create words, phrases and other linguistic artefacts known virtually by the same category of participants. This was the case with the university students’ social media where new forms of words and phrases are formed as shown in Chapter four of this study

Crystal (2001) on Netspeak features observes that one of the most obvious-but not less significant features- is the lexicon which exclusively belongs to the internet. This is encountered when someone enters any of the social networking sites. This lexicon however, does not include any of the terminologies associated with computer science, programming, electronics and other relevant subjects. Words like disk, bit, cable, binary and computer form just part of the jargon used in science and technology which extends beyond the net. Conversely, many of these words and phrases emerged because they are needed so as talk about internet restricted situations, activities, operations and personnel; making this domain one of the most creative in contemporary English, involving all major lexical processes. The following table shows major lexical

processes (word formation processes) that come as a result of the creativity of social media users according to Crystal (2001).

Table 2.1
Word Formation Processes

LEXICAL PROCESSES	EXAMPLES
Compounding	“mouseclick”, “mouseover”, “groupware”, “webliography”, “webcam” and “shovelware”
Derivation	“cybersex”, “cyberspace”, “hyperfiction”, “hyperlink”, “softbot”, “chatterbot”, “mailbot”
Blending	“netiquette”, “netizen”, “cybercide”
Coinage	“dubiosity”, “obviosity”, “windowfull”, “screenful”, “boxen”, “vixen”, “geekitude”, “hacktude”
Conversion	“To geek out “(to talk technically) “to 404” (unable to find a page)
Abbreviations	“Afaik” as far as I know, “asap”- as soon as possible, “cya”- see you, “j4f”- just for fun, “iou”-I owe you, “tx”-thanks,” “tttt”- to tell the truth, “4e”- forever, “Y!”- typical man, “X!”-typical woman, “bbfn”- bye bye for now.

Source: Crystal 2001

Crystal (2001) provides numerous word formation processes that indicate the different ways by which words are created in the internet. Some of the word formation processes include; compounding in which two distinct words are combined to create a new word. Another process is derivation that has to do with addition of affixes to the existing words and blending, which involves joining one part of a word to another part of a different word. There is also coinage whereby words are created or coined in the internet while word class conversion is also employed in the creation of words and phrases in the internet. Use of abbreviations and acronyms is one of the commonest ways a great deal of words and abbreviations have been created to represent some words, phrases and even sentences. This study looked into new words and phrases that are used in Whatsapp in order to reveal the peculiar usage of language by the university students. This study confirmed the existence of these kinds of words and also found out that new forms are emerging every day. For instance, Kenyans have witnessed killings

perpetuated by males to their female counterparts when their relationship turns sour. This has led to the coinage of a word to describe this kind of killing, “femicide”; more of these are discussed in Chapter Four.

Katamba (1993) further argues that, productivity is sometimes referred to as creativity which is the capacity that human languages are endowed with to produce an infinite number of words and utterances. In morphology, creativity manifests itself in two distinct ways; rule-governed and rule bending creativity. It is clear in the writer’s argument that most of the words, are created using general rules and principles that speakers have internalized in the language acquisition process. For instance, the addition of suffix-ly to adjectives like slow and quick will lead to formation of adverbs- slowly and quickly. Nevertheless, this ability that speakers have can be extended to produce words without meticulously following the standard rules of word-formation. He further provides examples of words like “stool pigeon” to mean police informer and “red legs” which refers to the poor whites in Tobago; for these words the writer argues that there exist no synchronic rules that can explain the meaning of these semantically unpredictable compounds. It is only in few instances where delving into history that one can get clue of their meanings. In the case of the current study, the researcher attempted to establish how new words are formed in social media and he found that some words are formed following the rules (rule-governed) while others do not follow the rules (rule bending).

Word productivity is hindered or constrained by a number of features that fall under a broad spectrum where blocking is the terminology that is used. Aronoff (1976) posits that blocking may occur if there exist another word with the same meaning; the putative word would have. For instance, due to the existence of the word ‘itself’, one is not allowed to add a productive suffix *-er-* to the word ‘steal’ to mean the person who steals. Katamba (1993) further adds that the concept of blocking can be refined by highlighting a number of other influencing factors. These are phonological, morphological or semantic factors as discussed in chapter four of this study. The next section discusses the phonological processes in order to shed light on phonological features.

2.3.2 Phonological Processes

Since social media discourse exhibits features that are very similar to those of the spoken discourse, some features associated with speech are evident in social media discourse. Phonological processes that form salient features of phonology are manifested in the discourse of social media. In order to highlight phonological features, three phonological processes; assimilation, elision and linking are discussed in details in the light of Rouch (1998).

Assimilation is where sounds that belong to one word cause or influence changes to sounds of neighbouring words. If a phoneme has a different realization from the way it ought to be realized just because it is surrounded by another phoneme, technically we say the phoneme has been assimilated. In other words, assimilation is a process whereby phonemes or a particular word is realized or pronounced differently as a consequence of being near some other phoneme, something that cannot happen if the phoneme or word were in isolation. Assimilation varies in extent according to the rate and style of a speaker's speech. Consequently, it is more likely to be found in speech that is rapid and casual than in slow and careful speech. Sometimes the difference brought by assimilation may be very noticeable or negligible. Generally speaking, most cases which have been described are assimilations affecting consonants (Rouch, 1998).

Rouch (1998) further provides numerous types of assimilation. For instance, we may have a case where two words are combined; the first which ends with a single final consonant (we will call it C^F) and the second starts with a single initial consonant (we will call it C^i):----- C^F / C^i ----- In some environment, if C^F changes to become like C^i in some way, this kind of assimilation is called regressive (the phoneme that occurs first is affected by the one that comes after it); if in another environment C^i changes to become like C^F , then the assimilation progressive. Assimilation of place may be clearly observable in instances where a final consonant (C^F) with alveolar as the place of articulation is followed by an initial consonant (C^i) not articulated at the alveolar ridge. For instance, the final consonant in "that" "dæt" is alveolar "t". In rapid casual speech the "t" will become "p" before a bilabial consonant as in "that person" "/dæp pɜ:sn/

light blue “/laip blu:”

meat pie “/mi:p pai”

If /t/ occurs before a dental consonant, it will change to a dental plosive as in:

that thing /ðæt̪ θiŋ/

get those /ge̪t̪ ðəʊz/

Cut through /kʌt̪ θru/

In an environment where it occurs before a velar consonant, the /t/ will change to /k/ as in:

that case – /dæk keís/

bright colour – /braik kʌlə /

quite good – /kwaik gʊd/

Similarly, in other contexts /d/ would change to /b/, /d/ and /g/ respectively, /n/ to /m/, /ŋ/ and /ŋ/. However, ‘s’ and ‘z’ behave differently in some instances where /s/ becomes /ʃ/ and /z/ becomes /ʒ/ when followed by /ʃ/ or /j/ as in :

“this shoe” – /ðɪʃʃu:/

“those years” /ðəʊzjɪəz/

Notably, consonants that undergo assimilation do not disappear completely. In the given examples, the duration of the affected consonants remains more or less than what one would expect for a two consonant cluster. Also from the examples, it could be noted that assimilation of place occurs in regressive assimilation of alveolar consonants.

On the other hand, assimilation of manner is less noticeable and is only evident in the most rapid casual speech. Therefore, the tendency will be for regressive assimilation and the change in manner will most likely affect an “easier” consonant; one which makes less obstruction to the airflow. It is thus possible to find cases where a final plosive becomes a fricative or nasal.

For example:

that side -/ðæs saɪd/

Good night – /gʊn naɪt/

It is therefore highly unlikely that a final fricative or a nasal would become a plosive.

In another instance there is progressive assimilation of manner where a word initial ‘ð’ follows a plosive or nasal at the end of a preceding word. It is very common to find that the C¹ becomes identical in manner to the C^f but with dental place of articulation. For example:

“in the” – /ɪn ðə / /ɪn̪ə/

“get them” /get ðəm/ /get təm/

“read these /ri:d ði:z / /ri:ðdi:z/

Evidently, phoneme /ð/ occurs frequently with no discernible friction noise.

Another assimilation is that of voice which occurs but in a very limited way. Only regressive assimilation of voice may be found across word boundaries and it is of one type only.

The phoneme theory encounters a problem with a assimilation when for instance: /d/ in good – /gʊd/ becomes /g/ in the context a context like;

Good girl – /gʊg gɜ:l/

Or the bilabial plosive /b/ in some context would behave as follows:

good boy – /gʊb / /bɔɪ/

The assimilation process causes a phoneme to be realized differently by an allophone; like in the case of /gʊg /, /gɜ:l/ and / gʊb bɔɪ /

The voiced alveolar plosive realized in /d/ of “good” has bilabial and velar allophones. Traditionally, phonemes were not supposed to overlap in their allophone realizations so that the only plosives that could realize allophones with bilabial place of articulation

were /p/and /b/; however, this restriction is no longer considered important (Rouch 1998).

Howe (2013) gives the following examples of cases of assimilation in social media “*hafta*”; “*gotcha*” (also *gotchya*); “*Waddga*” and “*Watcha*” (also *watchya*, *Whatcha* and *whatchya*), of which their respective standard written forms are *have to*, *got you*, *what do you*, and *what you*. In the case of “*hafta*”, the form appears to represent a type of regressive assimilation, which is; features of a preceding, articulating sound segment anticipate, and are affected by, qualities of the following conditioning sound (Celce-murcia et al., 2010; Collins & Moes, 2003; Cruttendon, 2001; Crystal, 1997). This study similarly found that assimilation occurs in students’ social media discourse. The findings are discussed in Chapter Four

Elision is where some sounds naturally disappear depending on the circumstances in which they appear. Since social media language usage has some similar traits with the spoken discourse, some of the phonological features evident in the spoken discourse are reflected in social media discourse. It is a process of reduction that refers to the omission of some sound segments, which can lead to the loss of phonemes, syllables and, at times words (Cruttenden, 2001). Rouch (1998) also concurs that in some environment elision may occur which is the loss of some sound segments. Technically, this can be described as the zero realization of a phoneme or simply deletion of some sound segments. Just like assimilation, elision typically occurs in rapid, casual speech. The process whereby a phoneme changes in terms of realization caused by change of speed and casualness of speech is sometimes referred as gradation. Learners of second language need not learn elision; however, it is important for them to be aware of it because when native speakers of English speak to one another quite a number of sound segments which a foreign speaker of English may expect will not actually be pronounced (Rouch 1998).

The following table draws examples from Roach (1998) and shows how elision takes place in spoken discourse

Table 2.2
Types of Elision

Elision type	circumstances	Example	realization
Loss of weak vowel	after /p/, /t/, and /k/	potato tomato canary	/p ^h tɜːtəʊ/ /t ^h mɑːtəʊ/ /k ^h neəri/
Loss of weak vowel	/n/, /l/ or /r/ becomes syllabic consonant	tonight police correct	/tnait/ /pliːs/ /krect/
Avoidance of complex consonant clusters	Avoidance of complex consonant clusters	George the sixth's throne	/dʒɔːdʒ ðə sɪksθs θrəʊn/
Loss of final /v/	in "of" before consonants	lots of them	–/ lɒts ə ðem/
Contractions	After vowels	Had and would	/d/
	After vowels	Have spelt as 've'	/v/
	After consonant	Have spelt as 've'	/əv/
	After vowels	'are' is spelt as "re"	/ə/

Source: Rouch (1998)

The table 2.2 shows the different ways in which elision can occur. The first one involves the deletion of a weak vowels appearing after the bilabial, alveolar and velar plosives respectively: /p/, /t/ and /k/, the second case is the loss of a weak vowel making the preceding consonant syllabic consonant. The third scenario is the simplification of a complex consonant clusters while the fourth one is the deletion of the final labial dental fricative /v/ in the word 'of' before consonants. Finally, we have contractions in which either consonants or vowels can be elided depending on the surrounding environment.

Crystal (1997) adds that, in general, grammatical words which are unstressed such as "of", and "and" are particularly prone to elision. In the case of "of", the phonemes 've' tend to elide to in many varieties of informal speech for instance in the sequence of 'kind of, the word' kind /v/ in 'of', may be elided and reduced to /ə/, and the grammatical unit is sometimes orthographically transcribed as the colloquial variant "kinda". A similar process of reduction can be found when "have" is unstressed and used as a co member of sequence of auxiliaries (Hudleston & Pullum, 2002p. 105). A good example is where a sentence like 'she could have gone' is realized as 'she conda

gone’ orthographically. This study revealed that elision is used in students’ social media discourse as evident in forms such as “em” for then and “n” for and. More of these are discussed later in chapter four.

Linking according to Rouch (1998) is where words are brought together or linked in a speech that is connected as opposed to a hypothetical “mechanical speech”, where all words are separate independent units placed next to each other in a sequence. A good example is that of linking /r/. In the RP English the trill /r/ cannot occur in syllable final position but when a word’s spelling has a final /r/ followed by a word that begins with a vowel; RP speakers will pronounce the /r/. Rouch (1998) provides the following examples of linking.

“here” – /hiə/ but ‘here are /hiə r ə/

Four – /fɔ:/ but ‘four eggs /fɔ:r egz/

Consequently, many RP speakers will use /r/ in linking even when there is no justification from the spelling as shown below:

Formula A’ – /fɔ:mjələ r ei/

Australia all out – /ɔstreilə r ɔ:l aot/

“media event” – /mi:diə r ivent/

This is normally referred as intrusive ‘r’; some speakers of English and teachers will regard this as incorrect or sub-standard pronunciation, but it is very widespread. Linking and intrusive ‘/r/’ are indeed special cases of juncture whereby the relationship between a particular sound and the sounds that immediately precede it are given importance in phonological theory. A good illustration of: ‘my turn’ – /mait ɜ:n/

The relationship between /m/ and /ai/, /t/ and /ɜ:/ and /ɜ:/ and /n/ is described as one of close juncture. /m/ is followed by a pause and /n/ is followed by a pause and so /m/ and /n/ are said to be in a position of external open juncture. Many ingenious minimal pairs have been invented to show the significance of the juncture.

For instance:

a) “might rain” *mait rein* (r voiced when it occurs initially in “rain” as short)

b) my train – *mai treɪn* (r becomes voiceless when it follows t in train).

a). ‘all that I ‘m after today (t becomes unaspirated when it occurs in the final position in that)

b). ‘all the time after today’ /ɔ:l ðæt aɪm a:ftə təder / (t becomes unaspirated when it occurs in word final in ‘that’)

a). he lies / hi:laɪz/ (“clear I” initial in lies)

b). “heal eyes” /hi:laɪz/ (“dark I” final in heal)

a). “keep sticking” /ki:p stɪkiŋ / (t unaspirated after s)

b). “keeps ticking”/ ki:ps tɪkiŋ /(t aspirated in ticking”)

A particular word’s context always determines where the boundary occurs, therefore making the juncture redundant. Hence, there is a big difference when words are pronounced in isolation and when they are connected in a particular context. This study noted that linking is evident in social media by students as seen in the word “warritis” (what is this). Discussion on linking is done in Chapter Four of this study.

2.4 Semantic Features and Language Context Analysis

Social context plays an integral role in determining what a certain linguistic form or expression means. According to Gee (1999), the meaning of an utterance and the context have a lot of interdependence. Gee further adds that certain forms in a language for instance English where we have independent and dependent clauses, the latter depends on the former so as to be meaningful. Leech (1974) notes that semantics is the study of meaning and it is central in the study of communication, the study of the human mind which involves the thought process, cognition and conceptualization. All these concepts are closely related to the way we classify and convey our experiences of the

world through our language and objects of nouns, sentences and verbs. These forms are associated with certain types of functions or meanings and this is what is referred to as “meaning potentials”.

Gee (1999) further posits that when we actually write or utter a sentence, it has what is referred to as ‘utterance –token meaning’ or what he refers to as ‘situated meaning’. In language use, situated meanings arise because particular language forms take specific or situated meanings in specific contexts. The term ‘context’ in language refers to an ever-widening set of factors that accompany language in use. They include people present, (what they know and what they believe), the material setting, the languages that come before and after a given utterance, the social relationships that exist of the people involved, and their ethnic, gendered, and sexual identities, as well as the institutional factors and cultural history.

Moreover, there are features of language that point to the meaning. The meaning of words, phrases or sentences is hugely depended on the context in which they are used. Semantics studies the meanings that can be expressed. It is convincingly claimed to be a component discipline of linguistics that is most fruitful and exciting point of departure at the present time. Some people would like semantics to simply pursue the study of meaning that is communicated by language in a wide sense. On this basis, meaning is broken down into several different components, giving vocal importance to logical meaning also referred to as conceptual meaning. Other six types of meaning are social, affective, connotative, reflected, collocative, and thematic meaning (Leech, 1981). All the types of meaning are discussed in the light of Leech (1981).

2.4.1 Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning is sometimes referred to as denotative or cognitive meaning. In linguistic communication, it is assumed to be the central factor. The other types of meaning are not so integral to the essential functioning of language like conceptual. In terms of organization, conceptual meaning has the most complex and sophisticated compared with similar organization on the syntactic and phonological levels of language. The two principles involved are constructive and the principle of structure.

Constructive features refer to sound classifications in phonology in that any label applied to a sound defines it positively or by implication negatively depending on the features it possesses. Thus, the phonetic symbol like /b/ may be viewed as a bundle of contrastive features [+labial +voice +obstruent –sonorant]. The assumption here is that the distinctive sounds or phonemes of a language are identifiable in terms of binary or binary contrasts. Equally, the conceptual meanings of a language can be studied in terms of contrastive features so that a like word woman could be specified as; [+HUMAN, -MALE, +ADULT] as distinct from say “boy” which could be defined as [+HUMAN, +MALE, -ADULT].

Structure is the second principle. This principle states smaller linguistic units help to build larger linguistic units. The two principles of constituent structure and contractiveness represent the way language is organized respectively on what linguists term as paradigmatic selectional and syntagmatic combination axes of linguistic structure. In the analysis of social media discourse, semantic features have been discussed where meanings of various forms are explained in the light of conceptual meaning vis-a-vis any other meaning that is acquired. The details of these are in Chapter Four.

2.4.2 Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is the communicative value that an expression has by virtue of what it refers to. It's actually conceptual content whereby the notion of reference overlaps with conceptual meaning. The word woman conceptually may be defined by three features (+HUMAN, -MALE, +ADULT), then the three properties ‘human,’ ‘adult’ and ‘female’ necessarily provide the criteria of the correct use of the word. In the real world of meaning, these contrastive features become attributes of the referent (that which the word refers to). In addition to these features there are other non-criteria properties that the referent woman is expected to have. They include physical characteristics like they have a womb; psychological and social properties like they are “gregarious” that is they feel the maternal instinct and may still extend to features which are merely typical rather than invariable concomitants of womanhood (capable of speech, experienced in cookery, skirt or dress wearing). Further, connotative meaning

is known to embrace the “putative properties” as a result of the viewpoints adopted by the society or simply an individual.

In the past, the referent woman has also been burdened with such attributes as frail, prone to tears, emotional, cowardly, irrational, inconstant imposed upon her by the dominant male just like the more becoming qualities such as “gentle” “compassionate,” “sensitive” “hardworking”. These connotations vary depending on the age and the society the referent woman belong to. Similarly, the connotations will vary from one individual to another within the same speech community. Connotative meaning is open ended; the same way our beliefs and knowledge about the world are open-ended. Indeed, any characteristic of the referent identified either subjectively or objectively may contribute to the connotative meaning of the expression which denotes it.

2.4.3 Social and Affective Meaning

Social meaning refers to what a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. Partly, we “decode” the social meaning of an utterance through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of style within the same language. We also identify some words or pronunciations as being dialectal that is telling us something about the social or geographical origin of the speaker. Other features of language may indicate something about the social relationship that exists between the hearer and speaker. In this case, there is a scale of status usage that descends from the formal and literary English at one point and to colloquial familiar and eventually slang English at the other.

According to Crystal and Davy (1969), the following are dimensions of socio-stylistic variation.

Dialect – this a variety of a language depending on the geographical region or of a social class.

Time – The language of the eighteenth century

Province – this is the language of law, science or advertising

Status – polite, colloquial and slang

Modality – language of memoranda, lectures and jokes

Singularity – the style of dickens of Hemingway.

The list indicates the range of style differentiation possible within a single language. It is not surprising perhaps that we rarely find words, which have both the same conceptual and stylistic meaning.

In a local sense, social meaning may include what is normally called the *illocutionary force* of an utterance; that is if it is interpreted as a request, an apology, an assertion or a threat. The function an utterance performs in this respect may be only indirectly related to its conceptual meaning. The sentence “I haven’t got a knife” has the form and meaning of an assertion and yet in social reality (for instance if said to the waiter in a restaurant) it can take on the force of a request such as “please bring me a knife”. From this, it is only a step of how language indicates the speaker’s personal feelings, including his attitude to the listener or whatever he/she is talking about.

On the other hand, affective meaning is how language indicates the speaker’s personal feelings, his/her attitude to the listener or whatever he/she is talking about. Affective meaning is often conveyed through the conceptual or connotative meaning of the words used. It is largely a parasitic category in that for one to express their emotions they will rely upon the mediation of other categories of meaning- conceptual, connotative or stylistic.

2.4.4 Reflected and Collocative Meaning

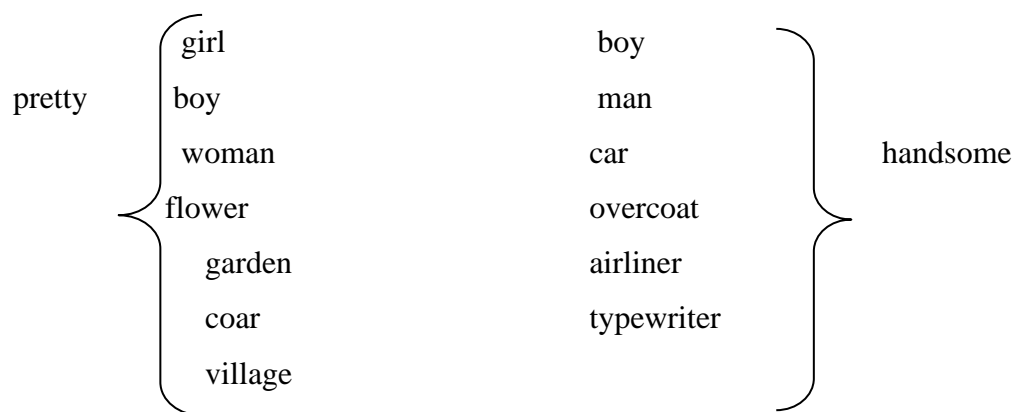
Both meanings involve an interconnection on language’s lexical level. First, reflected is the meaning which arises in cases where there are multiple conceptual meaning; one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense. In a church service for instance, the synonymous expressions, the comforter, and the holy ghost” refers to the third person of the Trinity”. These terms are conditioned by the non-religious everyday meanings of comfort and ghost. The comforter seems warm and ‘comforting’ (although in the religious context it means the strengthener or supporter) while the Holy Ghost sounds awesome. One sense of a word seems to “rub off” on another sense.

The case where reflected meaning overshadows conceptual meaning is more marked in taboo words. Good examples are those in senses connected with the physiology of sex, they include terms like intercourse, ejaculation, and erection. In fact it is very difficult

to use these terms without conjuring up their sexual associations. This process of taboo contamination has contributed to the dying out of the non-taboo sense of word. In other instances, there is actual replacement of the word like now cock by rooster this is brought by the influence of the taboo use of the former word. In the social media discourse and the wider society, the word sponsor is following the same route as it refers to a man who has a sexual relationship with and the man is seen as provider to the young girl. If a person calls you a sponsor and you are a man, what comes first is that reflected meaning. More discussions of these are in chapter four of this study.

2.4.5 Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning refers to the associations a word acquires as a result of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment. For instance, words like ‘Pretty’ and ‘handsome’ share common meaning in good-looking but may be differentiated by the range of nouns with which they are likely to co-occur with.



There may be an overlap in the manner in which words collocate. For instance, it is acceptable to have a pretty woman, and handsome woman although both of them suggest some different kind of attractiveness because of the collocation of the two adjectives. Other examples are quasi- synonymous verbs such as ‘wander’ and ‘stroll’ (like animals may wander, but may not stroll); ‘tremble’ and ‘quiver’ (one may trembles with fear but quivers with excitement).

2.4.6 Associative Meaning

Associative meaning comprises many imponderable factors that it can be studied systematically only by approximative statistical techniques. In effect Osgood, Suci,

Tannen and Baum (1957) propose a method for a partial analysis of associative meaning. Thiers is a technique that enables one to plot meaning in a multi-dimensional semantic space, using data from speakers' judgments recorded in terms of seven-point scales such as 'happy- sad', 'hard-soft', 'slow-fast'. Statistically, the investigators established that particular significance lied in three major dimensions: those of evaluation (good-bad), potency (hard-soft) and activity (active-passive).

Another important observation about the semantic differential is that it has been found useful in psychological fields such as personality studies, attitude measurement, and psychotherapy where differences in the reactions of individuals are under scrutiny rather than common core reactions that they share. Thus, associative meaning is less stable because it may vary depending on the individuals' experience whereas conceptual meaning is substantially part of the 'common system' of language that members of a given speech community may share.

2.4.7 Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning is communicated by the way in a speaker or writer organizes the message in terms of focus, ordering and emphasis. For example;

A sentence in the active voice such as:

- 1). Mr Benson donated a bus

Bears a different meaning from its passive form which is;

- 2). The bus was donated by Mr Benson.

Although the two sentences have similarity in the conceptual content, contextually, the two statements suggest different communicative values. The sentence in active voice seems to answer an implicit question 'What did Mr Benson donate?' While the passive sentence seems to answer an implicit question 'What was donated by Mr Benson?' Therefore, thematic meaning actually a choice a writer makes between alternative grammatical constructions as in:

- a). A man is waiting in the hall
- b). There's a man waiting in the hall

The effect here is the focus that is directed at the word which contains new information against a background of what is already known or assumed to be known. The study of the meanings of some words and phrases was guided by the above types of meanings according to Leech (1974). The meanings of words and phrases keep on changing depending on the context in which they are used and therefore this study attempted to explain the various meanings of words and phrases as used in the social media. Let us now focus our attention on the formality in social media discourse.

2.5 Formality in Social Media Discourse

Trugill (1992) observes that formality is a word used to describe a variety of language which changes depending on the subject, topic or activity being done. He also adds that formality may be characterized by both lexical and grammatical features. According to Thornborrow and Wareing (1993), one indicator of formality in language is the use of passive voice as opposed to active voice. Contractions of words is also another salient feature of informality since contractions are mainly used in spoken language as opposed to written although in some instances they can be used for written, a case in point is email. An example of contraction is ‘doesn’t’ instead of ‘does not’, ‘won’t’ instead of will not. An apostrophe is included in the written form (Bjork et al., 1998).

Nominalization is a marker of formality while verbalization is an indicator of informality. In other words, the more the nouns or noun phrases, the higher the formality but the increase in the number of verbs increases the informality of a text. The increase of verbs also tends to increase the adverbs which also reduces the level of formality. On the contrary, an increase in articles and adjectives will increase the level of formality. This because of their syntactic relationship with a noun (Heylighen & Dewaele, 2012). This study found out that verbalisation is more common among university students’ social media discourse since there is a higher frequency of occurrence of verbs and adverbs compared to the nouns, adjectives and articles.

In their effort to shed light on the concept of formality, a number of linguists have taken a myriad of perspectives in their studies. For instance, Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) observe that a good example of formal language may be the sentence that is read out at the end of a trial by a judge while informal speech may be produced by close friends or

family members in a relaxed conversation. Richards, et al. (1997:144) define “formal speech” as follows: “the type of speech used in situations when the speaker is very careful about pronunciation and choice of words and sentence structure. This type of speech may be used for example, at official functions, and in debates and ceremonies”.

Haliday (1964) proposes three variables that are crucial in determining the register. These are field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the subject matter or topic, tenor refers to the participants’ roles in an interaction and their relative status or powers and mode refers to the channel of communication or what the language is doing.

As for Trudgil (1992), he explains that formality is a word that may be used to describe a variety of language which changes depending on topic, subject or activity. The researcher suggests that lexical and grammatical features characterize formality. Indeed, the level of formality can identify the social group an individual belongs to and is often considered as Jargon by those who do not belong to the particular group. Perez-Sabater (2012) focuses on the degree of formality and informality used in the opening and closing formulae in Facebook. This study on the other hand, explored aspects of formality as depicted in the Whatsapp platform. Karlsson (2008) studies formality in websites whereby he analyses and identifies the level of formality used in websites. This study focused on aspects of formality and the findings are presented in chapter five of this study.

Linguists have devised different methods of measuring formality. For instance, some linguists (Gelas, 1988; BlancheBenveniste, 1991) have tried to determine the level of formality in a speech extract by taking into consideration the frequency of words and grammatical forms that are viewed as either “familiar” or “careful” such as “vous”vs “tu” or the omission of the negative particle when negating a sentence in French. However, they argue that defining formality in this way is ad hoc, intrinsically limited and too dependent on the language in question and its culture. Other parameters have been used to measure the degree of informality and formality in the new electronic genres like the number of words in sentence, use of paralinguistic cues, informal language, spelling mistakes and courtesy formulae (Perez-Sabater et al., 2008). This study used the above criteria in determining the aspects of formality in social media

discourse. In a very précised manner, Joos (1967) provides a scale that can be used to measure the level of formality in both written and spoken discourses.

The following are the five styles of formality according to Joos (1967): Frozen style is considered the most formal style which has printed unchanging language, an example is the language used in the Bible. It often contains archaisms which are features of writing that are no longer in use. In formal style, there is one-way participation and no interruption. Often, formal style contains technical vocabulary while consultative style is a two-way participation. Background information is normally provided and no prior knowledge is assumed. Casual style characterizes conversations in groups with friends and acquaintances. Common features include; ellipsis, slang and interruption. There is no background information provided. Finally, is intimate style often used in non-public situations; intonation is highly utilized and it is private. The style used by the students in their social media is casual if we consider Joos' classification.

The criteria provided by Joos is rather general and therefore other scholars have come up with more specific ways of determining the level of formality in either written or spoken discourse. For instance, Karlsson (2008) describes linguistic features of formality in relation to syntactic complexity and lexical formality. Lexical formality explains the meaning of a word root and length. Karlsson (2008) argues that words may semantically appear to be synonymous while in actual sense, they are not. Take for instance, *home*, *abode* and *residence*. All the three have the same meaning, however, they are used in different contexts. While *home* is the most informal, *residence* is the most formal. Karlsson adds that most formal words in English trace their roots to Greek and Latin while the informal words ones have their roots in German. Thornborrow and Sham (1998) observe that word length is another indicator of formality of a word. The longer a word is, the more formal it is. *Home* is monosyllabic while *residence* is polysyllabic; therefore, more formal.

Syntactic complexity on the other hand, presents the meaning of contractions and nominalization and deixis as means that can be used to measure formality. Furthermore, they explain the vital role played by active vs passive voice in determining formality. Heylighen and Dewaele (1992) suggest that there is increase in formality when the

distance in space, time or background between the interlocutors increases and when the speaker is male, introverted and academically educated. They also state that stylistic variations may result from the fact that different people express themselves differently even if the same persons are expressing the same idea. Also, people may express themselves quite differently when addressing different audiences, even if they may be using same or different modalities.

The way deictic words and non-deictic ones are used in a sentence is paramount in determining the level of formality. According to Thornborrow and Sham (1998), deictic words are those words whose meaning can only be understood by providing /knowing the context. For instance, in the sentence, *I will come tomorrow*, there is no explanation of, *who am I or when is tomorrow*. Heylighen and Dewaele (1992) divide words into two classes depending on whether they are used in context-dependent or context-independent language.

2.5.1 Context Dependent Words

These are words with a deictic meaning. According to Heylighen and Dewaele (1992), there are four identifiable types of deixis: deixis referring to place like ‘here’, ‘there’, and ‘down’; deixis referring to person like ‘I’, ‘he’, and ‘she’; deixis of time like ‘later’, ‘tomorrow’ and that of discourse which includes the linguistic structures above the level of the sentence, for instance, anaphora, exclamations and interjections. The opposite of deictic words are non-deictic words, which usually build context-independent language. Similarly, Leveit (1989), identify four types of deixis; referring to a person (“we”, “him”, “my”,...), place ‘here’, ‘those’, ‘up stairs’,.....), time (“now”, “later”, “yesterday”...) and discourse (“therefore”, “yes”, “however”....). The latter category of deixis includes anaphora which refers to things earlier expressed. More examples of discourse deixis are exclamation or interjection like “Ouh!” , “wah!” and “Ok”. In logic, deictic and anaphoric words would correspond to variables, which do not necessarily have a fixed referent interpretation.

Using the passive form rather than active voice is a sign of formal language. In the passive sentence for instance, focus is given to what is being done rather than who is doing what. Also, absence of contractions signifies formal language. Contractions are

usually used in spoken language but they may be used in written forms as well like in emails. A contraction is when a new word is formed from existing one or more individual words, but there are some letters or syllable left out. For instance, don't instead of do not. Writing or saying words which are contracted are features of informal language (Bjork et al., 98 in Karlsson, 2008).

Nominalization is another aspect which may be used to increase the level of formality (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). It entails a process whereby either a noun or a syntactic unit that is functioning as a noun phrase is derived from any other kind of unit. For instance, the nouns, 'kindness' and 'government', are nominalizations of the adjectives 'kind' and the verb 'govern' (Karlsson 2008). Hence, a higher noun frequency denotes a more formal text. Conversely, we have verbalization; a transformation of adjectives into frequency adverbs which will increase when the frequency of verbs increases (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). Emanating from the above discussion, Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) developed a model that they called Formality (F) measure. It is imperative that the focus be shifted a little so that this model is discussed in detail with the aim of informing this study, and below is their postulation.

F measure is a criterion used to determine the level of formality in a text. This is done by firstly determining the number of words whose meaning depends on the context (context dependent words) and those whose meaning is not dependent on the context (context independent words). After determining the number of context dependent words and context independent words, the F measure formula is applied to determine the level of formality as discussed in the next sub topics. According Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), F measure is easy to apply to corpora of large linguistic data without requiring specific rules of handling all possible subtitles or exceptions of contexts or the particular language. It is also able to unambiguously differentiate discourses that are considered informal from those that are considered formal. The degree of conceptuality is made easier when the focus is on cases of anaphora or deixis at the level of single word units rather than contemplating complex implicatures at the level of sentences and other larger linguistic units. Analysing language at the lexicon level makes it possible to avoid all intricacies which may be encountered at the phonetics, syntax, semantics and pragmatics levels. Their basic idea is to divide the words at the

lexicon into two classes; context-dependent or context-independent when used in speech.

2.1.6.2 Context- Independent Words

This category consists of non-deictic words which normally do not vary under changes of context. Typically, context-independent words are nouns, adjectives (which specify the meaning of nouns further), prepositions (which mainly create a relation by introducing a noun phrase with additional information) articles and conjunctions (which have no reference, neither to an implicit context, nor to an explicit objective meaning, which does not seem to be related to the deixis or formality of an expression, but only to its structure). Therefore, they are not put in either category (Dawaele, 1996a, 1996b).

Conclusively then, the formal, non-deictic category of words, whose frequency increases as the text's formality, includes the nouns, adjectives, prepositions and articles. On the other hand, the frequency increase of pronouns, verbs, adverbs and interjections decreases the formality level. The last category of conjunctions lacks prior correlation with formality. When you add the frequency of the formal categories, subtract it from the frequencies of the deictic categories and normalize to 100, you get a measure which always increases with an increase in the level of formality. Following this. The following simple formula can be derived.

$$F = \text{Noun frequency} + \text{Adj. frequency} + \text{prep frequency} + \text{Article frequency} - \text{Pronoun Frequency} - \text{verb frequency} - \text{adverb frequency} - \text{Interjection frequency} + 100/2$$

The frequencies are expressed as percentages of the number of words belonging to a particular category with respect to the total number of words in the excerpt. F will then vary between 0% and 100%. If an excerpt has more formal language, there will be a higher F value. This study did not use the F measure model exactly the way it is spelt out but selected a few features of language in the model that were used to shed light on the aspects of formality. For instance, aspects such as nominalisation, verbalization, contraction and active voice verses passive voice were used to determine the formality of social media discourse in chapter five of this study.

2.6 Code Switching

In multilingual situations, code switching is very common. It normally occurs where speakers are able to use more than one language as they speak. According to Sridhar and Sridhar (1980, p.203-204), code switching is where guest elements which have their own internal structure reside in the sentence of the host language. Valdes-Fallis (1977) adds that code switching is the use of two languages interchangeably or simultaneously. This implies that there must be some degree of competence in the two languages even if fluency is yet to stable. Romaine (1989) notes that code-switching within a sentence tends to occur more often at a point where the syntax of the two languages align, which determine whether the switching will be one of the following: Inter sequential switching - that takes place at a close of a sentence boundary or clause level. Intra-sequential switching- takes place within the same sentence or clause. Tag/emblem switching-involves switching a phrase or word from language X into language Y. Intra word-switches within a word at morpheme boundary.

Myers Scotton (2001) argues that code switching is best explained by the optional use of speakers' resource in their linguistic repertoires. He argues that speakers engage in code switching through conscious calculations of cost and benefits, they discover that the rewards of code switching will be greater than those of maintaining a monolingual discourse pattern. On the other hand, Trudgill (1995) regards language switching and shifting as a code switching and observes that speakers switch for various purposes. They are to influence a situation when one desires and to relay nuances of meaning and personal intention like when one wants to make the conversation more intimate and confidential or signal two or more identities at once. Haugerud and Njogu (1991) have also done some research on political rallies in Kenya. They opine that political language is by large implied and the political speakers are strategists who convey their information in particular ways only beneficial to their personal and national goals.

There are various reasons why people code switch in their speech. One reason is to signal their identity. Myers Scotton (1993:253) illustrates this fact by using the African context where an individual who wants to stress their African roots with others, would choose Kiswahili but if one wishes to establish a notion that they are more in position of authority they might choose English. In an attempt to capture both of these

atmospheres, the speaker may switch between the two. In social media discourse, students are seen to code switch where one of the motivation is to establish their identity. This discussion is in chapter five of this study.

Scherer and Giles (1979,) define markers as ‘speech cues that potentially provide the receiver with information concerning the senders biological, psychological and social characteristics. They posit that the social context may be determined by what is being marked, for instance the spoken words, their meaning and the social category like the addressee setting and purpose of the speaker. Auer (1995) adopts a sequential approach to code switching by stating that any conversational code- alteration theory is bound to fail if it does not consider the code alteration meaning which depends on the essential ways of its sequential environment.

One of the major arguments in code switching is whether it occurs in a predictable manner or not. Scholars have taken different positions with regards to the same. For instance, Blom and Gumpers (1972), in an article on code switching between the non-standard and standard dialects found that alternating codes among the local people in Hamnesberget in Norway was patterned and predictable. However, Gumpers (1982) again expresses a divergent opinion where he observes that code switching is not a uniform phenomenon; the norms vary from one group to another where each communicating group may tend to establish its own convention with respect to both borrowing and code switching and other factors like region of origin, social class, local residents and occupational niche.

2.7 Language and Identity

Identity is typically who an individual is, or the qualities of an individual or group which make them different from others. According to Norton (2013), identity is the way one understands his or her relationship with the world and how that relationship is constructed across space and time. Bucholtz and Hall (2010) simply define identity as the social positioning of the self and the other. Furthermore, Block (2006) notes that it is socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narrative as an individual performs, interprets and projects in dress, bodily movement, actions and language. Social identity involves participants’ roles, positions relationships, reputations, and other dimensions

of social personae, which are conventionally linked to affective and epistemic stances (Ochs & Capps 1996). De-fina et al. (2006) view collective identities as what people think characterizes them as a group which is different from other groupings.

Scholars have categorized identity variedly; Zimmerman (1998) for instance, suggests three categories of identity; discursive, situated and transportable identities. Discursive identity is the one a person has within a given speech situation; speaker- listener, questioner – answer; different discursive identities will be formed as the conversation unfolds. Situated identities are those that will be adapted when participants are engaged in a particular social identity. Transportable identities are those ones which travel with the individual across a variety of interactions. From a poststructuralist point of view, there are two types of identity; individual identity and collective identity. Individual identity is how a person answers the question “who am I and various concepts he/she has about oneself while facing different situations in life or invoking experiences which happened in the past and memories”. Collective identity is concerns the picture that a whole community presents to itself and other communities. Having defined and categorized identity, let us focus on the linguistic identity.

Language and identity are often viewed as dynamic, continuously shifting and being renegotiated and co-constructed in response to the fluid and ever-changing contexts of our interactions (Coulmas, 2005). Similarly, Darwin (2016) observes that identity is dynamic, multiple and even contradictory since a person’s sense of self and the relation to the world continuously shifts. Hozhabrossadat (2015), shares similar views by noting that linguistic identities are constructed implying that it is not something static but a never-ending process. Language changes our identities and the different forms of language we use shape our identities. This study analysed how the university students establish their identity by using language in social media and it was discovered that students coin words, use colloquial forms of words and use casual style in their discourse as shown in Chapter five of this study.

Speaker’s identity is normally displayed by ones linguistic behaviour. A lot of information regarding the speaker or an interactant are revealed through language. Coulmas (2005) posits that language is experienced as a marker of identity given that

as people speak, they will reveal who they are, where they grew up, their gender, their station in life, their age, and the group they want to belong to. In a university, we have learners who share a lot and the researcher established their linguistic patterns that defined their identity. The researcher found that students' chats follow a similar pattern that enhances creation of identity.

The context in which language is used determines the identity. This is because the way an individual uses language in a certain situation may vary significantly with the way the same person uses language in another context hence different identities. Gee (1999) considers identity as one of the components of situation. Any situation involves identity as a component. In fact, individuals use different styles or varieties for different purposes. They may use the different varieties of language to recognize and enact different identities in different contexts; they may also use the different varieties to get engaged in all other tasks. One individual might talk, act, and interact in way that one wants to be recognized as a "street-gang member" in one context and in another context, talk, act and interact in different way so that one gets recognized as a "gifted student" (Gee, 1999). The university students played different roles, interacted with different kinds of people and therefore depicted a plethora of identities as they chatted, and interacted in different ways owing to the variations in the contexts they found themselves in.

In situations with monolingual speakers, speakers normally adjust their speech by choosing one or more varieties of the same language. This choice is not only determined by the external factors but also the context and the speakers' sensitivity to the role of relationships expressed through language use. Similarly, choosing vernacular forms and colloquial styles are often speakers' ways of expressing intimacy and solidarity with a group and the social systems underlying these relationships influence the speakers' speech (Coulmas, 2005). This study was however not based on a monolingual situation but on a multilingual one and the relationship between the participants was clearly spelt out; university students who are in certain groups which they use to interact. As interactants engage in communication via social media, they tend to choose language in a manner that is similar to one another so as to create rapport amongst themselves and as such, they create identity in the process.

Linguistic identities may make individuals be integrated to membership of a community; hence, encourage accommodativeness and solidarity or lead to their being excluded (Hozhabrossadat, 2015). This study focused on how university students tend to include one another (convergence) and how they exclude each other (divergence) in their social media interactions. Inclusion is an indicator of strive to appear similar hence creation of identity. This study employed convergence and divergence in showing how students create identities. It was discovered that divergence was used by the sub group to indicate their identity through switching to their ethnic languages but convergence overrode divergence in that many were the times students used language in a similar manner so as to appear the same hence realizing their common identity.

Interactants have to make choices on whether to use language formally or informally. These choices are mainly determined by the context as well as the relationship that exists among the participants. The communicators may choose either formal or informal language to index their identity or to seek accommodation by the members of a certain group. Trudgil (1992) explains formality as a word that is used to describe a variety of language which keeps changing depending on the topic/subject or even an activity being undertaken. On the other hand, this study, explored (in) formality as depicted in the social media discourse and how it is used in the marking of identities. The students' social media discourse indicates high level of informality. The use of informal language demonstrates the close and cordial relation among the students. Discussions on the informal usage of language by the students and how this enhances marking of identity is in chapter five of this study.

2.7.1 Online Language and Identity

Technology has had an impact in transforming the world in multiple, exciting and unanticipated ways; therefore, facilitating a rapid flow of information capital and services across the globe. The mobile devices in particular have dramatically revolutionized the way we work, interact and communicate with one another in an affordable manner (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Online communication and social media have enabled the development of new patterns of movement and forms participating socially. In this world where many people are digitally connected, individuals move in a fluid manner across online and offline spaces making the boundaries of time and space

blurred and at the same time transforming nations of private and public domains (Gee & Hayes, 2011). In real time and space, social media users take pictures and upload them or post status updates making the process a naturalized activity. Using location services, the geographical representation of a person's actual position can be recorded and this displaces the self and the location so that both are represented in real time, blocking the boundaries between offline and online realities (Kress, 2009). With the increasing use of technology, people have formed various groups that are distinct from others, hence, attracting scholarly works in linguistics on such groups.

This digital revolution has tremendously changed the language triggering an upsurge of new vocabularies, genres, and styles by reshaping writing practices. In the development of a mode of communication whereby writing approximates speaking, instant messaging (IM) and texting facilitate the production of new words and styles that close the gap between speech that is interactive in nature and the capacity of writing which is documental (Warschaver & Matuchniak, 2010). This study analysed the new words and phrases used by university students in their WhatsApp interaction platform with an aim of determining how such usages enhance the creation of identities by those students. The discussion of such words is in Chapter Five of this study.

Identity may be constructed or projected in language as individuals use language to articulate ideas, to represent social relations and themselves (Norton, 2013). Digital communication has shaped the language practices and provided dynamic ways of constructing meaning. Moreover, it has provided new opportunities that enable the users to construct and represent online identities. Furthermore, digital media has enabled learners to perform multiple identities such as being blogger, photographers, game(s) designers and to document and display their lives through various modalities (Darvin, 2016). Herring (2001) notes that though not all aspects of personal identity are visible in online interaction, research shows that an individual identity and his or her membership with one or more groups can influence the language use in EMC. There is evidence that the language practice of EMC users can be seen to index identities that are socially conditioned by features associated with one or more social groups. Given that such variations reflect the influence of social factors - such as situational context and participant socio-demographic factors – on the linguistic choices of EMC users,

sociolinguistic inquiries exploring language variability among EMC users need to recognize that off-line and on-line behaviours can overlap.

Online platforms have increasingly become significant arenas for social identities development. The social networks in these spaces are constructed using technology and the imagined collectives that arise as a result of interacting in these platforms (Boyd, 2014). Within the spaces, defined by Boyd (2014) as “networked publics”, learners are able to engage others, as well as negotiate shared norms and values of collective behaviour (Facer, 2011). On the social media spaces like Facebook, there is no requirement of authentic identities in form of real names and affiliations. Therefore, the performance of a person or self is based on already established social roles projected when users update their status to express their thoughts or when they offer a representation of the self, based on the online socialization they have experienced already. Indeed, even the profile picture of an individual projects an identity and invites other social meanings (Ellis, 2010). This study revealed that apart from language use, student updated their profiles with pictures that portrayed them as being smart. They also gave themselves nicknames that matched their aspirations in life.

Generally, when individuals occupy online platforms, they reconstruct language in ways that match the constraints and affordances of various digital spaces. Depending on the communication, if it is either synchronous or asynchronous, the limitations of speed in which text can be delivered and space have led to the evolution and emergency of linguistic structures that conflate the written and the spoken digital media. This has led to easy access and use of multiple modalities. Social media platforms that provide connection of people from all over the globe have provided more opportunities for multilingual encounters and translingual practices, which has revitalized languages and led to the assertion of new identities (Darvin, 2016). This study revealed that students have the ability to use a number of languages as well as the ability to use different modes of conveying information (multimodality) as shown in Chapter Five of this study.

2.8 Politeness in Different Contexts.

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that there are universal principles that underlie the construction of politeness. This introduces a new perspective to politeness by drawing attention to the similarities involved in the construction of polite utterances across differing languages and cultures. The similarities noted are of two types; how polite utterances are constructed linguistically, and how the polite expression of utterances is modified depending on the social characteristics of the interlocutors and the situations they are in.

Three social factors determine politeness. First, one will tend to be polite to social superiors, second, one will tend to be more polite to people they do not know. In the first instance, there is one way upwards politeness (the superior is less polite to the inferior). In the second instance, politeness is exchanged symmetrically. Thirdly, in any given culture, there are values and norms that affect the degree of imposition or unwelcomeness of an utterance; therefore, someone will tend to be more polite to more serious impositions. In languages, there are also many similarities, with linguistic structures for realizing particular kinds of politeness showing remarkable parallels across unrelated languages.

Politeness or solidarity is indicated, for instance by the use of intensifiers in group identity markers and address forms, intonation patterns that are exaggerated and forms that emphasize agreement and avoid disagreements. Politeness that is avoidance based is characterized by using forms that express self-effacement formality, restraint, using of honorifics differently, hedges, indirect speech acts and using impersonal mechanisms like pluralization of pronouns, nominalization and employing passive constructions. All of these mechanisms deviate from Gricean communication in that they involve indirectly elaborating an expression of a communicative intent in very general ways.

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose an abstract model of politeness whereby the human actors are endowed with two essential attributes; face and rationality. Face has two specific kinds or wants: positive face (the desire to be approved, admired, liked, validated) and negative face (the desire to be unimposed upon, unimpeded in one's actions). The second attribute in the model-rationality-provides one with the ability to reason from communicative goals to linguistic means that would achieve these goals.

From these attributes; face and rationality, there is the assumption that speakers actually know that all speakers have these two attributes. Brown and Levinson (1987) developed a model of how speakers construct and interpret polite utterances in different contexts on the basis of assessments of three social factors: the relative power (P) of speaker and addressee, their social distance (D) and the intrinsic ranking (R) of the face-threateningness of an imposition. P, D and R are seen as abstract social dimensions indexing kinds of social relationship (P and D) and cultural values and definitions of impositions or threats to face (R).

Brown and Levinson (1987) aver that the actions people do when talking with one another, for instance when informing, requesting, offering, complaining, have implications for each other's face and they identify a wide range of speech act types that have the potential to threaten face; Face Threatening Acts or FTAs. They distinguish four general types of strategies of politeness ranging from avoiding an FTA altogether to carrying it out but "off record" (indirectly). On-record realization of an FTA can be done without any redressive action at all ("baldly"). It may be carried out with positive redress which is essentially approach based, addressing the hearer's positive face wants by emphasizing closeness and solidarity.

Politeness may also be carried out with negative redress, which is essentially avoidance based on addressing negative face wants for distance, deference, and freedom from impositions. Here it is assumed that speakers choose the linguistic framing of their utterance from this set of strategic possibilities according to their weightiness of the FTA, which is assessed with reference to the three contextually dependent social factors P (power), D (distance) and R (rank). For low levels of FTA threat, bald on record or positive politeness is most appropriate and cost effective. For higher levels, negative politeness is required; for the highest threats, indirectness is the safe option. Brown and Levinson (1987) further claims that this model of politeness universals can be applied in particular cultural settings as an ethnographic tool used to analyse the quality of social relationships. Stable social relationships are partly characterized by stable patterns of language use which may distinguish particular societies or social groupings. Analysing these stable patterns (for example the distribution of T/V pronoun usage

across individuals and social-groups) can reveal important aspects of social relationships and their changes over time.

Different scholars have examined politeness strategies in different contexts. Brown and Levinson (1987) conjure up the notions of face, the Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), positive and negative faces as well as politeness strategies. They view 'face' as the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself or herself. From the notion of the face, two types of 'faces' are identified; negative and positive face. The negative face basically claims territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, that is, freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The positive face is the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that the self-image be appreciated and approved) claimed by interactants. Politeness strategies are meant to mitigate the affront emanating from the FTAs and they include positive politeness, negative politeness, off record and bald-on-record. This study examined the politeness strategies employed by the university students and found out that students make use of all the four categories of politeness strategies mentioned above as discussed in Chapter Six of this study.

Most studies on politeness have used Brown Levinson's perspective. Using French and Dutch speakers, Stalpers (1995) compares the realization of the potentially, face-threatening act of disagreement and its mitigation in intercultural negotiations between French and Dutch participants. The study findings indicate in negotiations disagreements are generally curtailed; albeit not as much as in everyday conversation, hence, suggesting that clarity overrides politeness in business interactions. These findings although analysed from the face –saving perspective, seem to show implicit support for Lakoff's (1973) conversation maxim view of politeness by suggesting that business negotiations may exhibit particular idiosyncratic discourse features. Similarly, university students, who share a lot in common because of their similar undertakings in schools, exhibited idiosyncratic features, hence used some politeness strategies in a peculiar manner in the social media context. For instance, students used positive politeness strategies to build and maintain cordial relationship among themselves.

Neumann (1997) studies the realization of requests, another potentially face-threatening act, in business interactions between Norwegian and Germany buyers and sellers negotiating in German language. The findings indicate that Norwegians employed more indirect strategies than the Germans and that there was a considerably higher incidence of direct requests than in everyday conversation. Similarly, Charles (1996) investigates the production of face saving hedging device in authentic English business negotiations and concludes that their performance is bound by the role of the seller and buyer. This study similarly looked for such politeness strategies in the university context and discovered that students also used indirect request by use of words such as ‘please’, ‘excuse’ in order to mitigate the H’s face.

Inter-ethnic studies on politeness have been carried out in diverse contexts. Fant (1992) for instance investigated simulated negotiations between Spanish and Swedish professional negotiators while Grindsted (1997), on the other hand, analysed the use of jokes as a strategy to create rapport in simulated interactions between Spanish and Danish professional negotiators. The authors observe that the Spaniards made more use of laughing and joking in the context of business negotiations than the Scandinavian counterparts did and that they sought more interpersonal bonding. Laughing and joking is one of the positive politeness strategies that characterized students social media discourse as discussed in chapter six.

Politeness provides a resource upon which participants may use to manage relationships. Participants are normally concerned with managing the face and sociality rights. Face has two interrelated aspects; quality and social identity face. The two are related to Brown and Levinson positive face in that it refers to the need that individuals have to be evaluated positively. ‘Quality face’ is the desire to be judged positively in terms of personal qualities and ‘social identity face’ is the desire to be acknowledged in our social identity roles, (for example, as a teacher, wife and son) thus accounting for the public element neglected in Brown and Levinson interpretation of the face (Spencer–Oatey, 2000). The current study focused on the mechanisms used by students to maintain each other’s face in the process of interacting via social media platforms. It investigated how politeness strategies are envisaged in student’s conversations. This study looked into the ways in which university students-maintained relationship and

their quality face and social identity faces in the process of communication, which is an indicator of positive politeness. It was discovered that students showed solidarity which an indicator of positive politeness in an endeavour to maintain each other's face

Scollon and Scollon (1980) using politeness theory examine inter-ethnic communication difficulties between Athbasken Indians and monolingual English speakers. They use the politeness theory to assert that taciturnity (the avoidance of talking) reflects an assumption of deference politeness. On the other hand, volubility (much talking) reflects an assumption of solidarity. They establish that Athbasken interactional style is characterized by negative (deference) politeness because of reciprocal social distance. The Athbasken emphasized their distance or tended to dissociate themselves from any infringement by the monolingual English speakers, who, contrarily, were displaying positive (solidarity) politeness. Positive politeness narrows down the distance between the participants and only emphasized a slight power difference. This mismatch made the Athbasken Indians feel that they were incapable of having an intimate relationship with monolingual English speakers and were thus discovered to be uncommunicative, that is, they said very little or showed little interest in conversation compared to their counterparts. One of the major concerns for the study was to analyse the politeness strategies employed by the university students in the online context and how they are depicted.

Walya (1996) investigates the Kenyan banking discourse, and outlines strategies that the interactants applied in their conversation and the effects they have on banking interaction. The findings revealed that the structure of the Kenyan banking discourse and strategies are influenced by both verbal and non-verbal cues. Walya's study was based on a banking context but the current study analysed the same strategies but in an online context and the participants were also varied in that the university students' discourse in social media was used.

Studies on politeness strategies used in business environments involving students and professional negotiators have been carried out. Planken (2005), studies the manifestation of face in work simulated intercultural sales negotiations in English as a lingua franca by professional negotiators and students of international business

management. Planken pays attention to categories of 'safe' talk topic, frequency and locus of occurrence in the beginning of an interactional talk and the use of personal pronouns as indicators of the orientedness, inclusive vs exclusive "we" as an indicator of cooperativeness and professional distance respectively and 'I' as an indicator of self orientedness. The study reveals differences in the way professionals and students build rapport in negotiation settings. Unlike professional negotiators, the students did not engage in safe talk in categories of business environment. Similarly, the indicators of solidarity were sought in the current study so as to demonstrate how students created linguistic identities. Seeking solidarity is an indicator of positive politeness that this study was interested in but in an online set up.

2.8.1 Politeness Strategies in the Online Context

Politeness is also expressed in the online contexts just like any other context. For instance, Adel, Davoud, and Ramezanzadel (2016) use politeness model (Brown and Levinson, 1987) to investigate the politeness strategies used by Iranians using English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in constructed blog by the researchers as an extra opportunity for their interaction and communication. Comparing the synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated discussion (CMD), Shallert, Chiang, Park, Jordan, Lee, Janne -Cheng, and Song (2009) investigate the use of politeness strategies and argue that synchronous Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) provides more opportunities to seek information, information providing and social comments whereas asynchronous discussion creates an atmosphere for to discuss generating experience sharing, idea explanation and self-evaluation. Similarly, the current study used the politeness model to analyse the politeness strategies employed in social media discourse as discussed in chapter six of this study

Park (2008) argues that in order to understand the manifestation of on-line social interaction and to enhance fruitful interaction and collaboration through the CMC channel, analysis of patterns of socio-interpersonal communication among on-line discourse is vital. Drawing focus on people with arthritis, Harrison and Barlow (2009) explore the use of politeness strategies in an on-line self- management program. The results reveal that the participants used indirect suggestions and positive politeness to express their experiences and problems. On the other hand, Li (2012) conducts a study

to analyse the discourse by Chinese learners in EFL context. The results showed that participants used positive, negative and bald on record strategies to foster an atmosphere of friendship and solidarity. This study specifically used WhatsApp to analyse and explore the four categories of politeness strategies employed by the university students as they interacted via WhatsApp. It was discovered that many are times when students strive to remain polite by making use of the politeness strategies in their social media discourse as discussed in chapter six of this study.

Using naturally occurring data from Twitter corpora, Sifianon (2015) studies the manner in which politeness is conceptualized in the online context. The researcher finds that the new media affects the use of politeness strategies. On the other hand, Izadi and Zilaie (2012) examine the use of politeness strategies in exchanges of email. The participants were close friends and the researcher used 60 emails. Since the participants were close friends, the researcher analysed the data in terms of constituent positive politeness strategies that enhanced the ways of intercultural computer mediated communication. This study did not use the email or Twitter as the medium but WhatsApp texts were used in analysing the various types politeness strategies employed by students. The findings revealed that the four types of politeness strategies (positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record and off- record) were used.

Luzon (2013) studies the use of (im) politeness strategies in academic blog discussion revealing a high frequency of the strategies used to deter conflict. On the other hand, Chejnova (2014) studies the manifestation of impoliteness in email communication analysing means of expressing politeness, degrees of directness and amounts of lexical and external modifications. The findings reveal that respondents used both positive and negative strategies in conveying their meaning. Similarly, Park (2008) investigates linguistic politeness in CMC. The analysis of real time, on line discussion of participants of the study demonstrated that politeness strategies are used for interpersonal communication. This study also found out that students use positive and negative politeness strategies in order to maintain cordial relationship or 'comradeship' among themselves.

Taboo words can be used as a strategy in showing politeness in some instances. Pariera (2006) investigates how people used politeness strategies when taboo topics were discussed in the context of e-mail. The study also examines how politeness strategies vary among native English speeches when communicating about taboo strategies; it is found that intimacy is displayed in an attempt to indicate if the strategies conform to the speech-based politeness theory. Similarly, this study investigated how politeness strategies are employed in social media discourse in the case of the university students, who make use of various languages such English and Kiswahili, unlike the case with the aforementioned studies. It was discovered that students strive in most of the instances to avoid being confrontational by using politeness strategies as discussed in Chapter Six.

Humour characterizes the social media discourse. In this study, jokes/ humour is treated as one of the positive politeness strategies. There has been an argument that social media discourse especially the e-chats are laced with jokes. Danet (1995) in Georgakopoulou, (1997) observe that the use of playfulness, humour and wit is fairly finding, even if controversial in its interpretation. They also note that synchronous types of CMC, such as e-chat, have been found to be strikingly playful and resembling real life forms of play like charades having a masked ball or a carnival, hosting a party, and putting on a show. This study found that humour is depicted in social media discourse in a peculiar manner. See the discussion in chapter six

Further, Georgakopoulou (1997) argues that some of this language play is achieved through manipulation of various typographic devices such as capitalization, emoticons and so on. In the absence of the paralinguistic ones for instance, intonation, gestures that normally accompany face-to-face interactions, some typographic (and other visual) devices have emerged as important ways in which participants in CMC creates contextualized interpretations, draws inferences and makes choices keyed to the understanding of their context. Similarly, this study investigated how humour is realized in social media particularly in case of WhatsApp interaction platform as used by the university students. The students posted texts that were laced with humour and also used word play to create humour. The next area of attention after politeness strategies is the theoretical framework that this study employed.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

This study employed an eclectic approach in which three theories aided in the analysis of data. The three models include: The Social Identity Theory (SIT), the Politeness Theory and the Genre Theory. The three theories were used to analyse the way language is used in the society. Politeness theory was used to give insights into the politeness strategies used in the social media discourse while Social Identity Theory gave insights into the manner in which university students mark identity through language in Social media. The Genre Theory provided insights on the distinctive features of language. The following is a brief account of the three models. The three theories were therefore used to analyse data for the three objectives. the following is a summary of the three theories and how they were utilised in the analysis of the data.

2.9.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Tasfel (1981) developed this theory. This theory is based on the membership of individuals in various groups. This theory posits that people tend to keep a specific social identity by marking their specific viewpoints by becoming member of a community. The theory asserts that individuals put aside their individual identities and adopt the one that is most salient and powerful as t they join the mainstream identity and form what is called group identity. This theory relates to language in that, when individuals adopt the group identity, they also tend to adopt a variety of a language which may be dialect, group slang and jargons, or special register. The current study sought to understand how the university students made choice of the words they used, the nature of sentences they constructed and most importantly how they came up with new words that were not commonly used by other people in an effort to (un)consciously define themselves as a distinct group; hence, their identity. Closely related to the Social Identity Theory is Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) whose main argument is that interactants converge and diverge in their speeches for solidarity purposes and end up creating a distinct group identity.

According to Giles (1977), in Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), interacts can consciously use linguistic devices that enable them to create an identity in the conversation process. On the other hand, individuals can choose to join a community and adopt group identity or they can separate themselves from a given community and

construct their own individual identity leading to linguistic discourse. The technical terms used to above situations are convergence and divergence. Convergence is un(conscious) tendency of an individual to highlight similarities in interaction while divergence is the (un)conscious attempt by the speakers to distance themselves from each other (Meyerhoff, 2006). One of the concerns for this study was to determine how the university students in their online communications construct their identity in the process. This theory is useful for this study since the use of jargon and special register was used to show how students mark their identity in social media through language. By converging, interactants appear similar and by so doing they end up marking their identities in the process which was one of the major concerns of this study.

2.9.2. Politeness Theory

This study analysed politeness strategies inherent in the social media discourse using Brown and Levinson (1987) theory of Politeness. These scholars came up with various politeness strategies that aim at redressing the Face Threatening Acts. They postulate the following politeness strategies: Negative politeness strategies, positive politeness strategies, Off-Record politeness strategies, and Bald on Record. In an endeavour to carry out this study, a brief account of each of the above categories is given in the light of Brown and Levison (1987).

Bald on Record have a lot of bearing on the Grice's Maxims (Grice, 1975) that gives four types of maxims: Maxim of quality- be non-spurious (speak the truth, be sincere); Maxim of quantity- Do not say more/ less than is required; Maxim of Relevance- Be relevant; Maxim of manner- Be perspicuous, avoid ambiguity and obscurity. These maxims define the basic set of assumptions underlying every talk exchange. Use of direct imperative is a good example of Bald on Record usage.

The main reason for Bald –on Record usage may be noted in general as: whenever S wants to do the FTA, with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face, even to any degree he will choose Bald-on –Record strategy. Bald–on–Record strategy is indicated variedly in different circumstances. The reason for this being that S can lead different motives for doing FTA with maximum efficiency. For one, there is a situation where the face threat is not minimized, where the face is ignored or irrelevant;

and those where doing the FTA Baldly-on-Record, S minimize face threat by implication. This study found out that Bald on Record was one of the strategies the students used in their interaction via WhatsApp platform.

On the other hand, the Positive politeness is redress directed at the addressee's positive face, his/her perennial desire that his/her wants (actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable. Positive politeness strategies are classified into three broad categories. First, encompasses claiming the "common ground" with H by indicating that S and H both belong to some set of persons who share specific wants indicating good and values. Three ways of making claim are these: S may convey that some want (good or desired object) of H's is admirable or interesting to S too; or he may stress common membership in a group or category, thus emphasizing that both S and H belong to some set of persons who share some wants; finally S can claim common perspective with H without necessarily referring to in-group membership. The output of the afore mentioned three methods give us eight positive politeness strategies which include the following: noticing and attending to H (his interests, wants, needs goods), exaggerating (interest, approval sympathy with H), intensifying interest to H, using in-group identity markers), seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, presupposing/ raising/asserting common ground and joking.

The second category of the major class of positive politeness strategy is to convey that S and H are co-operators. This derives from the want to convey the fact that the speakers and the addressee are cooperatively involved an activity that is relevant. If S and H are cooperating, they share goals in some domain and thus to convey that they are co-operators can serve to redress H's positive face want. The following strategies are used: asserting or presupposing S's knowledge of and concern for H's want, offering promise, being optimistic, including both S and H in the activity, giving or asking for reasons and assuming or asserting reciprocity.

The third and the last category is to fulfil H's wants for some X. It involves S deciding to redress H's face directly by fulfilling some of H's wants, thereby indicating that the (S) wants H's wants for H in some particular respects. One strategy involved here has to do with giving gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding cooperators). This study

analysed the positive politeness strategies and found out that some of these devices listed above are used by students in their social media discourse as discussed in Chapter six of this study

Further, Negative politeness strategies are classified into a number of categories. The first category is called *direct* which entails being conventionally indirect and using questions /hedges. The second category states that one should avoid coercing H. For such FTAs, negative –face redress may be made by avoiding coercing H’s response, and this may be done on the one hand by explicating, or giving him the option of not doing the act. On the other hand, avoiding coercion of H may take the form of attempting to minimize the threat of coercion by clarifying S’s view of the P, D and R values. This category yields the following strategies: being pessimistic, minimizing the imposition, and giving difference. The third category is concerned with communicating S’s want not to impinge on H. This category entails following three negative politeness strategies; apologizing, impersonalizing S, and H, and nominalizing. The fourth and the last category is to redress other wants of H’s. It comprises offering partial compensation for the face threat in the FTA by redressing some particular other wants of H’S. These categories encompass single negative politeness strategy that is concerned with going on record as incurring a debt, or a not indebting H. This study discovered that students strive to avoid imposing and coercing others hence exhibiting negative politeness.

An Off-Record communicative act is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act. This means that there can be a number of interpretations to a certain given utterance. Off record utterances mainly rely on indirect use of language.

The politeness strategies under off-record are categorized into two. The first is inviting conversational implicatures. This category yields the following strategies; giving association dues, giving hints, presupposing, understating, overstating, use of tautologies, use of contradictions, being ironic, use of rhetoric questions and using metaphors. The second category entails being ambiguous or vague. This implies violating the maxims of manner. This makes communicated message-ill defined. In this category, the specific strategies employed include being vague, ambiguous, over

generalizing, displacing H and using of incomplete utterances or ellipsis. This study used this tenet by analysing those strategies that were off record in the WhatsApp interaction platform of university students. The table below provides a summary of the politeness strategies that guided the researcher in analysing the data collected from the students' social media discourse.

Table 2 3
Politeness Strategies

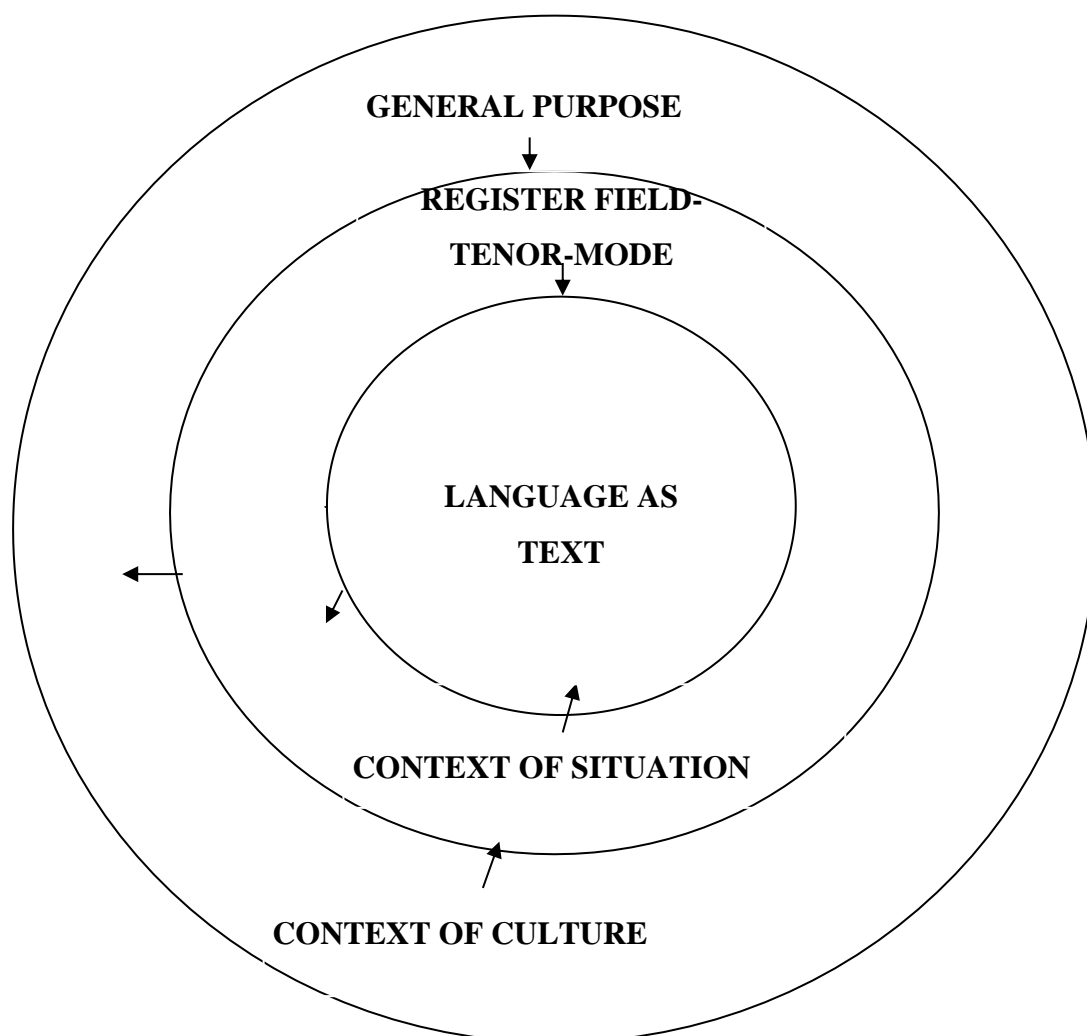
Positive politeness strategies	Negative politeness strategies	Off-Record Strategies	Bald on Record Uses Grice's maxims
Notice, attend to H	Being pessimistic	Giving hints	Maxim of quality
Exaggerate (interest to H)	Hedging/ questioning	Being vague	Maxim of quantity
Intensify interest to H	Giving deference	contradictions	Maxim of relevance
Use of Humour/ jokes	Conventionally indirect	Being ambiguous	Maxim of manner
In- identity markers	Apologizing	Use of rhetorical questions	Use of imperative sentences
Avoiding disagreement	Minimizing imposition by incurring a debt	Tautologies	
Seeking agreement Offering/ promising	Impersonalizing Stating FTA as a general rule	understating Pre-supposing	
Include both S and H in the activity Presupposing/raising/showing common ground		overgeneralization Be incomplete or use ellipsis Use of metaphors	

Source: Brown and Levinson (1987)

The data was analysed in the light of the various politeness strategies outlined in the table 2.3 above.

2.9.3 Genre Theory.

The study also used Genre theory as proposed by Macken et al. (1989). The following is a diagrammatic representation of the model.



Macken et al. (1989) posit that one of the main concerns of this theory is to reveal and describe the major characteristics of kinds of writing (or speaking), that are vital for participation in both formal, informal and the society at large. This theory therefore was used in this study to deduce the distinctive linguistic features used in social media discourse of university students in WhatsApp platform. The following is a brief discussion of the broad range of ideas which underlie genre-theory and their relation to literacy and education generally.

Writing and speaking are social activities where language is considered as a social phenomenon whereby when one uses language either to speak or write, then he/she is engaged in social activity. The kind of words we employ, the kind of sentences we make, the different ways in which we interact with language has both a social reaction and effects. This tenet of the theory played an integral role in this study as it underscored the choice of words and phrases used together with the kind of sentences used plus the kind of texts that were written which were explained by referring to the different social contexts in which the various kinds of writing characteristically occurred. This study found how social media discourse makes the choices of words and phrases, the nature of sentences and texts among other unique features of this genre, which was one of prime concerns for this study.

Language occurrence is always in form of text when we speak or write and we always do so in particular social situations. Meaning the language we use is fashioned by these situations, not only in what we say, but also in how we say it. Consequently, speaking in any context is not just a simple matter of pulling words and sentences together, but it entails that one understands the rules that govern the whole interaction (speaking and combining the appropriate words) in totality. The fact that this tenet of the theory recognizes the role played by the social situation in determining the language we use indicates that this study was bound to yield unique linguistic features that were of concern for this research.

On the Genre as a coherent socially meaningful text, all language employ context-bound words; hence, language occurrence is socially meaningful and it is a coherent text. Given that social structures are relatively coherent, social situations recur and the participants' goals in these situations have as a competent social being dependent among other things, on the ability to use the genre which are appropriate to particular situations. This study underscores the fact that language varies with the context as some of the words used in the social media have meanings that is context dependent as discussed in chapter four of this study.

The other tenet of Genre Theory is the Genre and specific language knowledge which claim that; given that the texts are entirely intermeshed with the social context in which

they are produced, all aspects of that total context have their effect on the text's language. As significant shifts occur in the context, some forms of language will change, markedly or subtly. At the very least, learners need to recognize the various grammatical means used in statements and how questions are formed in English. In other instances, the shift may involve other areas of grammar such as the kinds of words used (complex nouns or simple nouns), the types of clauses (encoding different relations of nouns and verbs) and the various levels of syntactic complexity.

The notion of register is the one that deals with these variations in language use. Register deals with three variables; field, (what is going on in the text), tenor (who are the social participants in the making and reading of the text) and the mode (what is the role of language in particular situation). Texts are largely determined by the genre (and other semiotic systems which are part of the context of culture) and register where they occur (the meaning associated with the context of situation- field, tenor and mode). Moreover, the oral and written texts created by people also act upon and influence the contexts (genres and registers) which are part of the environment.

As far as the current study was concerned, the argument put forward in the above tenet of Genre theory played a pertinent role in establishing the relationship between the texts and the social context in which those texts were produced. As posited in this tenet, that is, as significant shifts occur in the context, some forms of language will change, subtly or markedly, this study attempted to isolate those linguistic features that were due to the change in the context and the category of people involved in the discourse which was one of the main concerns for this study. Similarly, the aspects of formality were addressed by this tenet of the theory as it focused on the register that was paramount in handling the issues of formality in students' social media discourse. This study reveals that language use and the meanings of certain words are largely determined by the context of use. Details of such findings are discussed in chapter four of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter brings to the fore the methodological essentials that were used in the study. The following are discussed in the chapter: research design, population, sampling procedures and sample size, data collection procedures and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research technique and a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design was deemed appropriate because the nature of the study entailed finding out how linguistic identities are created in social media discourse, describing the linguistic features and analysing the politeness strategies prevalent in social media discourse. Summaries of politeness strategies used in social media discourse are discussed. The way identities are marked in social media and linguistic features inherent in social media discourse are explained too by use of tables.

3.3 Population

The target population is the larger group which the researcher intends to apply the research findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). The study population included all the comments posted on WhatsApp groups formed by Chuka university students from February, 2018 to April, 2019.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

This study used both Snowball and Purposive sampling procedures. Snowball sampling procedure was used in obtaining the WhatsApp groups in which the texts were extracted. Vogt (1999) defines snowball sampling as a technique whereby the researcher obtains study respondents by first of all identifying one respondent, the one given suggests another second respondent, the second respondent suggests a third who will in turn suggest another until the group required is yielded. Since it was not practically possible for the researcher to know all WhatsApp groups formed by the students as formation of such is normally a social thing, Snowball sampling procedure was considered the most appropriate. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to get in touch with as many WhatsApp groups as possible. Therefore, in this study the

researcher contacted one WhatsApp group administrator who then connected him to another group administrator and the process proceeded until the researcher obtained six groups that ensured sufficient data for the study analysis. The group administrators were requested by the researcher to inform the other members of the groups the reason for the addition of the researcher in their groups.

Snowball sampling is considered appropriate in research for two main reasons. Firstly, it offers practical advantages since it is an informal method which can easily be used to reach a target population especially when the nature of the study is explorative, qualitative and descriptive (Hendricks, Blanken & Adrians 1992). Secondly, as a formal methodology snowball can be used to make inferences about a population of respondents who have proved difficult to enumerate using methods which are descending like household surveys (Snijders, 1992). This sampling procedure was applicable to this study since it was not practically possible to know the number of WhatsApp groups in which the texts for analysis would have been extracted. Moreover, this study was a qualitative study in nature; therefore, snowball was favoured.

The purposive or judgemental sampling procedure was employed in obtaining the overall sample of texts that were used. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observe that purposive sampling procedure enables a researcher to obtain cases that would help the researcher to yield the relevant information for the study. Therefore, the researcher selected texts that showed politeness strategies that indicated how identities are marked by the university students and those with linguistic features that characterized university students' social media discourse. This was done a guiding card that acted as a checklist. Purposive sampling procedure was appropriate because the researcher was able to identify the texts that had linguistic features that he was interested in. Kothari (2004) avers that in non-probability sampling, units constituting a sample can be purposively sampled by the researcher so long as they are representative of the whole targeted population. The researcher sampled a total of 116 texts that were adequate for the study. The study used those texts that had been written from February, 2018 to April, 2019. To ensure that the researcher got the texts in their natural form, he requested to be enjoined in the WhatsApp groups formed by Chuka University students upon which the texts were extracted.

Chuka University that was selected for this study is one of the public universities in the republic of Kenya. Students who join public universities in Kenya have a lot in common because they are normally placed by Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) irrespective of where they came from. This implies that students in any of the universities are from the 42 ethnic communities and have similar attributes. Similarly, the way they use social media in their interaction is likely to be the same. Bearing in mind that these university students are likely to exhibit similar characteristics in language usage in their social media interaction, any of the universities in Kenya stood equal chances of being selected to participate in this linguistic study. The study therefore selected Chuka University just like it would have selected any other public university in Kenya.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

In order to yield the data that the study required, the researcher requested WhatsApp group administrators from the various groups in the university to include him in the WhatsApp groups so as to be in a position to access the texts that were used for analysis. The WhatsApp groups that were joined upon request were those that the researcher had identified through Snowball sampling procedure. The researcher was just an observer in those groups and did not participate in the group discussions.

Data was collected using a guiding card. This card was used to capture texts in their original form. From the context, the researcher categorised the data according to the objectives of this study. Politeness strategies were classified in their various divisions and sub-divisions. Similarly, those strategies used in the marking of identity were sorted out as well as those with distinctive linguistic features inherent in Chuka university students' social media discourse.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study utilized qualitative methods to analyse data. The process began by extracting the texts that answered the research questions and noting them down. The texts extracted from WhatsApp were then categorized according to the objectives of the study. After categorizing the data collected, content analysis was to isolate those that were based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness, Social Identity Theory (SIT)

by Tajfel (1981) and Genre Theory by Macken et al (1989). Content analysis offers methodological apparatus that enable the researcher to understand not only the process and character of social life but also to deduce meaning, as it facilitates the understanding of the different types, characteristics and organizational aspects of documents of social products in their own right as well as what they claim (Nartey, 2013).

Guided by Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Tasfel (1981), the researcher analysed the data on the various ways by which identity was created. The linguistic devices used in marking of identity such as use of slang, convergence, divergence, use of a distinct register or special jargons, style used, and multimodality, were identified and then discussed. Finally, the texts with the linguistic features inherent in the social media were analysed. Linguistic features, which included but not limited to phonographic, logographic and semasiographic in nature were identified and then discussed. Guided Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, the researcher identified the four categories of politeness strategies and analysed them. The present study made relevant reference to results of previous studies as found indispensable while doing data analysis. Chapter Four discusses the distinctive features of language inherent in Chuka University students' social media discourse, Chapter Five shows how students create identities in social media discourse, and Chapter Six discusses politeness strategies in students' social media discourse.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data collection exercise, the Chuka University Ethics Committee issued a permit. The data was extracted from WhatsApp groups formed by Chuka University students. The researcher requested to be included into all the groups that he used to extract data. The respondents were assured that the data was purely meant for research purposes. Also, as per the university requirement and policy, the researcher further sought permission from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation before data collection commenced. Finally, all the sources cited were acknowledged.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF LANGUAGE INHERENT IN CHUKA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter presents and discusses findings on objective one of this study. Texts with unique features of language were identified and discussed systematically. This chapter has analysed the data in the light of Genre Theory by Macken et al. (1989). One of the key concerns of this theory was to bring to the fore and describe the major characteristics of the different kinds of writing (or speaking), important for participating in both formal and informal communication in the wider society. Language use is largely dependent on the context of its use; therefore, language variation is inevitable as students use language in a context that is unique to them. This line of argument is underscored by one of the tenets of Genre theory that considers genre as a text that is coherent and socially meaningful and that all language use is context-bound; hence, language occurs as socially meaningful, coherent text. The distinctive linguistic features of language employed by the university students are discussed under the following: phonographic, logographic, semasiographic, lexical, word formation processes, code switching and mixing, and the interplay of linguistic features at various levels of linguistic study.

4.2 Phonographic and Paralinguistic Features

Phonographic features include features of language such as syllables, sound segment and features of articulation (Howe, 2013). This study found out that such features were common among the university students' social media discourse. In their social media discourse, students sometimes wrote words as pronounced as opposed to the way the same words are supposed to be written conventionally. It should however be noted that their way of pronouncing them may sometimes be the nonstandard way; therefore, they write them in the way they pronounce them in their day to day lives. Consider the following example.

T1

A: Ebu acheni, story za portal xaxa

(Can you stop talking about the portal now)

B: Iyo ishaachwa, we 2 ndo unaongelelea.

(We are already through with that story; you are the only talking about it.)

C: Luk at the content above.

(Look at the content above.)

The word ‘xaxa’ “is taken from Kiswahili word “*sasa*” which means now. “*Hiyo*” is also another Kiswahili word that means “that one” whose orthographic form in social media is “*iyoy*”. The word look has been spelt as “*luk*”. It is evident from these examples that the social media orthography is an alteration from the normal way of writing those words. This can be attributed to two things; either it is a reflection of the way they pronounce such words in their spoken discourse or ignorance. Sometimes students omit some sounds just as they do in their spoken discourse and some other times, letter ‘*k*’ is substituted with letter ‘*q*’, as in the example below.

T2

A: Qwani uko om bado?

(Are you still at home?)

B: Yap. Uliback wen

(Yes. When did you come back?)

A2: Mi nlikam Friday last week

(I came on Friday last week)

The orthographic representation of some words in social media can be said to approximate the standard pronunciation of the same words. In T2 above, the word when is spelt as “*wen*” and has the following transcription /wen/ while come is spelt as “*kam*” and has the following transcription /kəm/. This kind of realization approaches the standard way of pronouncing those words. This implies that there exists a relationship between the phonetic transcription and the way some words are realized in social media. However, there are instances when some letters or sounds are ignored like in the case of the word home which is spelt as “*om*” hence omitting letter “*h*” and “*e*”. The phonetic transcription of the word is /həʊm/ implying that there is no relationship between the way the word is pronounced and the way it is realized in social media as evident in the words come, when and look that are realized as “*kam*”, “*wen*” and “*luk*” respectively in T1 and T2. The omission of letters and sounds as in the case of the word home can either be as a result of the way they pronounce the word or due to ignorance because we cannot expect a native speaker of English to write the same word in such a manner. It is however plausible to conclude that the kind of deviation in the way students write words in social media is to a great extent influenced by the way they pronounce the same words in their spoken discourse. This is an indication of the hybrid nature of the social media discourse that is a mixture of the written and spoken

discourse. The shortening of the words to save on space and to make communication faster. The spelling on the other hand is altered to mark the identity of the users, university students. A part from the few examples of such forms in T1 and T2, other examples are provided on table 4.1 .Table 4.1, below summarizes some of the words whose social media orthography approximates the standard way of pronouncing them.

Table 4.1
Social Media Orthography Vs Phonetic Transcription

Orthographic	Realization	phonetic transcription
What	Wot	/wɒt/
Night	Nait	/nait/
When	Wen	/wen/
Time	Taim/ tym	/taim/
Love	Luv	/lʌv/
Good	Gud	/gʊd/
Fine	Fyn	/fain/
Please	Pliz	/pli:z/
Here	Ea	/hɪə/
Book	Buk	/bʊk/
Class	Klas	/klas/
Exam	Egzam	/ɪgzæm/
Food	Fud	/fu:d/

Source: Author, 2019

Apart from exhibiting traits that depict relationship between the phonetic transcription and the realisation of some forms in social media as shown in the table 4.1 above, social media has a way of incorporating non-verbal aspects especially in the showing of stress. In other words, Social media discourse has a way of indicating emphasis or stress. Stress, which is a prosodic feature, is marked by the use of capital letters, repeated/ exaggerated spelling, or repeated punctuation marks. Consider the following example.

T3

A. *So what if it happens that your prayers are answered because it is like u want people to die. Will you write a letter?*

(So what if it happens that your prayers are answered because it is as if you want people to die. Will you write a letter?)

B: *AKUFE kwanza*

(Let him die first)

C: *Brayo will you forgive me???*

(Brian, will you forgive me?)

D: *Namkaforgivianie hukooooo*

(Proceed and forgive one another elsewhere)

E: *Naukoooo*

(Far off)

The word “*hukoooo*” is derived from “huko” (there). The word has been prolonged so as to emphasize. The same case applies to the other word in E “*Naukooo*” (far off). Participant D and E were disgusted by the unbecoming behaviour of the student C who had lied to others in the group that somebody had died. Other Words like “*Sanaaaaaaa*”, “*kabisaaaaaa*” or “*soooooooooon*” are also exaggerated for emphasis. This emphasis can be read as serving the purpose of marking the spoken word alive in the written discourse, which enables the intrusion of orality in the discourse.

Phonographic as a unique feature is also seen by the way students use capital letters and repeated punctuation marks in order to lay emphasis on something.

T4

A: *Hii tbt noma!!! Any luhya guy mast have done this !!!C mm nimesema.*

(This Throwback Thursday is outstanding!!! Any man from Luhya land must have done this!!! It’s not I who has said)

B: *Noma*

(Outstanding)

T5

A: *Sasa kelele ni ya nn*

(Why are you making noise?)

B: *Wewe hit my inbox*

(Send me to my WhatsApp account)

C: *We ukiona ni ya NINI????*

(In your view, what do you think it is about?)

D: *Heheeeee hata WEWE JIJIBIE*

(Heheeeeeee, you can answer for yourself)

In the above examples we have repeated exclamation marks and also question marks. The use of capital letters is also evident in T5 where the word ‘*AKUFE*’ (let him/ her die), ‘*WEWE*’ (you) and ‘*WEWE JIJIBIE*’ (Answer for yourself) have been used. The use of capital letters here emphasised the displeasure the person had towards the topic in question. This implies that prosodic features such as stress are realized through the use of exaggerated spellings, exaggerated marks of punctuation and use of capital letters.

Use of laughter, which is a sign of orality, is a common phenomenon in social media discourse by the university students. Laughter is realized by use of the idiophone “*hahaha*” and “*hehehehe*”. The use of these prosodic features is because of the need to be heard on the written page.

T6

A: *Ngombe mwingine wa meru spotted walking like a slay queen during Meru university freshers' night.*

(Another cow from Meru was spotted walking like a slay queen during Meru University Freshers' night.)

B: *Hahahaha*

C: *Wachana na Ngombe za wameru. Think mmtuingilia sana*

(Leave Meru cows alone. I think you have ridiculed us so much.)

The kind of laughter evident in T5 D and T6 B is idiophonic as it imitates the normal laughter in the spoken discourse. The cow talked about here is the one that had killed a lion accidentally in Meru County in Kenya hence becoming very popular. Another feature of orality is realized through sibilance. Consider the following example:

T7

A: *Ety Enerikoo class iko wapi?*

(Enericko, where is the venue for the class?)

B: *Class rep r u there?*

(Is class representative there?)

C: *Wacha tungoje aseme*

(Let's wait for him to speak)

D: *Class rep, typing shhhh*

(Class representative, is typing..... shhhh)

Student D is using sibilance 'shhhh' to request others to 'maintain silence since the class representative is typing hence, they will get a response to their question. This serves to create anticipation in the rest of the group and it also stops anybody who could supposedly have wanted to comment further. Apart from having a way of representing stress and emphasis, social media also has a way of representing the phonological processes, which is normally evident in spoken discourse.

As already observed, that social media language lies at the boundary between the written and the spoken language, there are some phonological processes that are evident in the social media discourse just in the same way they are witnessed in the spoken discourse. Some of the dominant phonological processes observed in the social media discourse by the university students include assimilation, elision and linkage.

Assimilation refers to the influence one sound segment may have upon the articulation of another (usually adjacent) sound segment, so that the sounds become more similar, or identical. Howe (2013) gives the following examples of cases of assimilation in social media "hafta"; "gotcha" (also gotchya); "Waddga" and "Watcha" (also

watchya, Whatcha and whatchya), of which their respective standard written forms are *have to*, *got you*, *what do you*, and *what you*. In the case of “hafta”, the form appears to represent a type of regressive assimilation; that is, features of a preceding, articulating sound segment anticipate, and are affected by, qualities of the following conditioning sound (Celce-murcia et al., 2010; Collins & Moes, 2003; Cruttendon, 2001; Crystal, 1997).

Similarly, this study found several incidences of assimilation evident in students’ social media discourse. A word like “azn” is an example of assimilation. The standard form for this word is “*as in*” it should be noted that the words “*as in*” is a blend from ‘*as*’ and *in* and has been formed through the process of assimilation and elision. The sound ‘s’ which is voiceless has been influenced by vowel ‘a’ of the word *as* and the initial vowel ‘i’ in the word *in* to become a voiced sound /z/ hence the resultant form becomes “*azn*”.

T8

A: *Prac iko?*

(Where is the venue for the practical?)

B: *A zn iko wapi?*

(That is the venue?)

A2: *S403*

It is therefore clear that the word has been formed via a morphological process called blending which has been discussed under word formation process and through the phonological process called assimilation. This kind of relationship shows the interdependence between the morphology and phonology. Another example is the word *please* which is normally realized as “*pliz*”. In the formation of this form (*pliz*), the voiceless ‘s’ is surrounded by the vowels and bearing in mind that all vowels are voiced, the voiceless sound /s/ becomes /z/ which is voiced. Other examples of assimilation include words like “*diz*”, “*tiz*” “*doz*” for *this*, *it is* and *those*. Mostly, in social media, sounds /ð/ and /θ/ are replaced by the voiced sound /d/ and this is the reason we have a word like, “*this*” written as “*diz*” while “*those*” is written as “*doz*”. The voiceless /s/ changes to the voiced /z/ through the process of assimilation.

Elision and Linking are common phenomenon in social media discourse by the university students. Elision is a process of reduction that refers to the omission of some sound segment, which can lead to the loss of phonemes, syllables and, at times words

(Cruttenden, 2001). Crystal (1997) notes that in general, grammatical words such as “of”, and “and” which do not attract stress are particularly prone to Elision. In the case of “of”, the phonemes “ve” tend to elide to in many varieties of informal speech for instance in the sequence of ‘kind of’ the word find /v/. in ‘of’, may be elided and reduced to /ə/, and the grammatical unit is sometimes orthographically transcribed as the colloquial variant “kinda”. A similar process of reduction can be found when “have” is unstressed and used as a co member of sequence of auxiliaries (Hudleston & Pullum, 2002, p.105). A good example is where a sentence like she could have gone is realized as ‘*she conda gone*’ orthographically.

The findings of this study confirmed the existence of such features in social media discourse. It is for instance clear that lexes ‘*and*’, ‘*are*’, ‘*have*’ ‘*the*’ and ‘*them*’ are normally elided to ‘*n*’ ‘*r*’ ‘*ve*’ ‘*te*’ and ‘*em*’ respectively. Also consider the common form in social media “*coz*” (because) where sound ‘*b*’ is elided and the voiceless sound “*s*” becomes voiced sound /z/. Apart from those grammatical forms, other forms have emerged through morphological process of blending and phonological process of elision and linking. Such forms include “*isascam*”, “*isoright*”/“*isorait*”, “*tis*” and “*warratis*”. The standard forms for those forms include: *it is a scam*, *it is all right*, *it is* and *what is this*. From the above examples, the word *isascam* (it is a scam) the voiceless/t/ is elided in the word ‘it’ and *warratis* (what is this) sound ‘h’ is silent and therefore elided automatically, and then ‘t’ is replaced by double ‘rr’ and /ə/ through the process of assimilation and then replaced by voiceless sound ‘t’. In this case, assimilation, elision and linkage come into play. Linkage is evident in those examples as there is a number words that have been joined together in the formation of those forms, consider the example below in which the word “*isokey*” has been used.

T9

A: Please somebody send me the format for writing the report
(Please, someone to send me the format or writing the report)

B: Isokey, will send you soon
(It is okay, I will send you soon)









The shortening of words in writing is yet another well-documented feature in EMC and CMC research (Anis, 2007; Crystal, 2001 & Herring, 2001). Word forms like ‘night’ which is shortened to “*nite*” and ‘through’ which is shortened to “*thru*” is a good example. Anis (2007) regards this aspect as “transcription of standard pronunciations” because it reflects the relationship between common spelling rules and the spoken

pronunciation of the ideal form. The findings of this research confirmed that such shortening is also exhibited in the university students' social media discourse. Consider the following examples- 'book' is realized as "buk", 'good' as "gud", 'my' as "ma", 'anyway' as "enwei", and time as "taim". Shortening as form of elision is also common in the -ing forms words like chasing, writing, reading removing that are at times written as "chasin", "writin", "readin" and "removing" respectively. Having discussed the findings on phonographic and paralinguistic features, our next focus is on Semasiographic features.

4.3 Semasiographic Features

Semasiographic features entail the use emoticons of various and symbols. Emoticons of various kinds are utilized in an endeavour to emphasis something just like the other forms of nonverbal features in the social media that are meant to accentuate a certain message. These features include: exaggerated spelling, exaggerated punctuation marks, and use of capital letters as discussed under phonographic features. Emoticons also known as emoji are of myriad kinds; they are the most frequently used. Emoticons are used to convey different kinds of non-verbal messages. There are those used as gestures, consider the following example.

Table 4.2: Emoticons for Gestures.

Emoticon	Description	Meaning
	Tensed biceps	I feel strong
	Hand pointing downwards	To draw attention to the text below
	Hand pointing upwards	To draw attention to the text above
	Hand pointing to the right	Draw attention to something following
	Ok hand sign	Sign of approval or agreement or that everything is okay
	Raising hands	Stop, wait, do not come close
	Clapping hands	Expresses consent or appreciation
	Waving hand	As a welcome or farewell

Source: Author 2019

The table 4.2 above provides a few emoticons used by the university students to represent the use of gestures in the spoken discourse. T10 below provides an example

where emoticons are used in a text. The group was so ‘silent’, student A provoked them with a controversial topic, and other students warmed up for the topic, this makes him ‘feel strong’.

T10

A: 🤪🤪🤪 at least can make a group active...now I can sleep.

(I am strong; I have managed to make the group active.... now I can sleep)

B: You have done great.

C: 🙌

The above emoji in T10 A is used to show that someone is ‘feeling strong’ for having made others in the group that was hitherto passive active while the emoticon in C indicates clapping hands and therefore expressing consent or appreciation. This can be inferred as bringing in gestures into social media discourse.

There are emoticons used to convey emotions such as happiness, sadness and calmness. The following table 4.3 shows emoticons commonly used by the university students and other young generation to convey their feelings towards somebody or something.

Table 4.3
Emoticons for Facial Expressions

Emoticon	Description	Meaning
	face with tears of joy	Something is so incredibly funny that one cries laughing
	smiling face with open mouth and cold sweat	Shows relieve that a tight situation went well or was positively coped
	loudly crying face	Represent injury, pain or defeat
	disappointed face	Shows sorrow, remorse and regret
	angry face	Shows reaction to something unfavourable or a sign of rejection
	worried face	Shows anxiety, insecurity and discomfort.
	winking face	Expression of humour, pulling a practical joke or laughing
	neutral face	Unimpressed, awkward or indifferent
	face blowing a kiss	Expresses affection or romantic intent as an expression of love
	Skull	Used in unpleasant situations to symbolize terrible things.
	confused face	Expresses uncertainty or disappointment, having imagined something in a different way
	expressionless face	Tired, annoyed, emotionless, no patience

Source: Author 2019

T11 provides an example of a text in which emoticons representing facial expressions are used. In the example, some students were making fun of other students from Kamba community and Kamba students were retaliating and A feels that they have personalized the discussion. Student B, who comes from Ukambani, is warning student A that if he is not serious nobody will remind him about the class; he will keep on blaming Kambas for being ungrateful.

T11

A: 😄😄😄😄 *Wakamba hii ni personal.*
(Kambas, this is personal)







B: *Shinda hapo tu hakuna MTU atakuremind utanza kuuliza Vale wakamba hawana asante* 😕😕😕

(Remain with that kind of mind-set and nobody will remind you about the class, you start asking Vale that these Kamba people are ungrateful)

From the above examples, the facial expressions communicate different emotions, A has tears of joy but B has a confused face. Student B has used emoticon that indicates confusion showing how student A will find himself in a state of confusion. Student A has just taken the matter being discussed lightly and therefore uses emoticon with a face with tears of joy. This can be interpreted as the intrusion of facial expressions in the written discourse.

There are those emoticons that indicate body movements and are normally used to express different meanings. There are different emoticons for different kinds of body movement as shown on the table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4
Emoticons for Body Movement

Emoticon	Description	Meaning
	woman walking	A woman on foot or going for a walk
	person running	Someone is late or in hurry
	man running	A man in hurry or late
	woman dancing	Stands for joy and fun
	man walking	A man on foot or going for walk
	man and woman holding hands	Couple in love

Source: Author 2019

T12 and 13 shows how students make use of emoticons to convey body movements in a text. T12 combines facial expression with body movement to communicate a unified message.

T 12

A: *Hakuna class.*

(There is no lecture)

B: 😊😊😊😊🚶🚶🚶🚶 *hakuna class*

(There is no lecture)

T 12 above shows a smiling face and a person walking. The smiling face is as a result of a lecture that has bounced while a person walking reinforces the same message by suggesting that the student is now free to go wherever he/she wants. The facial expression indicates the fact that students are happy for a bounced class, which may point to either disinterest in learning, or the fact that they cherish any free minute. T13 below has emoticons expressing body movement, facial expression and gestures.

T13

A: *HBD Bree*

(Happy Birthday Bree)

B: Aaaaaa 😊😭❤️❤️ *thank you luv* ❤️ *ill c u in claass* 😊😊

(Aaaaa thank you love. I will see you in class)

C: 😊😊😊😊

(Face blowing a kiss)

D 🚶🚶🚶🚶 *coming for the cake*

B2 🙌 welcome

In the example above, emoticons are used to reinforce the information communicated. The first set of emoticons reinforces the excitement by use of an emoji with tears of joy and that of love while the second emoticon used by student A is that of love and the last one is that of a face blowing a kiss. The response to A by C is also an emoji of a face blowing with a kiss. D and B2 use emoticons for body movement and gestures. The use of different emoticons conveying different non-verbal messages is a manifestation of the students' ability to use various emoticons to communicate a unified message.

The use of symbols is also considered, as part of semasiographic features and the commonly used symbols by the students is hash tag (#) and asterisk (*). Consider the following example:

T14

A: *I humbly request your votes, #coming together is the beginning, keeping together is the progress and working together is success. COME ALL& VOTE IN DELPHAS OMBATI.*

(I humbly request for your votes, #coming together is the beginning, keeping together is progress and working together is success. come all and vote in Delphas Ombati).

T15

A. Msee ako na iyo link ya kujaza bio data anisave plz

(Anybody with information on how to fill biodata to help me)

A. B: Log onto Chuka.ac.ke. scroll down and you will get to where there is identity digitalization. Fill your details online and submit.

** Compulsory for all Chuka University Students*

** Failure to fill it will attract a fine of 2k*

(Log onto Chuka.ac.ke. scroll down and you will see where there is identity digitalization. Fill your details online and submit.

** Compulsory for all Chuka University Students*

** Failure to fill, will attract a fine of two thousand)*

From the above examples, it is clear that asterisk and hash tag are used by students to emphasize something they are communicating. In T14, hash tag is used in order to indicate what candidate considers to be important. Similarly, asterisk in T15 is used to accentuate what student B considers mandatory since failure to register in time attracts a fine of two thousand. This is an indication that students can combine written messages with symbols to communicate effectively. Our next focus is the features that are lexical in nature.

4.4 Lexical Features

Lexical features are a set of vocabulary of a given language defined in terms of words and idioms that have been a distinctive use within that variety (Crystal, 2001). University students use lexis in a manner peculiar to them in their social media discourse. University students have created their own jargon that is peculiar to them. These jargons are normally invented and others are borrowed from other languages such as English and Kiswahili or local languages and then adapted to social media with a meaning that is sometimes remarkably different from their normal use in other contexts.

The notion of language use in relation to the vocabularies and grammar in general and how variation in language use occurs is underscored by one of the tenets of Genre theory. The tenet presupposes that texts are entirely interlocked with the social context where they are produced and that all contextual aspects have their effect on the language of a text. In the same tenet, it is observed that as significant shifts occur in the context,

some language forms will change markedly or subtly. This change may be indicated by the kinds of words, the grammar and the clauses used. It is further noted that the variations which occur when language is used are dealt with by the notion of register, which is, the use of context dependent language. Register encompasses three variables; field, (what is happening in the text), tenor (who are the social participants in the making and reading of the text) and lastly the mode (what is the role of language in particular situation). In an attempt to understand how lexes are ‘invented’ as others change their meanings when used by students in their social media discourse, consider the following example T16.

T16

A: *Wapi Yule mzai wa lapi yuko wapi? Wish to do bisna na yy*
(Where is that person who sells a laptop? I wish to do business with him/her.)

B: *Ni kama amelala*
(It’s as if he is asleep)

C: *Lala pia wewe*
(You can also sleep)

D: *Laleeni nyinyi*
(Sleep you people)

A1: *Wewe umelala matter core hii?*
Have you have slept, you buttocks?

A person who does not belong to this group may not be able to decipher the meaning of the utterance by A1 particularly the phrase “matter core hii” (*matako*) which is a body part in Kiswahili (buttock) and is used offensively. In the above construction, one is not likely to see the relationship between “matter core hii” and “matako” which is a Kiswahili word. It is only the pronunciation that points out that there is some kind of relationship. The students make use of such forms to lessen the effect of the usage of such socially unacceptable forms. In other words, it is used to avoid mentioning ‘matako’ which is a private part of a body and it is a taboo word. The creativity is evident in the way a student comes up with such a form whose orthography is largely influenced by the way the actual word (*matako*) is articulated. The other words used in an unusual manner is “mzai wa lapi” (the laptop man) and “bisna” that refers to “business”. Students use words whose meanings are mainly understood by the group members implying that their style of writing is unique to them. This helps to create identities discussed in the next chapter.

As students interact with other members of the society, they learn some phrases that are used by other members of the society and then incorporate them in their conversations. Consider T17 below

T17

A: *Hata mimi I was late that class lakini kuongea vibayai nayo !!! pliz respect others even ka wamekosa*

(I was also late for that class.... But you are so rude!!! please respect others even if they have wronged you)

B: *Pliz apologize*
(Please apologize)

C: *We can't support that, she gonna style up*
(We can't support that, she should change her behaviour.)

Before the text, the participants had exchanged words concerning the lecture they had attended. Student A, points out that people are rude and there is a need to respect one another. B, another student calls for an apology and then student C categorically says that the student who had offended others 'gonna style up' meaning she needs to change her behaviour. The colloquial use of the language is evident especially in the usage of the form "gonna". Colloquialism is a pointer to the informality as depicted by the university students. Informality is used in the marking of identities as discussed in chapter 5

Another mostly used unique term by the university student is 'sleep over'. The word means spending a night at partners' place. Mostly, it implies a boy spending the night at his girlfriend's room or vice versa. Consider the following example.

T18

A: *Zle books laibu zinakaa side gani*
(Where can we get those books in the library?)

B: *Hahahaha!!! Consort google*
(Hahahaha!!! Consult Google)

C: *Google topic yako na Simo ka hakuenda sleepover*
(Goggle your topic together with Simo, if he did not go to spend the night with his girlfriend.)

It may not be easy for one to decode the meaning of the compound word "sleep over" if you are not conversant with the way university students or the young generation use language. Student C tells A that he, together with another student called Simo should check their topic in the internet using Google but expresses his doubt that Simo may have gone for 'sleep over'. 'Sleep over' is used by students to mean spending a night

in a partners room and as result one finds himself in “*a walk of shame*” the following day in the morning as he/she walks towards his/her room with the same clothes, unmade hair in case of a lady. “A walk of shame” is therefore phrase used by students as they interact with one another and it may not be easy for a person who is not a student to make sense of it.

Another phrase commonly used is “*Bora uhai*” (being alive is the most important thing) which is used by students while comforting themselves in case something that is unfavourable happens to them. The phrase came into existence during the World Cup games in 2018. In case a fan whose team he/she was supporting was beaten, he/she would simply utter the phrase, “*bora uhai*” to comfort themselves. The phrase later found its way to the students’ social media discourse.

T19

A: *weekend unaona inaanza then u are here stressing us on cats. Nkt !!!!*
(You see the weekend has started and you are here stressing us with the issues of Continuous Assessment test?? Nkt!!!(expression of annoyance)

B: *Bora uhai utafanya niskie ukutisha special endelea tu* 😞😞😞
(To be alive is the most important thing, I will hear you ask for a special exam)

There are words that are uniquely used by the university students in social media platform. Some of these words are adopted from English, Kiswahili, or local languages and then given another usage. The word *watunguyas* (my people) is a compound word formed by combining two Kiswahili free morphemes “*watu*” and the inverted, ‘*yangu*’ (*nguya*) which means mine and an English bound morpheme which in specific terms is a plural inflectional morpheme “*s*”. This word is formed in a unique manner hence demonstrating the peculiar way in which university students create their identities which is the concern for the next chapter.

Consider the following example;

T20

A: *Hey, form leo ni gani watunguyas*
(Hey, what are today’s plans guys)

B: *We will meeet 2 day @2*
(We will meet today at 2 P.M)

C: *Kila mtu akuje amejipanga*
(Everyone should come while prepared)

The following table provides some of the lexical items commonly found in students' social media discourse and may not be found in any formal written discourse.

Table 4.6
Lexical Features

Form	Meaning
Screw	To have sex
Screw raw/ hit raw	To engage in unprotected sex
Dry spell	To stay for long without engaging in sex
Bae	One's intimate friend
Swee	One's intimate friend
Secret crush	Secret admirer
Form	Plan
Sleep over	Spending a night in a partner's place
A walk of shame	A walk after one has slept in a partner's place
Femicide	Killing of females by their partners
Be thinned by yours	Mind your own business
Watunguyas	Watu wangu (my people)
Matter core hii	Matako hii (buttocks)
Nop	No
Lamba lolo	To engage in oral sex
Kujisort	To find a solution
Formless	To have no plan
kuchecwo	To be cheated
Hike	An outing/ tour
Show as in nitakushow	To inform
Utajua hujui	A threat, meaning that you will be proved wrong
Bora uhai	A comforting phrase used when something has gone wrong
On point	Something that is pleasant
Feel as in nakufeeel (I feel you)	It means that one has romantic feelings towards the other

Source: Author 2019

It should be noted that some of the words in the above table 4.6 are normally used in spoken discourse by the young generation and children and have found their way to the written discourse in social media. Having presented the findings on the lexical features, let us proceed to the logographic features that are closely related to the lexical features.

4.5 Logographic Features

Logographic features are those features used to represent morphemes, lexical elements and parts of words (Howe, 2013). These kinds of aspects are inherent in the university students' social media discourse. These features are often represented by the use of

acronyms in which a letter represents a word or a part of the word. They can also be realized through the use of abbreviations.

4.5.1 Use of Letters

There are those forms generally used to represent a whole morpheme/word. In this case, a letter may be used to stand for a morpheme.

T21

A: *Eti Erickoo class iko wapi?*

(Eric, where is the venue for our class?)

B: *Clas rep r u there?*

(Class representative are you there?)

T22

A: *I must come 4 u*

(I must come for you)

B: *Mm ctaki my inbox, biashara should b ok then done here*

(I don't want inbox; all business should be done here)

A2: *Ok then, utatoa ngapi nikuzie infinix note 5?*

(Ok then how much will you pay I sell to you Infinix note 5)

B2: *4 K.*

(Four thousand)

A3: *Make it 5 k bas.*

(Make it five thousand then.)

C: *leaders u r so quiet hii sem mao 2 hama?*

(Our leaders are so quiet.... this semester, is it because of mathematics or what?)

T23

A: *I feel like Y wa2 wanalala mapema hivi.*

(I feel like why people are sleeping early of late)

B: *May b juu ya egzam 2morrow*

(Maybe it is because of the exam that we are doing tomorrow)

In the above examples, the students have used 'r' to stand for the auxiliary verb *are* and 'u' for the second person pronoun (you) and "b" for 'be'. 'K' on the hand, is not related to the way the word is pronounced but refers to a thousand hence '4k' means four thousand and "5k" five thousand. C is normally used to negate something and students mostly combine it with Kiswahili words meticulously to realize a form that is common among the university students as well as the young generation. For instance, 'ctaki', (I don't want) 'cthani' (I don't think), 'ctaanalyse' (I will not analyse) while

'Y' stands for why. The use of such forms saves on space and ensures communication is done faster.

4.5.2 Use of Letters and Numbers

Students normally use letters and Arabic numbers to stand for a morpheme/ word or a phrase. At times, students use numbers only and at other times, they combine letters with numbers. For instance, 'L8r' means later, '2moro' means tomorrow, 'Gr8' means great, 'C u l 8r' means see you later, '2 day' stands for today, 'Rai8' stands for right, '4ward' means forward, '2nyt' means tonight, '208' tuonane (let's meet) and '9t night'. Consider the following examples.

T24

A: Wa2 wa Nai wazikane huko CC ha2taki jam shags tym ya matanga. Mara ooh maji moto ya wageni, tent ya wageni ku2ka Nai, maji ya chupa !!!malizeni service yenu Nairobi m2achie ushago 2 zikane.

(People from Nairobi should burry their people there, we don't want commotions upcountry during burial time. Mara oh, warm water for visitors, tent for visitors from Nairobi, bottled water for people from Nairobi!!! Finish your requiem mass in Nairobi and just leave us upcountry people we burry our people.)

T25

A. Utapata jawabu 2
(You will soon be answered)
C. R u 4getting that kesho tuko na CAT ya mao?
(Are you forgetting that tomorrow we have mathematics CAT?)
A2: That people should b revising
(People should be revising then.)

T26

A: Everyone get informed 2 meet for micro teaching rehearsal
(Everyone should be informed to meet for a microteaching rehearsal)
B: 208 wapi?
(Where should we meet?)
C: Bsr coming mbio
(I am in BSR (lecture hall) coming fast.)

From the above examples, it is clear that letters and numbers or any of them can stand for a morpheme, word or a phrase. In T26 for instance '208' means 'tuonane' (let us meet) while '2' stand for tu (you). In example two, 'R u 4' forgetting (Are you forgetting) is a phrase that has combined both letters and numbers. The students' ability to use both numbers and letters in a rule-governed manner and communicate a unified

message is a manifestation of their competency in the language they are using. The fact that the members of the group are able to encode the messages coded in such a manner implies that they share some common knowledge in that form of language usage and they have their own register and style of communicating.

The table 4.7 below shows the summary of the various logographic forms used by the students and what they represent.

Table 4.7 Logographic Features

Form	Description of the form	What is represented by the form	Actual form
U	letter	Word	You
R	letter	Word	Are
Y	Letter	Word	why
B	Letter	Word	be
K	Letter	word	Okay/ thousand
Cc	letters	word	Sisi (we)
C	Letter	word	see
4	number	word	For, four
2	number	word	Two, too, to
208	numbers	sentence	Tuonane (let us meet.
4n	A number; a letter	word	phone
L8r	Letters and a number	word	later
9t	A number and a letter	word	night
Rai8	Letters and a number	word	right
Ctakam	Letter “c” for negation, Kiswahili tense morpheme (ta) and a word (kam for come)	sentence	I will not come
@	symbol	A morpheme or a word	At, heart
+	symbol	word	Plus or addition

Source: Author 2019

4.5.3 Formation of Words, Acronyms and Abbreviations

Many forms of words and abbreviations have come up because of social media. These are forms that are not commonly used in other contexts. For instance, “*nkt*” stands for ‘not kindly taken’ but in context it conveys annoyance, “*LoL*” stands for ‘laughing out loudly’ while “*ASAP*” stands for ‘as soon as possible’, “*TBT*” stands for ‘Throw Back Thursday’, “*OMG*” stands for ‘Oh My God’ and “*TM*” ‘team mafisi’.

T27

A: *Tuna daro qwani hautakam?*
(There is a class.... Are you not coming?)
B: *Nakam ASAP*
(I'm coming as soon as possible)
A2: *C u there*
(See you there.)

T28

A: *Btw huyo jamaa 2tai mmeet*
(By the way, will we ever meet that guy?)
B: *C thani*
(I don't think so.)
A2: *Huyo jamaa alimek sem kuwa lively 2 sanaaaa*
(That guy made the semester to be so lively.)
B2: *Nkt !!! Ckumpenda huyo jamaa, alikuwa sadist*
(Nkt!!! (Expression of annoyance meaning not kindly taken) I didn't like that guy he is a sadist)

In the above example, "ASAP" which an acronym means 'as soon as possible' while "NKT" is an abbreviation for 'not kindly taken' are used. These short forms are common among the young generation of which university students are included. These forms save time that would have been spent typing, the space that would have been used and they ease communication making it faster.

4.5.4 Use of Symbols

Symbols are used to stand for certain words or morphemes. Students make use of symbols such as @ to stand for 'either at or heart'.

T29

A: *Niletee mbili ... yangu na ya sweet@*
(Bring for me two...mine and for my sweet heart.)

B: *Poa but sweet@ amekula mob*
(It's Ok but sweet heart has eaten a lot.)

T30

A: *Get your gas refilled @850 with free delivery + selling gas cylinders @ an affordable price.*

(Get your gas refilled at 850 Shillings with free delivery. In addition, I'm selling gas cylinders at an affordable price)

B: *Where r u situated?*
(Where are you situated?)

A2: *Ky energy solutions*
(Ky Energy Solutions.)

From the above examples, the first @ in T29 is used to stand for a free morpheme 'heart' while the one used in T30 is used to stand for the bound morpheme 'at'. Just

like acronyms and abbreviations, use of symbols saves time, energy, space and makes communication easy. Having presented the findings on the logographic features, our next focus will be word formation processes.

4.6 Word Formation Processes

4.6.1 Coinage

In coinage, new forms of words are invented. In social media discourse, a number of words have been coined. Consider the following examples.

T31

A: *Y don't you mind your own business*

(Why don't you mind your own business?)

B: *Y tag me then*

(Why mention me then)

C: *It is better to check or what do you mean?*

(It is better if you check, or what do you mean)

D: *Or we are in the wrong group Tell us you misleaders of this group*

(Or we are in the wrong group... Tell us you are misleaders of this group)

From the above example, there is the addition of the negative morpheme “mis” to the word ‘leaders’ to form a new word “misleaders” which is not an English word per se but a social media coinage. Another example is the addition of an English morpheme “less” to the word “form” which according to social media means ‘plan’. The word ‘*formless*’ means ‘having no plan’. The same case with the word “*utotology*” which is from a Kiswahili word “*utoto*” which means ‘childish’ becomes “*utotology*” after the addition of the morpheme *-logy*. The word acquires a new meaning; an act of being childish or being immature. The manner in which these words completely conforms to the rules of grammar. This confirms Katamba’s (1993) observation that productivity is sometimes used to refer to creativity that entails the human languages’ capacity to utilize finite means so as to come up with infinite/unlimited number of words and utterances. In morphology, creativity manifests itself in two different ways; rule-governed and rule blending creativity. It is clear in the writer’s argument that most of the words are formed following general principles and rules that have been internalized by the speakers in the language acquisition process. For example, in the formation of the words “*utotology*” and “*formless*”, the word formation rules are followed in such a way that anybody competent in the English language is likely to know the meanings of such coined words.

It should however be noted that sometimes coinage in the social media is not rule governed. Consider the words “*lefting*” and “*lefted*” which are mostly used in social media. The word “*lefting*”, in the light of grammar, is ungrammatical since the word is derived from ‘left’ which a past tense of leave. The grammatical rules do not allow one to add an –“ing” morpheme to word already in the past tense. The form “lefting” is nowadays used by virtually everyone to mean leaving while “lefted” which is equally grammatically unacceptable form is used in the social media. It should be noted that the word left is the past tense of the word leave and one cannot expect the addition of the past tense morpheme “*ed*” to a form that is already in the past tense. This entails rule bending creativity. Coinage in social media therefore happens through rule-governed and rule bending creativity.

Another example of coinage is the word “*inbox*” in social media words like “*inbox me* or *hit somebody’s inbox*” are very common. These expressions mean to send a message directly to a person’s WhatsApp account as shown in the following example:

T32

A: *kindly hit my inbox*

(Kindly send to my account)

B: *no need to inbox you, nothing personal, I will post the prices on the wall*

(There is no need, since the information is not personal, I will post the prices on the wall)

A1: *okay, hakuna wasi*

(Okay, no problem)

In the conversation, student A requests that student B to send the prices to his personal WhatsApp account (the prices for various items that B had hinted that he was selling). It clear from our discussion that students coin words or borrow words coined in the public media and use them in their social media discourse.

4.6.2 Blending

This kind of word formation process which involves clipping a part of one word and then clipping another part of another word and then combining the two parts to form a new word. This occurs in social media distinctively compared to the way it happens in other situations.

T33

A: *Prac iko?*

(Where is the venue for the practical?)

B: *A zn iko wapi?*

(In other words, where is the venue?)

A2: *S403*

(Science block 403)

The words ‘*azn*’ is a blend from ‘as in’ whereas the word ‘*isokey*’ is a blend from the words ‘it is okay’. Other words formed through this process include: ‘*isascam*’ is a blend from the words ‘it is a scam’, ‘*tis*’ comes from ‘it is’, ‘*warratis*’ is blended from ‘what is this’ and ‘*isoright*’ is blended from the words ‘it is alright’. These forms are not only formed through a morphological process of blending but also through a phonological process. For instance, other than blending, the word ‘*azn*’ is as result of assimilation; which is a phonological process, while ‘*warratis*’ is formed through linking, which is also a phonological process. This is discussed in detail under the phonological processes in this chapter. Blending is motivated by the intrusion of speech in the social media.

4.6.3 Clipping

Clipping has to do with removing some part of a word. This word formation process is very common among the university students’ social media discourse. Consider the examples below.

T34

A. *Nyinyi mko pavi mtuambie vyenye Njoka atasema.*

(Those who are at the pavilion will tell us what Njoka will say.)

B. *Ndo anaendelea*

(His speech is ongoing.)

T35

A: *Guys when are we submitting the group assigno?*

(Colleagues when are we submitting the group assignment?)

B: *I guess ni next wic*

(I guess it’s next week)

C: *I hear that comm. Skills lec has postponed*

(I hear that communication skills lecture was postponed.)

D: *Our class rep can you confirm that*

(Our class representative can you confirm that.).

Clipping is a common phenomenon in social media discourse. For instance, the word ‘lecturer’ is clipped to ‘*lec*’, ‘practical’ to ‘*prac*’, ‘pavilion’ to ‘*pavi*’, ‘library’ to ‘*lib*’, ‘representative’ to ‘*rep*’, ‘anyway’ to ‘*enwei*’, ‘by the way’ to ‘*by tha*’, ‘assignment’

to ‘assigno’ and ‘week’ to ‘wic’. Most of the words that students clip is those that they use on daily basis as they carry out their main business at the university. One can argue that these clipped words are unique to them and help in the marking of their identities. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5

Reduplication

Reduplication is also a word formation process used by the students in their social media discourse. The following examples show instances of full reduplication.

T36

- A: *Hii video imenibamba*
(This video is fascinating)
B: (smiling emoji) *pabwaa*
(Be thrilled)
C: *Imetubamba qweliqweli*
(It has really fascinated us)

T37

- A: *By tha, what do u think about this tabia ya madem kumeza tembe for their butt and boobs*
(By the way what do you think of this ladies’ bahaviour of taking medicine in order to improve their looks)
B: *No problem juu ma boys upenda yellow yellow nowadays*
(There is no problem because men like women who are light skinned)
C: *Let men get want they want at all cost*
(Let the men get what they want at whichever cost)

In T36, there is a full duplication of the word ‘qweli’ which stands for ‘kweli’. After duplication we get the word “*qweli qweli*, (true true) and in T37, there is a full duplication of the word ‘yellow’ thus “yellow yellow’ which means ‘light skinned’ according the social media usage. Ladies are said to take pills that enhance their looks especially their body colour. The argument here is that men prefer ladies who are light skinned. They also take some tablets that enlarge their “*butt*” (buttocks) in order to appear pleasant. The word “yellow yellow” is used to refer yo the light skinned girls. Other examples include ‘*minji minji*’ and ‘*ndengu ndengu*’ which intruded the social media from the political scenes in Kirinyaga County. The meanings for these words will be discussed under semantic features and language- context analysis in this chapter.

4.6.4 Compounding

There are several instances where compounding as a word formation process is evident. However, there is an overlap whereby some words formed through coinage happen to be compounded. For instance, words like ‘*slay queen*’, ‘*Ben Ten*’, ‘*lamba lolo*’, ‘*matter core*’ (matako) and ‘*side chick*’. These words are compounded and they have also been coined. .

It is therefore clear that university students, in their social media interactions form new words through a number of word formation processes. The way they form new words is unique to them. Acronyms, another word formation process is very popular and was discussed under logographic features in this chapter.

4.7 The Interplay of Linguistic Features at Morphological, Phonological and Syntactic Levels of Language Study.

In their social media discourse, students use language in a manner that shows the interdependence that exists in the three levels of linguistic study (morphology, phonology and syntax). In the formation of words, phonology plays an integral role in the manner in which words are formed. For instance, the word ‘love’ is written as ‘luv’, ‘anyway’ is written as ‘*enwei*’, ‘good’ as ‘*gud*’, ‘night’ as ‘*nait*’ or ‘*nyt*’ and “*sis* or *siz*” for sister, and ‘friend’ is shortened to ‘*fren*’. Consider the following example;

T38

A. *This iz not a group of elites av seen few people with brains, we ‘nid’ those ‘gud’ brains and mature people... many people here r allergic to insults thrown here.*

(This is not a group of elites, have seen few people with brains, we need those good brains and mature people... many people here are allergic to insults which are thrown here.)

B. *Am humble.... Meet next tym kama hawataleta wana.*

(I am humble... let’s meet next time if they will not behave immaturely.)

T39

A: *Good evening, kesho kuna prac na class ya Peris after prac*
(Good evening, tomorrow there will be a practical and Peris’ class afterwards.)

B. *Anapenda kusumbua watu na kuspoil **planz** za watu aki*
(She likes disturbing us and messing up our plans always.)

In T38, the word ‘have’ is written as ‘*av*’ while ‘need’ as ‘*nid*’ and ‘time’ as ‘*tym*’. This is a reflection of how these forms are used in the spoken discourse. In T39, the word ‘plans’ is written as ‘*planz*’. This implies that the phonological nature of a word has a bearing on the resulting morphological nature of the same word. This is as result of assimilation, which is a phonological process; the plural morpheme ‘s’ of the word plans, changes to a voiced sound “z” hence ‘*planz*’. This spells out the relationship between phonology and morphology.

Morphology and syntax relationship is spelt out in the students’ social media discourse from the way words combine to create sentences and how the morphemes combine to form new words that are grammatically acceptable hence realization of grammatically correct sentences despite the mixing of the codes. Consider the following example

T40

A: *Iyo ilikuwa my reaction kwa iyo text, ama umeinterpret maana yake kivipi?*

(That was my reaction to that text, or how have you interpreted the meaning of that text.)

B: *Kuna mjinga huku*

(There is a fool in this group)

C: *Utology detected in a comrade*

(Childish behaviour noted in a comrade.)

From the above example the word, ‘*umeinterpret*’ which is a clause when interpreted into English, is in agreement with the rest of words in the sentence. The word has different morphemes, ‘u’ for ‘you’, -‘*me*’, a morpheme marking the present tense and ‘interpret’ which is an English morpheme. When translated it means, ‘how have you interpreted’. In the sentence ‘*utology*’ detected in a comrade’, also mixes the morpheme ‘*utoto*’ (childish) which is a Kiswahili word and the morpheme ‘*logy*’ which is an English morpheme. The sentence is therefore grammatically correct despite the mixing of codes. The students are able to decode meaning of the morpheme – ‘*logy*’ simply because of the extensive use of the same morpheme in the names of units they undertake at the university such as morphology, Psychology, Physiology, Anthropology just to mention but a few. The relationship between morphology and phonology can be well understood in the light of the phonological processes as discussed by Rouch (1998).

4.8. Semantic and Language –Context Analysis Features

Semantics studies the meanings that can be expressed convincingly and it is claimed to be a component discipline of linguistics that is most fruitful and exciting point of departure. Semantics is core in the study of the human mind-thought processes, conceptualization and cognition. Several words acquire different meaning depending on the context where they are applied (Leech, 1974). The social context plays an integral role in determining what a certain linguistic form or expression means.

According to Gee (1999), the meaning of an utterance and the context have a lot of interdependence. The scholars argues that there are certain forms in a language that rely on one another so as to be meaningful. In English for instance, we may have independent and dependent clauses, subject and objects of sentences, nouns and verbs and other types of words. These forms are associated with certain types of functions or meanings and this is what is referred to as “meaning potentials”.

Gee (1999) posits that when we actually write or utter a sentence, it has what is often referred to as ‘utterance –token meaning’ or what he refers to as situated meaning. Situated meanings may come up as a result of particular language forms taking on specific or situated meanings in some specific contexts. The word ‘context’ in this case is used to refer to an ever-widening set of factors that co-occur with language in use. They include: the setting of the material, the people who are present (and what they know and believe), the languages that are used before and after a given utterance, the social relationships of the people who are involved, and their ethnic, gendered and sexual identities, as well as their institutional and cultural historical factors.

This study confirms that some meanings of words and phrases as used in the social media discourse of university students could only be interpreted depending on the context in which such words are used. In the social media context, some words are associated with some peculiar meaning that can be interpreted only when a person is conversant with what is happening in the wider society. A good example is the word “*nyerified*” and “*femicide*”. The former is derived from the word Nyeri while the latter is from the word female. Nyeri is a community in Kenya that is stereotyped with females battering or killing their husbands and therefore if a person tells another that

he will be “nyerified”, then it implies that such an inhuman act may be perpetrated to them. Without the social context one may not understand the meaning of this coined word. Similarly, “femicide” was coined after several instances were reported of male students killing their female lovers. This word is formed by clipping the word female and the adding a morpheme –“cide” which is associated with killing as seen in words such as insecticide, suicide, herbicide, homicide and so. Consider the following example;

T 41

A: Men have got physical strength and cannot be threatened by your threats

(Men are physically strong; therefore, cannot be threatened by your threats)

B: Ben, ety physical strength,,, not ol men are strong,,, give it tyme en women are going to react to it too. U guys are going to be nyerified,,, and killed too coz we have other skills hatutakaa hapo ety juu mko na nguvu mtunyanyase.

(Ben, so, you are talking of physical strength,,, not all men are strong,,,give it time and women are going to react to it too. you guys are going to be nyerified,,, and killed too because we have other skills, we will not stay there you exploit us because you have physical strength)

C: Okay, as we end femicide, what is your take on that murder by MISS PRISONS? Y were you feminist against the court orders towards her? I wish huyu boy is sentenced to death najua mtasema mpewe mumuwe.

(Okay, as we end femicide, what is your take on that murder by MISS PRISONS? Why were you feminist against the court orders towards her? I wish this young man is sentenced to death. I know you will say that he be given to you so that you kill him.)

As already discussed, the words, “femicide” and “nyerified” have been used in T 41 above and for one to understand their meaning, the social context is required hence situated meaning as Gee (1999) posits. Similarly, the word “nyerification” was also coined and has similar meaning with “nyerified”. This kind of coinage as already been discussed has a bearing on the social life of people outside the social media, their perceptions and attitudes towards other people and, their ethnicity and gender, which is a pointer to the intertextuality of the students’ social media discourse.

Other examples of coinage include words like “*minji minji*” and “*ndengu ndengu*” which originated from Kirinyaga County during the 2017 elections to refer to the main candidates for the gubernatorial seat. Denotatively, “*minji*” means ‘green peas’ while “*ndengu*” means ‘green grams’ while connotatively, the former stands for the type of

girls that are cool, soft and attractive while the latter stands for the rough and unattractive type. Initially the reduplicated, “*minji minji*” referred to Ann Waiguru, one of candidates while “*ndengu ndengu*” referred to Martha Karua (the other candidate) before they were generalized in social media to mean the Waiguru type and the Karua type respectively. Closely related to these words is “*yellow yellow*” which literally means a type of colour but in the social context, the form refers to those ‘very attractive light skinned girls whose complexion resembles some ripe fruit such as bananas, mangoes or oranges. Perhaps the word has got some relationship with the Kiswahili word “*iva*” (ripe) if a person says for instance “*Jane ameiva sana*” it means that ‘Jane looks beautiful’ but in another context if a person is going to do an exam and he/she says “*ameiva*” it means that he/ she is prepared for the exam. One can therefore draw some relationship between “*yellow yellow*” and the Kiswahili word “*iva*” which means ‘ripe’

Semantically speaking, some words have acquired new meanings in the social media discourse. This study found that there are a number of words that have either been borrowed or coined and then used differently from their initial meaning. For instance, there are words that generally refer to the relationship that exists among the males and females and are used in a peculiar manner. The word “baby” means a small child (literally). However, the word has acquired a new meaning and has several forms that have emerged over time. The word is currently used to refer to adults who are in an intimate relationship. From the word baby, through the dynamics of language we have other generics of the word that include: “*bae*”, “*baib*”, “*beb*”, “*babe*”, “*baibe*”, “*baz*”, and “*bbie*”. The most common nowadays is “*bae*”.

The other word that is metaphorically used is “sweetheart” to refer to people of opposite sex that are in close relationship. The word has acquired several other forms that include: “*sweat@*”, “*swee*”, “*swi*”, “*sweathat*”, “*switie*”, “*swrht*”, and “*swr*”

On the other hand, the word “*ancestor*” is used cognitively, to mean people who died long time ago. In social media, the word means an old man who has sexual relationship with a young man. Similarly, the word “*fossil*” means the mineralized remains of an animal or plant or anything that is extremely old, extinct or outdated but the same form

acquires a social meaning, that is, it refers to an old man having an affair with a young woman.

Several words have emerged to describe young women having affairs with old men. The first one is '*slay queen*' that is a compound noun that is formed from a verb and a noun. To slay, means to kill. It therefore implies that a slay queen, is a queen who has the potential of "killing". The killing here is not literal, rather the sense implies that a slay queen has traits such as being inhuman especially when it comes to the financial aspect of the '*sponsor*' or '*blesor*'. A point in case is the alleged relationship between one of the Kenyan Governors (Obado) who in this case can be considered to be the sponsor while Sharon, the slay queen. It is alleged that the slay queen was demanding so much from him hence the aspect of being inhuman comes in which killed her. These words are not only used in the social media but also in the wider society meaning that students do not live exclusively in isolation but they interact with others. This demonstrates the intertextuality aspects in students' social media discourse.

The other new terms that have come into existence are '*socialite*', '*clande*' and '*side chick*' which are considered synonyms for 'slay queen' and 'side chick'. Side chick has an equivalent of what is popularly known in Kiswahili as 'Mpango wa kando' (MWK) which can be literally interpreted to mean an illegitimate sexual affair that a person has. '*Socialite*' refers to the one with her own means, that is, she has money of her own as opposed to the 'slay queen' and the 'side chick'. "Clande" on the other hand, is a short form for 'clandestine' implying a person that one has a sexual relationship with that is highly secretive just like the word itself suggests. Devoid of the context in which these words are used, it may be a difficult for one to decipher the meanings (*Blesor, slayqueen, side chick, secret crush, ancestor, fossil, Ben ten, and lambalolo*). Therefore, context has a bearing on the meanings of words. Consider the following example.

T42

A: *Naskia tuko na lec mpya wa ile unit ya morro*
(I have heard we have new lecturer for the unit we are attending tomorrow)

B: *Ety tuliletewaslay queen mwingine hapo*
(We were given another slay queen)

C: *You mean?*
(Are you serious?)

D: Yes, she isn't even through with her studies yet, may be somebody's side chick
(Yes, she isn't even through with her studies yet may be somebody's side chick)

From the above examples, the words, '*slay queen*' and '*side chick*' have been coined. Slay queen is a combination of 'slay' and 'queen' while '*side chick*' is a combination of side and chick. On the other hand, the term used to refer to a young man with an extra marital affair with an old woman is '*Ben ten*'. Consider T43 below

T43

A: Yeyeto atakayea mamako ni babako. Go and apologize to ua dad. Usimwite Ben ten

(Anybody who marries your mother is your father. Go and apologise to your dad. Do not call him Ben ten.)

B: Correct

(That is right)

A: Aaaa

(laughter)

From the example given above, it is clear that "*Ben ten*" is that young man who marries an old lady. A "*player*" denotatively means one who plays any game or sport or an actor in a dramatic play; however, in social media it is that person who 'double deals' or engages in sexual affairs with many people. A "*Sponsor*" is used in social media to refer to a man who dates a young girl and supports her (takes her out for trips among others). Another word for a '*sponsor*' is a '*blessor*'.

The word "*tag*" generally refers a small label or graffiti in the form of stylized signature particularly to the person who makes the graffiti, but in social media discourse, it means to mention somebody. Consider the example below.

T44

A: Y don't u mind ua own business

(Why don't you mind your own business)

B: Y tag me?

C: (Why mention me then?)

In the context of the social media, some word change or acquire new meanings. For instance, "*Shock absorbers*" denotatively mean hydraulic or mechanical devices designed to take in and damp shock impulses by converting the shock's kinetic energy into another form of energy which is dissipated. Connotatively, shock absorbers may mean a man or woman who is able to withstand relationship pressure especially when

he/she is dumped by his/her lover or when being cheated on. “*Dry spell*” in social media means to have stayed for long without sex. Denotatively dry spell means a period where the weather has been dry for an abnormally long time; however, shorter than and not as severe as a drought. ‘*Beef*’ – in social media means one who is not pleased with the other but the original meaning of beef is the meat from a cow, bull or other bovine animals. “*Lamba lolo*” which is a short form for ‘lamba lolipop’ has a conceptual meaning of sucking a lolipop but in social media discourse the compound word has acquired a social meaning of engaging in oral sex.

Thematic meaning can be demonstrated by the sentence in our letter to Kinuthia in (T50) that goes “*pepeta Jane kwa ukakamavu na fujo*” in which the focus has been given to the action “pepeta” to accentuate the action of engaging in sex. The word ‘fujo’ literally means force but in the social context it implies that the actual actions should be done thoroughly.

4.9 Discourse Features

Crystal (2001) observes that discourse features refers to the structural organization of a text which is defined in terms of factors such as relevance, coherence, structure of a paragraph and the logical progression of ideas. This study found that University Students do not write in paragraph forms in most of the instances but when they do so in a few instances, their texts are coherent and their paragraph development and the progression of ideas is well-formed. A lot of ellipsis is common in their paragraphs and they rarely use a single language. However, despite their mixed codes the grammatically of their sentences is noted. Consider the following example.

T45

A: Ni aji hizi lectures imeallocatiwa badly. Class rep do something (These lectures have been allocated badly. Class representative do something)

B: I think that time table iko sawa kulingana na vile hali iko, n it is not the first time to have those lectures vile ziko, so I think ata kaa nimob, mtu ajipange atoke kwa keja akiwa ameshiba do not stress the class rep he has done his work best ,, ,, Sometimes learn to thank someone even when the situation does not favour you, haezi weka hizo class ivo kama kulikuwa na option ingine, understand that and stop complaining you people,, if you do not make to attend all. It is up to u,, Jipange vile unajiweza, “Jibebe” by Diamond

(I think that time table is okay depending on how things are, and it is not the first time that those lectures have been allocated the way they are. So I think although they are many you be prepared by ensuring by the time you get out of your house you have eaten well, do not stress the class representative he has done his work best ,, ,, Sometimes learn to thank someone even when the situation does not favour you,, he could not have opted to have the lectures that way if there was another option, understand that and stop complaining you people,, if you do not make to attend all. It is up to you,,,do as much as you can,,, “jibebe” by Diamond.)
 C: That is true

In the above example, student B writes a paragraph trying to convince other students to bear with the time table because the class representative has done his best. The ideas are well articulated using three codes; English, Kiswahili and Sheng. Cohesive devices like ‘so’ ‘even if’ and ‘when’ have been used. Apart from the cohesive devices, transition of ideas is mostly marked by continuous punctuation marks like in the above example; commas are used to show that one has moved from one idea to the other though related. It is also clear that student B has quoted Diamond, a famous singer from Tanzania in order to support his argument. The fact that student C concurred with the argument and several others who commented later is an indication of an idea well-articulated. Apart from few instances, where students deliberately deviate from the norm and give irrelevant contributions towards a certain chat, many are times when they are relevant and logical in their argument.

4.10 Code Switching and Code Mixing

Code switching generally means using different codes in the same speech. It is not found in formal written discourse but it is very common in social media discourse that is considered a hybrid between spoken and written discourse. This study found out that students mix their codes often. The three codes include: English, Kiswahili and a Kenyan slang known as ‘Sheng’

T46

A: *wasee walijam sana tym walitoka shags matanga coz huyo lec alifunza wenye hawakuenda*

(The students were disappointed on arrival from the burial upcountry because the lecturer taught thos who did no go to attend the funeral.)

B: *Hehehe alido wrong*

(Hehehe he did something wrong)

C: True.

T47

A: *Bwana hii kidogo na unatangazia wasee!*

(You are notifying students about this little)

B: *Na imagine nasikia that iyo sembe itabaki coz the miraculous man by the name Jesus is around.*

(Imagine I hear that this ugali will remain because the miraculous man by the name Jesus is around)

C: *Hamna! Inategemea kabila hapo*

(This depends on the culture)

B1: *Yesu alikuwa kabila gn ww ukiona?*

(Which ethnic community did Jesus come from in your opinion?)

D: *Ka c Mkamba! Bt c Mluhya*

(May be a Kamba but not a Luhya)

B2: *Alikuwa Mjaluco coz he emphasized on fish.*

(He was a Luo because he emphasized on fish)

A1: *Nop! Mjaluco samaki hazingebaki. Sema Mkisii*

(No! A Luo fish would not have remained. May be a Kisii)

E: *He didn't talk of matoke.*

(He did not talk of bananas)

In the above examples, the three codes; English, Kiswahili and Sheng have been used. English words like ‘*imagine*’ and “*tym*” for (time), *miraculous* and emphasized have been used in T46 and 47 while ‘*kidogo*’ (little) ‘*nasikia*’ (I hear), ‘*itabaki*’ (it will remain) are Kiswahili words used and ‘*shags*’ and ‘*sembe*’ are sheng words use to mean upcountry and Ugali respectively. Code mixing is very rampant in the students social media discourse. It manifests at the word level and the following are examples of code mixing.

T48

A: *Kwani uko om bado*

(Are you still at home)

B: *Yap, uliback wen?*

(Yes, when did you report back?)

A1: *Mi nlikam Friday last week*

(I came on Friday last week)

T49

A: *Hah! Nitumie details nikuchekie*

(Send me the details I check for you)

Nitakufowardia tu ctaanalyse

(I will forward them to you and I will not analyse them)

In T48 and T49 we have “*uliback*” (you reported) “*nlikam*”

(I came)

“*Nikuchekie*” (I check for you) “*Nitakufowardia*” (I will forward it to you) and “*ctaanalyse*” (I will not analyse). Code switching and mixing is a common phenomenon in students’ social media discourse as revealed by these examples. In

these examples, English and Kiswahili are the two languages involved. Code mixing is done by mixing the English and Kiswahili morphemes. For instance, in the word “nitakufowardia” (I will forward it to you) is a word and at the same time a sentence as the interpretation points out. The morpheme “ni” stands for the first person pronoun ‘I’, while “ta” indicates the future time (will), “ku” stands for the third person pronoun ‘it’ and “a” stand for the second person pronoun ‘you’. The only English morpheme is the word ‘forward’. The rules of grammar are followed in the code mixing which is an indicator that students are competent in both languages.

4.11 Intertextuality of Social Media Texts.

Students’ texts display aspects of intertextuality owing to the fact that despite these students sharing a lot, they are part and parcel of the wider society and therefore some features that point to the social, political, and religious life, that happens in the wider society are reflected in their texts. According to Gee (1999), the term social language refers to specific language varieties that are used to establish unique identities and carry out specific activities. A single oral or written text may be in one social language or it can switch between two or more or even mix them. Sometimes, however, a text spoken or written in one variety of language (one social language) may accomplish some sort of switching by incorporating words from another text written or spoken in the same or a different variety of language. This whole process is what is referred as intertextuality (Gee, 1999).

Similarly, Fairclough (1992) argues that intertextuality is the property of texts whereby they snatch of other texts and whatever that is snatched may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text assimilates, contradict, ironically echo and so forth. Zoonen (2017) simply adds that intertextuality is a word that indicates that all texts whether they are spoken or written, informal or formal, artistic or mundane are in many ways related to each other. It is a phenomenon that is particularly relevant when one wants to understand the meanings of mass media and online content, because more often than not, a particular piece of media content like crime novel, sports blog or a commercial, is related to another media content.

Students normally exhibit a number of linguistic features that are peculiar to them even in a single text. So far we have discussed a number of linguistic features and the following text, which is in form of a letter, will not only sum up a number of them but will also demonstrate the intertextuality of social media texts.

T50

Dear Kinuthia and the likes,

You had no right whatsoever to kill Ivy. In case you missed the men's conference of February, we covered this unit extensively. "Sending money to a woman or being in a relationship with her doesn't make you own her!!! It is very very naïve to imagine that simply coz dame ameingia box yako now her life must revolve around you. A real man should have one girl friend he truly loves, two side-chicks he sees occasionally and a secret crush he flirts with. If the beautiful girl he truly loves reciprocates and shows loyalty, gradually eliminate the side chicks and marry her. If the beautiful girl you truly love leaves you for another man or cheats on you, immediately give attention to the 2 side chicks and double your effort on winning the secret crush.

Remember, for every 14k that you send her, there's more financially stable man who sent 45k last week to 'pay' for her exam. Until you've married a girl, jua mko wengi kwenye kinya'nganiro cha 2022. She has a right to eat all your money, and later decide who she wanna be with or not. Likewise, you have right to engage multiple girls. If you had been cheating on Ivy... you'd not have felt so angry by rejection. The guilty of cheating buideth future shock-absorbers in case bae dumbs you with no reason like like former sports Cs Echesa was sacked by Uhuru. If Ivy amekuzimia simu respect her space. Don't be petty, insecure, jealous, a psycho, or a nincompoop. Just pick your damn phone and call Carol, muulize mbona siku hizi amenyamaza hivo? Ukiona hajisikii, chokoza Jane muulize utampeleka lunch lini? If Jane ameingia box and unaona mnaenda kejani, text Ivy and tell her "Babe, you may switch off your phone but just know I love you to the moon and back. Nalala sasa. ... weka simu "pilot mode" Pepeta Jane kwa ukakamavu na fujo. Let Ivy switch on her phone late at night, apate your message ajaribu kukupigia bt uko off. Mtaambiana sorry kesho morning about kuzimiana simu. It becomes a win win situation for everyone, n no life lost, are we together 😊😂😂.

(Dear Kinuthia and the likes,

You had no right whatsoever to kill Ivy. In case you missed the men's conference of February, we covered this unit extensively. "Sending money to a woman or being in a relationship with her doesn't make you own her!!! It is very very naïve to imagine that simply because a lady has accepted your proposal her life must revolve around you. A real man should have one girl friend he truly loves, two side-chicks he sees occasionally and a secret crush he flirts with. If the beautiful girl he truly loves reciprocates and shows loyalty, gradually eliminate the side chicks and marry her. If the beautiful girl you truly love leaves you for another man or cheats on you, immediately give attention to the two side chicks and double your effort on winning the secret crush.

Remember, for every 14k that you send her, there's more financially stable man who sent 45 thousand the previous week to 'pay' for her exam. Until you have married a girl you should know you are many in the competition like the the general election to be held in 2022. She has a right to eat all your money, and later decide whom she want to be with. Likewise, you have the right to engage multiple girls. If you had been cheating on Ivy... you would not have

felt so angry by rejection. The guilty of cheating buideth future shock-absorbers in case your fiancée dumbs you with no reason like like former sports Cs Echesa was sacked by Uhuru. If Ivy has switched off her phone because of you, respect her space. Don't be petty, insecure, jealous, a psycho, or a nincompoop. Just pick your damn phone and call Carol and ask her why she has not been talking to you, and if you realize that she is not willing, call Jane and request her for lunch. If you realize that Jane has accepted your proposal and you heading towards the house, text Ivy and tell her "Babe, you may switch off your phone but just know I love you to the moon and back. I am sleeping now. ... put the phone on flight mode. You do sex with Jane thoroughly. Let Ivy switch on her phone late at night, and then she gets your message let her try calling you later but your phone is off. You will apologise to one another the following day about the phone being off. It becomes a win win situation for everyone, and no life lost, are we in agreement 😊😊😊.)

One can only understand the above text if provided with the context in which it occurred. The writer presupposes that all the readers are aware of what happened between a university student named Ivy, who was killed by her fiancée, after she rejected him. He axed her to death. The writer tries to disapprove the action taken by Kinuthia. The writer however gives a strange solution to anyone who finds himself in the scenario that Kinuthia found himself in. Through this text, this study attempted to explore the possibility of a text to exhibit a myriad of linguistic aspects that are unique to the university students. It explores the current issues affecting the nation in a light manner.

In the text, there is the allusion of Ivy, Kinuthia, Carol and Jane. Ivy symbolizes that girl that one loves while Kinuthia stands for a man who is in a situation that Kinuthia was. There is also a presupposition of man's conference which according to the social media context took place as from 14th, February to 16th, February whereby men came up with a few resolutions on how to deal with their lovers. One of the resolutions was to deter themselves from battering or killing their lovers. The writer of this text assumes that everyone is aware of those resolutions and he himself argues that he covered the unit extensively. It was a three-day long imaginary conference that was designed to avoid valentine celebrations where men would get time to talk about all kind of things that affect them. Boyfriends and husbands had to optimize the opportunity provided by the men's conference to avoid doing all those romantic things for their partners and wives. Men everywhere fear valentines day because of the demands and pressures that

comes with it. This is because men feel that the responsibility to make the day special has been left only on their shoulders.

The event was so well choreographed that even a programme was availed complete with a master of ceremony (MC), key speakers and agenda for the entire three days. It is not easy to connect and get the interpretation of this message without the prior knowledge of what the men's conference was all about. This demonstrates the intertextuality of the social media messages. Secondly, one has to be aware of the story of Ivy and Kinuthia so as to make out the meaning of the letter written to Kinuthia. One needs to know the circumstances that led to the death of Ivy. The writer of the letter also uses imagery to liken a man who has been dumped (rejected) by his girlfriend without any good reason to the cabinet secretary (CS) Echesa who was sacked by the Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta. This also shows the intertextuality of the social media message. This confirms what Zoonen (2017) says about intertextuality; that all texts be they formal or informal, written or spoken, artistic or mundane; they are related to each other and that this feature is relevant in understanding the meaning of online content and mass media.

Apart from the intertextuality, the above 'letter' has a myriad of aspects of language discussed in this chapter and even in the next chapter. I will give an account of some of the peculiar linguistic features. As far as morphological and phonological processes are concerned, it is evident that compound words such as 'side-check' and 'secret crush' have been formed through a morphological process called compounding. The word 'psycho' has been formed through a process called clipping from the word psychotic. Abbreviation is realized through the word 'CS' (Cabinet Secretary). Clipping as a morphological process is also evident in the word "coz" (because). Phonological features are evident through the process of elision where a word like 'but' is written as "bt" and also the word 'because' written as "coz" and 'and' as 'n'.

Paralinguistic features are represented by the use of emoji. The smiling emotion is used at the end of the letter. At the same time, there are repeated punctuation marks where we have repeated exclamation marks and full stops in several instances. They are meant

to emphasise the message being put across while logographic features are evident in the usage of Arabic numbers like “2” to stand for two and ‘k’ to stand for a thousand.

The letter (text) is quite informal considering the tone and the several other factors that point to the informal usage of language. There is contraction as seen in the words ‘*doesn’t*’, ‘*you’d*’ and ‘*you’ve*’. There several instances where we have imperative sentences like ‘*Remember, for every 14k that you send her, there’s more financially stable man who sent 45k last week to ‘pay’ for her exam*’, this is a pointer to verbalization that shows informality. The active voice is used as opposed to the passive one. The usage of slang and colloquial forms of the words underscores the high level of informality. Consider the usage of words such as ‘dame’, ‘flirts’, ‘secret crush’, ‘damn’, ‘dumb’, ‘box’ and the Kiswahili words “pepeta” (to have sex) ‘fujo’ (force). The use of sheng is evident for instance where we have “kejani” (in the house). The informal use of the language, use of colloquial forms and Sheng shows how students mark their identities, which in line with the Social Identity Theory and more details of these findings are discussed in chapter five.

Multilingualism is evident in the text as the writer comfortably mixes three linguistic codes. English is the one that dominates followed by Kiswahili and then ‘sheng’. The use of the three linguistic codes shows students competence in the three codes. One of the main reasons for code switching is to enable one express himself or herself with ease. There are words that are better said in a certain language than the other. Consider the phrase “*pepeta Jane kwa ukakamavu na fujo*” if the same is said in English the effect would not be the same. The use of those linguistic codes points to the students’ identity that is the concern for the next chapter.

Creativity in the social media is demonstrated by the way the writer is able to do comparisons, his/her ability to make better choice of words, the ability to exhibit intertextuality in the text as well as the use of some stylistic devices with a lot of ease. Consider the phrase “*babe you may switch off your phone but just know I love you to the moon and back....*” The statement is not only ironical but also metaphorical and hyperbolic. It is ironical that he would tell his ‘Ivy’ that he loves her so much when he is warming up for Jane. By telling Ivy that he loves her to the moon and back is

metaphorical and is also an overstatement. The writer also uses onomatopoeia in the use of the word “pepeta” which in the context of the text means to engage in sex. The writer also metaphorically compares winning girl in situation that has a lot of competition just like winning a seat in the election “.... *jua mko wengi kwenye kinyanganiro cha 2022*”. The writer is talking about the 2022 election that will be held in Kenya. This is just a presupposition that the reader is supposed to be aware of. The choice of the word ‘pilot mode’ is derived from the word airplane/ flight mode which is an option in the phone that when switched on one cannot be reached over the phone. The whole text is laced with humour as the writer attempts to justify why a man should have multiple girlfriends particularly where he/she paradoxically state that *,the guilty of cheating buildeth the future shock-observers’*.

Discourse features, are also evident where the writer begins with salutation and then progressively and logically drives his point home. The reason for writing the letter was to show that Kinuthia had no reason to kill Ivy. Although the letter lacks the address and the closing tag, the writer addresses Kinuthia directly. Coherence and cohesion is indicated by the use of the connectors such as ‘likewise’, ‘until’, and ‘if’. The language is used informally just because the letter is informal.

Turning on the semantic aspect, it is explicit that some words and expressions can only be understood from the context. The inferences can only be made from the context in that compound word like “*side-chick*” and “*secret crush*” are only understood from the social point of view hence, social meaning. Side-check is a lady that a man has besides his girlfriend or wife while a secret crush on the other hand is that girl or lady that one admires and ‘hangs’ out with but because of the circumstances prevailing in their relationship they are not expected to have any sexual relationship. Like in the case of the letter written to Kinuthia, Carol, and Jane are the side chicks while Ivy is the ‘legal’ or the official girlfriend.

Affective meaning is evident when the writer refers to ‘Ivy’ as “bae” or “babe”. The word “bae” and “babe” as already explained comes from the word baby. The word baby conceptually means a small child. However, in the context of this letter, it refers to a person of the opposite sex that one is so intimate with. Another fascinating example of

affective meaning in this letter is the use of the word box.... “*Kama Jane ameingia box*” (if Jane has accepted the proposal) conceptually, the word ‘box’ has a meaning that is obvious but the social and the affective meaning comes into play and the word acquires another meaning, that is a girl accepting the proposal by made by a boy. If one interprets the sentence literally, it would mean that.... “*if Jane has entered in the box*” which is meaningless just like interpreting the clause “*pepeta Jane kwa ukakamavu na fujo*” . It is therefore explicit that context plays an integral role in decoding the social media messages and that intertextuality is common in students’ social media messages.

4.12 Conclusion

It is evident from the findings and the discussion presented in this chapter that university students exhibit uniqueness in the manner in which they use language in social media. This uniqueness is demonstrated by a number of features that include: phonographic, logographic, semasiographic, discourse features, morphological, phonological and syntactic features among others.

On the phonographic features, the study found out that students’ way of writing in the social media is largely influenced by the way they pronounce words in their day to day lives. This implies that social media discourse is hybrid between written and spoken discourse, as it lies at the boundary between the two forms of communication Prosodic features such as laughter is represented by the idiophones, ‘hahahaha’ or ‘hehehe’. While exaggerated spelling like ‘*kabisaaaa*’ and ‘*sanaaaaa*’ are used for emphasis. The use of capital letters is equivalent to shouting and also accentuates the message being communicated. Exaggerated punctuations like questions marks and exclamation marks are similarly used for emphasis in social media discourse. Logographic features are also a common phenomenon. Often, a single letter is used to represent either a syllable or a morpheme or a word. For instance, ‘*U*’, for you, ‘*r*’ for are, ‘*ua*’ for your/you are, are good examples. Acronym such ‘*OMG*’ oh my God, ‘*ASAP*’ for as soon as possible ‘*LOL*’, laugh out loudly among many more are often used. The university students make use of emoticons and symbols to represent the semasiographic features.

Another uniqueness is exhibited in the way students form new words. The words formation processes that are commonly used include but not limited to acronyms,

blending, clipping and coinage. For instance, there is the evolution of words such as “slay queen”, “lamba lolo” (compounding) “Ben ten” (coinage/compounding) “lec” and “prac” (clipping). Word formation processes exhibited in students’ discourse both rule-governed and rule bending creativity.

Intertextuality is also a common feature implying that students do not live in isolation but relate with the wider society. This is evident in the way they are able to incorporate the linguistic forms from the wider society in their texts in a manner that is unique. For instance, words with social political and religious connotations are used in their discourse. This implies that it may not be possible for one to make a correct interpretation of their texts without being in touch with what is happening in the society. Consider words like “femicide”, “nyerified”, “yellow yellow”, “minji minji” and “nyerification”, kieleweke”, “handshake” just but to mention a few. These forms are borrowed from the wider society and then incorporated in social media discourse by students in a peculiar manner.

There is the interdependence at the various levels of linguistic study. In the formation of new words, both morphological and phonological rules come into play. Consider forms such as “azn” (as in), “warritis” (what is this) and “isoright” (it is alright). In the formation of such forms both morphological processes and phonological processes come into play. At some point the semantic and syntactic features come on board. Consider the word “matter core hii”, (matako) which means buttocks. The pronunciation hits to the morphological nature of the word and the semantic aspects.

Having presented the findings on the unique features of language in social media discourse by the university students, the next chapter presents the findings and discussions on the way some of the linguistic features discussed in this chapter and others are used in the marking of identities by the university students.

CHAPTER FIVE

MARKING OF IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents major findings and discussions of objective two that particularly dealt with how students mark identities in social media discourse. Language plays an integral role in establishing how students mark their identities. Identities are constituted in and through language and that; language(s) are used to articulate ideas, to represent social relations and ourselves (Norton, 2013). The Social Identity Theory by Tajfel (1981), used in the analysis of data in this chapter, asserts that individuals adopt group identity and the adoption of the language may be a dialect form, a group slang and jargon, or a special register. In this chapter, an attempt was made to show how multimodality, convergence and divergence, use of special jargon and colloquial variants, indexicality, and the syntactic structure of the sentences used enhance the marking of identities in social media discourse by Chuka University students. It is imperative to observe that Social Identity Theory (SIT) borrows heavily from Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) which has convergence and divergence as one of its tenets and this study has utilized it in the analysis of the data.

5.2 Convergence

Giles (1991) observes that convergence is a strategy where individuals adjust towards each other's communication behaviours which may range from linguistic, prosodic or nonverbal features which include speech rate, pausal phenomena, and utterance length, phonological variants, smiling and gazing. Crystal (2001) reports that, in virtue worlds and group chats, members tend to accommodate each other so that they develop progressively a shared linguistic character that is equivalent to a local accent or dialect. This argument correlates with the findings of this study in that university students accommodate each by using languages in a similar manner as depicted in the way students use some lexical items that are unique to them and which are mostly colloquial forms. Students also used paralinguistic features such as use of exaggerated spellings and punctuation marks as well as the ability to blend their messages with emoticons appropriately.

This study found that convergence is realized through students' resemblance in their language usage in social media. Students used special jargon mostly known to them. Secondly, the syntactic simplicity of their sentences make the students appear similar to one another. Thirdly, the students' ability to use more than one linguistic code; English, Kiswahili, the Kenyan slang (Sheng) and local languages, enable them to converge easily. Fourthly, students are able to combine a number of features such as pictures, emoticons and various languages to communicate a unified message. Finally, convergence is made easy by the high level of informality and orality as indicated by the nature of words and the sentences they use.

This view is supported by Giles et al. (1991) who posit that mutual convergence can enhance communication innovations at the grammatical, lexical, non-verbal and the prosodic levels which may serve to foster shared family and couple identities as well as emerging small-group identities. Similarly, this kind of observation is supported by Scissors et al. (2009) who argue that linguistic similarity can occur at three levels: the structural level measured in terms of verb tense used, content level or emotion and task related content and the stylistic level indicated by using the same jargon.

As already pointed out, this study found out that students converge in their social media conversations in a number of ways; the language choice, paralinguistic features, use of common languages, slang, being informal, exaggerated spelling and punctuation marks. The manner in which social media convergence takes place is not much different from what happens in the spoken discourse. Drawing from the students' conversations, let us turn now our focus on the various ways that students converge in their conversation to identify with one another.

5.3 Use of Common Languages.

Although these students come from different ethnic backgrounds, many are times they strive to accommodate one another by using linguistic codes that are familiar to each one of them. The three linguistic codes (English, Kiswahili and Sheng) are exploited in a unique manner thus demonstrating the identity of the users. Consider the following examples.

T51

A: *I hope lecture ya saa tatu nikama kawa haiko*
(I hope the nine o'clock lecture will fail as usual)

B: *U always make my nyt 😊😊😊😊*
(You always make my night.)

C: *Yea haiko*
(Yes, it is not there)

D: 😊😊😊😊
(smiling emoticon)

In the above conversation, the students converge by using languages that are familiar to each one of them, as well as word forms unique to them such as nyt (night) “kawa” which is a short form of “kawaida” (normally). The students are also converging with the use of emoticons as in the above example; interactant D uses a smiling emoticon to show his/her pleasure because of a bounced lecture. The use of emoticons is considered one of the paralinguistic features in social medial discourse as discussed in 5.4 below. Although social media discourse exploits written form of communication, linguistic features used in convergence communication bear a lot of similarity with those of spoken media. This underscores the main argument in the Social Identity Theory that use of a similar register enhances marking of identity.

5.4 Paralinguistic Features

Paralinguistic features in the social media context are depicted through the use of exaggerated spelling, punctuation marks and use of emoticons as shown in T52 below.

T52

A: *Sshii...!!! What the hell is this???*
(Crap ...!!! What kind of situation is this???)

B: *Exactly what you can see*
(Exactly what you can see)

In the above example, the student had posted offensive pictures of Chelsea players (in pampers) and the text shows the reaction of the usage of such words like ‘sshii’ and ‘hell’. There is the use of exaggerated question marks and spelling by student A. This emphasizes the annoyance because of sending offensive pictures that is socially unacceptable. The use of the words ‘shit’ and ‘hell’ is a manifestation of how students use colloquial forms in their conversation. The use of colloquial forms is the next item to be discussed.

5.5 Use of slang (Sheng* and Colloquial Variants)

University students index their identity in the way they use colloquial forms, slang and the Kenyan pidgin commonly known as Sheng. They also use short forms of words, symbols, use of code mixing and switching. The use of similar register and special jargon underscores the importance of Social Identity Theory (SIT) that is used analysis of data in this study. Consider the following examples.

T53

- A. *Mm nitamkol*
(I will call him/her)
- B. *Wangapi wako na supu*
(How many have supplementaries?)
- C. *Ww hauko kwa iyo list.....ha ha ha*
(You are not in the list ... hahaha)
- D. *Sasa unacheka nn.....wachanga wana*
(Why are you laughing.... Stop being immature)
- E. *Shida ni nn na yy?*
(What's wrong with him?)
- F. *Qwan umeleft grp*
(Have you left the group)
- G. *Yeap....nimeona am alone here*
(Yes ...I have seen I am alone here.)
- A: *Kuna daro.....qwani hautakam?*
(There is a lecture ...will you come?)
- B: *Nakam ASAP*
(Am coming as soon as possible)
- A₂: *CU there*
(See you there)

T54

- A. *An yangu iliget lost banah*
(My phone got lost bwana)
- B. *Sorry brazah*
(I'm sorry brother.)
- C. *Niko na beef na ww*
(I have an issue with you)
- D. *Mbona*
(Why?)
- E: *Ukunitumia notes za class ya mao*
(You didn't send maths notes)
- D *Nitakusend them 2day..... relax*
(I'll send them today... relax)
- A¹ *Waah!!! Kwani tunado unit moja wk mzima*
(Waah!!! Are we doing the same unit the whole week?)
- B: *Qwani unataka kudo ngapi?*
(How many do you want to do?)
- A²: *Nkt!!! u don't need 2b rude kijana*
(Nkt!!! U don't need to be rude young man.)
- C. *Ghaaai!!! Mwathani..... watu waache kuwa rude*
(O my God...please people should stop being rude.)
- D. *Wacheni pressure nyinyi.....*

(Can you minimize stress)

F. *zii..... wasee wengine lazima waache ufala kwa grp..... ama waleft*

(No.... Some people should either stop their foolishness or leave the group)

G. *Plz note that hakuna daro 2morrow*

(Please note there will be no lecture tomorrow)

From the above examples; it is evident that there is a lot of informality as demonstrated by the kind of lexical items used. The words used in their discourse can easily make one identify with them because one will seldom find these kinds of words in formal situations. There is the use of slang, for instance, the word ‘beef’ which means bull’s meat implies that one is not pleased with the other in social media discourse. Use of words from Sheng is a very common phenomenon in the students discourse as seen in the words ‘*brazah*’ for brother, ‘*supu*’ for supplementary, ‘*wasee*’ for ‘wazee’ which is used by students to refer to one another, ‘*Zii*’ means no, *daro* means class and ‘*mao*’ means mathematics. The use of these words is common among the youth as they speak to one another but one would least expect them in written language. The use of in group identity markers, slang and colloquial forms is one of the main ways of showing identity as posited in the Social Identity Theory that this study makes use of. Table 5.1 below provides more examples of Sheng words commonly used by the university students. These words are incorporated in their discourse together with other words from English and Kiswahili to convey a unified message as shown in the above examples in T53 and 54.

The following table shows some of the Sheng words mostly used by students in their social media discourse

Table. 5.1
Sheng words and their meaning

Word	Meaning
Randa	Plan
Bisna	Business
Lapi	Laptop
Omoka	Go
Brazah	Brother
Bundaa/ msai	Parent
Pack	reside/live
Chapaa / ndoo	Money
Kuvaana	Fighting
Ndai	Car
Duda	Partying in a club/ falling down
Modi	Teacher
Ocha/shag	Upcountry
Wasee	Refers to the students. It is normally borrowed from the word mzee (man) and then adapted by students to mean otherwise in the social media context
Zii	No
Msai	Refers to a parent but in the text above, it refers to a student
Ghaai!!!	An exclamation that connote God.
Keja	House
Mwathani!!!	An exclamation. The word Mwathani, however, refers to God.
Chop	Study
Daro	Class
Ngori	Danger
Mburungo	Cargo
Tei	Alcohol
Sota	to be broke
Mangware	early in the morning

Source: Author 2019

Apart from using sheng, students have the ability to code mix English and Kiswahili and come up with new words that communicate their message. From the examples given above in T53 and T54, there is the use of words like “*nitamkol*”, “*nitakam*”, “*nimeleft*”, “*nikusend*”, “*iliget*” and several others. Table 5.2 shows how English and Kiswahili morphemes combine to make a single word, which at times comprise a complete sentence with subject, verb and object (SVO) and at other times, it entails a subject and the verb (SV) when translated into English. In the same word, the tense is also marked. It also evident that the rules of syntax are adhered to because in a single word, which is a blend of both English and Kiswahili morphemes, we may have the subject and the verb (SV) or subject, verb and the object (SVO), where number and tense are correctly marked.

Table 5.2
Code Mixing Analysis

Form	Subject	Tense	Object	Verb	gloss
nitamkol	Ni (I)	Ta(will) future	M(him/her)	Kol(call)	I will call him/her
Umeleft	U (you)	me(have) present		Left	You have left
nitakusend	Ni(I)	ta(will) future	Ku (you)	Send	I will send you
Nakam	N	a-ing- progressive aspect		Kam(come)	
Iliget	I (it)	li (past tense) morpheme		Get	It got
Tunado	Tu(we)	na(are) present, and – ing(progressive aspect)		Do	We are doing

Source: Author 2019

From the above table 5.2, it is evident that students blend English and Kiswahili in a meticulous manner that may not be common among the older generation. Some English morphemes are at time corrupted as in the case of the word “*nitamkol*”. The morpheme ‘*kol*’ represents the free morpheme call. The fact that they are able to code mix the two languages is a proof that their knowledge on the two languages is not questionable. No wonder they qualified to join the university.

Another feature that distinguishes university students from other users of language in social media is the way they shorten their lexes, use of a letter to stand for a word or a combination of letters to form a word (acronym). From T53 and 54 forms such as ‘*4n*’

for Phone, ‘*nn*’ for nini (what is it), ‘*u*’ for you, ‘*cu*’ for see you, ‘*pliz*’ for please, ‘*quiz*’ for question and ‘*2b*’ for to be are good examples.. In other contexts, in students’ social media discourse, you will definitely find out that their numerous abbreviations and acronyms as evident in T 27, T28 and T53 where such forms are used. Table 5.3 below provides more examples of abbreviations and acronyms commonly used by students at the university.

Table 5.3
Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/ abbreviation	Meaning
LOL	laugh out loudly
OMG	Oh My God
TBH	To Be Honest
TBT	Throw Back Thursday
NASA	National Sex Academy
BTS	Both Teams To Score
MWK	mpango wa kando
AR	Always Ready
LMK	Let Me Know
FFU	fanya funjo uone
NKT	Not kindly taken
MYOB	Mind Your Own Business
MSFW	not save for work
NBD	no big deal
Goat	greatest of all times
Imo	In my opinion
Nvm	Never mind
TTYI	Talk to you later
WYD	What are doing
Fomo	Fear of missing out
JK	just kidding
KK	cool okay
ASAP	As soon AS Possible
FYI	for your information

Source: 2019

These kinds of linguistic forms are commonly and extensively used by the university students to index their identity and rarely are you likely to encounter them being used by the older generation. The use of such forms as ‘*prac*’ for practical, ‘*lec*’ for lecturer, ‘*rep*’ for representative and ‘*grp*’ for group indexes their identity as they revolve around their core business (academics) at the university.

5.6 Social Media Sentences and Marking of Identity

The university social media discourse is characterized by a kind of sentences that bear a lot of resemblance with those used in the spoken discourse. Most of sentences used by students in their social media discourse may comprise a single word, a question or response. A response or a comment may be an emoji and the students are able to work out the meaning. Another salient feature is the use of simple sentences in both structure and meaning. This implies that they are syntactically and semantically simple in most of the instances. The grammaticality of their sentences is sometimes wanting.

T55

A: *Niko na quiz kwani leo hatuta-atend iyo lecture ingine?*

(I have a question.... are we not attending the next lecture?)

B: *Pliz note this..... hakuna daro 2morrow..... lec alisema hatamake*

(please note..... there is no class tomorrow... the lecturer said he will not be available.)

The above example (T55) shows sentences that are simple both syntactically and semantically but code mixing and switching are used to blend the sentences making them appear unique hence identifying with its users; university students. As indicated by the examples used in this study, students’ sentences are also characterized by the use of ellipsis which is either manifested through exaggerated dots or commas. Under normal circumstances, ellipsis is indicated by use of three dots and commas are not used. As evident in T56, students often make use of incomplete sentences and their response to a question corresponds to what would be witnessed when people are speaking one on one.

T56

A: *Good evening there is a high probability kutakuwa na prac 9:00*

(Good evening, there is a high probability that there will be a practical at 9:00)

B: *Aki* 😞😞😞😞😞

(True (frowning face))

C: *Practical iko confirmed*

(Practical has been confirmed?)

D: *Sasawa.*

(Alright)

E: *Kukua ama kutokua*

(Will it be there or not)

F: *Iko*

(It is there.)

G: *Ety?*

(What?)

C²: *Prac ya 9:00 iko*

(The practical will be at 9:00)

B₂: *Woi*

E₂: 😞😞😞😞😞

(Emoji with tears)

H: *fity*

(Alright)

In the above example, we have sentences that comprise a single word or an emotion just like what happens in the spoken discourse. Emotions express the paralinguistic features of language. This may not be a common phenomenon in other types of writing. In T56, students express different feelings when they realize that there would be a practical class the following day in the morning. In the above example, student B, uses the word aki (sure) and an emoticon while F also uses a single word in his response, “iko” (it is there) and D “sasawa” instead of “sawa” (okay).

The lacking aspect of their grammar is evident in the fact that interact E is asking whether it would be there or not after his counterpart C has already indicated there would be a practical class. The sentence is ambiguous. It is also evident from the students’ conversation in social media that some of the words are not spelt in accordance with the language in use but in a manner that is in congruent with the way students use such words. This is a pointer to their identity. Consider the response G, “Ety” and H, “Fitty” in which “ety” is a Kiswahili word that has been corrupted and means ‘what’ whereas “fitty” is an English word that has been corrupted by adding letters- “ty” to the word ‘fit’. In other contexts, you will find forms like “Io” –instead

of hiyo (that one), “*iyō*” instead of hiyo (that one), “*ii*” instead of hii (this one), “*te*” instead of the, “*dat*” instead of that and “*diz*” instead of this. This implies that students have a way of coming up with their own linguistic forms that are unique to them hence depicting their identity.

This study has found out that convergence is realized through students’ resemblance in their language usage in social media. Students make use of special jargon mostly known to them. Secondly, the syntactic simplicity of their sentences that make the students appear similar to one another. Thirdly, the students ability to use more than one linguistic code; English, Kiswahili and the Kenyan pidgin (Sheng), enable them to converge easily. Fourthly, students are able to combine a number of features such as pictures, emoticons and various languages to communicate a unified message. Finally, convergence is made easy by the high level of informality and orality as indicated by the nature of words and the sentences they use. Related to convergence is divergence that points at the interactants’ attempts to disassociate from the mainstream group and form sub group identity.

5.7 Multimodality of Social Media Messages

This study found out that multimodality is a common phenomenon in the social media discourse of the university students. This is due to their abilities to combine varied resources in their interaction. This makes their conversations more informative. For instance, the feelings of the interactants are conveyed by emoticons. Emoticons are at times combined with pictures and written messages to convey a unified message.

Even though language is the mostly used resource, multimodality recognizes that language is always employed alongside other semiotic resources and makes meaning because of the orchestration of the modalities and resources. This kind of perspective calls for a paradigm shift, from the most common view that is logo centric, to one that is multimodal in nature. Language needs to be viewed as part of complex sets of interconnectivity forms of human semiosis and not as an independent entity (Christie, 2002). This kind of perception is made a reality in the social media discourse by the university students where they make use of different forms of emotions, as well as

different languages in their conversation. Consider the following example drawn from students' conversations.



Figure 5.1: Multimodality of Social Media Messages

The above communication demonstrates the multimodality of social media discourse. It can combine two or more media in the process of communication. For instance, drawing from the above example, it is explicit that the first emoticon on top is a facial expression indicating the emotion of surprise because of the days that have elapsed so fast. The facial expression is reinforced by the written message and then the emoticons at the bottom that sets in the partying mood as indicated by a glass of wine and then a music sign between a man and a woman dancing. This indicates that it is on Friday, time to drink and dance. People normally wait for Fridays to relax after a long week's work. Figure 5.2 provides another example of multimodality extracted from students' conversations.

Social media discourse by the university students is also characterized by the use of pictures that reinforces the written messages. Below is an example of pictures that are used to show the situation of the English Premier League. Pictures of three boys with each boy having a label of a team, Liverpool, Mancity and Manchester United.

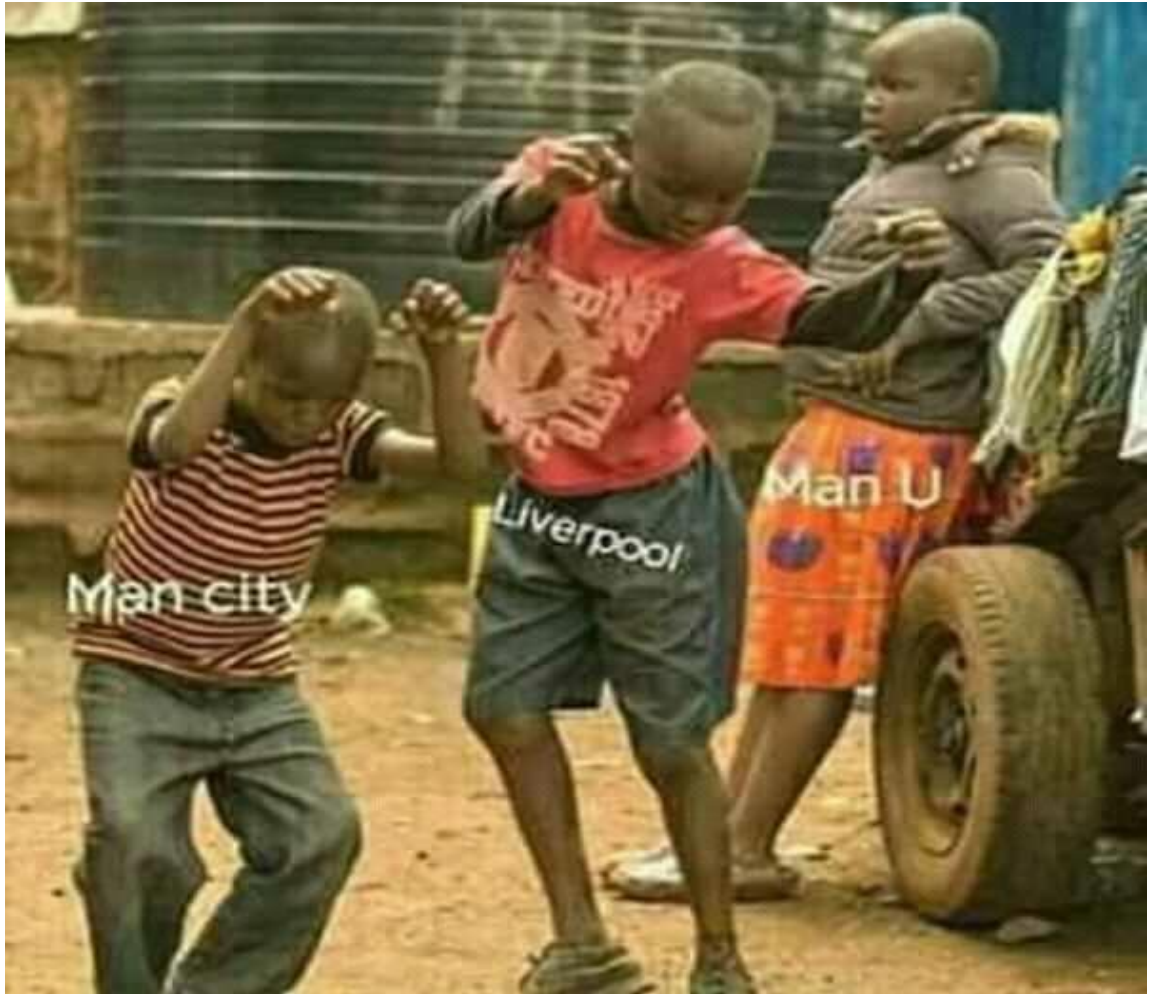


Figure 5.2: Use of Pictures and Written Message.

T57

A: *Ahaa*
(Ahaa)

B: Man, U hana hope totally 😂😂😂😂
(Manchester united has lost hope totally)

C: *my friend, najua utashangaa*
(My friend I know you will be shocked).

From the pictures, one can deduce that both Liverpool and Man City are celebrating because they hope to win as they are ahead of Manchester United with points and their chances of winning are high compared to Manchester United whose chances are slim. The boy labelled “Man U” is withdrawn indicating hopelessness and desperation. The pictures elicit reactions where student A conveys surprise while B replies with an emoji with tears of joy meaning that he is not a supporter of that team; hence, happy. He adds that the team has no hope of winning. The findings of this research correspond to Cope

and Kalantzis (2010) observation that digital media platforms create constraints and affordances in four main ways: multimodality, divergence, agency and conceptualization. Multimodality has already been exemplified and divergence is discussed in this chapter.

5.8 Informality in Social Media Discourse

The University students' social media discourse is characterized by the use of informal language. This informality in language use is demonstrated by their frequent use of active constructions as opposed to the passive one, use of contractions and ellipsis, use of verbalization more than nominalizations, immense use of deictic words and the special jargon. The use of informal language in a manner that is similar and peculiar to them indicates that students are able to identify with one another. Informality is indexed by the university students' use of passive constructions, verbalisation, contractions, use of both simple lexical items and simple syntactic forms, and indexicality.

5.8.1 Active Vs Passive Constructions

Students mainly make use of active construction more than passive constructions in their discourse. Consider the following examples

T58

A: *Maths and Chem teachers, get your Chem 212 cat 2 from me.*
(Mathematics and Chemistry teachers get your Chemistry CAT two from me.)

B: *poaz*
(It is okay)

Student A uses a sentence that is in active voice hence indicating the informality in language use. The passive correspondence could have been; Chemistry 212 CAT can be got from me.

T59

A: *The Bio Chem lec has returned the Biochem CAT unmarked coz someone stole a phone yesterday which he had picked from a student.*

(The Biochemistry lecture has returned the Biochemistry CAT unmarked because someone stole a phone that he had picked from a student).

B: *Wot???*
(what)

C: *Serious??*

A2: *yeah*
(Yes)

D: *He can buy new one we lose and we don't care.*
(He can buy a new one, we always lose and we don't care)

Student A has used as sentence that is in active form and this is mostly what happens in their communication. It is not likely for one to find a situation where students have used passive constructions in the interaction. In the above example, responses by student B, C, and A2 comprise single word responses that is also a pointer to the informality. Use of active constructions may not be peculiar to university students but a common feature among the social media users especially the young generation of which university students belong. Another indicator for informality in any form of writing is the use of contracted forms.

5.8.2. Contractions

Just like in the spoken discourse, students make use of contractions in most of the time as they interact via WhatsApp. This is another pointer to the informality inherent in student's social media discourse. For instance, consider student D in T59 above who says (*He can buy new one we lose and we don't care.*). In this sentence, there is the use of '*don't*' which is a contracted form of do not. Students also may decide to avoid apostrophe and contract a word by leaving out some letters as in the example below;

T60

A: *The same girl u were chasin to wea panties ten years ago is the same girl u are now chasin to remov her panties... hahaha.*
(The same girl you were chasing to wear pants ten years ago is the same girl you are chasing now to remove her pants)
B: *hehehe*
(Hehehe)

The students use an apostrophe in forms that are contracted such as 'can't', 'don't', 'won't' and 'it's' and at the same time they can also shorten words especially those ending in "-ing"; for instance, the words chasing has been shortened to '*chasin*' while removing to '*removin*' in the above example.

5.8.3 Nominalization vs Verbalisation

Nominalisation and verbalization are used to indicate formality and informality. The University students normally employ verbalization where there are many incidences of using verbs and adverbs as opposed to nouns. This implies that the students are normally informal in their interactions. Consider the following example.

T61

- A: *Kuna class*
(Is there any class?)
B: *Zii*
(No)
C: *Muraya ameingia*
(Has Muraya come)
D: *Bado*
(Not yet)

In the above example, the chat has not used any noun or pronoun forms as subject of the sentence constructions. In formal communication, the syntactic word order is normally a subject, verb and object and this considered an important aspect. We normally have the noun or pronoun as the subjects in the sentence but in our case above, the sentence begins with a verb, adverb or a single word like in B. This is a demonstration of the informality in the language use. Also consider the following examples;

T62

- A. *Hey have missed you Noor,*
(Hey I missed you Noor)
B. *Me too.*
(I too)

The above example shows how students normally avoid repeating or indicating the subjects of the sentence, which is normally represented by a noun. In 'B', we have objective case of the pronoun I (me) and the conjunction (too). This is an indication that students interact as if they are speaking one on one and there is a lot of informality in their interactions.

5.8.4 Syntactic and Lexical Complexity

University students mainly use very simple sentences. Syntactic complicity indicates a high level of formality but syntactic simplicity indicates informality. Similarly, use of simple words is an indicator of informality while the opposite is true for the formality. The results of this study show that students use very simple words which is an indication of informality. Similarly, they interact using very simple constructions. In the formal usage of language, we expect subject verb object (SVO) as a compulsory aspect but in the way students use language, we find that there are instances where they use a single word and then there is ellipsis of other words. In other instances, students omit the subject of their sentences hence most of their sentences are imperative in nature.

Consider the following examples.

T 63

A: Chatting is off until we get back a peace of mind from exam env.

(Chatting will not take place until we get back our peace of mind after the exam)

B: Ulicram definition ya environment kwa technology

(Did you cram the definition of environment in technology)

A₂: Imagn,,, BT haikuwa

(Imagine but it was not there)

C: That's why unaiapply now

(That is why you are applying it now)

B₂: Irrelevantly

(irrelevantly)

C₁: Then where can you relevantly apply it?

(Where can we apply it relevantly?)

In the above example, it is explicit that they begin sentences with verbs like in the case of A₂. They may also have a response entailing one word like in A₂, and B₂ cases. There is ellipsis in C, B₂, C₁ and A₂. The information that has been left out can be recovered from the context. It is therefore clear that their constructions are simplistic syntactically. This is a manifestation of the informal nature of the language use by the students.

Students at the University mainly make use of very simple lexical items in their interactions. They normally avoid complicated vocabularies and mix codes that are common to them. In the example provided above under syntactic complexity, it is evident that very simple words are used hence an indication of informality. Informality therefore is a phenomenon that is common among the university students owing to the kind of relationship that exists among them that is cordial as they share quite number of things such as academic, facing similar challenges in their lives and most importantly being in the same age bracket. This kind of relationship enhances similar language usage bearing in mind that the linguistic artefacts that they share are similar. This therefore enhances the marking of identity by use of similar language in a similar manner.

5.8.5 Indexicality.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) are of the view that an index is a linguistic form whose meaning is dependent on the interactional context. They point out the following as

linguistic means which enable speakers to form identity in discourse. One of the ways is the overt mention of identity labels and categories, secondly is through implications and presuppositions which regard one's own or others' identity position and the third means is displayed evaluation and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles and finally through the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific persons or groups. This study found out that University students make use of deictic words in their social media interaction which is an indicator of identity. At the same time they use a lot of presuppositions. This enhances the creation of identities since they seem to understand those deictic words and what they presuppose. Use of deixes indicates the level of informality in the social media discourse by the university students. Look at the following example.

T64

A: *check here 4 ua assigno.*
 (Check here for your assignments)
 B: *K*
 (Okay)

T65

A: *2morrow kuna CATs..... prepare*
 (There will be a Continuous Assessment Test tomorrow.... Prepare)
 B: *I think we r not prepared for the CAT*
 (I think we are not prepared for the Continuous Assessment Test)
 C: *Wewe pekee hauko prepared*
 (You are the only one who is not prepared)
 D: *Wat tym is the CAT*
 (At what time are we doing the CAT)
 A2: *@ 9amlets meet there.*
 (At 9am... let's meet there)
 E: *K....will be there*
 (Okay... I will be there)

In both T64 and T65, students use deixes which they are able to infer their meaning due to the fact that they share the same context. In the above examples, we have personal deixes (I and you), place deixes (here and there) and time deixes (tomorrow, 9am). The use of deixes is considered to be an indicator of informality. This implies that students use language informally in their social media interactions. Similarly, it is deducible that students establish their identity by using language in this manner. Related to convergence is divergence that points at the interactants' attempts to disassociate from the mainstream group and form sub group identity.

5.9 Divergence

Individuals often tend to emphasize the social distance that exist between themselves and their interlocutors using linguistic features or character traits of their group in divergent speech. Although university students share a lot in common, sometimes they tend to diverge in their conversations to indicate their subgroup identity. This is mostly evident when a section of members results to their mother tongue hence excluding members from other communities. A good example is seen in one of the groups where some members result to the use of Ekegusii and in retaliation another section decides to use Kikamba.

T66

- A: *Okirete Tata*
(You are so silent father)
- B: *Togende gaki*
(Let's go please)
- C: *Moturaa Akoria*
(Is he eating muturaa (a type of meat))
- A2: *Achachacha Omoture Tata*
(Hey! wake him up)
- C: *Qwani tuko grup ya Wakisii*
(Are we in a group that belong to Kisiiis)
- D: *Eee tata*
(Yes father)
- E: Imagine Wakisii mkimaliza mtushw na sis tuanze
(You people from Kisii tell us when you are through so that we can begin.)
- C2: *Wamalize,, lakn tuchange wkianza kurapp bana,, tutasubiri hadi kesho*
(They finish.... But let's change because if they start rapping, we will wait up to tomorrow.)
- F: *(I think this group should be changed into Kisii coalition)*
(I think this group should be changed into a Kisii coalition)
- A3: *Exactly*
(Exactly)
- B2: *Omosiki riogo... riogo Obongo gopoesha situresi asema omonto ndirindidu du*
(Somebody said that music is like medicine.... It can reduce stress)

In the above conversation, students whose ethnic background is Kisii have deliberately switched to Ekegusii. This marks their sub group identity. The other members of the group who feel excluded in the conversation do not take this kindly. A few students from Kamba tribe retaliate by code switching to their language in which impolite language is used with reference to the Kisii students. Whatever the student says in their mother tongue is something that would not have been said in an official language since

it is so socially unacceptable thus; social media provides a space to mention the unmentionables. Look at the conversation below.

T67

A: Mwamba ata balicha iii sya kuu desi..ko mute atanduu mnno inye, misingooo iii

(How are you members of this group who I don't know, you are so stupid, necks)

B: Now it is your time

C: Yes it is my time,, kwoou kila mundo ekune kando kana nimie guluvuni oyu

(Yes it's my time, so everybody be 'aside' or else I go for a long call in this group now.)

A1: Toa ukamba hapa

(Stop everything that has to do with Ukamba)

D: Uka vaaa mwakome pyu,, Syinduu iii sitena undo wa kwika,, kukilwe vyu mumiiwa ni ithe,,

(Just sleep you useless people with nothing to do, and be silent as if your dad has farted on you.)

From T 66 and 67, it is evident that just like in the spoken discourse, students code switch in order to identify themselves as members of another small subgroup that is different from the main group. However, since the interest of the main group supersedes that of the subgroups, the compromise is always arrived at. The following is the resolution after the divergence communication.

A2: All wat I mean tuache kusumbuana waseee

(All that I mean is, that let's stop disturbing one another comrades)

E: Exactly Richard, sasa tutafanya handshake brazah.

(Exactly Richard, let's do a handshake brother)

B1: This group is met for all of us. Everyone should have a sense of belonging..... ama namna gany?

(This group is meant for all of us.....everyone should have a sense of belonging....or what do you think?)

F: Nadhani iko ivo.....ama namnagany my fren, awa watu wa vitendawili..... kieleweke,,,,,

(I think so...or what do you think my friend, or people who use riddles.....it will be understood,,,,,)

From the conversation above, it is apparent that the students have converged in their communication by recognizing the fact that there is no need of disturbing one another and the interest of the main group should always be prioritized. The use of words such as "brazah" (brother), "my fren" (my friend) and "wasee" (a word they use to refer to one another) is an indication of convergence. Some of the words used above have social political connotations (vitendawili, kieleweke).

Some of these words used are borrowed from the public social media. Consider the following “*Kitendawili*”, “*handshake*”, “*ama namnagany*”, “*kieleweke*” and “*my fren*”; these forms emanate from the political scenario we are currently in. After the 2017 Kenyan election, there was a lot of tensions owing to presidential results and there was a need for reconciliation that later happened through the famous ‘handshake’ between President Uhuru Kenyatta and his close political rival Raila Odinga. “*ama namnagany*” (or what do you think) and “*my fren*” (my friend) are associated with deputy president, Dr William Ruto, who usually uses such phrases in his speech while the word “*Kitendawili*” is associated with Raila Odinga, a famous politician in Kenya because he often uses the word in his speeches. Before the general elections of 2013, it was believed that there was an agreement between Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto that, Ruto would support Uhuru to be a president for two terms upon which Uhuru would reciprocate by supporting Ruto to become a president after his second term is over. Those individuals opposed to this kind of agreement are using the term “*kieleweke*” (let it be understood) to mean that they have no debt to pay. Currently, we have a group being referred to as “*kieleweke team*”. This is an indicator of the intertextuality of the social media by students as discussed in chapter four of this study.

University students also diverge in their conversation by using offensive language to any member with unbecoming behaviour. This deterrent measure guarantees the unity among the members. This is what happens with student C and D in T67.

Convergence and divergence are common features of the students’ social media discourse. Convergence occurs as students strive to identify with one another while divergence occurs as the sub groups of the main group strive to force their identity by resulting to the use of their local languages, which normally does not go down well with others.

5.10 Conclusion

From the findings and discussions in this chapter, it is explicit that university students mark identities by converging and diverging in their conversations; hence, convergence and divergence. Convergence is realized through indexicality, multimodality nature of their messages, and their use of peculiar register/ jargon. Conversely, divergence is

realized using code switching as some members of the main group results to their ethnic language, which is a pointer of solidarity and in-group relation markers.

The findings of this research shows that students put away their personal or subgroup identity for the one that is most powerful meaning that they opt to join the mainstream identity so as to form an in-group identity. Since individuals adopt the group identity, the adoption of the language may be in form of dialect; in group slang and jargons, or special registers. Students converge and diverge in their texts for solidarity purposes and end up marking a distinct group identity. The students' style of writing is casual indicating that they have close relationships with one another. The informality in the language use by students can be attributed to the manner in which they live freely with one another. It is indicated by the use of deictic words whose meanings can only be understood within the context of use and several other means pointing to the informality such as the use of contractions, a lot of active sentence constructions, simple lexical and syntactic constructions just to mention a few. The students' ability to use different modes of communication in a single text (multimodality) also points to their identity. Having presented the findings for the second objective, the next chapter dwells on the strategies of politeness employed by the university students in their social media discourse.

CHAPTER SIX

POLITENESS STRATEGIES

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings for the third objective are presented and the discussion for the findings is done systematically. The study employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The theory has four strategies of politeness whereby each one of them has various sub set strategies. The four include: Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Bald on Record and Off-Record. This chapter analyses politeness strategies as postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their theory of politeness. Table 2.3 shows the four categories of politeness and the strategies employed in each of the categories.

6.2 Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness is a redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his/her perennial desire that his/Sheer wants (or the actions/ acquisition/values resulting from them) should be thought as desirable (Brown and Levison, 1987)Positive politeness strategies are realized through a number of devices that are discussed below.

Noticing and attending to the Hearer's (H) interests, wants, needs or goods

This strategy suggests that speaker (S) should take notice of aspects of H's condition like noticeable changes, remarkable possessions, anything which looks as though H would want S to notice and approve it. Brown and Levinson (1987) give the following examples

1. *You must be hungry, it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch?*
2. *What a beautiful vase this is! Where did it come from*

In this strategy, the S can make a general comment on H's state. Consider the following example.

T68

A: comrades I am humbly requesting for your votes
(Comrades I am humbly requesting for your votes)

*B: Kevo u have always been smart both physically and mentally,
count my vote come rain come sunshine*
(Kevo, you have always been smart both physically and mentally,
count my vote come rain come sunshine)

The student B attends to the interest of student A, who is vying and promises him his vote. By promising him his vote, the needs and the interests of the candidate are catered for hence positive politeness. Student B takes notice of the Student A and gives his approval hence making him feel good. This helps students to build and maintain relationships.

Exaggerating Interests, Approval, or Sympathy with H

In an endeavour to create a good environment between the interactants, students exaggerate what they want to communicate in their social media discourse. This is achieved through exaggerated intonation, stress, intensifying modifiers or an exclamation mark at the end of an utterance. Another strategy related to this is intensifying interest to H. T69 shows how students can exaggerate their interest and approval to the H as well as intensifying their interest.

Intensifying Interest to H as a Strategy

This is another strategy for S to communicate to H that he shares some of his wants by intensifying his/ her interest and his own (S's) contributions to the conversations, by 'making a good story'. This could be done with a purpose of pulling H right to the middle of the events being discussed. The following example can serve to illustrate the two strategies mentioned above.

T69

A: Epu tutoe kumi kila mtu tupee John coz ingekuwa mm hamgekuwa mnaatend class

(Let's contribute kshs 10 and give it to John because if it were me you would not be attending classes.)

B: Ndio maana hukuitisha hiyo kazi

(That's why you did not ask for such duties.)

A1: Singewezana najijua. I tried class rep hadi nikachoka...I luv John he always sacrifices for us especially me...thanks John

(I know myself I could not manage. I tried class representative and I was not able... I love John; he always sacrifices for us especially me.)

In the above example, student A and A1 exaggerate approval of John by even suggesting that each group member to contribute ten shillings to appreciate him for the work he has done as a class representative. The student also points out that she could not have performed the way John is performing because she was once a class

representative and she was unable to do a good job. This is meant to intensify the interest of H, which also increases his intrinsic interest in him.

T70

A: Wasee mmecheki hiyo assino???

(Guys, have you seen that assignment?)

B: *Yap huyo lec amepeana assino mob, ni kama anafikiri tunafanya PhD*

(The lecturer has given too much assignment one would think we are doing PhD)

C: *Wololo!! I haven't seen it.*

(Wololo!! I haven't seen it)

T71

A: *Hey people, lec amefika*

(Hey people, has the lecturer arrived?)

B: Yap

(Yes)

C: *Kwan kuna class saa hii*

(Is there a lecture at this moment?)

D: *Kuna watu walikam campo vacation, yaani hujui kuna common course leo?*

(There are some people who take campus as vacation, you mean you do not know there is a common course today?)

C: *Gani, ile ya lec mpya*

(Which course? the one by the new lecturer)

B2: *Mwenye ako hall ni myoung watu wanashangaa kama alianza degree akiwa 14 years.*

(The lecturer in the hall is so young that everyone wonders if he/she started his/her degree at fourteen years.)

In the above texts, the students exaggerate the amount of assignment given to them and the age of the lecturer. Student B2 exaggerate the age of the lecturer by saying that she is so young that one would imagine she enrolled for her undergraduate at 14 years. At the same time, another student in T70 exaggerates the amount of assignment given to them by stating that it was too much; it is as if the lecturer thought they were pursuing a degree in doctor of philosophy. Student B in T70 consoles A by exaggerating the assignment given by the new lecturer hence showing sympathy with H and also serving his interest.

Use of Humour/Jokes as a Strategy

Jokes usually rely on mutual shared values and background knowledge; meaning they can be used to stress that shared background and values. Joking a technique of positive politeness technique used to put H at ease. Jokes may minimize Face Threatening Act

(FTA) of requesting. For example, *Ok If I tackle those cookies now? How about lending me this old heap of junk?* (Brown and Levinson, 1987)

Jokes may be used as a strategy that exploits politeness and attempts to redefine the size of the FTA. Students' conversations are characterized by humorous episodes as evidenced in the following texts.

T72

A: *Hey guys, kuulza tu. Ukiwa na aunt anapenda kutravel utamuita safari aunt?*

(Hey guys, just asking, if you have an aunt who loves travelling would you call her safari ant?)

B: *Hahaha!! Exactly*

C: *Wewe ni kondoo sana*

(You are so stupid)

A2: *Wacha matusi wewe*

(Stop being abusive)

D: *Lakini mbona ukiita mtu kondoo anajam sana. Tumekuwa tukitwa kondoo kwa Bible na hata ukiwa mtoto hapo Sunday school ulikuwa unajiita kwa ile wimbo ya "ingia ingia uwe mmoja wa kondoo"*

(Why is it that when you call a person a sheep, they get mad, yet we are often referred to as sheep in the bible, and when we were young we would often sing in the Sunday school saying, "enter enter and be one of the sheep",)

B2: *Hehehe hiyo ni ukweli*

(Hehehe, that's true)

A3: *Kondoo ni wewe basi*

(You are the foolish one then)

T73

A: *With this Obando thing, my mom now understands why my friends have left campus single like Catholic fathers. She is now aware they used to compete with Governors, senators; MPs and MCAS. A boy hustler can't win such fights.*

(With what is happening regarding Governor Obado, my mother understands why some of my friends leave campus single like Catholic fathers. She is now aware that they used to compete with Governors, senators, MPs and MCAs. A boy who is a hustler can't win such a fight.)

B: *Hahaha.*

(Hehehe)

T74

A: *Hey guys nimeenda ile recruitment ya KDF wakanishow sina meno 32, halafu nikawauliza kaa naenda kula Alshabab, Saa hii niko kwa landrover. I think nimepata job*

(Hello guys, I have gone for the Kenya Defence Forces recruitment and they have told me that I do not have a full set of teeth; thirty-two, then I have asked them whether I am going to eat Alshabab. Right now I am in their land lover, I think I got the job).

B: *Hehehe*

In the above examples, students refer to one another, the church and the politicians in a very humorous way. In the conversation, student C insults the other by calling him/her “kondoo” (sheep) and proceeds to justify why “kondoo” (sheep) is not an insult as it is used in the church to refer to the faithfuls. The word sheep is used with positive connotation in the bible as it symbolizes the humble or the meek but outside the church the word is associated with foolishness hence used offensively.

In the second example, the reference is made to the Governor, Okoth Obando who was alleged to have killed a university student whom they were purported to have had an illicit love affair with. The humour comes in when the student says that the parents can now understand the kind of competition that is there between them and the politicians for the girls in campus; hence, boys who are poor are not likely to win. The use of jokes makes H at ease and enhances cordial relationship among the students.

The last example is also laced with humour as a student says that he went for the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) recruitment exercise and he was told that he does not have a full set of teeth. Then the student asked whether the teeth will be used to eat the Alshabab. One cannot fail to laugh when he says that now he is in their land lover and he thinks he has already secured the job. Students employ humour in order to make themselves happy and maintain a good relationship with one another.

Sometimes university students also use word play to lace their contributions with humour. Consider the following examples.

T75

A: Someone to wake me up we go for the hike
(Someone to wake me up as we go for the hike)

B: Wee endelea na usingizi yako..... people are building the nation utacome kupaka rangi.....

(You continue sleeping.... people are building the nation..... you will come to paint it.)

In the above example, the wordplay is achieved through the use of the word ‘building the nation’. Literally, building the nation has nothing to do with putting up a house but the word has been used to mean so and student A is told by B that now that people are building the nation, and he is there sleeping, he will do the manual work of painting it. Consider another example below where word play has been used. This is meant to make

the people in the group laugh and it also breaks the monotony of sending chats that communicate only serious issues. The following example exploits the sound features of the word 'kiss' and "Kisii" (an ethnic community in Kenya) to create humour.

T 76

A: *Jana nilikuwa maji sana leo nafungua nipate updates Napata texts za kiss (Kisii) kila mahari*

(Yesterday I was drunk, today I open the WhatsApp to get updates, only to get texts written in Ekegusii)

B: *Kiss na kila mtu hii group si Kisii ... ata mmezidi.*

(Kiss with everybody, (Kisii meaning Ekegusii language) and everyone is not a Kisii,... you have become too much)

In the above example, the students make fun out of the word Kisii. It had happened that the students from Kisii community had switched to their mother tongue (Ekegusi) and by the time student 'A' open his whatsapp group, he finds conversations written in Ekegusii. The fun comes out of the word "Kisii" and 'kiss' that the student deliberately uses them interchangeably. Student A and B use humour to show their displeasure with students from the Kisii community who had turned into their mother tongue excluding others who come from other communities. Since the criticism is made on a light note, nobody is likely to be offended. Orgads (2006) opines that women adopt a cheerful and triumphant attitude despite suffering painful and difficult experiences; the use of humour in women's interactions is a strategy of positive politeness.

Use of in Group Identity Markers

Although in group identity markers were discussed in our previous chapter, it is still discussed here as it is one of the strategies of positive politeness. By using, any of the many ways to convey in-group membership, S can implicitly claim the common ground with H that is carried by that definition of the group. These includes in-group usages of address forms of language or dialect, slang or jargon and ellipsis. Forms that are used to convey in-group membership include generic names and terms of address such as, 'pal', 'dear', 'duckie', 'buddy', 'honey', 'Iuv', 'blondie', 'mom', 'babe', 'brother', 'guys', 'fellas', 'sweetheart', 'sister' and 'cutie'. These forms can be used to soften FTAs as in the case of the following; *Hey mate, I was keeping that seat for a friend of mine* or *Help me with this bag here, will you luv son pal* (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This study similarly found out that university students use such forms. Consider the following;

T77

A: *night poa siz....*

(Good night sister)

B: *u 2 bro*

(You too bro)

C: *pamoja*

(Together)

D: *pamoja pals*

(Together friends)

T 78

A: *Nakwambia wasee wamengangana na repts ata hawapatikani*

(I tell you that students are struggling with report writing; therefore, they are not available)

B: *The largest proportion ya skills zenye wasee wa BSC Agric wataoka nayo Chuka ni report writing.*

(The largest proportion of skills that BSC (Bachelor of Science) Agriculture students will get from Chuka University is Report writing)

T79

A: *Kakenya usisahau iyo kakitu joh*

(Kakenya please don't forget that thing)

B: *beb what is it??? Don't say u r still preparing supper till now. Baby*

(Baby what is the problem, don't say you are still preparing supper until now)

A2: *nakula bae*

(I am eating baby)

The students use endearing terms such as 'baby' which over time has changed to "beb" then "bby", then 'babe' and finally "bae" as well as 'sweetheart' which has several variants such as "sweetie", "swry", "swirie", "swt@" and "swee". Other terms commonly used are 'bro', for brother, 'siz' for sister, "brathee" or "braza" for brother, while 'guys', "wasee" and "pals" are general terms used by students to refer to one another. The use of these words shows that students have close a relationship among themselves and use such forms when requesting for something or when showing intimacy.

Use of In-group Language or Dialect

Code switching as a phenomenon involves a switch between one language or dialect to another in a community where speakers have a linguistic repertoire which includes two or more linguistic codes. The switch may involve two varieties or dialects of a language where one is considered highly prestigious than the other. In other cases, the switch

may involve switching simply from one language to another especially in bilingual or multilingual speakers. In code-switching situations, a switch into the code associated with in-group and domestic values may be considered a potential way of indicating positive politeness when redress is required by an FTA (Brown and Levison, 1987)

. T80 can serve to elucidate both the use of in-group language and jargon or slang. Student A for instance code switches between Slang and Kiswahili as explained below.

Use of Jargon or Slang

Related to the use of an in-group language or dialect is the use of in-group terminology. By referring to an object with a slang term, S may evoke all the shared associations and attitudes that he and H both have towards that object, this then may be used as FTA redress. For example, use of brand names in a request may stress that S and H share an (in-group) reliance on the required object.

T80

A: *Wa2 wa Nai wazikane huko cc ha2taki jam shags tym ya matanga.*

Mara oooh! Maji moto ya wageni , tent la wageni kutoka Nai,maji ya chupa!!! Mmalizie service yenu Nairobi mtuachie ushagoo 2zikane.

(The people from Nairobi should conduct burials in Nairobi and avoid distracting the local people with unending demands like being given warm water, special tents and bottled water. Do the services in Nairobi and leave us the locals to bury the dead.)

B: *exactly.*

(Exactly)

This conversation takes place after the student had attended a burial accompanying one of their own who had lost a relative. In the above example, the students make use of such forms like “wa2” (people), “cc” instead of ‘sisi’ (we), “shags” referring to the upcountry, ‘jam’ to mean a kind of disagreement or conflict. The use of such forms makes the students stand out as a different entity. The example above shows how the students wish to distinguish themselves from the Nairobi people.

Avoiding Disagreement and Seeking Agreement as Strategies

Another way of seeking common ground with H is by adopting ways where it is possible to agree with him. Coming up with “safe topics” allows S to emphasize his agreement with H and hence, satisfy H’s desire to be right or to be corroborated in his opinions. Often the weather or even the environment is a safe topic mostly for everyone

just as the beauty of gardens, the incompetence of bureaucracies (to those outside of them, at least) and the irritations that come as a result of waiting in a line. On the other hand, seeking agreement involves raising aspects or topics where it is possible to agree and stick to them. For instance, if your neighbour comes home with a new car and you think it hideously huge you might still be able to sincerely say. *“Isn’t you new car a beautiful colour!”* (Brown and Levison, 1987)

Besides using safe topics to seek agreement one can repeat part of or all the preceding speaker has said in a conversation while avoiding disagreement may be achieved through token agreement which is a desire to agree or appear to agree with H which may also lead to mechanisms of pretending to agree. It is also realized with hedging opinions. This ensures that interactants remain cordial, as they try as much as possible to seek agreement and avoid disagreement. Consider the following examples;

T81

A: *Rareni bwega*

(Sleep well)

B: *What is this young girl*

A2: *Bukuria sapa? Wa2guyas?*

(My people, have you taken supper?)

B.: *what is this young girl?*

A3: *Just asking if you have taken supper and slept well*

(I was just asking if you have taken supper and slept well)

B2: *Yes, we have.*

A. *Rareni bwega then*

(Sleep well then)

C. *Umeanza tena mrembo??*

(Have you started using that language again cute girl?)

A4: *Oh, sorry nimesahau tena! Sitarudia Kimeru tena wakubwa*

(Oh! I am sorry for speaking in Kimeru again. I will not repeat)

B3: *Ok nice*

(Okay nice)

In the above text, student A uses her mother tongue, which makes other students annoyed. In the process of their conversation, she apologizes hence, avoiding conflict/disagreement. This is an attempt to show politeness by avoiding disagreement as much as possible. Seeking agreement is where the interactant has the desire to appear to agree with H. The hearer is forced to agree with what has just been uttered.

T82

A: *Aki nilifail exams?*

(I really failed my exams)

B: *u failed?*

(Did you really fail?)

C: Kwani ulipata sup?
 (Did you get a supplementary exam.)
A1: Yeah, imagine
 (Yes, I did)
B2: Ghai! pole
 (Ooh my God! I am sorry)
B3: Uko science?
 (Are you taking a Science course)
A2: Yeah, mbona?
 (Yes, why ask?)
B4: Supu uko ni lazima
 (The supplementary exams are mandatory in the science courses)
C: Supu uko ni tohara ya lazima
 (Supplementary exams are like compulsory rituals in these courses.)

In this example, students are seeking agreement in their conversation. Student B3 does not want to be misconstrued by A2 to hurt him by asking an unsuitable question (*are you in Science?*). B4 and C agree that when one is taking science courses, supplementary exams are very common just like the way one cannot escape circumcision. This kind of exaggeration is meant to comfort the student who failed hence showing sympathy to H which is another positive politeness strategy already discussed. B4 and C seek agreement which implies politeness as they try to avoid threatening the face of A2. Students strive to avoid conflicts and normally try to seek agreement in order to make the H feel good.

Offering and Promising as Strategies

Offering and promising are considered the natural outcome of choosing this strategy even if the promises or offers are false. Students make use of this strategy in their social media discourse. Consider the following examples.

T83

A: Kim count my support next year, tutakuwa nawe hadi kwa debe.
 (Kim, I assure you my support next year. I will be with you all the way to the ballot box)
B: Thanks.

In the above example, student A promises to support another student who would be vying the following year for one of the student leaders' position. This is geared towards making him feel good hence positive politeness.

Inclusion of both S and H in the Activity

The strategy is achieved with the use of ‘we’ pronoun form when S literally means ‘you’ or ‘me’. The word ‘let’s which in English is an inclusive for ‘we’, can also be used in realizing this strategy. Below is an example;

T84

A: Guys, let’s plan for hike...or what do you see?
(Guys let us plan for the hike...or what do you think?)
B: I second
(I second)
C: Good idea
(It is a good idea)

The student A uses the word ‘let’s in order to involve others in the planning of an outing. By so doing, the H’s face is not threatened. This is a sign of positive politeness. It also implies that students strive to remain cordial by uniting in accomplishing a mission.

Use of Contraction/Ellipsis as a Strategy

Contraction and ellipsis are common phenomena in the university students’ discourse in social media. The following is an example:

T85

A: class ya statistics ni xangapi?
(At what time will the statistics class be held?)
B: Akuna class leo?
(There is no lecture today)
C: iyo prac iko wapi?
(Where is the venue for the practical?)
D: Scie block
(At the science block)
E: That’s okay super
F: fity
(fine)

The above conversation has got ellipsis. Some linguistic forms have been left out and contractions are employed. For instance, ‘that’s’ a contraction for that is. Instead of saying, the class is in science block, the interactant say “*scie block.*”

Presupposing, Raising / Asserting or Showing a Common Ground

Since students have a lot in common, they tend to show their admiration to something that the other students have; hence, showing a common ground. The value of S spending a least time and effort being with H as a mark of friendship or interest in him gives rise

to the strategy of redressing an FTA by talking for a while about unrelated topics. S can thereby stress his general interest in H and indicate that he hasn't come to see H simply to do the FTA; a request even though his intent to do it may be made obvious by his having brought a gift. The strategy of softening requests using favours is commonly used (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Consider the examples below where students strive to show a common ground.

T86

A: *pole sana maclassmates,naona madem walikuwa washaeka new hair style ya kwenda trip, machali wakanyolewa*

(I am so sorry guys, I am aware that you already made preparations for the trip, the girls had new hairstyles and the boys clean shaved.)

B: *hahaha*

C: *Ata wewe nyoa tusiende kuulizwa "kwani mmekuja na worker"*

(You can also shave and be like us, otherwise you might be mistaken for a manual worker)

It is evident that students believe that people need to be smartly groomed before going for a trip. For instance, ladies make their hair nicely and the male students are expected to shave in order to be smart. This is an endeavour to show solidarity by asserting a common ground. This also presupposes that students believe that there is a need for them to be seen having similarity in several ways including grooming mannerisms.

6.3 Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative politeness is a redressive action directed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. Negative politeness is realized through a number of devices that are discussed below in the light of the politeness theory (Brown and Levison, 1987)

Being Pessimistic as a Strategy

Pessimism is evident in university students social media discourse as students express their doubt towards something as demonstrated in the example below;

T87

A: *Venye tu cat inabounce ndio trip inabounce*

(The trip has been postponed just like the Continuous Assessment Test)

B: *Ama ilikuwa haiko tu*

(Or the trip was not planned?)

C: *but guys are staining our names*

(you guys are denting our reputation)
D: *trip has been postponed till date 15*
(The trip has been postponed to date 15th.)

Pessimism is expressed by showing doubt in something as shown in the above example. Student A expresses his pessimism by indicating that he/ she not sure whether there would be a trip as it will be postponed just like a Continuous Assessment Test (CAT). This is an indirect way of asking whether or not there would be a trip and/ or CAT or not without blaming anyone since this can be comprise an FTA. By being pessimistic about something, one cannot be blamed by anyone for imposing on him or her. This implies that students avoid antagonizing one another unnecessarily.

Use of Hedges / questions

Used in a form of hesitation. The speaker states something indirectly.

T88

A: *Who is vying for CUSA sec?*
(Who is vying for Chuka University Student Association secretary position?)
B: *Yule comedian Kimutai*
(Kimutai, the comedian)
A: *I believe that he would deliver despite being a comedian*
(I believe he will deliver even though he is a comedian)
C: *I Second*
(I second)
D: *unasecond kitu ujui?*
(Why are you seconding things that you don't know.)
C: *What? Comedian amekuwa tested.*
(What? Has the comedian been proven to be a good leader)
D: *Alright, time will tell*
(Alright, time will tell)

Hedging in the above conversation has been manifested through the use of questions like “*who is vying for CUSA sec?*” “*unasecond kitu hujui?*”

Stating words indirectly by using the word like “what?” and ‘*alright time will tell*’ is an hedge as the S does not want to impose on the H by giving their genuine views about the chances that Kimutai has for winning. Obviously, student D does not believe that Kimutai has got a chance but at the same time he does not want to state categorically as this would ruin his good relationship with student A and C. This shows that students try not to hurt the feelings of other students.

Apologizing as a Strategy

This is when the speaker begs for forgiveness from the hearer by using apologetic words such as “sorry “and I apologize.

T89

- A: *Hey guys, I am sorry lec hatamake leo*
(Hey guys, I am sorry, our lecturer will not attend today.)
B: *what!! mbona hakutushow mapema??*
(What! Why did he not notify us earlier?)
A2: *Oh sorry guys the information came late*
C: *hatugharamie hiyo loss yote @ least kafare*
(He should at least cater for our bus fare)
A3: *I really apologize guys and na promise next time will communicate mapema*
(I really apologize and I promise that next time it will be communicated early.)
D: *ok then!!*
(Okey, then)
A4: *Thanks for understanding.*
(Thanks for understanding)

The speaker in the conversation is using words like ‘sorry’, and ‘I apologize’ to beg for forgiveness from the hearer because of late communication. By doing this, the speaker minimizes the face threatening acts through apology. This implies that students mend fences in order to show politeness hence, maintaining cordial relationships.

Strategy of being Conventionally Indirect

This strategy involves the speaker facing opposing tensions: the desire to give, to be indirect and at the same time being on record.

T90

- A: *Hey guys, we could be meeting for our 2morrow’s class @ 7. or 9a.m*
(Hey guys we could be meeting for tomorrow’s lecture at 7.00 am or 9.00 am)
B: *NKT!!! Kwani hauko sure fala hii?*
(Nkt!!! Are you not sure you fool?)
C: *Kwenda uko!!!*
(Nonsense)
A: *Luk guys! The lec has just communicated*
(Look guys! the lecture has just communicated)
B: *Aiii*
C: *please, would you show him amalize unit leo.,*
(Please, would you inform him to complete the unit today?)
A: *Ok guys will discuss that. Thank you*
(Okay giys we will discuss that. Thank you)

The conventionally indirect strategy is indicated by words like *'could, 'please, and 'would'* as evident in C. the use of such words by the students is meant to minimize the imposition and maintain their cordial relationship.

Minimizing Imposition, and Incurring as Debt Strategies

S can achieve negative politeness through the use of words that do not coerce the H into doing something but by asking indirectly. S may for instance use a word like borrow instead of ask this therefore reduces the imposition. Similarly, in incurring a debt S can address an FTA by explicitly claiming his indebtedness to H as in the following;

T91

A: *Hey Brayo !Will appreciate if you perform your new song at the function.*

(Hey Brayo ! we will appreciate if you perform your new song at the function)

B: *Mmmm; No, I'm not in the mood.*

(Mmmm, No I am not in the mood.)

C: *Hey bana popularize your new song*

(Hey Sir, make your song popular)

D: *Btw this is an avenue kuwa fame.*

(This is an opportunity to become famous)

B: *Anyway can't repay you guys for your support will try.*

(Anyway, I cannot repay you guys for your support. I will try.)

A: *Thanks Brayo I will cheer you*

(Thanks Brayo, I will cheer you)

B: *Thanks!!!*

T92

A: *Swee, can I have a bite of that delicious birthday cake.*

(Sweetheart, can I have a bite of that delicious birthday cake?)

B: *U r welcome my dia.*

(You are welcome my dear.)

The strategy of minimizing incurring a debt is realized by the use of phrases like *"will appreciate 'can't repay you for your great support'* this shows that the speakers attempt to incur the debt hence minimizing the imposition to the hearer. In example 2, A tries to minimize the imposition by the use of the expression *'can I have a bite'*. Incurring a debt is a demonstration that students strive not to impose on others which is a means of depicting politeness as they interact.

Impersonalizing as a Strategy

Impersonalizing speaker and hearer is normally done by mostly avoiding the use of pronoun 'I' or 'you'. This kind of language usage is inherent in Chuka University's social media discourse of the students as illustrated below.

T93

A: Somebody to remind me the 2nd general integral equation before the exam

(Can somebody remind me the second general integral equation before the exam?)

Here, S does not mention any anybody in particular in the group to whom he expects the response. This is geared towards avoiding coercing the H into the action. The student avoid personalizing the request so as not to be seen as making an FTA through their demands. It implies that anybody willing to assist will do so without being asked or requested to do so by anyone directly. This entails a redressive action to the addressee's' negative face.

Stating the Face Threatening Act (FTA) as a General Rule.

This is a strategy whereby S and H are dissociated from a particular imposition in the FTA, and therefore ones ends up saying that S does not impinge on H but is merely forced by circumstances to state the FTA since he/she is obliged or it is a general social rule.

T94

A: I am going to remove those using their local languages from this group. This group is meant for each of us

(I am going to remove those using their local languages from this group. This group is meant for each and every one of us)

B: Guys let' respect one another

(Guys, let us respect one another)

A: Mamboz msee

(How are you)

B1: ehe, sema

(Yes, tell me something)

A1: wewe, utaacha maringo mingi

(You will have to minimize your pride)

C: We nawe nyamaza

(Can you shut up)

B2: usiniletee ujinga bana

(I don't want your nonsense)
A2: *Kwani unafikiria wewe ni nani*
(Whom do you think you are?)
B: *unajifeel sana, sindio*
(You value yourself so much, don't you?)

In the above conversation, the group administrator is forced to inform the other interactants that they are supposed to respect one another by using a language that is understood by each one of them and avoid their local languages failure to which they risk being removed from the group. The group administrator is obliged to state the FTA for the interest of the majority of members who could not understand the Ekegusii language that a section of members had switched to. This may not be polite to those using the Ekegusii language but it is quite in order for the majority of the members.

6.4 Bald on Record

Bald on Record is a politeness strategy that is viewed in light of Grice's Maxims (Grice, 1975), that is, speaking in conformity with the four maxims that include: quality, relevance, quantity and manner maxims. The four maxims are discussed to show how this kind of politeness is realized (Brown and Levison, 1987)

Use of Maxim of Quality

This maxim requires one to be non spurious (speaking the truth and being honest) and avoiding saying that which you believe is false. This maxim is illustrated in the following interaction;

T95

A. *Hey mtu aezi expect smthng from u*
(Can someone expect anything from you?)
B. No noooo leo kila mtu n kupambana na hali yake
(No, everyone should deal with their own situations)

Interactant A wants something from another interactant. It is however clear that interactant A's wish is declined by the other interactant who candidly tells him/her that every person should face his/her own challenges. This demonstrates the candid nature of students when it comes to some issues.

Use of maxim of Relevance

This implies making one's contribution as relevant as possible in any discussion.

T96

A¹: *Hello there*

(Hallo there)

B¹: *Hehehe*

(Hehehe)

A²: *Why are people so silent?*


(Why are people so silent?)

B²: *They are in the library*

(They are studying in the library)

C: *Exams (CATs)*

(For exams (CATs))

D:  *around the corner.*

(An emoticon, exams are around the corner)

In the above example, the interactants give only the information that is relevant to their conversation. Emoticons of cats are used to communicate that they are doing Continuous Assessment Test (CAT). The Information communicated in the conversation is relevant hence, underscoring the maxim of relevance. This is an indication that students can communicate effectively to one another without digressing to irrelevancies; a sign of effective communication.

Use of maxim of Quantity

This Maxim requires that one makes one's contribution as informative as possible to the current purposes of the exchange. The contribution should not be made more informative than is required. Consider the following example.

T97

A: *For those who listened without emotion of opposition,, you can conclude that Kimutai is a true leader.*

(For those who listened without the intention of opposing,, you can conclude that Kimutai is a true leader.)

B: *Yea. Kimutai is a very able leader, from what he spoke am sure he will deliver, congratulations to him*

(Yes indeed. Kimutai is a very able leader, from what he spoke am sure he will deliver, congratulations to him)

C: *Ukweli*

(True)

Maxim of Manner

The Maxim of manner proposes that an interactant should be brief, clear and orderly.

T98

A: Practical iko wapi guys?

(Where is the venue for the practical?)

B: Prac iko sides ya secondary, na iko kesho 9:00 a.m

(Practical will be tomorrow around the secondary school (Ndagani Secondary School) and it will be at 9.00 am)

A: Ok dude

(Okay man)

B¹: Karibu!!!

(Welcome)

Interactant A inquires whether there would be a practical class and he is given a clear response by B and in an orderly manner. This implies that students observe clarity when communicating information related to their core business at the university; academics. Having discussed the strategies oriented to Bald on Record, our focus now shifts to the Off- Record Strategies.

6.5 Off -Record Strategies

When a communication is done off- record, it is done in a way that it is impossible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act. The hearer can interpret and give the message more than one meaning (Brown and Levison, 1987).The strategy utilizes language indirectly and employs a number of devices explained below.

Giving Hints as a Strategy

This is an off-record strategy whereby something you say or do suggests something to someone without telling them directly. In other words, S says something that lacks explicit or relevance; hence the H searches or has to interpret. Consider the following example.

T99

A: Some people may look okay but deep inside hawataki CAT ya Mr X.

(Some people may seem to be okay but honestly they do not want to do Mr X's Continuous Assessment Test)

In this statement, student A is giving a hint that students may be appearing okay but they may not be willing to do the CAT hence suggesting that they should decline it anyway. By posting such a statement, the student does not want to be on record for having told other students not to do the exam but gives a clue.

T100

A: *Sijapata exam time table*
(I have not seen the exam time table)
B: *so?*
(So?)

In the above example, student A is indirectly requesting for the timetable by giving a hint but student B seems to be rude. This implies that students can be rude sometimes to one another which is sign of impoliteness but in an indirect way. Both A and B are just giving hints of what they mean by their statements.

Over-Generalization as a Strategy

It is an off-record strategy whereby the speaker does not name the hearer who is addressing him/her directly. It involves making statements or drawing conclusions that are based on too few facts or a small number of instances.

T101

A: *These Gikuyu men surprise me*
(These Gikuyu men surprise me)
B: *What have they done?*
(What have they done?)
C: *A Gikuyu man will finish his wedding by 3:30p.m and still open a shop by 4:00 p.m*
(A Gikuyu man will finish his wedding by 3:30p.m and still open a shop by 4:00 p.m)
D: *Hehehe!!! Hii pesa itawamaliza*
(Hehe this money will ruin them)

In the conversation, the speaker is drawing conclusion on a community that is “Gikuyu” to show how they love money to an extent that immediately after their wedding ceremony, they will open their businesses and life goes on normally as opposed to the expectation that they should enjoy the celebration, later proceed on to honeymoon among others after marriage. Another example is where some students who exhibit inappropriate behaviour are castigated through over generalization. Consider the following example;

T102

A: *Kuna watu apa mnafaa kupewa fee yenu yote mrudi nyumbani till you mature to be admitted back.*

(There are some people here who need to be refunded all their fees they paid, they go back home and come back to be readmitted when they mature)

B: *Nini*
(What?)

Student A does not mention anybody in particular but has over-generalized so as not to be on record for having criticized anybody in particular. Also consider the following example;

T103

A. *Then how can u go all the way talking in Kikamba and Kikuyu and expect a win.... Kumbé kwenu common sense is not common.*
(Then how can you go everywhere speaking Kikamba and Kikuyu languages and expect to win.....so then to you common sense is not common.)

B. *My friend if there are people using common sense it is us team Kidero.....*

The rest are using condom sex 😊😊😊😊

(My friend if there are people using common sense it is us team Kidero.....

The rest are using condom sex, emeticon)

In the example, the speaker does not name the person he is referring to as 'u' (you) or 'kwenu' (your place) but only mentions Kikuyu and Kikamba languages.

In the same conversation, student B says it is only team Kidero that is using common sense, '*the rest*' which is a general reference which can be generalized to mean other teams, is used. By overgeneralising, students avoid a situation where they may be accused of abusing one another directly, which is likely to ruin their good relationship. The H cannot blame anyone since none is addressed directly.

Using Rhetorical Questions as a Strategy

This is an off-record strategy in which a speech or writing intended to be effective, persuasive and influence people is not honest.

T104

A: *Hey lakini madam mnapeda pesa sana!*

(Hey, but ladies have high affinity for money)

B: *Eish! hakuna mtu hapendi pesa. Kwani wewe hupendi?*

(Eish! Everyone loves money. Don't you love it yourself?)

C: *Yao ni excess sana*

(Theirs is much more)

D: Wanaume mtashida to hapa eti wanawake wanapenda pesa,, Judas wa bible alikuwa bibi ya nani?
(Men always think women have more affinity for money but whose wife was Judas of the Bible?)

T105

A: *Hakuna Cat hadi Monday.....*

(There is no Continuous Assessment Test until Monday...)

B: *Man uko sure na hii wewe...should we quit revising till next week??? Or what do you want to suggest*

(Man, are you sure about this... should we quit revising till next week? Or what do you suggest)

In the above examples, rhetorical questions are used as an off- record strategy by student D in T104. She asks whose wife was Judas of the Bible? if it is true that it is only women who have a high affinity for money than men. Judas is said to have betrayed Jesus after receiving some money despite being one of the disciples. In the same text, student B asks Student A rhetorically if there is anyone who does not love money. In T105, student B rhetorically asks whether they should stop revising for the Continuous Assessment Test now that it has been postponed. By using rhetorical questions, the students are able to persuade one another on how they should perceive things; that is, in a manner which is not acrimonious as they do not ask a question directly as this would be tantamount to committing an FTA.

Being Ambiguous as a Strategy

This is an off- record strategy that describes statements or conditions not clear in meaning. It refers to an act, statement or an attitude that can be interpreted in two or more ways which are often contradictory intentionally or by accident.

T106

A: *Hey life is really hard*

(Hey, life is really hard)

B: *Don't worry yourself, nobody knows tomorrow*

(You should not worry yourself, nobody knows about tomorrow)

C: *Stop running around with nonsense quote like nobody knows tomorrow.*

(Stop running around with that nonsense quote like nobody knows tomorrow)

C: Tomorrow is on Friday.

The second interlocutor is ambiguous by stating that nobody knows tomorrow. This can be interpreted differently as one can state the day and date of tomorrow. Similarly, one can also say that tomorrow refers to the future which no one can purport to know.

Pre-supposing as a Strategy.

This is an off-recording strategy in which you give a hint and at the same time you violate the maxim of relevance.

T107

A: *By dha trip niaje?*

(By the way, how is the trip?)

B: *kwani kuna wasee bdo wanaitisha trip wen semester is ending?*

(Are there some students still asking for the trip when the semester is ending?)

In the above interaction student A presupposes that there is a trip. The presupposition is that there was a trip that was being planned and the student (A) assumes that everybody is aware of the same.

T108

A: *Jokes aside pliz ...others gonna miss that CAT.....y mislead people surely*

(Let's put jokes aside.... some of the student are likely to miss the Continuous Assessment Test (CAT) why... mislead people surely)

B: *Let's be intellectuals pliz*

(Let us behave like intellectuals please)

By urging other students to behave like intellectuals presupposes that they were not behaving like intellectuals. This implies that student B is indirectly telling those behaving in a manner that is immature to behave themselves. Nobody can claim that student B has offended anyone but in case he pointed out, at a specific student, he could

have borne the blame and could also have been accused of being abusive. This strategy helps in maintaining students' good relationship.

Understating as a Strategy

This strategy entails providing less information than required hence violating the maxim of quantity. In their conversation, sometimes university students provide information that is far much less than what is required.

T109

A: Somebody is going crazy here. Msee mwenye ako karibu naye afanye kitu, help a comrade.

(Somebody is becoming crazy here. Any student near him to do something, help a comrade.)

B: That guy is a genius of his own, leave him alone anajua kitu anafanya.

(That guy is a genius of his own, leave him alone because he is aware of what he is doing.)

C: Yeah , I think anapaswa kwenda rehab.

(I think he should go to a rehabilitation centre.)

Student A notes that one of the students is behaving in an unbecoming manner hence suggesting that whoever might be close to him to assist but student B nevertheless, dismisses him by providing unsubstantiated claim about the fellow student. He argues that the fellow is a genius of his kind and therefore should be left alone. This violates the maxim of quantity hence the strategy of understating. This implies that students at times may opt to remain unclear so as not to be seen offending others. This ensures that they are not at loggerheads with one another.

Use of Tautologies as a Strategy

In their social media discourse, students use tautological statements whose meaning is difficult to decipher. The following example can illustrate the usage of this strategy;

T110

A: Going to heaven is not about 'let me go' we got have narrow doors there, ukinenepa na dhambi za duniani... shauri yako.. na kumbuka hakuna dhambi ndogo mbele ya mungu. Be lustful or be a killer... a sin is a sin, wages to death.

(Going to heaven is not about 'let me go' we have narrow doors there, if you plunge yourself in sins and become stout, it is upon you and remember there no difference between 'small sins' and 'big sin' as far as God is concerned. Whether you are lustful or a killer, sin is a sin and wages for the sin is death.)

B: *This is true no small or 'large sin' every...a sin is always remain a sin.*

(This is true. All sins are the same and will always remain so)

T111

A: *If u notice that the post does not concern you just keep off! U don't have to shout nonsense*

(If you notice that the post does not concern you just keep off! You don't have to shout nonsense)

B: *If it doesn't concern me, as I shout nonsense,, shout ten sense.*
(If it doesn't concern me, as I shout nonsense,, why don't you shout ten sense.)

C: *uuui..... Hehee*
(uiii.....Hehehe)

From the above examples, tautology is depicted by the use of the statement 'a sin is always a sin and will remain a sin' in T105 and in T106 student B tells A that "as I shout nonsense, shout ten sense". When used, tautological statements are meant to display different meanings. Hence, instead of being rude out rightly which is considered polite, the other is implied. In the above statement for instance, student B makes fun by using a statement that is tautological instead of being rude as A has already indicated his disappointment.

Use of Incomplete statements and Ellipsis as a strategy

Use of incomplete statements and ellipsis is a common phenomenon. Students use this strategy often so as not to be on record for hurting a colleague. A good example is provided in T111 whereby student C responds, '*uuui....heheee.*' The following is also a good example of ellipsis;

T112

A: *Jokes aside pliz ...others gonna miss that CAT.....y mislead people surely*

(Let's put jokes aside please.... some of the student are likely to miss the Continuous Assessment)

B: Exactly.

Student A's statement was in response to another student who was making fun as to when the Continuous Assessment Test would be done and by using ellipsis he avoids saying his real feelings about what he felt about that behaviour. This is an off record strategy that helps to maintain relationships among the students.

Irony and Contradictions as strategies

These are two off- record strategies that are inherent in the students' social media discourse. Consider the following example.

T113

A: *Anybody selling empty but a complete gas please inbox*

(Anybody selling an empty but complete gas please inbox)

B: *Empty and complete???*

(Empty and complete?)

C: *Contradicting statement.....*

(It is a contradictory statement)

D: *That's why you will remain jobless*

(That's why you will remain jobless)

E: *Maliza jina jobless millionaire*

(Finish the name jobless, millionaire)

A2: *Sipendi kubishana, I know you are after that.*

(I don't want conflicts and I know that is what you are up to.)

T114

A: *Nothing is sweet like Ekegusii*

(Nothing is sweet like Ekegusii language)

B: *Motebi endugu*

(Tell him brother)

C: *Stop being retrogressive and pseudo intellectual*

(Stop being retrogressive and pseudo intellectual)

D: *I think this kind of Kisii is much better*

(I think this kind of Kisii used is much better)

Drawing from the above example, it is ironical and contradictory for one to be a jobless millionaire and at the same time the statement made by A in T113 is also contradictory in nature since there is no empty but complete gas. In example 2, student D ironically tells student C that the kind of Kisii he has used is better. This statement is meant to hurt the feelings of the student from Kisii who had used the language in the chat and suddenly switched to English. Student D is ironical because he refers to the statement in English as 'a better Kisii'.

Overstating as a strategy

Students often overstate something in order to show the seriousness of the issue they are talking about. In the example below, a student overstates the manner in which team Kidero is conducting their campaigns and predicts their failure by saying that there will be a might fall.

T116

A: 😊😊😊😊 *with the way u guys are handling things like primary school kids do you really expect a win surely.*

(With the way you guys are handling things like primary school kids do you really expect a win surely.)

B. *And I think that is for those who go with the name team Kenya,, we wait for their mighty fall. That's for the Kidero followers*

(And I think that you are referring to those who go by the name team Kenya,, we will wait for their mighty fall. That's for the Kidero followers)

C. *Yea, definitely I have to be prepared to witness the mighty fall of the so called Kidero too.....*

(Yes, definitely I have to be prepared to witness the mighty fall of the so called Kidero too...)

The speaker in the conversation refer to others as primary school kids meaning that they are immature in politics. Speaker B says that he/she is waiting for the mighty fall meaning, people will lose big in the forthcoming students' elections despite their efforts and by saying, 'mighty fall', it is an overstatement. Use of overstatement is an off-Record strategy used by students in their interactions.

6.6 Conclusion

Students use various politeness strategies which are evident in the social media discourse. These strategies enable students to build and maintain relationship among themselves. Positive politeness like the use of humour and jokes make the students to be in the light mood and lessen the seriousness of life at the university due the challenges encountered. Students strive as much as possible not to threaten the H's face through the use of several devices that realize positive politeness. Similarly, students attempt not to impose or impinge on the hearer by making use of the negative politeness strategies such as hedging and indirect requests. Sometimes students use Bald on Record where they make use of the Gricean maxims. This is when they say things exactly the way it is expected of them. Other times, students go Off-Record so as to commit an FTA. And as the strategy points, Off-Record strategies are meant to give statements whose meanings can be interpreted in more than one way hence one cannot be quoted or be on record for committing an FTA. Having presented the findings for the three objectives, the next chapter presents the summaries, conclusions and the recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the major observations made in this study and makes suggestions for further inquiry. The study analysed the social media discourse on Whatsapp interaction platform to reveal the kind of discourse that takes place as students interact using this platform. The study used Whatsapp groups formed by Chuka University students and sampled texts that were posted on their WhatsApp groups between January, 2018 and April, 2019. The study looked into the distinctive linguistic features inherent in Chuka University Students' social media discourse, the way students create identities as they interact via social and the politeness strategies used by the students in their social media discourse. The findings for Chapter four to six are summarized. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings and then suggestions for further research are presented last.

7.2 Distinctive Linguistic Features in Social Media Discourse

This study found that university students use linguistic forms that are unique to them. Some of the linguistic forms may not be familiar to people who are not part of the group. On the phonographic features, the study found that students' way of writing in the social media is largely influenced by the way they pronounce words in their day to day lives. This implies that social media discourse is a hybrid between written discourse and spoken discourse, as it lies at the boundary between the two forms of communication. For instance, they write words like night and good as '*nait*', or '*nyt*' and '*gud*'.

Prosodic features such as laughter is represented by the idiophones, '*hahahaha*' or '*hehehe*'. While exaggerated spelling like '*kabisaaaa*' and '*sanaaaaa*' are used for emphasis while the use of capital letters is equivalent to shouting and also it accentuates the message being communicated. For instance, '*YOU KAM HERE*' (you come here). Exaggerated punctuations like questions marks and exclamation marks are similarly used for emphasis in social media discourse.

Logographic features are also a common phenomenon. Often, a single letter is used to represent either a syllable or a morpheme or a word. For instance, 'U', stands for you, 'r' represents are, and 'ua' for your/you are. Acronym such 'OMG' oh my God, 'ASAP' for as soon as possible, 'LOL', laugh out loudly are among many often used.

Semasiographic features are also used alongside phonographic and logographic. The university students use numbers such as '4' for for or four and, '2' for two or to and symbols such as @ for at or heart, asterisk (*) for emphasis or ellipsis. hash tag (#) is also used for the same purposes.

Another uniqueness is exhibited in the way students form new words. The words formation processes that are commonly used include but not limited to acronyms, blending, backformation, borrowing and coinage. For instance, there is the evolution of words such as 'slay queen' (compounding/borrowing), 'Ben ten' (coinage/compounding), 'lec' (clipping) and 'prac' (clipping).

University students code switch and code mix using three codes which include English, Kiswahili and the Kenyan popular slang commonly known as 'sheng.' For instance, a word like 'ctanalyse' can be interpreted as I will not analyse, 'nakam' - I am coming are examples of code mixing and they are very co

It is explicit that students use language distinctively by exhibiting such features as phonographic, logographic, semasiographic and through unique formation of new words and phrases. Their ability to make use of such features aid in marking of identity as explained in the next session.

7.3 Marking of Identities by the University Students.

The findings of this research shows that students put away their personal or subgroup identity for the one that is most powerful meaning that they opt to join the mainstream identity so as to form an in-group identity. Since individuals adopt the group identity, the adoption of the language may be in form of dialect; in group slang and jargons, or special registers. Students converge and diverge in their texts for solidarity purposes and end up marking a distinct group identity. The students' ability to use different

modes of communication in a single text (multimodality) also points to their identity. At the same time use of language in an informal manner points to the students' identity.

Informal use of language is also a common phenomenon in students' social media discourse. This feature is demonstrated through aspects such as the use of active voice more than the passive voice which is considered formal. Use of contractions is also common just like ellipsis at the word level. Colloquialism, slang and informal usage of words is also an indicator of informality. Apart from simplistic use of words as opposed to lexical complexity, there is simplistic representation of the sentences as opposed to syntactic complexity. This is evident in the nature of comments, remarks and responses depicted in the discourse. Comments and responses normally comprise of a single word, phrase, an emoticon or a simple sentence/ sentences. Complex and compound sentences are not common in social media discourse of the students. Verbalization as opposed to nominalization is a common phenomenon hence depicting a high level of informality. Many are the times when students use imperative sentences implying that the subjects of such sentences are ellipted thus a lot of verbs are used which is an indicator of verbalization that shows the level of informality in a given text. It is also clear that students mark their identities through the way they use language in an informal manner. The students' style of writing is casual indicating that they have close relationships with one another. The informality in the language use by students can be attributed to the manner in which they live freely with one another.

One way students converge is through code mixing and code switch in their discourses. Students normally try to appear similar by abandoning their ethnic languages and turning to the codes familiar to one another; Kiswahili, English and Sheng. These codes are mixed in an intricate and meticulous manner that is peculiar to the interactants. Interactants also converge in the way they use emoticons in their discourse. There is a myriad of emoticons employed in the discourse. The emoticons serve as some of the paralinguistic features inherent in the spoken discourse and can be categorized variously; there are those that indicate the emotions (facial expression), others gestures and the rest body movement.

It is evident that university students mark their identities by converging in various ways. The implication for this is that students strive to use language in a similar manner so as to accommodate one another and have a peaceful coexistence. Another way of ensuring that there is peaceful coexistence and cordial relationship is through the exploitation of the numerous politeness strategies as discussed in the next session.

7.4 Politeness strategies

Students use various politeness strategies which are evident in their social media discourse. Bald-on-Record, positive politeness strategies, negative politeness and Off-Record are the various sub categories which students used most. Politeness strategies are not only employed by students to build and maintain their relationships but also to ensure their relationships remain cordial and more importantly, solidarity which is considered a key thing in their lives as students.

Under positive politeness, strategies such as attend to H's needs, exaggerating (interest, approval), sympathizing with H, intensifying interest to H, jokes, in-group identity markers, avoiding disagreement, seeking agreement, offering and/ or promising, including both S and H in the activity and presupposing/raising/asserting common ground are used by students in their social media discourse. This implies that students, while chatting make concerted efforts not to threaten the face of the H (the person to whom they are chatting with).

Strategies of negative politeness are also used in several instances. In this category, strategies such as pessimism, hedging/questioning, giving deference, apologising, being conventionally indirect, incurring a debt and stating the FTA as a general rule are used. This implies that students try as much as possible to avoid coercing the H into doing something or imposing on his/her personal territories. Students normally make use of the Bald on record where they utilize the imperative sentences and remain within the confines of the Grice's maxim; maxim of manner, relevance, quantity and quality.

Off- record strategies are also used by the University students' social media discourse. Strategies employed in this category include: giving hints, irony, pre-supposing, over-generalisation, contradictions, overstating, understating, being vague, ellipsis and

incomplete sentences, giving association clues and rhetorical questions. This means that the students avoid committing themselves or being on record for saying something that is likely to offend one the other.

7.5 Conclusions

Based the research's findings, the following conclusions are drawn.

- i. University students use language in a distinctive manner. This distinctiveness is evident in their grammar, phonetic features, word formation processes and orality.
- ii. University students create identities by use of in-group identity markers, convergence, colloquial variants and slang.
- iii. In social media discourse, the students make use of virtually all the politeness strategies.
- iv. There is a lot of orality in social media discourse by the university students.
- v. Intertextuality is a common phenomenon because students do not live in isolation; they interact with other members of the society.
- vi. There is the interplay of linguistic features at the various levels of language study.
- vii. Some words and phrases acquire new meanings in the context of social media.

7.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following areas for further study to any interested scholar. A comparative study on the language use in social media by different categories of people like the students and their tutors can also be carried out in order to find out how P, D and R can affect the realization of politeness. A study can also be carried out to investigate how the language use in social media has affected learning and teaching of English and Kiswahili as second language. This can it turn be used by the educators in the designing of education policies that concern the language. At the same time language learners and teachers can be enlightened on the effects of social media on language teaching and learning.

REFERENCES

- Adel, S, M., Davoud, M., & Ramezanzadel, A. (2016). A qualitative study of politeness strategies used by Iranians EFL learners in class blog. *Iranian Journal of language teaching research*, 4, (1), 47-62
- Anis, J. (2007). Neography: Unconventional spelling in French SMS text messages. In Danet, B. and Herring, S (Eds). *The multilingual internet: Language, Culture and communication online* (87-115). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Aranoff, M. (1976). *Word formation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, London: MIT Press
- Auer, P (1995). The pragmatics of code-switching A sequential approach. A sequential approach. In L. Milroy & P. Muysken(eds) *one speaker, two languages*: 115-135. Cambridge University Press
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Barak, A., Boniel-Nissim, M. & Suler, J. (2008). Fostering empowerment in online support groups. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 1867-1883.
- Barnes, S. (2003). *Computer-mediated: Human-to-human communication across the internet*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc
- Baron, N. S. (2000). *Alphabet to Email*. London: Routledge
- Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always On: Language in an online and mobile world*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bere, A. (2013). Using mobile instant messages to leverage learner participation and transform pedagogy a South Africa University of Technology. *British Journal of Education Technology*, 44(4), 544-561
- Bilbow, G. (1997). *Spoken discourse in the multicultural work place in Hong Kong: Applying A Model of Discourse As Impression Management*?. In F. Bargiela-Chiappin & S. Harris(eds). *The language of the business* (Pp 21-28). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Blattner, G. & Fiori, M. (2009). Facebook in the language classroom: Promises and possibilities. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 6(1), 17-28. Retrieved in November 02 2017.
- Blance-Benveniste, C (1991) *Le français parle. Etudes grammaticales. Editions du CNRS, Paris*.
- Block, D. (2006). Identity in applied linguistics, In O, Tope; W. Goodith (eds.) *The sociolinguistics of identity*. London: Continuum 31-49

- Blom, J.P & Gumpertz, J.J (1972). *Social meaning in linguistic Structure. Code-switching in Norway*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Boyd, D. M, & Ellison, N. C. (2008). Social networking sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13 (1), article 11. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/boyd.ellison.html>, accessed November 25, 2017.
- Boyd, D. M. (2014). *It is complicated; the social lives of the networked teens*. New Have: Yale University Press.
- Brown, P and Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. UK: CUP.
- Bjork, et al (1998) “intentional forgetting in perspective, comments conjectures, and some directed remembering, “*in intentional’ forgetting: interdisciplinary approaches* eds J.M golding and C.M Macleod
- Bulcholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2005) “Identity and interaction; a social cultural approach” *Discourse studies* 7 (4-5) London: Thousand oaks, 585-614
- Bulcholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2010) locating identity in language. In C. Llas & D Watt (eds). *Language and identities*. (18-28). Edinburgh UK: Edinburgh University press Ltd
- Celce-Murcia, M. Brinton, D.M & Godwin, J. M (2010). *Teaching pronunciation*. New York: Cambridge University press.
- Charles, M. L. (1996). *Business negotiations: Interdependence between Discourse and the business relationship. English for specific purposes*. In F. Bargiela-Chiappin & S. Harris (eds). *Handbook of business discourse*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Chejnova, P. (2014). Expressing politeness in the institutional E-mail communication of university students in the Czech Republic. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 60 (1), 175-192.
- Chipunza, P. C. (2013). Using mobile devices to leverage student access to collaboratively-generated resources: A case of WhatsApp Instant Messaging at a South African University. *International Conference on Advanced Information and Communication Technology for Education (ICAICTE 2013)*.
- Christie, F. (2002). *Classroom discourse analysis; a functional perspective*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Church, K., & de Oliveira, R. (2013). *What’s Up with WhatsApp? Comparing Mobile Instant Messaging behaviours with traditional SMS*. Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction with Mobile Devices and Services (Pp. 352-361).ACM.

- Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2010). New media, new learning. In W. Cole and D. Pullen (eds), *Multiliteracies in motion: Current theory and practice*. Abingdom: Routeledge. P. 87-104
- Cornejo, C. (2012.). Contrasting Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's approaches to consciousness. *Culture and Psychology*, 18(1), 109–120.
- Coulmas, F. (2005). *The study of speakers choices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language variation and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cruttenden, A, Ed. (2001). Gimson's introduction to the pronunciation of English. London Arnold 6th edition
- Curtis, P. (1996). Comunicazione via MUD: I Fenomeni Sociali delle realta virtual reality. *Sistemi Intelligenti*, 8 (2), 229 – 251.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Crystal, D and D Davy-1969 investigating English style. London: Longman
- Danet, B. & Herring, S. (2007). Introduction: Welcome to multilingual internet language. In Denet, B and Herring, S (Eds). *The multilingual Internet: Language, culture and communication online (3-39)*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University.
- Danet, B (1995) playful expressivity and artfulness in computer mediated communication 1 (2) retrievable from [https:// cloi org/10.vii/](https://cloi.org/10.vii/). 1083-6105. 1995.t boo 323.x
- Darvin, R. (2016). *Language and identity in the digital age*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303838217.retrieved_on_25th_January_2018.
- Darvin, R. (forthcoming). Representing the margins: Multimodal performance as a tool for critical reflection and pedagogy', *TESOL Quarterly*.
- De Fina, A., Schiffrin, D. & Bamberg, M. (eds) (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dewale J.M (1992) L'omission du 'n' dans deux styles d'interlangue francaise *Interface Jovial of Applied Linguistics*, 7.1 3-17

- Dewale J.M (1996a) how to measure formality of speech? A model of synchronic variation in: *Approaches to second language acquisition studies*. 17. K Sajavaara & C, Fair weather (eds) Jyvaskylä 119-183
- Dewale J.M (1996b) variation dans la composition lexicale des styles oraux. *I.R.A.L International Review of Applied Linguistics* 34(4) 261-282
- Dix, A., Finlay, J., Abowd, G. & Beale, R. (1993). *Human – computer interaction*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Ellis, K. (2010). Be who you want to be: the philosophy of Facebook and the construction of identity. *Screen Education Winter*, 58(22) 36–41.
- Facer, K. (2011). *Learning futures: Education, technology and social change*. London: Routledge.
- Fant, L. (1992). Scandinavians and Spaniards in negotiations. In A. Slørgen and L. Yanson (eds), *Culture and management in the field of ethnology and Business Administration*. Stockholm: School of Economics.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and society Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926592003002004> retrieved on 15 April 2019
- Fischer, Y (2013). *The Facebook is dead-long live WhatsApp: De Maker*. Retrieved from <http://www.themarket.com.technation/1.2126492> in May, 13, 2015
- Fraenkel, J. & Wallen, N. (1993). *How to evaluate research in education*. Mishawaka: McGrawHill College.
- Gee, L.P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis; theory and method*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. & Hayes, E. R. (2011). *Language and learning in the digital age*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (1997). *Discourse analysis: An introduction*. Britain: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gelas, N. (1998). *Dialogues authentiques et dialogues romanessques*, in: *Echanges sur la conversation*, éditions. Paris 323-333
- Giles H. (1980). *Language: Social psychological perspective*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Giles, H. (1977). *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations*. New York: Academic Press
- Giles, H. & St Clair, H. (1979). *Language and social psychology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

- Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (Eds.) (1991). *The contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Giles, H., Coupland, N. & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation theory: Communication, context. In H. Giles, N. Coupland & J. Coupland (Eds.), *Contexts of accommodation* (pp. 1-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, P. (1975). Logic in conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds) *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Act 3*. New York: Academic Press, pp 41-58
- Grindsted, A. (1997). Joking as a strategy in Spanish and Danish negotiations. In F. Bargiella-Chiappini and S. Harris (eds). *The language of business: An international Perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp81-159
- Gumpers, J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday M., A., K. (1964). *The linguistic sciences and language teaching*. London: Longmans Linguistic Library
- Haugerud, A & Njogu, S., K. (1991). *Political and the Kenyan Baraza*. African studies centre: Boston University.
- Harrison, S. & Barlow, J. (2009). *Politeness strategies and advice giving in an Online Arthritis Workshop* 5(1), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/JPLR.2009.006>. Retrieved on 16th August 2016
- Hendricks, V., Blanken, P. & Adrians, N. (1992). *Snowball sampling: A pilot study on cocaine use*. Rotterdam: IVO
- Herring, S. (2001). *Computer Mediated Discourse*. In D. Shiffrin, D., Tanner & H., E., Hamilton (Eds), *The handbook of discourse analysis*. (613-634). Maiden: Blackwell Publishers.
- Heylighen, F. & Dewaele, J. (1999). *Formality of language: Definition, measurement and Behavioral determinants*. *Free University of Brussels*. Retrieved from: Citeserx.1st. Psu.edu/./summary? Do=10. Accessed on 16th April 2015.
- Heylighen, F and Dewaele J.M (2012) *Variation in the contextuality of language*. An empirical measure, *foundations of science* of 293-340
- Heylighen, F. and Dewaele, J.M. (2002). Variation in the contextuality of Language: An Empirical Measure. *Foundations of science* 7; 293- 340
- Heylighen, F. (1992a). From complementary to bootstrapping of distinctions. Reply to Lofgren's comments on my proposed structural *international journal of general systems* 2014.

- Howe, C. (2013). *Language variation in text-based messages: The social differentiation of representing speech and orality in electronically-mediated communication*. Colorado state University. M A Thesis: Unpublished. Retrieved From Grandworks .Uni.Com /15/44 On 15th April 2015.Pdf
- Hozhabrossdat, S. (2015). Linguistic identities. How code switching and/ code rassing help constructing solidarity or otherness in multilingual societies. *Inter.J. Eng.Lit. Cult*,3 (6), 194-198
- Huddleston, Rodney D, Pollum, Geoffrey K. (2002) *the Cambridge Grammer of the English language*: Cambridge Cup
- Izadi, A. & Zilaie, F. (2012). Politeness strategies in Email exchange in Persian. *Journal of Comparative Literature and Culture*, 2 (1), 86-90.
- Joos, M. (1967). *The five discks - A linguistic Excursion into the five styles of language usage*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and world.
- Karlsson, S. (2008). Differences regarding country of origin and market sector. English C2 Course. Spring. Retrieved from www.Diva-porta.Org
- Katamba, F. (1993) *Morphology*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Kothari, C. (2004). *Research methods and techniques*. Waswa: Prakashan.
- Kress, G. (2009). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness; or minding your P's and Q's. *Papers from 9th regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics society*, 292-305
- Lea, M. (1991). Computer-mediated communication de-individuation and group decision making. *International Journal of Man-machine studies*, 34, 283-301.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Leech G. (1981). *Semantics: The study of meaning* (2nd eds). Great Britain: The Chaucher Press
- Leech, G. (1974) *semantics*, London: Penguin pp. Xii +386 (2nd edition entitled *Semantics the study of meaning*)
- Lerbert, M. (1999). Le-multilinguals, surleweb < <http://www.ceveil.qc.ca/multieng2.htm>>
- Levelt, W., J., M. (1989). *Speaking from intention to articulation* Cambridge: MIT Press
- Li, M. (2012). Politeness strategies in Wiki- Mediated communication of EFL collaborative writing tasks. *ALLT Journal*, 42 (2), 1-26.

- Ling, R. (2005). The sociolinguistics of SMS: An analysis of SMS use by a random sample of Norwegians; In R. ling & P.E. Pederson (eds). *Mobile communications: Renegotiations of the social space*. (335-349) Kent, UK: Springer-Verlg London Limited.
- Luzon, M, J. (2013). This is an erroneous argument: Conflict in Academic blog discussions. *Discourse Context and Media*, 2 (3), 111-119.
- Macken, M. Kalantzis,M.Kress,G. Martin,J and Cope,B.(1989). A Genre based Approach to teaching and writing, years 3-6. Book 1. *Introduction*. Sydney:director of Studies,N.S.W. Departmentof Education, Pp6-8 Retrieved from; *newlearningonline.com*. Accessed on 15th April 2015.
- Mantovani, G. (1995). Virtual reality as a communication environment. *Consensual Hallucination, Fiction and Possible Selves Human Relations*, 48 (6), 669-683.
- Maynor, N. (1994). The language of Electronic Mail: Written Speech? in Little, Greta D., Montgomery, Michael (eds), *Centennial usage studies*. Tuscaloosa, AI: Alabama U.P, 48-54
- Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. New York: Academic Press.
- Montero-Fleta, B., Montesinos, L., Peres-Sabater, C., & Turney, E. (2009). Computer Mediated Communication and Communication and Informalization of discourse: The influence of culture and subject matter. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41 (4) 770-779.
- Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A. (2003) *Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approach*. Nairobi: Act press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivation for code-switching. Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University
- Myers- Scotton, C., M. (2001). The matrix language frame model. Developments and responses In R Jacobson (ed), *Code switching worldwide*, 11(pp 23-58) Berlin: Mouton De Gryter.
- Neumann, I. (1997). Requests in German- Norwegian business discourse: Differences in directness. In F Bargiella- Chiappini and S.Harris (eds). *The language of business: An international Perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp 277-303
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation*. 2nd edn. Bristol: Multilingual.
- Ochs, E & Capps, L. (1996). Narrating the self. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 25: 19-43.
- Orgard,S (2006). The cultural dimensions of online communication: A study of breast cancer patients' internet spaces. *New Media and Society*, 8 (6), 877-899

- Osgood, C.E Suci, G.J, & Tannenbaum, P.H (1957). *The measurement of meaning*. Urbana: university of Illinois Press.
- Palfreyman, D. & Alkalil, M. (2007). A funky language for Teenzz to use: Representing Gulf Arabic in Instant Messenger. In B. Danet & S. Herring (eds). *The multilingual internet: Language, culture, and communication online*, (43-63) Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.
- Pariera, K (2006). The use of politeness strategies in Email discussions about taboo topics. *PSU Mcnair Scholars Online Journal*, 2.(1) 320-341
- Park, J., R. (2008). Linguistic politeness and face work in Computer Mediated Communication, Part 2 An Application of the Theoretical Framework. *Journal of the American Society of Information and Technology*, 59 (14), 2199-2209.
- Parks, M., R. & Floyd, K. (1996). Making friends in cyberspace. *Journal of Communication*, 46. (1), 80-97.
- Perez-Sabater, C. & Montero-Fleta, B. (2008). Pragmatic competence and social power awareness: The case of written and spoken discourse in non-native English environments. *International Journal of English Studies* 14 (2) 21-38
- Perez-Sabater, C. (2012). *The linguistics of social networking: A study of writing conventions on Facebook*. *Linguistic online* 56, 6/2012. –Retrieved from www.linguistic-online.org
- Perez-Sabater, C. & Montero-Fleta, B. (2015). A first glimpse at mobile instant messaging: Some sociolinguistics determining factors. *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 51(3), 411-431
- Planken, B. (2005). *Managing rapport in lingual France sales negotiations: A comparison of professional and aspiring negotiators. English for specific purposes*. 24 (4) 381-400
- Richards, J.C, Platt, J, and Platt, H. (1997). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. London: Longman
- Rocco, E, & Warglien, M. (1995). La comunicasone mediate da computer e l'emergere dell 'opportunità (The growth of electronic opportunism in computer-mediated communication) *Sistemi Intelligent*, 7 (3) 393 – 420.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Rouch, P., J. (1998). *Transcription Oxford International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scherer, K.R. & Giles, H. (1979). Dimensions of sociolinguistics. *Language and Society* 10 (3) 443-448

- Scissors, L. E., Gill, A. J., Geraghty, K. & Gergle, D. (2009). CMC we trust: The role of similarity. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 527-536). New York: ACM Press [on line]. Retrieved from: http://dgergle.soc.northwestern.edu/resources/ScissorsGillGeraghtyGergle_SimilarityTrust_CHI2009.pdf
- Scollon, R. & Scollon, S.K. (1980). *Athabaskan – English inter-ethnic communication centre for cross-cultural studies*. University of Alaska: Fair Banks.
- Shallert, D., L., Chiang, Y., Park, Y., Jordan, M., E., Lee, H., Janne Cheng, A., C., & Song, K. (2009). Being polite while fulfilling different discourse functions in online classroom discussions. *Computers and Education*, 53, 713-725
- Sifianou, M. (2015). Conceptualizing politeness in Greek. evidence from twitter corpora. *Journal of Pragmatic advance*. Online publication. <http://dx.do:org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015.05.019>
- Snijders, T. (1992). Estimation on the basis of Snowball samples: How to weight. *Bulletin Methodologie Sociologique*, 36, 59-70
- Spears, R., & Lea, M. (1992). *Social influence and the influence of the “social” in computer-mediated communication*. In Lea (ed) contexts of computer-mediated communication. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester wheat sheaf (pp 30-65).
- Spencer Oatley, H. (ed) (2000). *Culturally speaking*: London: Continuum
- Squires, L. (2010). Enregistering internet language. *Language in Society*, 3(Issue) 457-492. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.colostatedu3056/action/displayAbstract?From_page=online&aid=7873122&fullestType=RA&fileId=S0047404510000412
- Sridhar S., N. & Sridhar, K., K. (1980). The syntax and psycholinguistics of bilingual code mixing. *Canadian journal of Psychology* 34(4) 407-416
- Stalpers, J. (1995). The expression of disagreement. In K.Ehlich and J. Wagner (eds). *The discourse of business negotiations*: New York: Mouton Gruyter, P.90-275
- Stasser, G. (1992). Pooling of unshared information during group discussion. In S.Waaronell, W. Wood & S.A Simpson (eds). *Group processes and productivity* (pp. 48- 67). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Thornborrow. J. & Wareing, S. (1998). *Patterns of language: An introduction to language and literacy style*. 1st Edition. London: Routledge
- Thornborrow, J. and Wareing, S. (1993) “*The woman, the man and the filofax*. Gender positions in advertising; in S. Mills e.d

- Trudgill, P. (1992). *Introducing language and society*. London: Penguin.
- Trudgill, P. (1995). Grammaticalisation and social structure: Non-standard conjunction formation in East Anglian English in F.R Palmer (ed), *Grammar and Semantics papers in honour of John Lyons*. Cambridge: University Press.pp (136-147
- Valdes –Fallis, G. (1977). Code- switching among bilingual Mexican-American women. Towards an understanding of sex-related language alternation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol 1978(17), 65-72.
- Vogt, W. P. (1999). *Dictionary of statistics and methodology: A non technical guide for the social Science*. London: Sage.
- Walya E. (1996). *Kenyan banking discourse: Structure, strategies and their effects on banking interaction*. M.A. Thesis Nairobi: Kenyatta University
- Warschauer, M. & Matuchniak, T. (2010). New technology and digital worlds: analyzing evidence of equity in access, use and outcomes. *Review of Research in Education*, 34(1), 179–225.
- Wikipedia. *WhatsApp*. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/whatApp> on 30th April 2019.
- Yates, J. (2000). Computer mediated communication, the future of the letter??. In B. David, & H. Nigel (eds) (2000). *Letter writing as a social practice*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins 233-252
- Zimmerman, D. H. (1998). *Identity, context and interaction*. In Antaki, Charles and Widdicombe, Sue (eds.) *Identities in talk*. Sage, P. 87-106
- Zoonen, w.v (2017) paradoxical implications of persocial media use for work. *New technology work and employment* 32 (3) retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.111/ntae.12098>-retrieved on 20th May 2019

APPENDIX I: GUIDING CARD FOR DATA TRANSCRIPTION



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 3310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/19/91872/30107**

Date: **18th February 2019**

Miriti Gervasio Itiri
Chuka University
P.O. Box 109-60400
CHUKA.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Analysis of Chuka University students' social media discourse.*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Tharaka Nithi County** for the period ending **18th February, 2020.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner, and the County Director of Education, Tharaka Nithi County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a **copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

**GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Tharaka Nithi County.

The County Director of Education
Tharaka Nithi County.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001:2008 Certified