



Discursive Functions of Coinages and Abbreviations in *Nairaland* Online Community

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Abstract: This study applies Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis to the investigation of coinages and abbreviations in online discussion boards. With data from sections of a popular Nigerian online forum, *Nairaland Forum*, findings showed that Internet users have become key social actors in the creation and distributions of coinages and abbreviations, which serve as collective symbols for their interactions online. These coinages and abbreviations include lexical blends and nonce words, derived neologisms, slang and acronyms, all of which construct the social understanding of the social structure in which they operate. The study concludes that the linguistic novelty being created by the online community is a means of expressing the multicultural consciousness and multiple linguistic and social identities of these internet users. **Key words:** coinages, abbreviations, neologisms, discussion boards, lexical blends slang, *Nairaland*.

Introduction

To better understand the interface between discourse and society, Fairclough (1995) describes discourse as a social practice in which any instance of language use is a communicative event rooted in the social structures. This means that the meaning conveyed whenever language is used is a feature of the way the society is organised with humans and groups functioning to express their values, norms, beliefs and experiences. In analysing language therefore, we have to look beyond the

text into the interrelationship among texts, production processes of texts, and their social context (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995; 2003). Like every other form of discourse, participants in online discourse use language to construct themselves as social beings who are connected to certain social spaces where they communicate their common grounds.

Coinages and abbreviations are grammatical processes and expressions deeply rooted in the social experiences of the users, which could over time grow to become part of the vocabulary of the community. To be culturally competent

and relevant, a language user must be familiar with the use and meanings of these expressions, which spread very fast in contemporary times through the digital media. According to Pousada (2011), coinages can develop and spread through all social domains in the society, however, the most productive social spaces for them are arts and entertainment, technology, politics, health and fitness, social relationships, food, economy, and advertising. Communicating through the Internet has encouraged the use of coinages and abbreviations, some which have become popularised among Internet users all over the world, such as *lol* (lots of love or laugh out loud); *SMH* (shaking my head) *BRB* (be right back), *OMG* (Oh my God) and others, which are not that popular, and more culture-specific, like *ITK* (I too know); *LWKMD* (laughter wan kill me die).

The use of coinages and abbreviations in online communication is characterised by the orientation towards the collective practice of idea development that emerges from what the online community values as meaningful through their virtual co-presence (Bulu, 2012). When Nigerians converge online to discuss issues that are peculiar to them, they develop cultures and sub-cultures that best express aspects of their common knowledge. This present study investigates the discursive practices that underlie the construction of coinages and abbreviations in discussions in *Nairaland Forum*.

Nairaland Online Community

Nairaland is a website, which also serves as a discussion board created in 2005 by a Nigerian programmer/webmaster, Seun Osewa. It was created to report breaking news and discuss issues of interests among Nigerians within the country and in the Diaspora. In addition, it serves as a forum for sharing personal interests, knowledge/opinions and asking

questions, or making requests from other members of the forum. The website is divided into different sections where topics such as crime, politics, romance, career, education, travel, health, culture, and religion are discussed. The forum has grown to become the most popular forum associated with Nigerian news and issues online. The forum is located at <http://www.nairaland.com>.

Coinages and Abbreviations

Coinages and neologisms are regarded as new words created for new experiences, usually when language users cannot identify any correct standard expression to satisfy the communicative purpose of their immediate environment (Odumuh 1987; Adegbija 2004; Abdulahi-Idiagbon & Olaniyi, 2011). They can also be regarded as new formatives that can be deliberately or accidentally created to yield new words. Coinages include neologisms formed to represent the perceptions of the internet users of socio-political issues in the context of their language use. Neologisms are new words formed either from parts or whole of existing words. Some examples of neologisms in Nigerian English are: *fulanisation*, *ipobian*, *Buharist*, *Jonathanian*, and so forth. The mechanisms for the formation of neologisms are connected with conceptual changes in human consciousness, in connection with the constant development of technology and scientific advances (Ezeifeke 2019; Nurtaev 2019). Coinages are also common in the media, especially in advertising, where they could be used as trademark names which later become "everyday words of language" (Yule 2006, 53).

Abbreviations, on the other hand are short forms which could represent a lexical item, such as *Dr* for *doctor* and *hr.* for *hour* or *stSt.* for *street*. Another kind of abbreviation which is called clipping

involves forming a new word by dropping one or more syllables from a polysyllabic word, as in, *roach* for *cockroach*, *phone* for *telephone*. Abbreviations could also be short forms for a group of words, such as initialism - *FRCN* for *Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria*; *OAU* for *Obafemi Awolowo University*; *ICU* for *Intensive Care Unit*. There are also abbreviations that are formed by combining the initial letters or a combination of letters of a name to form a word, as in - *NOUN* for *National Open University of Nigeria*; *RAN* for *Reading Association of Nigeria* (Crystal 1995; Plag 2003; Harley 2006).

Many studies on coinages and abbreviations have focused generally on their sociolinguistic relevance in a specific variety of English, like Nigerian and Camerounian English (Anchimbe 2004; Teilyano 2008). For instance, Abdulahi-Idiagbon & Olaniyi (2011) examine the sociolinguistic properties of coinages among Nigerians in different socio-political contexts of Nigerian English usage and observe that coinages “find expression in linguistic perspectives to language change, shift, transfer and dialectology” (p. 78). Neologisms have also been observed to be common in political as well as in traditional and new media discourses where they could serve different purposes such as satirizing political actors (Taiwo, 2007); signalling underlying power struggles and ideological contestations in ethnic identity construction (Ezeifeke, 2019) and persuading, negotiating and delineating political affiliations and dissociations among political actors (Akinola & Imam, 2020). Other studies examine the vitality and creative dimension of coinages and abbreviations, especially in the context of communication through the new media (Thurlow 2003; Chilwa 2008; Taiwo 2010a; Adamo & Igene 2014; Udofot & Mbarachi 2016).

Another direction in new media studies is the understanding of new media writing as social practices that illuminate social and cultural processes (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008). Being a social phenomenon, language enriches its vocabulary by developing various aspects of human life and activity (Nurtaev, 2019). The ability to form new words is an indication of language dynamism, which allows for adjustments in lexical and structural forms, such as, deletions, addition, and complete inventions. Scholars have observed that new technologies are the most prolific source of new words in recent times (Gozzi, 1990; Knowles & Elliot 1997; Crystal 2002). Apart from the large and specialized jargons that the Internet has spawned over the years of its existence, blogs, chats, and other internet discussions have produced a number of coinages, which are the focus of this study. This study is premised on the fact that social realities are linguistically/discursively produced and could be understood as cultural meanings rooted in the beliefs and values and other social experiences of the community in which they are produced.

The language of digital writing is “a product of the facilitations and limitations of technological tools utilized in computer-mediated communication” (Gustillo, Vergel & Veile 2020: 101). In order to facilitate communication and cope with the limitations of contemporary online writing culture, new linguistic practices have emerged, which include: abbreviated spellings, acronyms, emoticons, initialisms and phonological approximations in order to achieve speed and brevity. Thurlow, (2003) refers to speed and brevity as the dual maxims of this new writing culture. According to him, “heavily abbreviated language is of course also a generic feature of interactive CMC” (p.6). In addition to abbreviation, coinages are also popular in online digital communication because of

the quest by users for expressing social and cultural selves (Carter, 2004). The Internet has become a space for the expression of collective identities of users as social beings. To further buttress this, Street (1984) observes, that “Orthographic choices constitute a form of semiotic design in which people construct their identity and affiliation with particular social groups and practices” (p.37).

Online discussions are characterised by different kinds of narratives and such narratives have distinct vocabulary, grammar and text structure, which have been linked by online language ethnographers to the performance of ethnicity (Heyd, 2014; Ezeifeke 2019). Web discourses in which Nigerians are involved, such as *Nairaland Forum* have been identified to feature (often conscious) selection of ethnolinguistic repertoires. Such ethnolinguistic repertoires include language mixing, which is constrained mainly by cultural factors and the need for identity construction (Taiwo 2010b; Biro 2019); distinctive stylistic and sociolinguistic imprints as identified in email fraud messages, often described as “419 scam messages”, such as greetings, address forms, persuasive strategies and so forth (Blommaert & Omoniyi, 2006; Chilwa 2010, Ofulue 2010; Chilwa 2017; Taiwo 2012; Kperogi 2018). Existing studies on email hoaxes have also shown that identity construction, stance and discursive indexicals for fraudulent purposes are central to their production (Heyd 2008; Chilwa 2010)

Another strong index of ethnolinguistic repertoire that has been identified in online discussion is the Nigerian Pidgin (NP), an English-lexifier Pidgin widely spoken in the country. Despite that it is not accorded any official status, the knowledge of NP is fast becoming indispensable for daily practical communication in Nigeria (Faraclas, 1996). The language for many

could be restricted to business transactions especially in many Nigerian cities, while for others, especially the inhabitants of the southernmost parts of the country, it is the day to day language of communication, which has become creolised (Osoba, 2014; Dibia & Roberts, 2018). In the mass media, especially radio and television, NP is gradually taking over the major functions of English as it is now commonly used in advertising of goods and services as well as for political propaganda. Agheyisi (1984) observes that the media has been the most effective outlet for NP on its route to popularity in Nigeria. NP in Nigeria is a signifier of postcolonial identity for sub-cultures, such as the youth population in the country. It is also employed as the language for narratives of belongingness in online discourse as this will study. It is this expression of belonging in online discourse manifested through the use of coinages and abbreviations as discursive practices that this paper set out to investigate.

Methodology

As of 15th April, 2020, *Nairaland* had 2,474,666 members and over 5 million topics have been posted on it. Fifty posts, which are mainly on topics about Nigeria totaling 32,541 words were collected from the forum between February and August, 2020 for this study. This period was purposively chosen since it represents a period of intensive discussions online, and coincides with the significant period of COVID-19, when participation in online discussions appear to increase tremendously with the nationwide lockdown. Many Nigerians got more involved in online activities, most especially discussions during this period.

Fairclough’s approach to Critical Discourse Analysis was chosen for the

interpretation of the data because it blends textual practices with the social world of language users, thereby providing the basis for integrating analysis at the macro levels of social structure and social action with the analysis at the micro level of linguistic structure. This approach is adequate for the description, interpretation and explanation of the discursive forms of a text as social practice, which is rooted in the social structure in which the text is produced. According to Fairclough (1989), "linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects" (p. 19). Investigation of the choices in the vocabulary, grammar and text structure interprets how they construct the values and norms of the communities. Fairclough (1989) posits that the text is interpreted as a discursive practice and such interpretation is concerned with "the relationship between text and interaction, which sees the text as the product of a process of production, and as recourse in the process of interpretation" (p.26).

In addition, the approach allows for the interpretation of power and dominant ideologies that reside in text. Fairclough's (1995) tri-dimensional framework to CDA enables the linguistic description as well as the semantic interpretation of the coinages and abbreviations and the pragmatic explanation of the usages for democratic practices. The pragmatic interpretation of the use of these coinages as rightly identified by Ezeifeke (2019:10), has the tendency of drawing the attention of the symbolic elites, most especially politicians (van Dijk 2008) to the perception of the electorates about their mode of political practice. In order to account for the relation between social practices and discourse as well as interpret the underlying socially shared cognition that went into producing the

discourse, a close attention is paid to the linguistic choices employed in the construction of the coinages and abbreviations.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Drawing from their shared social knowledge, Nigerian internet users have been able to create actual texts through the use of coinages and abbreviations that discursively construct their social experiences, world views, and response to political governance. As evidence in the data samples, some of the coinages appear as critiques of some politicians. Four major processes have been identified in the data: blends and nonce words, derived neologisms, slang and acronyms.

Lexical Blends and Nonce words

Blends are expressions in which two or more words or parts of existing words are merged to form new words. The blended constituents are either clipped, or partially overlap (Beliaeva 2019). On the other hand, nonce words are linguistic expressions consciously or accidentally formed and limited in use as well as "typically maximally short-lived" (Hohenhaus 2005, 264). The difference between nonce formations and lexical blends is that the former "are said to merely have the potential to be spread, accepted and be part of the societal norm, the latter are considered to have already gained enough foothold in usage to be part of the working vocabulary of a substantial number of language users (Bauer 2001; Hohenhaus 2005; Fischer 1998). The commonest kind of blends combine components of the names of some political actors and institutions with certain vices that have been associated with them. Below are some extracts of texts that contain such blends in the data.

The new words have been highlighted in bold font for easy identification

- Ex 1: **athiefku** is better than the pretentious looter friend of Abacha who has no clue on governance but is excellent at stealing.
<https://www.nairaland.com/6094244/zainab-ahmed-afdb-should-step/1#93517456>
- Ex.2 **Aregberascal** has taken his crazy ideas in the village of Osun to the federal level
<https://www.nairaland.com/5783320/fg-grants-amnesty-2600-prisoners>
- Ex.3 **thiefnubu** can NEVER rule Nigeria. Leave matter for Mathias... You want them to build a bullion van hub in the Villa^{???}?
<https://www.nairaland.com/6098585/primate-ayodele-buhari-dump-tinubu/3#93595127>
- Ex.4: It is time to round up these **executhieves**, **legislotters**, and **judisharers** and send them to abyss.
<https://www.nairaland.com/6031438/nigeria-only-benefited-politicians#92412219>
- Ex.5 Why should anyone who really wants ‘one **zoogeria**’ be lamenting about ‘fulani killing’? Only separation and dissolution of the zoo will save from fulani killings.
- Ex.6: Of course, we all know that the educated igbo elites are against this **Biafraud** hogwash. We the educated and advanced igbos kick against **biafraud** My prayer is let this covid19 issue in this country remain audio just the way it is till it vanishes absolutely.
- Ex.7: Thanks to the PPPs (POLITICAL PARTY PROSTITUTES) who crossed from PDP to **apcheats!**

These coinages consist of lexical blends that negatively construct certain individual politicians, political institutions and parties and social groups. The perception of political leaders as thieves is clearly portrayed in the way names of prominent political actors and group are blended with the word ‘thief’ such as *athiefku* – *Atiku*; *thiefnubu* – *Tinubu*; *Executhieves* – *Executives*; *legislotters* – *legislative*. This perception is buttressed by a prominent politician - Balarabe Musa, former Second Republic Governor of Kaduna State. He asserts in an interview with *pulse.ng*

Since the end of the Second Republic, how has it been possible in Nigeria to have a political leadership which is not made up of thieves? Of course, there are exception. (Balarabe Musa, Interview with *Pulse.ng* 16th April, 2018).

The blend *Aregberascal* came up online as a way of describing Rauf Aregbesola, the former Governor of Osun State and now the Minister of Internal Affairs whose behaviour is often tagged with rascality or roguishness by political opponents. Below in table 1 is a list of some of the blends and nonce words

identified in the data, the components and the process of their formation.

Table 1: List of lexical blends and nonce words

Blend	Components	Process
<i>Athiefku</i>	Atiku + thief	Insertion of the word <i>thief</i> between the first and the last syllables of <i>Atiku</i> .
<i>aregberascal</i>	Aregbesola + rascal	A blend of the first three syllables in <i>Aregbesola</i> - <i>Aregbe</i> with the word <i>rascal</i>
<i>thiefnubu</i>	Thief + Tinubu	A blend of the word <i>thief</i> with the last two syllables of <i>Tinubu</i> - <i>nubu</i>
<i>executhieves</i>	Executives + thieves	A blend of the first three syllables of the word <i>executive</i> - <i>execu-</i> with the word <i>thieves</i>
<i>legislooters</i>	Legislator + looters	A blend of the first two syllables of <i>legislator</i> - <i>legis-</i> with the word <i>looters</i>
<i>judisharers</i>	Judiciary + sharers	A blend of the first two syllables of <i>judiciary</i> - <i>judi-</i> with <i>sharers</i>
<i>senatouts</i>	Senators + touts	Deletion of the last letter 'e' in the word <i>senate</i> and a blend of the remainder with <i>touts</i>
<i>Gandollar</i>	Ganduje + dollar	A blend of the first syllable of the name <i>Ganduje</i> - <i>Gan</i> with the noun <i>dollar</i>
<i>Jagabandit</i>	Jabgaban + bandits	A blend of the first two syllables of the title <i>Jagaban</i> - <i>Jaga-</i> with the noun <i>bandit</i>
<i>Jonadaft</i>	Jonathan + daft	A blend of the first two syllables of the name <i>Jonathan</i> with the adjective, <i>daft</i>
<i>Zoogeria</i>	Zoo + Nigeria	A blend of the noun <i>zoo</i> with the last two syllables in the name <i>Nigeria</i> - <i>-geria</i>
<i>Biafraud</i>	Biafra + fraud	A blend the first two syllables of the word <i>Biafra</i> - <i>Bia</i> with the noun <i>fraud</i>
<i>Apcheats</i>	APC + cheats	A blend of the acronym <i>APC</i> with the noun <i>cheats</i>

The lexical blends were employed for discursively constructing resistance to looting of public funds, political rascality, bad leadership, and dirty politicking, which the authors believe these political actors represent. The prevalence of corruption in the judicial system is a worrisome issue that has generated a lot

of discussion in the public space, especially online - the blend *judisharers*, emanated from such discussions. The word *sharer* is a euphemism for constructing the act of collaborative looting of public funds by politicians. Sharing is a metaphor for institutionalised nepotism and

squandering of the national wealth by politicians.

The blend *senatout* was employed to satirize some of the disgraceful acts of Nigerian senators, such as the forceful removal of the mace during a rowdy session of the house; physical exchange of blows during certain plenary sessions; and gate-jumping to gain access to the National Assembly Complex. The last act happened when the gates leading to the House of Assembly Complex were locked by security agents due to a security report that alerted them to impending invasion of the National Assembly by hoodlums. The gate was however alleged to have been locked only after some of the law makers who belonged to the ruling party were already inside the Assembly Complex. The legislators who jumped the gates believed they were locked out to prevent them from participating in the deliberations over some crucial national issues. These unethical behaviours are encoded in the suffix: “tout” in the coinage. The first part *Gan*, in the coinage *Gandollar* was blended with *dollar* to create another name for Abdulahi Ganduje, the Governor of Kano State, who was alleged in a viral video published by a Nigerian online newspaper, to have received bribe in dollars from some contractors in his state.

The word *Jagaban* (leader of warriors) is the Chieftaincy title conferred on Bola Tinubu, the former Governor of Lagos State and a key politician of the ruling party - All Progressives Congress (APC) by the Emir of Borgu. This title, which later became synonymous with Tinubu was blended with the word *banditry*, whose first syllable *ban* is similar to the last syllable of *jagaban*. Associating Tinubu with banditry is an online satirical co-construction of him with other politicians as a leader of political bandits warring against the nation through their political corruption.

The discursive construction of President, Goodluck Jonathan as *Jonadaft* portrays him as an indecisive, weak and incapable leader. Another version of this coinage is *Jonadumb*. The negative adjectives, *daft* and *dumb* were blended with the first two parts of Jonathan to construct these nonce words, which became a derogatory way of referring to Jonathan by the opponents of his party.

The expression *zoogeria* is a blend of *zoo* and the last two syllables of the country's name *-geria*. Nnamdi Kanu, the leader the separatist group, IPOB, once referred to Nigeria as a zoo - a metaphor he created to devalue Nigeria in an ideological struggle for leadership and ultimately to create a separate state. This expression was not only amplified, a new word was also created from it to further establish its acceptance and usage. Connected to this is the word, *Biafraud*, an online coinage meant to describe the agitation of the Igbo civil group (led by the same Kanu) for a separate state as a “fraud”. These two words, *zoogeria* and *Biafraud* are discursive means online supporters of Nnamdi Kano and Nigeria engage to construct one another.

The word *Apcheats* depicts the dirty and fraudulent politics being played by the ruling party, APC in the country. The acronym is made to blend with the negative nominal item, *cheats*. The process also made the last letter ‘C’ represented as the phoneme /si:/ to assimilate with the first phoneme /tʃ/ in *cheats* to realise the new word. Prior to governance by APC, the country had been ruled for 16 years by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the yearning for a change brought in the APC, whose slogan of “change” convinced Nigerians to vote them into power. However, after a few years of APC in power, the people felt the party deceived them because of its inability to bring about the expected change. This disappointment led to the

coinage of the name to delegitimise the party.

The expressions discussed above are mainly nominal, but they were constructed to negatively describe political figures and the institutions they represent, as well as delegitimise their acts and foreground them in the new words. These new words also became labels, and powerful rhetorical strategies to describe the politicians and the institutions they represent. In the contexts of online discussions, these labels serve as identifiers that prescribe and attribute particular characteristics to the politicians and political institutions they refer to. Such characteristics magnified in the words are stealing, looting, touting, bribery, banditry, daftness, fraud and cheating. This can be interpreted as moral evaluation of the actors and Nigerian political institution.

While these lexical blends and nonce words apparently exist mainly in the context of online discussions and rarely in day to day usage, they give import insights into the linguistic and discursive processes in the social practice of labelling the political class.

Derived Neologisms

Derived neologisms also called morphological neologisms, are created through affixes, typically suffixes, attached to existing words. The new forms sometimes coincide in sense and grammatical category with some words already present in the language. Below are some extracts of texts drawn from the online discussion threads that contain these neologisms.

- EX.8 Ask those dumb **IPOBIans** when they will ask for the probe of their Fulani slavemaster athiefku.
<https://www.nairaland.com/6084637/bullion-van-tinubu-untouchable-buhari/1#93348808>
- EX.9 That Virus is **fulanisation** AND ANARCHY AND IT'S DANGEROUS
<https://www.nairaland.com/5792651/buhari-virus-destroying-nigerians-sowore#88425903>
- EX.10 What do you expect from a **jonathanian**? Celebrating fraud is their lifestyle.
<https://www.nairaland.com/5969993/hushpuppi-angel-compared-buhari-reno/5#91390353>
- EX.11 You are a **buharist** if you think a senile old man should continue holding the country to ransom while an invisible people stay in the background to make decisions that can bring about division and animosity.
<https://www.nairaland.com/5905970/something-wrong-picture-president-buhari/1#90369854>
- EX.12 **Buharism** is worst (sic) than covid19.
<https://www.nairaland.com/5904076/case-atiku-separating-facts-sentiments#90321014>
- Ex.13 Illiteracy & **almajirism** causes insurgency. Solve those two and end insurgency. But because of ur political ambitions, u wont hind to this truth.
<https://www.nairaland.com/5945955/boko-haram-senate-delegation-visits#90988026>

The nominal suffix *-ian* representing “person having to do with X” is engaged in the derivation of the new words *IPOBian* to generate the meaning: followers or supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) - a Nigerian separatist/secessionist group that seeks independence for the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria and *Jonathanian*-supporters of Goodluck Jonathan - the former President of Nigeria. Likewise, the suffix *-ist*, a nominal derivational suffix with the same function as *-ian* is used to form the new word *Buharist*. These nouns have become prominent in the context of online debates by fanatical and sympathetic supporters of these persons. The word *Buharism* is derived by affixing the suffix *-ism*, which denotes doctrine or belief, to the name ‘Buhari,’ to negatively construct Buhari’s style of governance, which is believed to bring about a lot of hardship to the governed. *Buharism* in Ex.12 is said to be worse than COVID-19, the lethal pandemic disease, in order to further legitimise the view of the user and delegitimise Buhari. Also, *almajirism* derived from affixing *-ism* to *almajiri* (an itinerant qur’anic pupil of an Islamic school in northern Nigeria). This new form means the system of Almajiri, which is believed to be one of the main causes of terrorism in northern Nigeria.

The expression *fulanisation* is derived from the root *Fulani*. The process of forming this nominal neologism is complex, because its verbal form *fulanize* has to be derived from the original noun *Fulani* before the neologism can be formed. The suffix *-ize* added to the root means “to convert into, give a specified character or form to” thereby giving the meaning “to convert into Fulani” or “bring under Fulani authority.” An additional morphological process that brought out the neologism is the affixation of the nominal suffix *-tion* (state of being) to the earlier derived

transitive verb *fulanize* to yield *Fulanization*, meaning “the action or process of bringing people under the control, dominance, or influence of the Fulani people”. The Fulani are a large ethnic nomadic group spread across many West African countries. “Fulanisation” was popularised by Olusegun Obasano, the former President of Nigeria, when he raised an alarm in 2019 about the purported West African process of Islamisation. His warning came at a time when the nation was suffering from the unchecked menace of armed cattle rustlers, bandits and kidnappers who are believed to be Fulani people. It is also sometimes believed that these criminals have the tacit and subtle support of the President and some powerful members of the ruling class, who are Fulani. The word *Islamisation* is typically a major word within the clusters of words that collocate with *fulanisation*. It is hardly possible to talk about *Fulanisation* without *Islamisation* because Islam is the cultural symbol of the identity of the Fulani people. *Fulanisation* in Ex.9 is also metaphorically constructed as a ‘virus’ destroying Nigeria.

Internet Slang

Internet slang, often originate from street language popularised by musicians and people in the fringe cultures, who are typically opposed to the prevalent culture (Coleman, 2012). The Internet gives expression to these counter-cultures and helps the youth who are its drivers to define their own values, which over time has spread well enough to become the group identity. Some of the common slang words popularised by the Internet, which now feature as identity markers for many who participate in the *Nairaland* discussions are identified in the extracts below:

- Ex.14 There has to be a separate and unique Hell for Nigerian leaders! Their Damnation should be far more terrible! **just negodu** Broad Daylight robbery!!!
<https://www.nairaland.com/6010942/covid-19-lagos-spends-n100000-n1m/1#92049930>
- Ex.15 I wasn't expecting anything sensible from you because what people like you do when they can't stand a superior argument, is to type the **okoto meow skrr**
<https://www.nairaland.com/5998585/bbnaija-2020-live-updates-thread/715#92119511>
- Ex.16 LMAO.... I can see the **gbas gbos** going on in this thread 😊 if buhari hadn't won.... people would have thought him to be the Messiah
<https://www.nairaland.com/6071817/youths-attack-rarara-while-shooting/2#93132269>
- Ex.17 NDDC is being looted by the same National Assembly members, and 80% of NDDC contracts are not executed. **gbam!**
<https://www.nairaland.com/6087851/release-names-list-loot-ers-nddc/1#93412052>
- Ex.18 The youths following that guy are dumb for following a man who doesn't have a defined path for his journey. **las las** you're endangering your lives. Foolish people 😊
<https://www.nairaland.com/6090931/nnamdi-kanu-should-either-fight#93461220>
- Ex.19 **aswearugad** you go tire...
<https://www.nairaland.com/5790255/what-keep-yourself-busy-now#88384918>

Fused intercultural identity is displayed sometimes when co-constructing communal experience. Language choice in the construction of these slang expressions reflects the multilingual identities of the participants. For instance, indigenous language expressions, such as *kuku* (Yoruba adverb - just, as well); *negodu* (Igbo verb - see); *oshe* (Yoruba expression of gratitude); *jimasun* (Yoruba - wake up, don't sleep) were deployed to express these identities. The slang *oshe baddest* is said to be coined by Bob Risky- a popular Nigerian male barbie and internet personality. The expression is a way of complimenting that combines the Yoruba word *oshe* (thank you) with *baddest* a superlative

form that means 'worst' to express an extreme gratitude. Likewise, the expression *just negodu* is a fusion of the English adverb *just* and Igbo *negodu* (see) to mean "just look at that" or "just imagine!" to drawing attention to some silly or unimaginable ideas expressed online. The context of its use in the extract is the unbelievable news that Lagos State spends between 100,000 Naira to one million Naira (about \$260-\$2600) on a COVID-19 patient daily.

The internet slang *gbam* is an exclamation, an onomatopoeic expression mimicking the sound of an explosion - a smash or something clashing against another. The expression is used to show support for or affirm a

statement made by other participants. Similar to it is *gbas gbos*, an onomatopoeic description of war of words or what more technically can be referred to as “flame wars” in online discussions, which results from posting provocative and offensive message. Another onomatopoeic expressions is *okoto meow meow skrr* whose origin could not really be ascertained, but meaning documented in *Urban Dictionary* as “talking off-point or simply not making any sense”. *Okoto* in Yoruba refers to an object made to spin on the ground in a game. *Meow* is the sound cats make and *skrr* is a mimicking

of the screeching sound of a car. Putting all these together, the expression describes postings considered nonsensical.

Las las is an expression of despondency, frustration and futility that tend to describe the experiences of eventuality of life in the country. As expressed in EX.18, youths following Nnamdi Kanu, the separatist leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), will eventually realise that they were endangering their lives. Table 2 below presents a list of some of the coined internet slang expressions and their meanings.

Table 2: List of some coined internet slang, structural forms and their meanings

Slang	Structural Form	Process
<i>just negodu</i>	Verb phrase	Just look at this/that
<i>okoto meow meow skrr</i>	Onomatopoeia	Rubbish, talking off point or not making sense
<i>oshe baddest</i>	Phrase	Used when a person totally agrees with an opinion; or when something makes sense
<i>fall my hand</i>	Sentence with subject ellipsis	To disappoint
<i>gbam</i>	Onomatopoeia	Confirmed or affirmation of something considered true
<i>gbas gbos</i>	Onomatopoeia	used when two or more people are engaging in a war of words
<i>las las</i>	Lexical reduplication	At last, at the end
<i>aiswearugad</i>	Sentence	Merging of the words “I swear to God”. It is used in social media when someone wants you to take him/her serious.
<i>jimasun</i>	Sentence with subject ellipsis	Wake up, don’t sleep; don’t be dull, be street wise
<i>kuku kill me</i>	Sentence with subject ellipsis	Used when one is really excited - a way of expressing deep pleasure on something that caught one’s attention
<i>japa</i>	Verb phrase	to runaway, escape or avoid someone or something
<i>this one weak me</i>	Sentence	A way of expressing a high level of amusement after seeing something extremely funny
<i>inside life</i>	Adverbial phrase	In reality
<i>wawu</i>	Exclamation	Nigerian version <i>wow</i> , pronounced with a bit of stress on the last syllable to express a surprise.
<i>mad o</i>	Exclamation	To indicate that whatever is being said or discussed is very astonishing – whether in a good or bad way

<i>turninoninown</i>	Sentence with subject ellipsis	Used to describe things one cannot control or situation out of ordinary
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The structural forms of the slang expressions identified in the data range from one word to phrases and sentences. Phrasal constructions include: *just negodu* (verb phrase), *japa* (verb phrase, literally meaning “fling hands”), *inside life* (adverbial phrase). Clauses and sentences include *aiswearugad* (I swear to God); *this one weak me* (this one makes me weak); *jimasu* (wake up don't sleep); *kuku kill me* (just kill me) and *turninoninown* (turning on its own). The last three expressions are clauses with subject ellipsis. The missing subject is determined by the context of communication.

These words are different discursive means of appraising through construction of attitudes which expressing affective feelings about what others have done; judging as well as appreciating their acts. They could therefore see other participants' acts as strange (*endtime*), silly (*just negodu*), rubbish (*okoto meow meow*), excellent (*oshe baddest*), true (*gbam*), exciting (*kuku kill me*), astonishing or amazing (*mad o, wawu*), amusing (*this one weak me*) and

despondent (*las las*). In addition, the slang expressions portray how participants expect others to perceive their opinions, such as being taken seriously (*aswearugad*), being seen as expressing reality (*inside life*). This expectation is important if participants are to orient to the same things in talk and to each other.

Beyond their ordinary literal meanings, many of these slang expressions have their origins in the musical lyrics of some popular Nigerian celebrities. For instance, *japa* and *jimasu* were popularised by musicians Naira Marley and Idowest respectively. *Japa* has a range of meanings, such as: to run or escape from danger or a threatening situation, to avoid someone or something, terminate an unpleasant experience, retreat from danger, or evade arrest by law enforcers. The lyrics, as well as the video of the song titled “Japa” presents this photo of a person on the run from the police in order not to be arrested. In discursive practices, to many young people, *japa* could mean different things based on its usage.

Ex.20 I don **japa** from the God forsaken country since!! (emigrate)
<https://www.nairaland.com/6041857/young-people-mentally-checked-out#92591048>

Ex.21 madam stay there and be waiting for Nigerians to get u out u better **japa** (to seek a divorce)
<https://www.nairaland.com/6069103/please-me-get-out-marriage#93077885>

As can be seen in the extract above, the meaning ranges from escaping from Nigeria to another country to seek greener pasture (Ex.20) and seeking a divorce (Ex.21) *Jimasun*, on the other hand, projects the values of hard work, stressing alertness and being streetwise as means to attaining wealth. These slang

expressions are ways of conceptualising survival strategies among the users.

Formulation of slang expressions can be idiosyncratic because of the creativity involved in it, which permits the use of unconventional spellings, fusing local expressions with global ones, popularising expressions in local languages through usage, formulation of

words through sound imitation and so forth. The goal of the users of internet slang is to explore novelty in language use in order to construct their perception of social issue.

Acronyms

Brevity is one of the major features of online writing (Thurlow (2003). Conventional abbreviations have been

created to enable participants in digital communication to negotiate meaning. However, in addition to the popular acronyms known and used by netizens worldwide, Nigerians have come up with uniquely Nigerian acronyms of Nigerian Pidgin, which they employ when communicating with one another online. Table 1 below has a list of some of such acronyms.

Table 3: Pidgin English Internet acronyms, full forms and their meanings

Acronym	Full form	Meaning
<i>BBP</i>	<i>Bad belle people</i>	Envious people
<i>NBST</i>	<i>No be small thing</i>	It is not a small thing
<i>ITK</i>	<i>I too know</i>	Too knowledgeable
<i>IGA</i>	<i>I gbadun am</i>	I enjoy it
<i>NB</i>	<i>Na beans?</i>	It is not easy
<i>FMJ</i>	<i>Free me joo</i>	Leave me alone please
<i>WWY</i>	<i>Who wan yarn?</i>	Who wants to talk?
<i>NTT</i>	<i>Na true talk</i>	You are correct
<i>NUS</i>	<i>Na you sabi</i>	That is your own business
<i>WSU</i>	<i>Who send you?</i>	What is your concern?
<i>WGYL</i>	<i>We go yarn later</i>	We will talk later
<i>UNGKM</i>	<i>You no go kill me</i>	You won't kill me
<i>UDC</i>	<i>You dey craze</i>	You are crazy
<i>MIHW</i>	<i>Make I hear word</i>	Keep quiet/keep shut
<i>NWO</i>	<i>Na wa o</i>	This is surprising
<i>WKP</i>	<i>Waka pass</i>	Forget or leave it
<i>NBL</i>	<i>No be lie</i>	It is not a lie
<i>WBYO</i>	<i>Wetin be your own?</i>	What is your business?

The fact that many of these acronyms have their English equivalents, is a strong indication that they were consciously created for expressing the Nigerian multicultural identity in cyberspace communication. For instance, *TTYL* (*talk to you later*) is replaced with *WGYL* (*we go yarn later*). For the people who are desirous of a language of identity apart from English, Nigerian Pidgin has become the adopted language of peer communication sometimes in online context. Just like many other acronyms, the acronyms listed above were formed from the first letters of the words in some popular Nigerian Pidgin phrases, clauses and sentences and they construct

attitudes and positioning in online discourse.

These acronymised Nigerian Pidgin expressions function basically the same way as the conventionalised global English acronyms. They are used to interrogate other participants - *WWY* (who wan yarn?), *WSU* (who send you?), *WBYO* (wetin be your own?); provide feedback - *NTT* (na true talk), *NBL* (no be lie), *IGA* (I gbadun am) and *NBST* (no be small thing); and evaluate other postings - *NWO* (na wa o), *NB* (na beans?). Using Pidgin online is quite significant for these participants because it is for them a language of identity. It is a means of expressing their multicultural

consciousness and multiple linguistic and social identities.

These online coinages and abbreviations, which are peculiarly used by Nigerians are strongly linked to events and situations in ordinary daily social lives. As has been explained, some of the collective symbols identified in internet abbreviations and coinages are products of social practices in which these discursive constructions are rooted.

Conclusion

This article explores the connection between discourse and social practices in the cyberspace, especially as related to the use of coinages and abbreviations. Drawing its corpus from a popular Nigerian multi-ethnic discussion forum where diverse issues are regularly discussed, the study has described the linguistic features of the expressions and interpreted how their usage derive meanings from the socio-cultural context. We also explained the discursive practices, drawing insights from the larger social structure. The study has demonstrated how coinages and abbreviations were deployed to construct social understanding in internet discussions among Nigerian internet users. While some of the coinages and abbreviations discussed in this study may end up functioning as nonce words, which would be used for just a while and then fizzle out, there is the possibility of many of them becoming established part of English language usage in the Nigerian context. Moreover, the fact that these words were produced in the context of online interactions may make them gain international acceptability if they are considered the most appropriate words for expressing the concepts they depict.

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