

**USE OF ENGLISH NEOLOGISMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A CASE OF
TWITTER LANGUAGE IN KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors.

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DEDICATION

To my dear parent Mr. &Mrs. Mworia,
You have always propelled me to great heights.
Heights that I never knew existed.
You taught me the value of handwork, prayer and determination.
You have made me the person I am today, I will forever be indebted.

To my sister Lydia and brother-in-law Kim,
Your kindness and support is beyond measure.
You two are a source great of inspiration
Thank you for the love and generosity you have shown me for years.

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ABSTRACT

This project investigated the use of English neologisms in social media using twitter in the Kenyan context. Driven by inadequacy of literature with regards to English neologisms in Kenyan social media: English neologisms that are used in Kenya and also internationally. The study looked into the word forming processes and gave examples of processes that social media neologisms undergo. The study guided by the objectives, aimed at determining how social media neologisms deviate from the use of Standard English using linguistic levels of analysis giving various examples. The study focused on the factors that lead to the production and usage of the social media neologisms. Finally the study focused on the effectiveness of social media neologisms in communication. Lexical pragmatics was used as the theoretical framework for this study due to its ability to explain how a hearer is able to understand the encoded concept of a word from the concept communicated; this was explained under the processes: lexical narrowing, lexical broadening and categorical extension. The study after the investigations found that: social media neologisms deviate from the standard use of Standard English at different levels explained through linguistic description, the deviation was found to be a way to easen communication amongst the online users. Factors such as age, gender, quickness in communication, meaning impact and avoidance of grammar and spelling conventions were identified as having contributed to the production of social media neologisms. Finally speed of communication, brevity time-sensitivity, ease of interpretation and exposure were amongst the elements used to affirm that social media neologisms are effective in communication.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DM direct message

SNSs social networking sites

KOT Kenyans on twitter

CMC computer mediated communication

MAIC: Machine-assisted-interpersonal communication.

RT *retweet*

MT modify tweet

DEFINITION OF TERMS

MAIC: Machine-assisted-interpersonal communication.- ‘combination of interpersonal communication and mass communication

SNSs: social networking sites.- ‘platforms for building social networks or social relations.

Netspeak: Language of the internet among online users.

Netizen: Group of online users.

CMC: Computer-mediated-communication. -‘human communication that occurs through the use of electronic devices’

Hashtag : ‘word or phrase preceded by the hash(#) mark’

Emoji: ‘ small digital image or icon.’

Emoticon: ‘a representation of a facial expression used digitally’.

Standard English: a variety of English language acceptable as national norm in any English-speaking country. (Kenyan: British English)

Neologisms: A coined word to represent a new idea or object, an existing word that acquires new meaning, or a new word to represent existing ideas and object adequately.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the dynamic technological advancements in internet based communications and its effects on English language vocabulary. Crystal (2005) stated that in the 21st century use of social media applications have greatly shaped the way we communicate. Language is a dynamic repository of words, when it comes to technology, it's not just the way things are done that is changing but also the words being used and the lingo that is morphing at an accelerating speed. Words that never existed a decade ago now touch people like never before, due to the interactions online that require people to coin or invent words to refer to things that are new or have changed.

Kiesler (1997), stated that three quarters of American adults have been online with even more than (93%) reporting they do so, and almost all internet users say one of their primary purposes for going online is for communication. The internet is part of everyday life and people rely and use it for a variety of reasons that suit them.

This study focuses on social media applications to see how neologisms formed in social networking online have deviated from Standard English. The social networking sites have many of users who connect via computers or smart phones. People are able to communicate, share information, buy and sell product while miles away from one another because technological advancements have made it possible. Through these interactions online, languages being used have been greatly affected and particularly, this has greatly led to English vocabulary expansion.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to investigate how English language evolves in technology based on the use of this language and the neologisms formed in social networking online. The researcher will be able to identify the factors that influence the use of neologisms online.

Growth in SNSs has transformed the way in which people create and share or exchange information and ideas which has been accelerated through virtual networking sites. The internet

offers reduced cost of creating, organizing and participating in communication and also decreases the need for people to be physically together to act together. Just as social media has evolved and grown over the decades, so has language used in the SNSs platform.

Lenhart (2009) argues that the predominant SNS users are young adults three-quarter of adults internet users under age of 25 have a profile on a social networking site, and that these sites are attracting more adults users. In 2005, only 8% of adult internet users had online profiles. By 2009 the number quadrupled to 35%. Social networking site users are also regular visitors with more than one-third checking their profile page daily and almost another 25% visits every few days.

According to Ewing (2008), social media used “pull technology” that connects people and actively engages them in the creation and management of online content allowing individuals to freely contribute to information publication and sharing, facilitated by the introduction of user-friendly sites, tools, platforms and applications such as Facebook, YouTube, twitter, blogs, MySpace, instagram,

Marchand (1969) states that neologism is a newly coined word that maybe in the process of entering common use but has not yet been accepted into the main stream. Some neologisms, especially those coined as a result of new inventions tend to be integrated into the language very quickly.

1.1.1 Technology

Technology includes hardware inventions as well as software by human being to make life easier and more efficient. Technological inventions such as smartphones and computers are invented to make communication easy and help people access many other software applications on these devices that can be accessed via internet. Dominic (2011) states that, with advancements in technology print media started looking for new ways to prosper in the digital age. This siphoned off potential readers of print edition especially young readers. Young people, therefore, spend more time in internet based sites and various social networking sites.

The reason behind the prominence in internet based communication avenues is that the internet brings down the cost of mass communication to the level which anybody can afford and easily

access. In today's world technology has out done the print media, one can read news online cheaper than one buy a newspaper, this can be conveniently accessed at the comfort of one's phone.

Technology, as mentioned above is not just in terms of mechanical inventions but also inclusive of software programs. These software programs, however, have specifications that differ from one another, this determines how people behave, use or adhere to the specifications of these programs. E.g. on instagram a user is able to upload a video which is only 15 seconds long but on you tube the size of a video is limitless. Kelly (2010) observes that technology as a whole is not, just a jumble of wires and metal, but a living, evolving organism that has its own unconscious needs and tendencies.

1.1.2 Social media

Social media is a group of software applications facilitated by the internet on devices such as computer and phones for the purposes of socializations and communication between people globally enabling people to send and receive messages, upload and download pictures and videos among other thing. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), define social media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web. 2.0 And that allow creation and exchange of user-generate content.

According to Dominic (2011), online communications use special techniques which involve participation, conversation, sharing, collaboration and linkage. Participation is the simplest technique that defines social media; it involves soliciting feedback from people on various issues and items such as blogs, statuses, article or images. Conversation functions are facilitated by blog and websites that allow people to comment and respond to one another. Individuals share, create, upload content for others to see such as you tube, Flickr. Wikis are social media exemplification of collaboration. The most elaborate social media involves linkage: Facebook, twitter, instagram, my space, Google where people link up with their virtual other online users who are ready to communicate with one another based on their relationships.

Social media being a popular aspect of technology has influenced society in general; it has widened the world and made communication easy around the world. It has made mankind to be

closer to the other parts of the world other than the one they live in. According to Smartly (2013), in her article “social media and society: the good, the bad and the ugly”, she talks of the positive side of social media; people can share their lives with others regardless of the distance; through videos, pictures. There is communication between people and businesses, through interactions customers can tell brands what they want and businesses can use this information to tailor their products to appeal. Social media has also made it possible for like-minded people to discuss important topics, widen their personal knowledge and discover new things. Non-profit organizations have the benefit of using social media for awareness campaigns, sites like Facebook, you tube are cost effective means of spreading the word and getting feedback and support.

Smartly also focused on the negative; social media limits human contact, there is minimal face to face communication amongst individuals today. A score of personal relationships have been injured in social media due to misuse of social media content as well as misunderstandings. On the extreme, there are cases of online predators preying on the young and naïve, cyber bullying on social media has led to depression, low self-esteem as well as suicide in some cases.

Social media, if used well it has multiple of benefits socially, psychologically as well as economically which serve to improve human life. There are millions of social media users online. Social media provides a medium of interaction for several social activities as well as business related. Social networking has become a basic mode of communicating; it has, therefore, been integrated and widely accepted into our society hence the need to learn more about it. The most important aspect of social media is language, as communication on all the functions enveloped by social networking sites would not be possible it.

1.1.3 Mobile Social Media

When social media is used in combination with mobile devices it is called mobile social media, due to the fact that mobile social media runs on mobile devices .It differentiates from traditional social media as it incorporates new factors such as current location of the user(location – sensitively) or the time delay between sending and receiving message (time-sensitivity).

1.1.4 The internet

Internet is a gateway to connect and access the digital world, where global information such as research, pictures, and videos among others can be accessed, shared, uploaded, downloaded and stored. The internet is an integral part of our everyday life, it is a constantly evolving tool that not only contains a variety of information but also provides new ways of accessing, interacting and connecting with people and content.

Technology and internet has profoundly changed the human experience. People use the web to find information, buy and sell products, watch television shows, seek mates, search for entertainment, converse and catch up with friends among other uses, (Gildezuniga, pulg & Rojas, 2009). It is through the internet that the social media applications are supported and accessed via computers and smart phones.

As the internet evolves, two developments are becoming clear: that web becomes more important for interpersonal and social functions, as evidenced by the tremendous rise of social media machine-assisted-interpersonal communication. However, if we become too dependent on internet, natural disasters, and human-made calamities e.g. cyber-attacks may disable the system and make it difficult to access and secure online profiles. (Dominic, 2011).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Human beings have become heavily reliant on technology and what it has to offer, technology has made it easy for people to communicate, and has greatly affected the language through social networking sites. The language of social media differs from standard English due to people's habits to; shorten, clip, abbreviate or combine words, give different meaning to existing words, coin words to represent things that are new or coin new words to ease their communication. Therefore, there is the need to look into the aspect of English language in relation to social media and the neologisms created for communication purposes.

When looking into social media neologisms, the term neologism is described as a new word used to represent something new or a word coined to represent a thing due to inadequacy of existing

words to represent it sufficiently and effectively. Bussman (1996: 324) while describing neologisms points out that neologisms are newly formed linguistic expressions that are recognized by at least part if not all of a language community as the way to denote a new object or state of affairs. These new objects or state of affairs are found in areas of technology, industry, politics, culture or science.

A study has been done on description, analysis and interpretation of dholuo Neologism, (Aduda ,2013). This study only focuses on the neologisms of a natural language and how hearers interpret the meaning . A different Study has focuses on the functions and importance of social media: how social media transforms the way people live and do business online. Scholarly material has been found on how social media improves products and service through branding hence better service delivery, (Burson-Mersteller ,2010).

However, there is inadequate literature with regard to English neologisms in Kenyan social media: English neologisms that are used in Kenya and also internationally. The research looks how social media neologisms are used in Kenya with special interest paid to twitter. A linguistic description approach analyzed deviation of social media neologisms from the usage of Standard English. This study investigates factors that contribute to production and usage of neologism in SNSs, and finally determines the effectiveness of neologisms in communication.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. Does neologism in social media deviate from standard usage of English?
- ii. What factors influence the production and usage of neologism in social media?
- iii. To what extent are social media neologisms effective in Kenyan context of communication?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this study is to study the use of English language in technology: investigating the use of social media neologisms as opposed to Standard English in communication on social networking platforms.

The specified objectives are:

- i) To determine how SNS neologisms deviates from the use Standard English through linguistic levels of analysis.
- ii) To examine factors that influence the production and usage of neologisms is SNSs.
- iii) To evaluate the effectiveness of neologisms in social media in communication.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This research is based on the use of English language in technology and the neologisms that are formed in social media. This study is important as use of social media is inevitable part of everyday life and the language used in social media is worth area of investigation to find out how it differs from the standard usage. This study will help to explain how words formed through social media are incorporated in Standard English as well as benefit the language researchers on the factors that influence the production and the continuous use of the social media neologisms. This study is important as it explains on the why the social media neologisms are preferred in communication amongst online users over the Standard English words.

Literature on how social media has been integrated in the communication systems in our society have been studied; issue of language use in social media platforms is a significant area of study. This study is in the quest to understand how English language evolves through SNSs in terms of Neologism created in social media. This study will provide the process through which Neologisms are formed. The factors that influence usage of Neologism, which in return leads to English language vocabulary expansion.

Neologisms play a significant role in language change. This is in view of the fact that as new words are created in the language, there is a change in the vocabulary as new words are introduced and old words may acquire new senses. Neologisms can also lead to language

modernization in the sense that it makes it possible for speakers to express the new technological and scientific developments in the society. With the invention of computers, tablets, ipads and smart phone which provide a wide range of applications that didn't previously exist, the need to come up with new words to represent the new things.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study will focus on English language in technology within the framework of lexical pragmatics. The study will use the linguistic levels of analysis to investigate how use of social media neologisms deviates from the standard use of English, the study will also examine factors that lead to the production and usage of neologisms in social media and finally determine how effective the neologisms in social media are in communication. Due to presence of a very large platform of social networking sites, this study will be limited to neologisms in a specific media application, twitter: this is because twitter is more diverse and text oriented and has a lot of real-time reports, up to date hence being a suitable social networking site for language research. Twitter is relevant in this study as it captures real-time English neologisms. The study will however make reference where necessary to other interrelated social networking; Facebook and instagram. The study will focus on English neologism used in Kenya; but not limited to the neologism that are only produced and used in Kenya.

For the purpose of the study, online users of this media application will form the target population since they are best conversant with applications. The language under study is English, since the language is wide and widely used. A study corpus of about thirty words will be compiled of English neologisms and their meanings collected from twitter. The SNS mentioned will provide 30 words each containing each 6 nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and interjections.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

i. Literature review on neologism

Aduda (2013), in his study adopts (Katie, 2001:268) definition of neologism as a newly invented word, words that may eventually find their way into the dictionary if they become widely accepted. Aduda stated that neologism can be created, (quoting Bussman (1996)), on the basis of morphological means, semantic transfer or loan from other languages. However after quoting various definitions from different sources, the following definition was adopted in his study; Neologism is broad and refers to a wide range of lexical items; the term neologisms may refer to new words borrowed from other languages and dialects, new words created through morphological processes operating in the language under study, words acquiring new senses and words produced as a result of speech defects. Aduda's study explains dholuo neologisms and how they are interpreted by the respective community.

The research study mentioned above focuses on neologisms and various word formation processes which are relevant to this research but differs from this research in that, it is restricted to dholuo language and the neologisms can only be understood by the speakers of this language because translation of the same into English doesn't guarantee total transfer of meaning. This study will therefore, aims at investigating a language of wider communication, a language that is globally used and how effective the neologisms in this language are in communication on the social media.

Lucinda (2005), states that new words are constantly entering the lexicon to describe new concepts and technologies and what they mean to us. Conversely, older words continuously fall out of use as they decrease in cultural significance considering the influence of digital technology. The internet and computer in particular have spawned a large and specialized jargon e.g. the "e-" prefix is particularly productive: *e-book*, *e-learning*, *e-source*. Lucinda concluded that new words are not only coined to describe new things but also when the currently in existence cannot accurately express our sentiments. The words we invent to describe our experiences of the world inherently and concurrently reflect our attitude about the world.

This study by Lucida focuses on neologisms that are brought about by technological advancement. This is particularly relevant because this study investigates English language in technology and social media is inseparable from technology. However, the mentioned study above is restricted technological neologisms begin with prefix "e-". This study will investigate not a particular type of neologism but those neologism used by online users in social media.

Rey (1995) discusses the concept of neologism and identifies three core areas of neology: Formal neology is a result of application of grammatical rules to the morphology of the lary: suffixation, preffixation; Semantic Neology is a feature found in all neologisms. These neologisms only express the meaning e.g. borrowing and internal derivations; Pragmatic neology is identified on relation in communication. This means that neologism is to be used in a social context depending on its appropriateness in communication. He finally noted that once a neologism gained wide-spread usage it becomes stable .Stability is indicated by appearance in glossaries dictionaries and large corpora. This study by Rey introduces categories of neologism, which will be important in this study to help categorize neologisms identified from the specified SNSs.

ii. Literature review on netspeak

English *netspeak* (language of the internet) neologisms as the very source of productivity of new words becomes an indispensability part that English learners have to master. The Internet is going to record the linguistic diversity more fully and accurately than was ever possible before, and the creative potential of the new medium is forming new areas of expressions (Crystal, 2001).

The emergence of productivity of coined words is caused by the necessary prerequisite—intended usefulness, such as labeling function, syntactic categorization and expressing an attitude (Plag,2002). Through Internet, the language changes so quickly that if a *netizen* (coined word for internet users) fails to follow the new emergences, it would bring difficulty to his or her online communication with others or understanding of the online information. when the *netizens* does communicate offline, they most likely to use the coined words that created through Internet due to their visualization and liveliness. Therefore, a new language variant comes into being with the rapid development of technology and the emergence of computer-

mediated communication (CMC), which is named *Netspeak*, used to represent the language used by *netizens* in the process of *CMC*.

Studies on the language of internet above serve to show how words used online can find their way into the mainstream language, due to users who continuously use this language offline. These studies will give insight to this research especially when evaluating how effective neologisms in social media are in communication.

iii. Literature review on social media

Sewe (2014), states that, in today's digital world, people can communicate with strangers from other parts of the world through the internet. Through *SNSs* such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace among others, one can be informed in real time about some far away disaster or other breaking news. Through research evidence it has been established that many people in the world today rely on the social media for all kinds of information. The study also found out that many people used *SNSs* to stay in touch with friends and family as well as share their views on an array of topics including popular culture, religion and politics. Sewe also stated that Social media as an emerging and high rising technology has been embraced by a number of sectors in the country including, the agricultural sector, government, education, manufacturing, private sector and civic society among many others. Social media has become a new pathway to information and corporate bodies, and organizations are essentially using social media to reach out to their clients, solve their problems and understand issues affecting them in a more personal way reminiscent of face to face communication.

This study by Sewe focuses on social media as a tool of communicating in the corporate world regardless of the language being used, which is relevant, as this study focuses on neologisms formed in social media created for various uses in communication. However the same study differs a great deal because this research is restricted to English language.

A study has been done on effects of social media content on local television programs in Kenya, (Ouma, 2013), on whether the uprising of social media is going to leading in the death of traditional media particularly television . The study found that in Kenya the influence of social media on television was felt and seen in segments of television programs where the audience is

asked to contribute their ideas to the show through Facebook or twitter accounts. This study is important to this research as it proves that social media is integrated in the today society, however it focuses on traditional media versus the modern online media.

A study has also been done on the role of social media in activism in Kenya, (Motaroki ,2013). This study focuses vigorous complaining to bring out social change, in the sense, cannoles non-violent forms of agitation which includes writing letters to concerned parties, political campaigning as well as use of social media to facilitate civic engagement and collective action. The study took a modern approach to activism “internet activism” which uses electronic communication technologies such as social media to enable faster communication by citizen movement. This study shows that individuals take to social media platform to air their complaint as a means of communication to the respective recipients this facilitates quick and wide spread communication.

1.8 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework selected for this study is lexical pragmatics theory. Lexical pragmatics theory is a branch of linguistic that investigates the processes by which linguistically specified word meaning is modified in use (Wilson and Carton, 2007). This theory advances the view that lexical items of a language are analyzed in a systematic manner and interpreted according to a particular context. This means that lexical items will be analyzed depending on the meaning change it undergoes in a particular context of use. Context plays an important role in meaning as some lexical items acquire different meaning under certain contexts. In other words the lexical items are subjected to the concepts and processes of the theory.

1.8.1 Lexical pragmatics

The lexical pragmatic was proposed and developed by Blunter Reinhard (1990) in an article published in the Journal of Semantics. Lexical pragmatics explores the application of the semantics-pragmatics distinction at the level of the word or phrase rather than the whole utterance (Blunter, 2004). A central goal is to investigate the processes by which linguistically-specified (encoded) word meanings are modified in use. Lexical semantics strictly refers to word meaning. Lexical semantics further accounts for multi-word units: these are cases where a group of words have unitary meaning which doesn't correspond to the individual meaning of the words used.

Conversational implicature refers to the relationship between what is said and what is meant in a conversation. The theory tries to explain the mechanisms through which we grasp language interpretation. When faced with a selection task to perform the conversational implication helps in selecting from a set of other possibilities. The example below illustrates that the implication of what is said is shown by what the hearer infers and not the words of the utterance.

1.

- a. Speaker A: Has Mariah's bowel cooled down?
- b. Speaker B: She has been making many trips to the washroom.

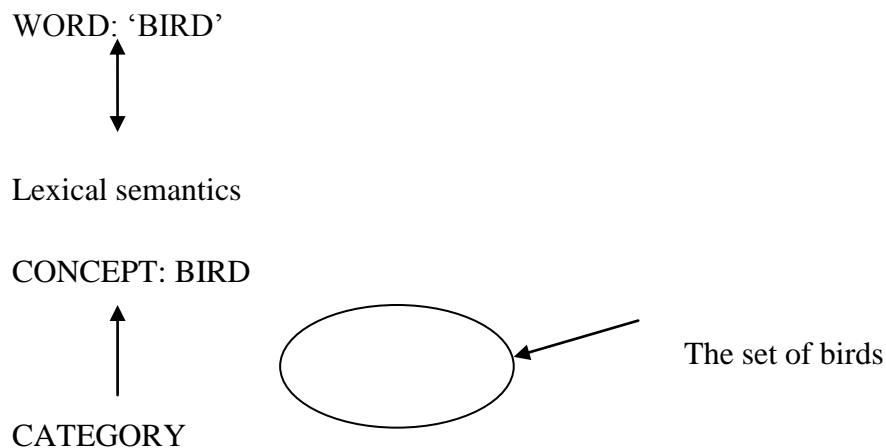
What was said by B in example 1b, Mariah has been making trips to the washroom.

What was meant1b speaker B believes that Mariah is not yet healed.

McCawley, (1978), argues that a lexical item and syntactically complex equivalent of it may make different contributions to the interpretation to a semantic structure. The goal of lexical semantics is to investigate the relations between words and concepts they encode. And the goal of lexical pragmatics is to account for the fact that the concept communicated by use of a word often differs from the concept encoded.

1.8.2 The lexeme in lexical pragmatics

Lexical semantics looks at the relationship between words and the semantically represented concepts they encode. This means that the words are looked at from the perspective of encoding concept while on the other hand concepts are treated as denoting categories of objects, events or properties in the word.



From Wilson D. (2006-2007:2)

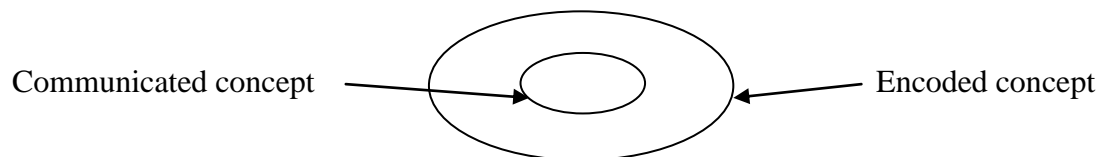
The above model portrays that word meanings are concepts, and that concepts represent categories of objects. The concept BIRD may be activated in the mind in two different ways: by hearing the word 'bird', or by seeing a bird. The study of concepts can be approached from two different directions: from a linguistic view investigate what properties concepts would have to have to function adequately as word meanings, or from the cognitive view, and investigate the role of concepts in categorization and cognition. The linguistic approach is taken by lexical semantics. Cognitive approach is taken by cognitive psychologists working on problems of

categorization. The best treatment of concepts will be one that responds to both types of evidence, taking both linguistic and cognitive factors into account. Lexical semantics looks at looks at the relationship between words that are mentally represented and concepts they encode. Words do not necessarily express what they encode and this is where pragmatics comes in handy. The issue of context comes in and that is why there is a gap between the sentence meaning assigned by the grammar and the speaker's meaning conveyed on a particular accessible occasion of use. This still applies at the level of words: there is a gap between the concepts communicated by the use of that word on a particular occasion.

There are three types of lexical pragmatic processes. The processes correspond to the main ways in which a concept communicated by the use of a word may differ from the concept encoded. They include lexical narrowing and broadening, approximation and categorical extension.

1.8.2.1 Lexical narrowing

Lexical narrowing is the use of a word in a more specific sense, resulting in narrowing of the linguistically- specified denotation. . Narrowing is the case where a word is used to convey a more specific sense than the encoded one, (Wilson and Carton, 2007).



The effects of narrowing are to highlight a particular subject of the linguistically-specified denotation. The following example illustrates this,

2.

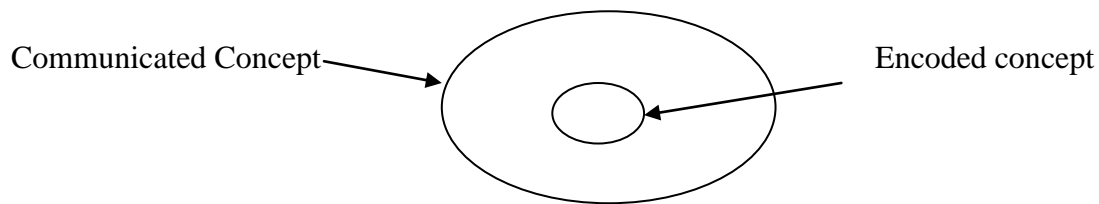
- a. All doctors drink (drink liquid, drink alcohol, drink a lot of alcohol).

In example 2a above drink might convey not the encoded sense drink liquid but, more specifically 'drink alcohol; or drink significant amount of alcoholic drinks, hence drink undergoes lexical narrowing. (Wilson D. 2006-2007:3)

Lexical narrowing is a flexible process since the encoded meaning may be narrowed to different degrees and different directions depending on the context of use or particular occasion of use.

1.8.2.2 Lexical broadening

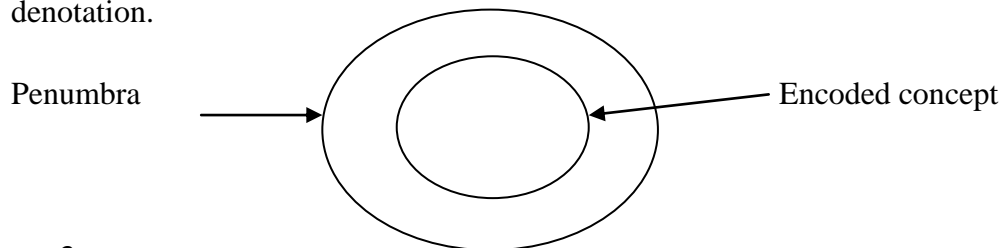
Lexical broadening consists of approximation and metaphoric extension. Broadening is where a word is used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one hence widening the linguistically-specified denotation. Approximation is a variety of broadening where a word is used to convey a more general sense, with consequent widening of the linguistically-specified denotation (Wilson and Carton, 2007)



A word such as '*Friend*' basically means a person other than a family member, spouse or lover whose company one enjoys and feels affection for. When this word is used in social media the meaning is extended to accommodate the act of accepting a request on social media application or act of sending a request so that someone can be-friend you on social media.

1.8.2.2.1 Approximation

This is the minimal type of broadening which involves the use of a word with a relatively strict sense to apply to a penumbra of cases that strictly fall outside its linguistically-specified denotation.



3.

- a. The water is boiling (almost boiling) (scientific terms)

- b. The coat cost 1000 dollars (about 1000, dollars (round numbers))
- c. The stones form a circle, an oval, a pyramid (approximately a circle) (geometric terms)
- d. Edinburgh is north of London (roughly north) (geographic terms)

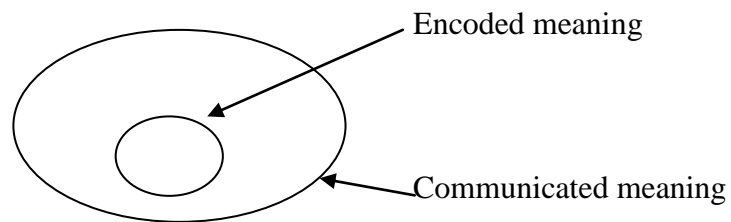
However the different degrees and types of approximations do apply differently depending on the circumstances, as the word *hot* as shown below,

4.

- a. The tea is *hot*
- b. My boyfriend is *hot*
- c. The discussion is *hot*
- d. The market is *hot*

1.8.2.2.2 Hyperbole

This type is different from the rest in that it allows the communicated concept to depart much further from the encoded concept.



Example below would be an approximation if the tea was almost boiling and hyperbole if the tea were hotter than expected or uncomfortably hot.

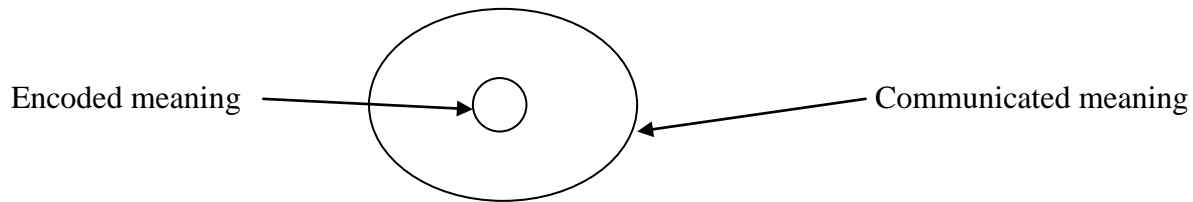
5.

- a. The tea is boiling – ‘hotter than expected’
- b. I am dying of boredom – ‘very bored’

1.8.2.2.3 Metaphor

According to Blunter the metaphor is seen as more radical widening and what makes it rather than an approximation is the fact that for instance in example 6 a Liam fall very far outside the normal denotation of snake, hare, and deer.

6.
 - a. Liam is a snake, a hare, a deer.
 - b. The waves dance by the ship.
 - c. The boring movie put me to sleep.



We can get three interpretations to example 6 c apart from the literal one: as an approximation (the movie almost put me to sleep), a hyperbole (boring movie not too far removed from sleep) or a metaphor (the boring movie put me in a state with properties similar to sleep). This therefore implies approximation, hyperbole and metaphor may all be seen as varieties of lexical broadening involving different degrees of distance from the encoded 'literal meaning.

1.8.2.3 Categorial extension

In categorial extension words that start out as names of a particular brand of item like '*Kiwi*' (shoe polish) may end up being used to apply to a whole broader category. It therefore mean that in example 7a below may be understood to be asking, not specifically for '*omo*' , but for any brand of powder soap and example 7b may be understood to be asking specifically for *HB* and not any other brand of pencils.

7.
 - a. I want to do washing. I need *omo*. (*powder soap*)

- b. Do you have *HB?*(*pencil*)

This is referred to as categorical extension because the name of a salient category member is extended to apply to a whole broader category to which it belong.in the internet other words like *Google* are being used to mean any type of internet search, yet it known that *Google* is a brand name for a popular search engine

1.8.2.4 Neologisms

Neologisms are newly coined words. Clark (1979) and Clark Gerrig (1983) quoted in Makuyu (2009:20) observed that newly formed verbs derived from nouns, as in example 8a are not hard to understand.

8.

- a. I *M-pesad* him yester night.

Other neologisms can be formed through compounding, or affixation, acronym, abbreviation, conversion or semantic transfer. (The word-forming processes will be discussed in the research) Blutner, therefore, made the observation that, the lexical pragmatic processes have mechanisms of creating new sense from existing nouns and by that meaning is easily realized immediately or after some construction. This also means the relationship between the unfamiliar and familiar is brought about only through pragmatic inference.

1.9 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will be tested.

- i. Neologisms in social media deviate from the Standard usage of English.
- ii. There are factors that influence the production and usage of neologisms in social media.
- iii. Neologisms in social media are effective in communication.

1.10 METHODOLOGY

1.10.1 Introduction

This study will adopt stratified sampling design. This design is a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, then randomly select the final subject proportionally from different strata. A questionnaire will be used in this study to collect data from the respondents.

1.10.2 Sample selection

Probability sampling will be used in this study. The target population in this study will be individuals who are speakers of English and online users with active profiles in the specified social media applications. According to Ogula (2005), a population refers to any group of institutions, people or objects that have common characteristics.

For the purpose of this research, two major strata will be formed Gender and Age; gender will be split into two: male and female. The strata that will be used for data collection therefore will be Age, Gender; male and female making a total of three strata this is in order to establish whether they are factors that influence the use of language and identify their differences in language use. According to Coates, (2004:86) men and women develop differentiated communicative competence, such that their conversational behavior suggests that they have a different understanding of how utterances are done. Hudson (1980) pointed out that speakers make a very subtle use of the language variability that is available to them, age like gender, profession, social class, and geographical and ethnic origin has been established as one of the factors that locates us in society and causes language variation. The three strata that will be used will be; age, female

and male and then random. A population of 500 will be used to undergo the sampling process. The following formula will be used.

<i>Stratum</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>Population size</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Z</i>
<i>Sampling fraction</i>	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
<i>Final sample size</i>	$X/2$	$Y/2$	$Z/2$

Stratum	Age	Female	Male
Population size	200	150	150
Sampling fraction	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Final sample size	100	75	75

This study will involve 250 respondents who are active users of Twitter. The respondents will later be divided into an equal number in terms of gender and age; so as to provide a clear picture on whether gender and age serves as an influence on the Neologisms in SNS. Wardhough (2010), stated that men's and women's use of speech differs because boys and girls are brought up differently and often fill different roles in society and behave accordingly, he also stated that when collecting data on the variants of linguistic variables quantifiable factors such as age among others are considered. The age bracket for the research will be (18-55) this will be useful to show how age serves as an influence in the usage Neologism in social media.

1.10.3 Data collection techniques

The researcher made personal observation online on the 250 respondents being an active member of the specific SNS(s). A questionnaire was administered to the respondents; the responses were used to come up with a list of neologisms that helped the researcher make a conclusion on the factors that influence usage of Neologism in social media. The responses of the questionnaire further served to explain factors that influence usage of neologisms and their effectiveness in communication in social media applications. However, part of the data was acquired from secondary sources by reading relevant literature in order to acquire statistics on the percentages of online users.

1.10.4 Nature of data collected

Data collected was used to form a corpus of social media neologisms and their meanings collected from twitter. A glossary was made with the social media neologisms and their counterpart Standard English. The list of words provided will be categorized into the applicable parts of speech. The data collected from the questionnaire was used to arrive at the conclusion of this study.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an introduction to what the study is about, the background to the study is illustrated and a statement to the problem is also indicated in this chapter. After looking into the literature review provided, this study found it necessary for research to be done in connection with the language of social media narrowing the focus to twitter in the Kenyan context. The theory chosen for this research was lexical pragmatics, due to its ability to explain how hearers are able to interpret encoded meaning from the communicated meaning of a word or a phrase. The study is based on Kenyan context and data will be collected from 250 respondents who were selected though probability sampling must be active social media on the relevant social networking platform. A questionnaire will be issued to enable develop the research further as the data collected will be able to answer questions such as: what factors contribute to the production and usage of the social media neologisms? Are social media neologisms effective in communication? The findings will be used in the chapters ahead.

CHAPTER TWO

NEOLOGISMS IN TWITTER

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Language used on social media is unique to social networking sites, as people interact they form new words in their social groups to enable them communicate effectively. Social media being part of technology means it evolves and so does the language used. Neologisms are produced every day to accommodate new items, objects and ideas. This chapter is going to make a brief introduction to the concept of social media in order to narrow down to the precise social networking site of interest, but due to the interrelatedness of the social media applications, an introduction will be made of the other social networking sites that may greatly influence to language of twitter. The entire research is about neologisms in social media, the concept of neologisms will be revisited. Standard English words undergo word-formation processes and so do social media neologisms; therefore, the chapter will look into English word-forming process to see how social media neologisms are produced as well as their sources.

2.2 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This study focuses on the use of English neologisms in social media; therefore, understanding the concept of social media is crucial. Below the study will take narrowed approach to the specific social media of interest and how the language on this social media may be influenced by other related social media platform.

Social media provides a social avenue for virtual interactions amongst social media users. Social media has evolved from being a personal tool that people used to interact with friends and family but were later adopted by businesses that wanted to take advantage of a popular new communication method to reach out to customers: informing them of sales and offering them special sales and essentially gathering feedback on their products and service delivery.

Eisenberg (2006), however stated, the biggest problem there is with the term “social media” is that it isn’t media in the traditional sense. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, you tube, instagram are platforms for interaction and networking. All the traditional media: print, broadcast, search provides platforms for delivery of ads near and around relevant content.

Social media has evolved over the course of time, it has influenced how people do things, communicate and people are finding new ways of using social media to gratify their needs. According to Schaefer (2012), Social media has three distinguishing characteristics; First, evolution of how we communicate: replacing email in many cases through use of newer and more efficient modes such as text and chats. Secondly it's a revolution: there is access to free, instantaneous, global communication. Thirdly, social media is distinguished by the ability of everybody to share and contribute as a publisher. Social media therefore is more than an avenue for social interaction amongst online users; people are able to do many other things on social media than just connect with family and friends. People are able to do business by marketing their product, develop talent by publishing articles and blogging, exchange ideas at a global scale and acquire cultures online.

Social media being part of technology advances every day and so does the language used. As people use social media for the purposes mentioned above they need language. This language is sometimes tailored to meet the users' need for effective communication. Looking into the language of social media, this research aims at identifying the English neologisms that are used to communicate in the social networking sites.

The social networking site of interest in this research is Twitter, this is because Twitter is more diverse and text-oriented and has a lot of real-time reports, implying that it uses language that is up to date hence being the most suitable social networking site for language research. Twitter is relevant in this study as it captures real-time English neologisms and this study is interested in language, however, where need be, reference will be made to interrelated social networking sites particularly Facebook and Instagram due to their interrelatedness to Twitter.

2.2.1 TWITTER

Twitter is a real-time free micro-blogging service founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and Biz Stone. Twitter allows users to create handles using their names through which they share 140 character messages with other users, the users can favorite, repost tweets from other users as well as engage in conversations using @ mentions, replies and hashtags (hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the hash (#) mark used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it.) for their content. This creates a wonderful practice of being concise

with the message that users would like to convey. Twitter is not only a useful tool to connect with friends and keep abreast of their daily activities but is also the viral dissemination of information; it allows users to follow news organizations, celebrities and other global organizations. Due to the 140 character messages, language on twitter is very precise and unique words are used to ensure that brevity is achieved through; abbreviations such as RT- *ReTweet*, used to *RT* someone else's tweet; *MT*- Modified Tweet, acronyms such as *AMA* – ask me anything, *LOL* – laugh out loud and *hashtags*, *#fashiontoday* would be an appropriate hashtag for tweets about a show on the current fashion. This serves to attract other users to tweet about or reply to the same topic using your *hashtag* and also makes it easy to track the conversation. If a user likes content posted by another user they can *retweet* the users tweet directly or add a comment or modify the tweet then *retweet* or repost the message.

The settings of the twitter application allow the user to include links to other content in their tweets, and broadcasts can be public or private. Users can also share the same content to other social networking sites such as Facebook and tumblr. The language of twitter therefore influences the language of other social networking sites and in return it also acquires the aspects of the languages of other networking sites that the users interact on.

#ff- follow Friday is an abbreviation used on twitter but once it is linked to Facebook the users translate that to send friend request on Friday that will be immediately responded to. Similarly, when users link a photo from Instagram with the caption *#tbt* on a Thursday it is immediately incorporated into the language of twitter and understood.

2.2.2. Instagram

This is a social media application that allows users to keep up with each other's lives by uploading photos and videos, founded by Kelvin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010. Instagram has a distinct feature that confines photos to square shape and videos to be only 15 seconds long. This social networking site enables users to upload content across a variety of social networking platforms such as twitter, Facebook, tumblr and Flickr. The language of instagram incorporates a lot of hashtags not only on abbreviations but also phrases which are always accompanied the uploaded pictures and videos.

9.

- a. *#adorbs* – adorable ‘lovable or cute’
- b. *#naturethingthegoodlife*- nature things the good life ‘enjoying the nature’
- c. *#MCE* – man crush every day. ‘a guy one has a crush on for a long time’

2.2.3 Facebook

This is an online social networking sites that allows users to create user profiles, add other users as ‘friends’, exchange messages, post updates, upload photos and videos and receive notifications when other users update their profiles. One can share a status, a picture or video to other SNS such as twitter, instagram tumblr and flickr, as long as they do not violate requirements of the other social networking sites. The language of Facebook is influenced by many other social networking sites as it is the most accessible site that many other social sites users can share their content.

These three social networking sites mentioned above are connected and the language used in each one of them is similar due to their ability to allow users to cut across through sharing content on them; neologisms found in twitter can be understood in Facebook and instagram. Not all users, however, have active profile in all three social platforms.

Below the study will briefly look into the concept of neologisms to have an understanding of the kinds of words produced and used in social media.

2.3 NEOLOGISMS

Neologisms are new words or word combinations that appear in the language due to the new developments and advancements in social life, culture and technology. Existing words that acquire new meanings are also regarded as neologisms. These new words in a language are often for the purposes of naming a new object or idea that is introduced into the culture of a speech community. Neologism as defined earlier in this study is a type of word-forming process. New words and expressions or neologisms are created for new things irrespective of their scale of importance, (Gontasavora, 2013)

A neologism is a newly coined word or phrase or a new meaning for an existing word, or a word borrowed from another language, (Arnold 1986:217). There are several definitions of neologisms this study will however adopt the definition of neologisms as: A new word or phrase in the language or already existing word that acquires a completely new meaning and is used as a new coinage.

As earlier noted just like Standard English words, social media neologisms are produced through word-forming process found in English. Next, the chapter is going to look into the word-forming process and give examples of the social media neologisms produced under specific processes and sources of social media neologisms.

2.4 WORD FORMATION PROCESSES

As the study focuses on English neologisms in social media there is need to look at how word-forming processes in Standard English and make a connection to how neologisms are formed in social media. The formation of neologisms involves a whole spectrum of word –formation process available to speaker’s language: word-formation is the way in which new complex words are built on the basis of other words or morphemes, (Plag, 2013:13). Neologism may also be brought forth by inadequacy of a language to provide a word that is effective for an object or idea. Interest in word –formation has gone hand in hand with interest in language in general. Work on word formation is dated back from the time of Panini who provided detailed descriptions of Sanskrit word-formation to present. Word formation however did not receive the attention that linguistics as a whole received in the early years of 20th century .But scholars like Jespersen (1942), managed to merge synchronic and diachronic approaches in their study of word –formation. When discussing the concept of neologism as a type of word-formation processes two terminologies are important; motivation and productivity. This study will apply these two concepts where applicable when looking at different word-forming processes.

2.4.1 Motivation

Motivation can be described as the condition which may lead to a particular linguistic form. In cognitive linguistics, motivation is regarded as a basic cognitive process .A lexical item that can

be learnt, retrieved and produced more easily is said to be motivated ,(Lakoff,1987:346) , he further explained that a neologism is morphologically motivated if it can be broken down into its morphological constituents and the meaning of its constituents reveals its meaning. In this research, we have made reference to the linguistic condition of motivation particularly the morphological and semantic motivations which are the characteristics of certain word formation patterns.

A decrease of morphological motivation corresponds to loss of transparency and it may mean that such a word has been merged or lexicalized. A merger is defined “the meaning or function of two linguistic units merged into one new meaning or function which is different from that of the combined units,” (Heine and Reh, 1984:44-45) they also state that a word is said to be semantically motivated if its form can be associated freely with others like in the case of metaphors and metonymies.

2.4.2 Productivity

This is the ability of speakers and hearers to produce and understand new words. (Bauer, 1983:66) Productivity is contrasted with creativity which is neither rule governed nor predictable. Productivity allows a speaker to produce a number of principally uncountable formations. These two concepts will be applied in determining the productivity and motivation of social media neologisms under the word-forming processes where necessary.

2.4.3 DERIVATION

Neologisms on social networking sites can be derived from other words that are already into existence of that particular language, in social media affixes can be added to English words to form neologisms with specific meaning. Derivation is the process of adding bound morphs to already existing roots stems to create new words of the same or different word class, (Bussman 1996:50). Derivation is a highly productive technique of word-formation; it is the process of adding affixes to an already existing word. There are different types of derivations and will be discussed in this below.

2.4.3.1 Zero-morpheme derivations (conversions)

Social media neologisms are sometimes derived from already existing words where they acquire new meaning in context. Zero-morpheme derivation is where a word as a determined in a syntagma whose determination is not expressed in phonic form but understood to be present in content, also referred to as conversions. According to Martin and Sims (2010:39), conversions are the limiting case of a morphological pattern in which the form of the base remains unaltered. Conversion is a process that assigns an already existing word to a new syntactical category, (William et al, 1997:157) they further assert that conversions resemble derivation because of the change in category and meaning that it brings out. In social media, conversions entail using the existing English vocabulary and assigning new meaning to the vocabulary. The meaning of examples 10a&b below have undergone broadening to accommodate new meaning other than their original standard meaning.

10.

- a. *Friend* - ‘accept a friend request’
- b. *Bridge* - ‘make peace’

2.4.3.2 Back derivation

According to (William et al, 1997:58) back formation is the process that creates a new word by removing a real or supposed affix from a word in a language. This is the form of derivation in which the initial or final sound or syllable is interpreted as an affix and dropped hence shortening a word. In social media all the back derivations are extracted from longer words, such words are especially convenient for twitter which has the policy of ‘the shorter the better’ due to a restriction of the characters one can use to construct a message.

11.

- a. *House sit* – ‘house sitting’
- b. *Blog* - ‘Blogger’

2.4.3.3 Motivation

Morphological motivation contributes to transparency of derivatives. The meaning of the derivative seems to be primarily determined by the meaning of its contribute morpheme.

12.

- a. *House-sit* – (the practice of having to care for a house while the owner is away) –
house-sitting - (progressive action of caring for a house while the owner is away)
- b. *Blog* (a web site where online journals can be accessed) – blogger (a contributor
to an online journal)

The meaning of *house-sit* and *blog* is determined from the meaning of its constituent base morpheme house-sitting and blogger. The two terms are hence said to be morphologically motivated.

2.4.3.4 Productivity

Social media neologisms are generally productive users can easily generate new words. In social media users are able to generate countless new words to enable them express new and old ideas which have taken on a new cultural context.

13.

- a. *House sit* – ‘house sitting’
House-warm – house warming
- b. *Blog* - ‘Blogger’
Write – writer

Using the examples it is clear that derivations are productive, online users can easily produce, understand and communicate effectively using these kinds of neologisms because they are productive.

2.4.4 COMPOUNDING

The language of social media is also made up word combinations which form their own distinct meaning sometimes derived from the root words or a whole new meaning. This is a word that contains more than one root (Katamba 1993:46). A compound word can therefore be viewed as a combination of two free words that exist independently. Bauer (1983:11) compounding composition is the process of putting two words together to form a third one.

14.

- a. *Ego + surfer* → *Ego-surfer* ‘One who boosts his own ego by searching his own name’
- b. *Tweet + up* → *Tweetup* - ‘in-person gathering for people who use twitter’

Mukava and stockwell (2006) defined compounding as a process of combining two words to form a new one. Compound words are written as one word or as two words; hyphenated, plural is marked differently depending on the kind of compound word formed.

- c. *Ego-surfer* *Ego-surfers*
- d. b. *Tweetup* *Tweetups*

Under compounds we have different categories under which compounds are formed in English; clipping, blending and affixing.

2.4.4.1 Blends

Blending is the combination of clipping and compounding in which new words are created by the overlap of words or fragments of existing words. William et al (1997:58) blend are words created from morphonemic parts of two already existing items. In social media there are combinations of words that are clipped combined with words that are whole to form a meaning completely different from the original words. This is compounding by means of curtailed words.

15.

- a. *Slanguage* ← slang + Language – ‘language that employing much slang’

- b. *twicide* ← twitter + suicide ‘one becomes unpopular on twitter because of something they did: an awful message or an insult to someone or a group of people.’

2.4.4 .2 Affixation

According to Martin and Sims (2010:40) affixation is more than just combining two morphemes, a rule of affixation state there is a combinatory potential and that it is not the case that any affix and any base may combine. There are several derivatives created through affixation, although the most common amongst social media users are prefixation and suffixation; these two are treated as part of compounding. Prefixes are bound morphemes which are proposed to free morphemes added before a word while suffixation refers to adding a suffix to a base, in twitter majority of the words are created through affixation.

16.

- a. *Re-tweet* ←re + tweet – ‘ post someone else’s tweet’
b. *Un-follow* ←un + follow – ‘cease to befriend someone on twitter’
c. *selfie* ← self + ie – ‘a picture taken by oneself’

2.4.4.3 Motivation

Compounds are generally morphologically motivated and expected to be semantically transparent. However, the semantic relationship between the parts of compound neologisms is very varied.

17.

- a. *twicide* - twitter + suicide

twicide ‘one becomes unpopular on twitter because of something they did: an awful message or an insult to someone or a group of people; meaning someone is responsible for their death on twitter. Is formed from twitter ‘the social networking site and suicide ‘taking one’s own life’. *Twicide* is morphologically motivated because its meaning can be inferred from the two words it is made from.

2.4.4.4 Productivity

Compounding is productive in English, users are able to easily understand and produce utterances by either blending, clip-compounding or affixation. Social media users can produce unlimited words that are constantly used across the social networking sites of the compound nature. However there are some restriction to certain combinations on social media, most common being Noun-Verb combinations.

2.4.5 SEMANTIC TRANSFER

McMahon, (1994:174) argues that semantic transfer is the formation of new words using a language's own resources. She further noted that words are typically polysemous thus can lose or gain meaning relatively early and do not have to lose an earlier sense to gain a new one. Semantic transfer is also similar to conversions where already existing words tend to acquire new meaning sometimes related to the existing meaning of the or completely acquiring new meaning.

18.

- a. *Troll*- 'Means grotesque humanoid and in twitter it means someone who post obnoxious comments or someone being negatively attacked via tweets'.
- b. *Ancestor*- 'amongst the youth online users this word refers to older spouses for monetary gain equivalent of sugar mummies/daddies'.

2.4.5.1 Motivation

Semantic transfers Neologisms are semantically motivated. The form of the Neologism can freely associate with the form of its base.

2.4.6 Clippings

Clipping is where part of a word is clipped of the rest and the remaining word now means essentially the same thing as what the whole word meant. William et al (1997:57) clipping is the process that shortens a poly syllabic word by deleting one or more syllables. In social media such

words are formed to facilitate fast communication, and especially in twitter, they are used to enable users make most of the words and meaning without exceeding the limited number of characters

19.

- a. *Rep* – reputation
- b. *Sync* – synchronize

2.4.7 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Akmajian et al (2001:25) forming acronym is a process that entails abbreviation shortening of words: this is done through initial letters of some words in a phrase. In most social networking site these two are used a lot to facilitate quickness in writing and particularly in twitter they are very helpful due to the restriction of the 140-character messages that users have to adhere to as they communicate. In reference to other word-forming processes they are the most useful looking at the frequency of usage, and also because they are not only effective but also efficient.

Acronyms form a word by using the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase. To be an acronym the new word must not be pronounced as a series of letters, but as a word. According to William et al (1997:59) acronyms are formed by taking the initial letters of some or of all the letters in a phrase or title and reading them as a word.

20.

- a. BAE → before anyone else
- b. AMA → ask me anything

While abbreviations are shortened form of a word or initial letters of words in titles or phrases but pronounced as letters not as a word.

- c. *Adorbs* → adorable ‘lovable’
- d. *Fab* → fabulous ‘extraordinary’

- e. *MT* → modified tweet ‘modify and repost someone’s tweet’
- f. *RT* → re tweet ‘repost someone else’s tweet directly’
- g. *Ikr* → I know right ‘interpretable as common sense’
- h. *SMH* → shaking my head ‘sign of disapproval’
- i. *LMAO* → laughing my Ass off ‘laughing hard’

2.4.7.1 Motivation

Acronyms and abbreviations are motivated semantically they exactly carry the same meaning that the original phrase had before the acronym.

IKR stands for I know right! And even in the abbreviated form carries the same meaning. The word *Fab* still as the same meaning as the full word fabulous.

2.4.7.2 Productivity

Both acronyms and abbreviations are productive especially in phrases they always take the first letter in each word in a phrase. It is therefore very easy for these words to be formed and understood by the social media users. Social media users can understand the meaning of the neologism easily especially if they have access to the complete forms of the abbreviations and acronyms, continuous usage of the terms too, ensure users acquire their meaning.

21.

- a. Shaking My Head – SMH

2.5 SOURCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA NEOLOGISMS

The analysis of the word-forming process, above serves to account as to how social media neologisms are produced, below sources of social media neologisms as analyzed next.

2.5.1 Derived SNS neologisms

Derived neologisms are formed by attaching an affix to a root. They are analyzable into a sequence of smaller units. The interpretation of a derived neologism is rather broad as it comprises the central meaning of the root and the meaning of the affix.

22.

- a. *Rips* – ‘kiss ass’ / impressive video or picture.
- b. *Favorite* – ‘preserve a tweet that impressed on into the archives’

2.5.2 Compound SNS neologisms

Compound neologisms consist of two bases. Two existing words that are combined to form new lexical items that function as single words. Compound neologism maybe of two with related meaning or words with distinct meaning hence creating new meaning. In social media compounding is used when the thought or idea one wants to pass along can only be communicated using to combination of two words to form a single idea.

23.

- a. *Cookie + face* – cookie-face ‘one with acne’
- b. *Photo bomber* – ‘one who invade someone else’s photo’

2.5.3 Semantic transfer SNS neologisms

A word may lose or gain new meaning; however these words do not always have to lose earlier meaning in order to gain new. In this case social media users do not produce new words they use the languages available resource, without altering the form of the word, by giving ‘old’ words new meaning.

24.

- a. *Follow* (verb) ‘carry out in accordance to (among others) in twitter it simply means to accept a request by a user or voluntarily be their friend. In this case the word follow has just been extended in meaning.
- b. *Favorite* (verb) ‘liked or preferred’, this word in twitter gains new meaning: to put to archive the updates that appealed to one, so that they can easily access them in the future. This meaning of favorite is extended.

2.5.4 Acronym and abbreviated SNS neologisms

Social networking sites are dominated by the youth who prefer shortcuts anywhere possible and language is no exception, most words are shortened to ease communication as well as to convey certain messages. In twitter abbreviations and acronyms make it easy for users to adhere to short message rule and be able to effectively communicate. In social media there are several neologisms in form of acronyms and abbreviations, they directly take the meaning of the full phrases before the shortening happens. Interpreting the meaning of abbreviated and acronym words are not difficult for the users especially if they have access to the full version of the words.

25.

- a. *FOMO* – fear of missing out
- b. *WOMBAT* – waste of money, beauty and brains
- c. *WCW* - Woman Crush Wednesday
- d. *FBF*- Flash Back Friday.
- e. *DM* – direct message
- f. *BRB*- Be Right Back

2.6 CONCLUSION

Social media uses language that is unique to the social networking sites and different from the Standard English. Through understanding the concept of social media, the language used in one social networking site can be influenced the language of other social sites depending on the interrelatedness of these sites. There is mutual intelligibility of neologisms, those created in one site can be used and understood in another. This chapter looked into English word-forming processes, establishing that social media neologisms, just like Standard English words undergo the same processes: derivation, compounding, semantic transfer, abbreviations and acronyms to produce new neologisms that are used for communication in social media. The finding of this chapter will be useful in chapter three determining how social media neologisms deviate from the Standard English.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVIATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of electronic media in the 1960s and the advent of the internet brought about tremendous revolution in the way the society lived and operated. Social media has been incorporated in people's daily lives. The entire range of social media applications share the innate ability to enable social behavior through dialogue thus providing an opportunity to discover and share new information (Solis,2008). Social media provides a social platform for people to interact; it is almost inevitable that people take interest in social networking sites although for a variety of reasons. As people interact across the social networking sites they use language and English being a lingua franca is the most popularly used. Similarly in Kenya the social networking users, the majority being the youth have taken up interest in social sites. The 2013 Pew Research Global Attitudes Project revealed that 76% of internet users in Kenya use Social Networking sites and that most of the users are young people. The report further revealed that 62% of internet users access the internet on a daily basis. The study also found out that many people used Social Networking sites (SNS) to stay in touch with friends and family as well as share their views on different topics including popular culture, religion and politics. These statistics exponentially reveal the immense power of social media and it can therefore argued that social media has indeed become part and parcel of the modern society's lifestyle and culture.

Kenya's vision 2030 economic blueprint spells out the use of science and technology in order to raise productivity and efficiency across all sectors of the economy. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is seen as being the major force and backbone of the Kenyan economy going forward. Social media as an emerging and high rising technology has been embraced by a number of sectors in the country including, the agricultural sector, government, education, manufacturing, private sector and civic society among many others. In Kenyan context, therefore, technology and social media are element familiar to most of the people and they have access to what it has to offer.

In this chapter the study will analyze the deviations that occur in social media focusing on English neologisms that are used on twitter based on Kenyan context in communication by the use of linguistic level of analysis. While analyzing the language of social media the concept of stylistics emerges. According to Leech and Short (1981) stylistics is a linguistic study of style of a language. Stylistics is part of linguistics that concentrates on variations of language. Turner (1973: 7) defines stylistics as that branch of linguistics which focuses on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively, with special concern to the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature. Stylistic analysis of language uses different levels namely: graphological, phonological morphological, lexical, syntactical and semantical levels. This study will analyze deviation of social media neologisms using the applicable levels of analysis.

3.2 DEVIATION

Deviation in linguistics is breaking of the rules or conventions of a language. According to Short, (1996) deviation is a linguistic phenomenon used in poetry, and a violation of the commonly observed rules of a language. Deviation is not only viewed in poetry but also drama and prose, this study will look at deviation in terms of the words produced for social media use to establish their departure from the words from Standard English. Deviation is a term used to describe spelling and pronunciation of a word or a sentence structure which does not conform to a norm (Richards and Platt, 1985: 79). Deviation is a departure from certain expected or already established pattern of doing things, writing or speaking. Cook (1989: 74) perceives deviation as ‘a case of non-conformity to the norms and regularities of discourse structure’. Deviation, therefore, is the breaking the established rules of a language. This study aims at establishing how social media neologisms deviate from the usage of Standard English at the above mentioned levels of linguistics. Through this analysis this study will be able to identify the devices and patterns that social media users use to manipulate language in order to communicate effectively.

3.3 LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION

This approach is satisfactory in realizing the general aim of stylistics analysis on the language use on social media to determine the level at which deviation occurs. Crystal and Davy (1969:15) states that the levels of analysis involves taking a particular language or text and discussing it in terms of a number of interrelated levels of description. The levels are studied independently as possible. Crystal and Davy further identify the levels of analysis: phonetics and graphetics levels; studies the basic phonic and graphic substances of language. Phonology level studies the sound systems of a given language and graphological level which is the analogous study of a language's writing systems, various kinds of handwriting and typology. Morphological level which studies the internal structure of words or classes of words. Syntactical level, which studies the internal relationships of words. Lexical level, that covers idiomatic word-sequences as well as single words regardless of their grammatical form and function, and finally semantic level which studies the meaning of stretches longer than the single lexical item.

Below the study will look at deviation at the linguistic levels to find out how social media neologism violates the rules of Standard English.

3.3.1 GRAPHOLOGICAL DEVIATION

The spelling of a word represents pronunciation and any strangeness in pronunciation will be reflected by a strangeness of written form. According to Leech (1989:47) graphological deviation is the violation of writing systems: 'discarding capital letter and punctuations where conventions call for them, jumbling of words, eccentric use of parentheses. Graphological deviations capture any out of ordinary visual writing systems that might be written. In social media, users deviate graphologically as a way of putting across specific messages. User in social media use symbols and picture that represent a variety of emotions rather than writing the words down. Twitter users use the *emojis* (a small digital image or icon to express an idea or emotion) or *emoticons* (a representation of a facial expression used digitally) to communicate saving the user from writing the actual sentences or utterances.

3.3.1.1 CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

The standard usage of capitalization is clearly stated where, how and when to be used, according to Straus (2007) capitalization is the writing of a word with its first letter in upper case and the rest in lower case. She further explains that ‘capitalize the first letter of the initial word in a document and the first word after a period, and the proper nouns. Graphological deviation may occur as some social media users apply capitalization for different uses and convey specific meanings.

26.

- a. *The movie today was EPIC.*

Capitalization is sometimes used to show emphasis on the capitalized words. In example 27a above emphasis have been put on the word epic to show how extraordinary the movie was. The capitalization captures the eye on the reader too, making them curious as to the importance of the singularly capitalized word.

- b. *Where is KAMBUA? Someone!! Anyone??*

In writing a capitalized word can also be interpreted as shouting or to indicate urgency, in the above example the user is shouting for Kambua and using the capital letter to draw them out.

- c. *KEEP OFF dare I say it again.*

Capitalization can also be used to express emotion of anger, mostly in warning people against something.

In social media punctuation marks are not regarded with seriousness and importance as they are in print media and documentation. Few social media users correctly use them or use them at all, and when they are used they carry more weight than the functions accorded to them.

- d. *?????*

The question marks alone can be used instead of the word why, online users can just post them on someone else’s comment and they would understand they are being asked why.

- e. *My computer crashed!!!*

The exclamation marks can be used to indicate that someone is shouting for help or expressing extreme emotions of frustration or anger drawing attention to their updates. The textual context here helps other users understand that the use of exclamation marks here means the user need help or is trying to express emotions of despair, the other users automatically respond with messages with solutions or express how they relate with the situation or feel sorry for the situation.

3.3.1.2 HASHTAGS AND COLOUR

According to urban dictionary, *hashtag* is a word or phrase preceded by the hash(#) mark used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it. Use of *hashtag* messages on twitter is very popular amongst the users. Twitter application introduced the *hashtag* kind of message which allows the users to track *hashtagged* updated messages as well as allow comment and reply on the same. Once a *hashtag* is created the message turns blue like a link which is clearly visible unlike the other writings which are usually black, this serves to attract the users.

27.

a. *#SomeonetellTanzania*

This hashtag was created in September 2013, after a clip aired in one of the Kenyan TV channels, NTV, where Tanzanian authorities unceremoniously ejected Kenyan teachers from the country, following the crackdown on the Kenyan immigrants in Tanzania. KOT (Kenyans on twitter) created the hashtag to mock Tanzania in general for the action on Kenyan citizens; some of the messages accompanying the hashtag were comic

- i. *'#someonetellTanzania wakale ndio wana run ndunia sio mapenzi'* which meant that the kalenjins, a Kenyan tribe that is very good at athletics are the ones that run the world and not love as one of the Tanzanian musician states in his song. In the example 28(a)i above the word *run* undergoes lexical broadening the concept in which the KOT used the term *run* (act of moving rapidly using the feet) different from how the Tanzanian musician had used

run (act of ruling / leading) . The word therefore has different meaning depending on the context it was used.

b. *#WeareoneKenya*

The above *hashtag* was initially created during the terrorist attack at the westgate shopping mall on 21st September 2013 which resulted to 67 deaths. The *hashtag* was created as a way of sending out messages of comfort and condolences following the happenings as a sign of unity. The hashtag is frequently used especially when addressing issues that affect Kenya as a country. When the *hashtag* was created Kenyans understood the circumstances that led to the creation and thereby used it appropriately, while someone who might not have known of the attack might not have understood what it was used for or misinterpreted it. In this case the context needed for effective communication was a situation that had occurred.



The above image explains how *hashtags* work once it has been created it turns blue clearly visible as it contrast with the other words written in black. Online users are immediately able to click on it as well as tweet using or just follow various topics and discussions under it.

3.3.1.3 *Emoticons and emojis*

Emojis and emoticons are used in communication; people use them to express feeling, emotions that are demonstrated by the icons instead of using words. According to Mignon (2014) in her

article ‘*Emoticons versus emojis*’, emoticons are typographic displays of facial representations, created by a combination of keyboard characters, used to convey emotions in a text. The word *emoticon* is coined from *emotion* + *icon* to form ‘*emoticon*’. *Emojis* on the other hand are cartoon pictures added to a text.

Emojis and emoticons are used universally to communicate they are not unique to twitter, however they make part of twitter language.

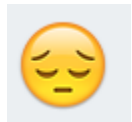
28.

a. *Smiley face* ☺



This is used amongst the online users to express the emotion of happiness instead of writing the actual word. In social media this emoticon could have variant of interpretations all closely related to happiness; one could use it to show approval for something someone has said or done, to show content with an action.

b. *Sad face* ☹



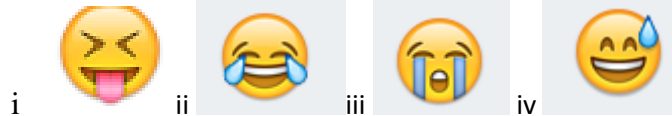
This emoticon is associated with the sad emotion. Social media users could use it to express disappointment, disapproval, or bad mood in general. Without using the actual words the emoticons are able to deliver the expected message to other users.

c. *Shocked face*



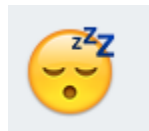
This serves to express shock or disbelief. In social media it can also be used to tease, or feign shock

d. *Laughing face*



This is used to express when something is hilarious. This emoji has tears coming out of both eyes to illustrate that an action or a statement was so funny one laughed until they cried, I laughed until I sweated or go tired. There is a variety of laughing emojis all describing different degree of laughter depending on what the users are communicating about.

e. *Sleepy face*



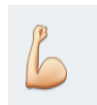
This indicates that a user is sleepy and ready to turn in; it can also be used as a response to someone instead of just saying good night the emoticon is used. This emoticon can also have a different interpretation, it could mean one got bored of a conversation it's putting them to sleep.

f. *Winking smiley face ;-)*



This *emoji* expresses all-knowing look that people would exhibit depending on the accompanying message, it could also be used as a sign of flirtation. The interpretations however depend on the context of use and the relationship between the users.

g. *Flexed arm*



This emoji indicated strength, users can to one another as a sign of encouragement, or acknowledging that someone has really worked hard on something.

h. *Waving hand*



This emoji is used to express different things depending on the context of the communication. This emoji can be used as a sign of simple greeting 'hello'.

It can also be used to mean 'stop', insinuating the user wants the conversation to come to an end.

Emoticons and *emojis* are used in communication and understood, however most of them do not have the desired meaning in isolation and context is need for the intended meaning to be understood. Context could be: the relationship between the users, prior conversation amongst the users. One *emoji or emoticon* can be understood in different ways depending on who it is sent to, a smiley face sent to a friend could be interpreted as the happiness and joy one feels towards their friend, but if sent to an enemy it could have the opposite, it could be sarcastic or contemptuous, meaning the users life isn't affected by the enemy.

3.3.2 PHONOLOGICAL DEVIATION

According to Hyman (1974:1) phonology is the study of sound systems of a language; the study of how speech sound structures and functions in a language. At this level the study will look at how social media neologisms deviate phonologically. Social media is dominated by the youth, who invent their own ways of pronouncing words by shortening or rhyming them using various sound patterns. Short (1969: 55) stresses that because the sound dimension of a language belongs to speech and most of the literature is written, there is relatively little scope for phonological deviation. Phonological deviation, sometimes is seen when written down especially if the deviation cause the spelling to change. Deviation from the normal use of sounds or mispronunciation of sounds may be the result of habit, childish mispronunciation which have never be corrected or they may arise from physical defect (Jones, 1918: 12). Under phonological deviation the study will look into common ways that language of social media, particularly twitter, deviates from the phonology of Standard English.

3.3.2.1 Elision

One of the most popular phonological deviations in twitter is elision; this is omission of syllables or letters from a word for the convenience of pronunciation. Elision can be defined as the "omission of sounds in connected speech " (Crystal, 2003: 158). Similarly, Underhill (1998:61) indicates that "elision is a natural result of the speech organs cutting corners in connected speech, mainly to word boundaries". Crystal (2003:247) states that "a whole syllable may be elided, especially when there is a separated consonant. This can be explained using three stages as illustrated below.

i. Aphesis which is the omission of the initial part of a word or phrase. This occurs easily where the first letter being a vowel then it is dropped and the rest of the syllables remain intact, illustrated by the examples 29a &b below.

29.

- a. *'em* - them
- b. *'bout* - about

ii. Syncope is the omission of the medial part of a word or phrase, as illustrated by the examples 29 c-f below.

- c. *Aiit* – alright
- d. *Ne'er* – never
- e. *Donno* – don't know
- f. *Ama* – am gonna

iii. Apocope is the omission of the final part of a word, illustrated by the examples 29g and h below.

- g. *Oft'* – often
- h. *Opt'* – option

3.3.2.2 Alliteration

Alliteration is repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines, (Frost and Armstrong, 2007) on their article ‘poetic devices’ Some words are pronounced differently from how they are meant to be pronounced this is achieved by shortening or rhyming them. Arp and Johnson (2006:838- 839) state that rhythm concerns any wavelike repeating of motion or sound. Phonological deviation can be achieved through alliteration which is the rhyming of the initial consonants of words in a sentence to bring out an aspect of musicality.

30.

- a. *flim flam* – ‘deception’

This term is used when one manages to cheat people out of their money, a trick get people’s money.

- b. *Slip slop* - ‘intoxicated’

The word above is used one is drunk to an extent they do a lot of silly things they wouldn’t do in their sober state.

3.3.2.3 Consonance

Frost and Armstrong (2007) state that consonance is repeated consonant sounds at the ending of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. This is an element that brings forth rhythm, which is the rhyming of the final letter of words in a line. These words formed through consonance aspects of rhythm and musicality. When social media users create these words their prowess in creativity and rhythm is noticed by other users. This is demonstrated by the examples below,

31.

- a. *Slang whang* – ‘nonsense’

- b. *Hum drum* – ‘bore/ monotonous’

3.3.3 MORPHOLOGICAL DEVIATION

This level deals with morphology, morphology deals with the grammar of words, (Leech, 1969:44). This study is investigating words that are formed and used in social media, and just like the Standard English words social media neologisms have similar structure. Martin and Sims (2010:1) state that morphology is the study of the internal structure of words. Words are made up of morphemes; morphemes are the building blocks for words. The morphemes that can stand freely on their own as words are called free morphemes. But some morphemes are not free and are called bound morpheme. According to Leech (1976:44) morphological deviation is a deviation in how words are formed. In Standard English there are word-forming processes that social media neologisms are deviant of. The possibility of producing a morphological deviation is by adding to a word an affix (a bound morpheme) that is not normally added to a word. In twitter, affixation is common, although some affixes added to serve to manipulate the word to express what the user wants to refer to and these words are understood amongst the users.

32.

- a. *Bootyless* – with a small posterior.
- b. *Bootyful* - with a big posterior.
- c. *Twitterhollic* – addicted to twitter.
- d. *Feelanga* – ‘boastful’

Morphological deviation in twitter can occur when users break the morphological rules by inventing completely new morphemes which are not Standard English. These words are used over and over until the users become conversant with them and they can understand and communicate effectively using the words.

- e. *Tweep* – twitter people (users)

Amongst the social media users the people on twitter are referred to as *tweeps* to identify them with tis specific social networking platform.

- f. *Dweeps* – drunk tweets.

Social media users especially in Kenya have tendencies to engage in online activities while have drinks and sometimes update their locations and the

activities they are engaged in. When the messages seem silly or do not make sense they are then referred to as *dweeps*.

g. *Tweepup* – meet up for *tweeps*.

This term is used when twitter people (*tweep*) are having a meeting physical or virtual.

Morphological deviation on twitter can occur through the use of *hashtag* messages. The *hashtagged* message is formed like a compound but the combination of several independent words form one very long word which is interpreted as a sentence not as a single word, each word carries a meaning different from the other.

h. *#kenyamycountrymyhome*

This is a *hashtag* created for patriotic Kenyans, to show the love for their country. It is normally used when Kenya has an accomplishment that the citizens feel proud to be associated with.

i. *#turndownforwhatYOLO*

This *hashtag* is normally used for the party occasions, ‘*turn down for what*’ simply means one will not miss an event for whatever reason and *YOLO* means you only live once. The combination of those words translates to one has only one life to live therefore any opportunity to enjoy it should not be wasted.

j. *#nyumbakumiinitiative*

The *hashtag* was created after a proposed initiative where every ten houses would have a headman who would be required to know everyone who lives within his sphere of influence and what they do. This was proposed after terrorist attacks in Kenya and the idea was for the residents to take charge of their security by keeping watch of one another in case of any suspicious or unusual happenings.

3.3.4 LEXICAL DEVIATION

The most obvious lexical deviation is neologism, especially a nonce-formation. Nonce formation is the invention of new words made up for the nonce: for a single occasion (Leech, 1969: 42). Some words formed in social media are occasion words and are viewed as deviations from

Standard English. The occasion neologisms are sometimes created if the speaker cannot remember a particular word, so it is coined as an alternative approximation, or is constrained by circumstances to produce a new form.

33.

- a. *Staycation* – vacation at home due to financial constraints.

This term is used when one is confined to their house due to lack of money to indulge in travels. Such a word may be created by users due to lack of a better word to express their situation.

- b. *Sossion* – ‘threaten’ ‘*dont sossion me*’

This word is common amongst Kenyans, it is the name of a person, and he is the Kenya national union of teachers (KNUT) chairman who is popular for fighting for teachers and issuing threats to the government so that the teachers’ demands can be met. Such a term however is limited to the Kenyan context.

Lexical deviation can occur from functional conversion. It is the process of converting a word from one grammatical class to another, this process is common in literary language (Short, 1969: 46). In the case of conversions users do not form new words but use language’s existing vocabulary only differently from they are originally used.

- c. *follow* – ‘acquitted with someone on twitter’

In twitter the term is used to mean you have an online relationship (friendship) where one is able to view the tweets of those the follow and therefore it is not just used in literal sense.

- d. *needle neck* – ‘really skinny person’

This is a term used to describe someone who appears thin, it act as an adjective instead of a noun to mean the neck of a needle used in sewing.

- e. *harder* – ‘someone who is physically appealing’

The above term is not used as verb to mean extra effort but rather as an adjective to describe someone’s physical appearance, hence changing the word class.

Lexical deviation in social media can be achieved through words that belong to a different variety of English. Twitter users especially in Kenya include the Kenyan variety of English which is code mixed with the natural languages.

f. *Madodology* – ‘a meal made of beans’

The word above is used in Kenyan context to refer to a type of food, formed from a Kiswahili word *madodo* (cooked bean) and an English suffix – *logy*. The interest with the word lies in the fact that it easily made and sold very cheaply, it can be served as stew or just by itself. Mostly people prefer this kind of meal when they don’t have or don’t want to spend a lot of money on food. This word if used away from the Kenyan context might not make any sense at all; it is therefore Kenyan context bound.

g. *Kimenyazation* – ‘favoritism’

This is a word formed from a combination of a Kenyan Bantu language: Kimeru, *Kimenya* (knowing) and the English suffix –*anization*, it is a word referring to a form of corruption favoritism. The word is especially used in the job sectors where people get employed because they know someone senior hence the word *kimenyanization* is used.

h. *M-boree* – ‘a boring person’

This a word formed through affixation the *m-* is a prefix from Kiswahili to refer to the second or third person and the English word *bore* and suffix –*e* here is used as an adjective marker. The word is used in a situation where someone is extremely boring.

3.3.5 SYNTACTICAL DEVIATION

This linguistic level is concerned with syntax: sentence constructions. According to William et al (1997:181) syntax is concerned with components of grammar; a system of rules and categories that underlies sentence formation in human language. They further elaborate that the arrangement of elements that make up a phrase is regulated by a special type of grammatical mechanism called phrase structure rule: which stipulates the position of specifiers (words that give precise meaning to the heads), heads (nouns) and complements (adjectives).

Syntactical deviation in twitter occurs because messages deviate from the phrase structure rule by having unusual word order as compared to the standard word order in English which follows the subject, verb, object rule. In twitter, the 140 character messages drive the users to construct sentences that are not standard as a way of economizing on the words.

34.

- a. *she, me, we happening.* – she and I are showing up for an event

The word order in the above sentence deviates from the Standard English order, the elements used to represent the subject of the sentence she, me and are redundant as they refer to the same thing and there is lacks a linking verb between we and happening to make it standard English construction. In social media however this construction is understood and it effectively communicates.

- b. *I ain't never going back.* – ‘I am never going back’

This construction has use of double negation, which is not necessary in Standard English; however in social media user may opt for this to express sternness in their statement.

As mentioned above phrase structure rule stipulates the position of particular words in a sentence, therefore, syntactical deviation can realized in social media through use of certain word class in a position reserved for different word classes; a noun can be used in place of an adjective an adverb in a sentence for the same effects as the adjective.

- c. *You are model tall* – ‘you are quite tall’

In the model business height is one of the requirements, when a reference such as above is made its means that one is tall. The word model is a noun acting as degree adverb to explain how tall someone is.

- d. *You are kibaki silent* – ‘ you have gone very quiet’

Kibaki, the former president of Kenya had a tendency to remain silent a midst crisis, and addressed the public after things had cooled down. When that statement is made it insinuates one is silent in a situation where otherwise is expected of them. Kibaki in the above construction is a noun acting as an adverb.

e. *Ages ago* - 'a week ago'

In the above construction the word *ages* is a noun and is used in the place of an adverb *week*. Adverbs of degree appear before the word they are intensifying, this is to put emphasis on the length of the duration in reference.

3.3.6 SEMANTIC DEVIATION

This level deals with the semantics of a language. William et al (1997:268) observes that semantics is the study of meaning in human language. The meaning of words is interpreted according to how they are used in an utterance; however, some words can be used in a misleading way: as such a participant has to think deep to understand the intended meaning.

Semantic deviation can be termed as 'non-sense' or absurdity; understanding meaning relations which are logically inconsistent or paradoxical in some way. Semantic deviation shows that an ordinary word can have an extraordinary meaning, and that a word can have difference in meaning according to use, meaning is not in evidence at first sight one has to look for it, (Leech, 1969:48). In social media, the use of semantically deviant language may be intentional or accidental. Users may update messages that seem too exaggerated in meaning or sketchy so that the other users can try and unravel the meaning intended.

Elements of semantic deviation make the users search for the hidden meaning in communication. Some expressions used in social media are semantically incompatible but serve to bring out a specific meaning that may or may not be obvious to all the users. Figurative language is mostly used to bring out semantic deviation such as similes and metaphors.

According to Hawkes (1972:1) figurative language is language which doesn't mean what it says in contrast to literal meaning which is intended to be taken as purely denotative. In social media use of figurative language can bring about semantic deviation; as in some cases words are used to mean different or opposite of the meaning encoded. Elements of figurative language are used as illustrated below.

Leech (1969) states that semantic deviation deals with tropes: foregrounded irregularities of content, according to him they are classified largely into three sections; semantic oddity, transference of meaning and honest deception.

3.3.6.1 Semantic oddity

This is semantic bizarreness of expression; pleonasm, periphrasis and tautology bring about the element of semantic redundancy while oxymoron and paradox have the element of absurdity. These tropes all entail irreconcilable element of meaning or reference.

3.3.6.1.1 Pleonasm

An expression which is semantically redundant in that it merely repeats the meaning contained elsewhere, either precedes or follows it, (Leech, 1969:62). In social media this is shown by use of extra words to explain the meaning or get across an idea for the purpose of clarifying or emphasis. Plett (2010), in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, states that as a rhetorical figure, pleonasm gives an utterance an additional semantic dimension.

35.

- a. *This minute in time I am super elated* - instead of ‘now I am super elated’
- b. *She is my younger baby sister* - ‘she is my younger sister or my baby sister’

3.3.6.1.2 Periphrasis

An expression which is of unnecessary length, in that the meaning it conveys could have been expressed more briefly by a single word, (ibid: 62). Holcomb and Killingsworth (2010) say that periphrasis occurs when a single word is replaced by several others to form a longer phrase that names the same thing. In social media such messages as below may be encountered especially when users can’t find the specific words that are simpler and would bring forth precise meaning, and other online users use the lengthy statement for superfluous and at times for dramatic effects.

36.

- a. *My cousin’s mother is ill* – my aunty is ill

- b. *The president who was in power before Uhuru was Kibaki* – the former president is Kibaki.

3.3.6.1.3 Tautology

This entails a statement which is vacuous because self-evidently true, (ibid: 61). Tautology constructions, have users including in sentence constructions word that are obvious and do not need explanations. According to Waterhouse (2010) in *Waterhouse on Newspaper Style*, tautology is an unnecessary elaboration, pointless repetition, superfluous description, a needless appendage or a self-cancelling proposition. Tautology is using of two synonyms within the same sentence, and it is conceptually uninformative, however, in some cases the very repetition of an item carries additional meaning.

37.

- a. *I don't know what killed the dead rat* – 'I don't know what killed the rat'.
- b. *My new nephew is a boy*- obviously a nephew is a boy'.
- c. *He is his father's son* – 'he is very much like his father'

The examples 37a and b above the tautology used is not informative, it is rather obvious that if something is killed it is dead and a nephew can only mean a boy, however, in example 37c the case of tautology serves to emphasize the strong similarity between the father and the son.

3.3.6.1.4 Oxymoron

Oxymoron is the yoking together of two expressions which are semantically incompatible, so that in combination they can have no conceivable literal reference to reality, (ibid: 61). In social media this is used by a way of combining contradictions; ideas that are on the opposite end to create an extreme effect on the other users. Abram (2009: 239) asserts that oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two words of seeming contradictions are placed together in language unit.

38.

a. *Last night we had some serious fun.*

The words serious and fun are on the extremes of one another and using them together brings out the sense of incompatibility. In social media such words serious fun can be used to however express the degree of fun being referred to, it could mean too much fun.

b. *What's with her today she is icy hot!*

Icy hot are the opposite of one another, however, in social media this can be used to describe someone's mood, one minute she is distant and reserved the other she is bad tempered and irritating.

3.3.6.1.5 Paradox

A statement which is absurd because self-evidently false, (ibid: 61). In social media paradox is used through messages that are self-contradicting in nature or that lead to contradictions without seeming to. Users who are updating the messages may or may not be aware of the contradictions in their messages. Short (1996:43) states that paradox is a character of semantic deviation which has "inconsistent semantic relation". The inconsistency of meaning in paradoxical statements mostly has hidden meaning for the users to infer.

39.

a. *He is an honest liar.*

This statement is self-contradicting, such that a person who is said to be honest can't be a liar and a liar can't be an honest person, however, this can be used to mean that the person of interest here doesn't shy away from admitting he is a liar, thereby making him honest.

b. *Of the two chics (girls) she is the dude (man).*

The contraction here is that a girl cannot be a man. This statement can be used to mean that amongst the three girls the one of the exhibits characters associated with men: she could be protective of the rest, toughest amongst them, or physically masculine despite being a girl.

3.3.6.2 Transference of meaning

Transfer of meaning deals with tropes of figurative language. Leech (1981: 37) describes transfer of meaning as ‘tampering with the rules of the language and playing language games.’ Figurative usage of the language is a major source of linguistic creativity. Social media users apply figures of speech in their language to enhance the beauty and value of their work.

3.3.6.2.1 Synecdoche

This is used as a technical term to refer to the rhetorical figure in which ‘one word receives something from another, which is internally associated with it by the connection of two ideas’ (Bullinger, 1968: 613). A synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part is used to represent the whole or the whole is used to represent a part. In social media this used users apply this without their knowledge yet they are able to communicate and be understood. Laham (1969:97) states that synecdoche is the substitution of a part for the whole, genus for species vice versa.

40.

a. *My new wheels rock.*

The word wheels are used as a part to represent the whole by some of the components of a car. The statement thereby is about someone talking praise about their new car. The sense of the word *wheel* undergoes lexical broadening in this case, it doesn’t refer to just a part of the car but the car itself.

b. *Nairobi is dope.*

Nairobi here is a whole representing a part, in this case the word Nairobi is not used to refer to the entire Nairobi County but some part of Nairobi that one found fascinating. If a person visited Runda and found it beautiful then would make such a statement. The word Nairobi undergoes narrowing, in that *Nairobi is dope* means a part of Nairobi (Runda – an estate in Nairobi) is dope, a more specific sense of the word.

c. *He was chained by city council.*

City council is a local authority governing the town and cities around Kenya they apprehend the wrong doers within the towns and cities, city council here is a whole

representing a part, an officer or two and not the entire city council body. With reference to lexical pragmatic theory, the word *city council* undergoes lexical narrowing, it doesn't mean the entire organization of city council apprehended someone; city council in a more specific sense is used to represent an officer under the council.

3.3.6.2.2 Metonymy

The idea of metonymy is the use of a single characteristic or name of an object or item to identify and associate an entire object or related object. Wilden (1997:198) says metonymy consist in using for the name of a thing or relationship, an attribute, a suggested sense, or something closely related , such effect for sense; the imputed relationship being that of contiguity. In social media, users sometimes substitute the name or an attribute of a thing or idea for that of the thing, item or idea they mean to communicate, this occurs when some users lack the precise name of the item or idea the wanted to communicate and opt for a related idea.

41.

- a. *College girls are blonde and gold-diggers* – ‘college girls are shallow and only after money’

Someone might have an experience with a college girl who was shallow-minded and only after money from men, hence made the assumption that every college girl has similar traits hence the statement. Attributing the qualities of a single object to a group of related objects.

- b. *Kill the books, that's your future* – ‘work hard education, that is your future’

Books are related to and associated with education, when the statement above is made it doesn't literary mean books are the future but emphasizes the importance of hard work in education process for a better future.

For metonymy to be effectively understood it undergoes lexical broadening, an attribute associated with an object is used generally to associate with all the members of related objects. In examples 41a above the words blonde and gold-diggers are true descriptions of ‘some’ girls

but not all hence referring to all college girls as such, broadening occurs. In example 41 b books have been broadened to mean education and not singularly the concept of books.

3.3.6.2.3 Metaphor

This is the term used when contrasting something directly to something else because the exhibit similar traits. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) the essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. Social media users may use a term in reference of something else invoking a direct similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described.

42.

- a. *She is a light skin much* – ‘boastful and has self-importance in her character’

Light skin is a word that originated with the girls who have a very light complexion, they are deemed to be very self-centered and very proud due to the attention they receive from people. The word light skin is not limited to girls or people with the light complexion but is given anyone who exhibit the traits associate with them, inclusive of males, as well as other complexions.

- b. *Alice is so blonde* – ‘Alice is dumb or shallow’

The term blonde is western that initially was given to people with natural blonde hair; they were deemed as shallow- minded. The word blonde today is global it is used to describe people who are shallow-minded regardless of the colour of their hair.

Metaphors undergo broadening, in example 42a&b *lightskin* and *blonde* are not used literary but used to show that the ladies in reference are not *blonde* or *lightskin* in colour but exhibit traits or properties that are similar to the encoded meaning of *blonde* and *lightskin*.

3.3.6.3 Honest deception

This section deals with tropes that leech (1969) says, ‘they are all connected in the sense that they misrepresent the truth; Hyperbole, litotes, and irony. All the three have to do with twisting the intended meaning of utterances and statements.

3.3.6.3.1 Hyperbole

The above distorts an utterance or information by saying too much, (Leech, 1969: 66). Hyperbole relies on an intentional and obvious exaggeration for the sake of emphasis or to show how serious something is, in social media users can use exaggeration to draw attention to their messages as other users might be curious to understand the message posted.

43.

- a. *I died and came back in that lecture* – ‘the lecture was boring’
- b. *A million apologies for my actions* – ‘being very remorseful for an action done’

Hyperboles due to exaggeration allow the communicated concept to depart much further from the encoded concept Human being have the ability to know what is real and not through broadening, hence they are able to infer with hyperbole the closest real interpretation close to the encoded meaning of a word or an utterance.

3.3.6.3.2 Litotes

This is an understatement that distorts information by saying too little, (ibid: 66), it is an understatement, in the sense that it diminishes the designated object or its qualities for reasons. Litotes in social media are used when users want to stay humble, modest or euphemistic.

44.

- a. *Chilled at pizza-inn, only had a bite of pizza*
- b. *We had one bottle for the road.*

The above example ‘had a bite of pizza’ is most unlikely that one only had a bite of pizza, the person is just being modest about how much pizza they had, ‘one bottle for the road is also most unlikely especially when more than one person is involved in social drinking, the person here is trying to be euphemistic and not revealing the amount of alcohol that was consumed. Litotes just like hyperbole undergoes lexical broadening, *a bite of pizza* and *a bottle for the road*, in examples 44a&b, are used to mean several bites and bottles respectively.

3.3.6.3.3 Irony

Chandler (2002:134) states that irony reflects the opposite of the feelings or thoughts of the speaker or writer or the opposite of the truth about external reality. Irony, therefore, is portraying the opposite of what is expected or saying something contrary to what is meant. This sometimes is difficult to interpret especially in written form. In social media, an *emoji* or *emoticon* can be used as clue. Irony though, is not always identified, some take it literally leading to misunderstandings and others are able to identify and interpret it appropriately.

45.

- a. *Kinya is stand-up and honest like a Kenyan politician* – ‘Kinya is not forthright or honest’
- b. *You have dry jokes, you cut for Churchill* – ‘you are not funny and you can’t make as a comedian in Churchill’s comedy show’

Examples 45a and b are used ironically, what is said is the opposite of what is said. In 45a above Kinya is described as having characteristics of a Kenyan politician who are known to be very dishonest, therefore there is irony in Kinya being said to be honest. The user means the opposite of what he says. In 45b dry joke are not funny and hence there is no chance of the person being referred here joining a comedy show. Irony, the encoded meaning of what the user wants other users to understand is opposite of communicated concept, a context is needed for the irony to be effective.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Through analysis of social media language, using the linguistic levels of analysis, it is evident that it deviates from the Standard English. Deviations are evident from different levels. These levels reveal that these deviations in social media are used for the purpose of convenience in communication either in pronunciation, meaning or length of messages. Social media is mainly popular amongst the youth who device their own way of communicating. These neologisms are formed for the purpose of communicating and can be effectively understood by the users. The language cuts across other linked sites. This analysis will help in the next chapter determine whether these neologisms are more effective in communicating as opposed to standard English.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEOLOGISMS IN SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has looked into how the neologisms in social media are formed as well as given examples. Due to technological advancements, language evolves and therefore, new neologisms are constantly produced and used. When neologisms are used over time, some English social media neologisms and their meaning are adopted into the Standard English and become part of the language

Social media neologisms are part of social language that is used in communication. Hollander, (1967) observed that language is the strikingly distinctive attribute of man. It is acquired from contact with human beings and consists of symbolized meanings which act as sources of stimulation and mediators of responses. The language of social media is also learnt through contact with other online users. When users are exposed to new social media neologisms through frequency of interaction online, the meaning becomes very easy to deduce. Kreech, et al (1962) expressed their opinion that it would be difficult to overstate the importance of language in the affairs of man. They gave three major functions of language: firstly, language is the primary vehicle of communication; secondly, language reflects both personality of the individual and the culture of his society. Thirdly, language makes possible for growth and transmission of culture, continuity of societies and effective functioning and control of social groups. Just as language is necessary for communication amongst physical communities so it is for the virtual communities (online communities). Alike people form interaction groups and there is transmission of cultural values and through use of language online, social groups are also formed to discuss issues that cut across the groups. In this chapter the study aims at identifying factors that influence production and usage of social media neologisms and later the effectiveness of social media neologisms. Social media offers many different functions, and users are attracted to these platforms according to their needs below the study will touch on elements that attract users online.

4.2 THE ATTRACTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media appeals to the most personal parts of users lives, and connects them to the world beyond their private circumstances; as a result media in general is a major force in society, (Turow, 2010). Social media attracts all kinds of people for different purposes. There are a variety of social networking sites for different purposes. The choice of a particular social platform depends on how it is suited to the user's needs. Many people have online profiles in more than one social site, if a user likes taking and posting picture, Instagram will be useful to them, if the user likes more news related affairs and keeping up with current happenings, Facebook and twitter are better suited. Below are some of the common reasons users choose to participate in online activities.

4.2.1 Linkage and Conversational currency

According to Kabani (2010) the first reason why people join social networking is identity; to showcase who they are, second being to connect with others and build relationships and third is community. Social media is a platform that is able to join different element of society that are not directly connected; people of different gender, age, ethnic origin who would never have connected save for social media are brought together due to their common goals. Social networking site users are able to link up with friends, old and new, create interest groups, share message, photos and videos as a way of keeping up with each other. However, there are negative effects of social media that may directly or indirectly affect the social media users such as hackers, who access user's personal content and use them maliciously. There is cyber bulling where online users attack some of the users and especially among the youth, it can affect them psychologically, therefore leading to depression and low self-esteem, suicidal tendencies and anti-social behaviors. When social media is used carefully to connect with people, meaningful relationships can be created but this can only happen if the social media users are careful on the personal content they display and who they share it with.

On the other hand, social networking site provide a common ground for social conversations as many people use thing they see, hear or read for discussions with others, creating para-social relationships 'developing feelings of kinships and friendships with social characters'. Through these interactions social media users adopt new and current language as well as behavior and

values of the people they interact with. The social media neologisms produced and used in one social site easily find their way in other related social sites. Conversational currency is created by people who share their enthusiasm for a topic, especially a conversation with peers. Social media users are able to keep up with new neologisms as they are produced and are able to use them effectively in communication.

4.2.2 Cognition

According to Guenther (1997) human cognition is an inquiry into how people acquire and use knowledge. There are many different avenues through which human beings get information from. Through the interaction via social networking sites online users become knowledgeable. Social media is a source of information and it's in human nature to desire to be knowledgeable about the world around them. It is through the social networking sites that people are able to get informed on all kinds of news. Social media users join the social platforms to keep up with current affairs on other individuals in the world, keep up with the latest activities socially such as language, fashion, arts and to get business ideas and products.

A communication situation is one which a sender has a message they intend to convey to a receiver, such conveying can occur in many different ways and through many different media, however, among human beings language is the most usual medium, (Hockett 1963). Social media users post informational material for other users to benefit from, how the information acquired from social media is used depends on individual users and their interpretation of the same.

4.2.3 Diversion and Dissociation

Diversion is a basic human need to draw attention from the real world and take interest in a variety of other activities. Blumer and Katz (1974) in 'use and gratification theory' (UGT) suggested that media is motivated by needs and goals that are defined by audience and that active participation in the communication process may facilitate, limit or otherwise influence gratification and effects associated with exposure. UGT gives the consumer power to discern what media they consume with the assumption that the user has clear intent and use. When social media users go online they already know what they intend to achieve. Diversion is one of

humans needs 'taking a break from the world'. Diversion may take various forms, first, simulation or taking relieve from boredom or basic routines activities of everyday life. In social media this is successful through engaging in group chats, viewing others profiles for pictures and videos as while as engaging directly with other online users through direct messages (DM). Secondly, social media offers relaxation or escape from the pressures and problems of day to day existence. Thirdly, emotional release of pent up emotions and energy is achieved through update messages as well pictures and videos sharing with other users to express their current moods and situations. Fourthly, social media is a social utility that enables social integrative needs such as, the need to strengthen our ties with family friend and others in society.

In different situations, people use social media to create a barrier between themselves and the people around them physically. In Kenyan context, it easy to observe that when people board a '*matatu*', several people use their mobile phones, they dissociate themselves by engaging in social activities online rather than having physical conversations with the other passenger. Teenagers too, tend to be always engaged in their mobile phone and instead of sharing or communication with the people around them. Other instance some people have been said to have committed suicide and people around them were not aware or couldn't see any suicidal tendencies, only to realize that the departed had left suicide notes online, suggesting people sometimes prefer self-expression of their inner thoughts, feelings and opinions digitally.

4.2.4 Affiliation and entertainment

Affiliation is individual counterpart to the linkage function, the need, desire or sense of belonging or involvement within a social group. Users go online for the need to identify with other users for self-importance and gratification. The today life is busy such that individuals may not have the opportunity to interact physically with people as they would like, social networking sites provided an alternative form of interaction at individuals' comfort. This is possible because online users can be logged in while anywhere in the world and be able to communicate with other online users. Samovar et al (2010:163) states that individuals acquire and develop identities through interaction with others in their cultural group. Social media users interact with other users whom they believe to have something in common with and develop relationships online that might not have been possible in the physically. Through interaction, users are kept

entertained through the shared pictures and videos posted online, comic updates, shared stories and experiences and discussions amongst the social media users. In the social networking sites individuals are able to display their personality through their posts and messages, entertaining other users. There are users who specialize in comedy such as their posts are always comic and not to be taken seriously, others are bloggers on real-time event and are informative; they link documents that interested users can use for further information.

4.3 IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites are developed for difference reasons that appeal to a wide range of online users as identified earlier in this study, and in order to accomplish any activities in social media language must be used. But language serves not only to express and share ideas and thoughts with other people but also allows users to convey their emotions and relieve stress. Samovar et al (2010:26) states that not only does language allow the members of a culture to share ideas, feeling and information but it is also one of the chief methods for the transmission of culture. Online users acquire online habits, in twitter for a user to be relevant they have to post messages frequently and the frequency means that the user is constantly visible to the other users and the more prominent they become.

Ethnic identity is also derived, in part, from language, it helps creates and reinforce a sense of mutual identity amongst users. In social media you will find that people of similar ethnic origin are in the same circles of communication. Language usage also serves to organize people into groups according to factors such as age, gender and even socio-income level. In social media there are groups formed by age mates, or particular gender to enable them to discuss issues that affect them and come up with ways of dealing with the issues that are unique to them. Therefore some terminologies or neologisms are unique or can be easily identified as belonging to a particular group of users. When language groups people, a shared vocabulary allows a group to record and preserve past events, albeit often with selective interpretation. These recordings of the vocabulary provides the group with a communal history which, when passed onto new generations, becomes a unifying force. Hudson (1993) states that speech is an important factor in socialization, not only through the information that is used to impart, but also the concept which

it requires the children to identify as meaning for linguistic items they learn from other people's speeches. The language of social media serves not only to produce, transfer and share neologisms but also to pass on the meaning embedded in the neologisms, users acquire meaning of new neologisms as well as share meaning, for the personal neologisms they create, to other users online.

4.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA NEOLOGISMS

Social media neologisms are produced for the purpose of communication amongst the online users. For communication to be effective there must be understanding between the participants in a communication process. Social media neologisms as chapter three indicates are produced through different word formation processes and they also deviate usage of Standard English. Communication in social media is understood by the users, and below are indicators that they are effective.

4.4.1 Quick transfer of information

Computer mediated communication has increased both the ease and the speed of communication. Communication is fast between participants. According to Nahwha (2012) in his article 'Social media and the speed of communication' what used to take days and sometimes weeks to traverse a landscape, is now tweeted within seconds to millions of people all over the world. He further stated that, over the last decade, this has been mainly perpetuated by the Internet and the rise of social media and has since transformed the old school means of communication into a colossal social media monster, *tweeting* the words. Social media facilitates a very quick avenue for message transfer and response amongst participants, and with the use of social media neologisms even the art of composing a message has also become fast. Production of abbreviation and acronyms which are very popular saves on time. The users do not have to write a complete words or sentences to be understood. Twitter particularly ensures that the user masters the art of brevity due to the 140- character rule that forces the users to clip their words in order to communicate. Use of hash tags also facilitates quickness as the user doesn't have to worry about spacing the words as they communicate. It is hence fast to write the shortened form of the words or phrase or

the *hashtagged* versions than the full correct forms, this aspect, users keeps finding new ways of coming up with shortened neologisms to suit communication in social media. In examples 46a-c below the abbreviated forms are clearly easier to write than their complete forms.

46.

- a. *Ikr* - I know right
- b. *#TGIF* - Thank God it's Friday.
- c. *#Icantkeepcalmitsmyb/day* – I can't keep calm It's my birthday.

4.4.2 Avoidance of grammar and spelling conventions

With Standard English users have to obey the rules of the language in order to communicate effectively, spelling, punctuation, sentence structures and the right combinations of words in order to bring out the desired meaning. There is a specific word order that is allowed in English, there are some combinations that are not possible in Standard English. Social media neologisms defy most of the rule yet they are able to be effective. Trubek (2010) in her article 'Should we care about grammar and spelling on twitter?' states that we are living in a moment of seismic linguistic change, rules change as cultures and people do. Changing language signals evolution, not degradation and attention should be paid, but not to errors. 'Mistakes' on Twitter are what signal the changing culture. With twitter the users have to pick words that are effective for their short messages to be effectively understood, the sentence structures that ensure brevity of messages. Social media neologism as the study notes in chapter three deviates from the Standard English word formation and the change is visibly noticeable through spelling and pronunciation. Social media users get away with spelling errors and punctuation mistakes. Through the neologisms even users who are not conversant with the rules of grammar are not left out as they are not limited by the conventions of grammar. This attracts many online users to participate in conversations and other activities online without the fear of criticism and also come with neologisms of their own.

47.

- a. *Ne'er I dint speak to ha.* – Never I didn't speak to her.

- b. *Luotide* – Luo (Kenyan tribe) attitude (clipped to ‘tude) ‘Someone with a proud and boastful attitude’

Example 47b above is a word formed through compounding; under clippings. In the Kenyan context users who are not good in English have the option of using the Kenyan variety of English in communication. *Luotide* amongst Kenyans is associated with the Luo community who are very confident, vocal and very proud of their accomplishments and are not shy about making them public. If someone exhibits the same character, Luo, and especially one from other ethnic communities, this word is at times used to refer to them. The meaning of *luotide* is broadened

4.4.3 Age

Hudson (1980) pointed out that speakers make a very subtle use of the language variability that is available to them; it allows speakers to locate themselves in a multi-dimensional society. He continued further to say, age like gender, profession, social class, and geographical and ethnic origin has been established as one of the factors that locates us in society and causes language variation. In English language certain terminology that one uses can easily mark one as old or young. In Kenyan context older generation would use a word such as ‘smoking marijuana’ while the younger urban generation would use ‘rolling a joint/ smoking pot’ to make reference to the same thing. Most of all the social networking sites are western inventions and technologies and when they are incorporated into the Kenyan culture the youth acquire the language that comes with these inventions. The youth like to associate themselves with a language deemed to be prestigious as compared to the variety of Kenyan English. The youth will use words such as below:

48.

- a. *Gerrahhia* – get out of here (as pronounced by the African-Americans).

The word above, formed through compounding: an infusion of clipping and affixation, can be used by a youth in social media to dismiss someone on grounds of being impolite or out of topic, to discontinue a conversation, instead of getting into an argument. An older person may use a different word for the same purpose such as, ‘grow up’ or ‘I can’t deal with you right now’

- b. *Isorait* – it's alright (as pronounced by the African-Americans).

Example b, formed through compounding: an infusion of clipping and affixation, would also be used the youth as an equivalent of 'don't worry' especially if someone tries to justify something they have wronged someone instead of directly apologizing.

4.4.4 Gender

Language is part of gender identity. According to West & Zimmerman, (1987) gender is not something we were born with, and not something we have, but something we do. Gender however is not to be confused with sex; sex is a biological categorization of primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Sex is therefore determined before and after birth while gender it is role taken by different sex as assigned by society. Women and men use language differently, both in word choice and behaviorally. According to Coates, (2004:86) men and women develop differentiated communicative competence, such that their conversational behavior suggests that they have a different understanding of how utterances are done, suggesting that there is gender-differentiated conversational style. Women tend to ask more question, listen more, use supportive speech behavior and are generally very vocal and chatty. Men on the other hand, are more prone to interrupt and to assert their opinion, and are poor listener and generally they are less vocal. The differences between women's and men's language is even more pronounced, women tend to be dramatic with words and employ more horrific terms and the two genders often use different words to say the same thing. In social media some neologisms are forms, used and are popular amongst member of particular gender.

49.

- a. *Fossils* – 'a really old man in a relationship with a girl fit to be his granddaughter'.
b. *Sponsors* – 'An older man who maintains a girl's lavish lifestyle regardless of the age'
c. *Beast*- 'a powerful and expensive car'

The usage words in example 49a and b are prominent amongst women in Kenyan context this is facilitated by many groups formed on face book that only allow female user to be members:

‘Kilimani mums’, ‘Vuteni stool niwape udaku’, and frequently used by them on social media. With the recent raise of Kenyan dating sites such as ‘sugar dating’ which are publically advertised in social networking sites, young Kenyan girls are in search of enviable lifestyles and older men who are well off to finance and sustain their lifestyles. The male gender would use words such as sugar mummy/daddy. Example 49c is used by men, who talk about and are very interested in huge ‘masculine’ vehicles and machines. This was after the visit of the United States of America’s president to Kenya with a heavily humored vehicle referred to as the beast, the name gained prominent amongst Kenyans especially the men.

4.4.5 Ease of understanding

Standard English words have specific meaning which can be found in a dictionary and are meant to be used in a specific manner, if they are used wrongly used in a construction they could alter the meaning of an utterance or not convey the intended meaning. Hong-mei (2010) the popularity of internet English is mainly reflected in its word-formation of compounding and derivation, thus a net user understands the meaning of the affixes, they can infer and grasp a large amount of neologisms derived from them quickly. He further states that, therefore, the great use of derivations and compounding makes internet English popular and easy to understand. Not only the derived and compounded social media neologisms that are easily produced and understood, but also the ‘occasion’ neologisms that are produced during a particular period and are easily understood amongst the literate and the illiterate in social media.

50.

a. #SomeonetellCNN

In Kenya shortly before Obama’s visit Kenyans on twitter (KOT) responded heavily to CNN after Kenya was referred to as a ‘hotbed of terror’ to which a *hashtag* was created to hit back at CNN demanding an apology, criticizing CNN as well as highlighting all the good sides of Kenya in defense of the reference. This kind of neologism is easy to understand as it focuses on the happening events which are clear to everyone therefore there is no need to dig for deeper meanings of the *hashtag*.

b. #mugowawairimu

This hashtag was created using the names of a quack doctor who sedated and raped his female patients who sought after medical attention in his hospital within Nairobi environs. The hashtags appeared shortly after the documented exposé by one of the local news station in Kenya was aired, where KOT expressed their bitterness towards the inhumane act and urging the police to take the matter with expected seriousness, and for Mugo wa Wairimu to be apprehended.

4.4.6 Meaning impact

Social media neologisms are at times is created and used to complement Standard English, especially when users feel that the meaning communicated by the Standard English words doesn't have the impact in terms of meaning as anticipated, therefore they come up with an alternative word that will effectively drive the point home. Other times neologisms are used in social media as euphemisms for the alternative Standard English words that users may not be comfortable with as they are considered impolite, therefore they use a neologism to bring out the sense of politeness. According to William et al (1997:554) euphemism is the avoidance of words which may be seen as offensive, obscene or somehow disturbing to the listener or reader. There are some topics in social media that make many users uncomfortable, but using the right neologisms makes it possible for the online user to still have the same discussions. Neologisms can also be used to exclude a group of users, the younger generation may use neologisms to have discussion about topics and the older generation may have no idea what they are talking about.

51.

- a. *Fleek* – ‘awesome or fabulous’
- b. *Nasty* – ‘incredibly mean’

The above examples 51a and b are, formed through semantic transfer, would be used in a conversation, especially amongst the young generation of online users, the standard words are considered in this case inadequate in bring out the intended impact on meaning. When used in social media they seem to have a stronger sense of meaning than the alternative Standard English words. ‘Eyebrows on *fleek*’ is used instead of ‘those eyebrows are fabulous / awesome’ just as ‘he is nasty’ is used instead of ‘he is very mean’.

- c. *Seal the deal or bang* – ‘have sex’
- d. *Fun bags* – ‘breasts’

The examples in 51c & d above are used as euphemisms when online users are shying away from the words that make others uncomfortable or by the younger generation to exclude the older generation and still have conversations about sex or sexual topics which in the Kenyan context is not discussed with ease.

4.4.7 Creativity

Social media neologisms are captivating to read on the social networking sites. Standard English is ‘normal’ and appears monotonous, social media users choose the neologisms so that their posts and messages can attract a large audience. Most *netzens* are usually young people and they have great creativity, with the use of signs for emotions and expressions to the extent Oxford Dictionary wanted to record the neologisms but due to the high speed of production they failed, (Hong-mei, 2010). Use of *emojis* is also captivating as other users are always keen on interpreting them; hence they are more engaging than standard words. The social media neologisms have all kinds of effects; amusing due to creativity, others are comical such that the readers get entertained.

52.

- a. *digital afterlife*- ‘life after one deactivates all online social activities’

The above example is amusing as it is compared to the afterlife, just as people believe there is life after death, especially those that are spiritual, digital after life is used to refer to online users who have briefly left or have retired from all the online activities for their own reasons.

- b. *Kanyarified*- ‘conned’

Kanyarified is Kenyan variety of English coined word, it takes after a local pastor who was conning believer by telling them he add the power to heal all kinds of disease but only did that after the revelers sent some money ‘*mbegu*’ (seed) in exchange for the service. Online users use this neologism when someone has been conned as it has a more comic effect hence catchy.

4.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA NEOLOGISMS

Written language is now on the screens of computers, tablets, and smart phones, as language now evolves partly through interaction with technology. The words that surround people every day influence the language that is used. The introduction of new words, new meanings for old words has changed language. Social media is making it easier than ever to contribute to the evolution of language.

Social media neologisms have increases awareness of mistakes. Instead of looking at social media sites as platforms for making mistakes, it can be used for ‘catching mistakes’. When social media users see errors, they often point them out. Knowing tweet, Facebook post or Instagram caption will potentially reach thousands of people and spread so quickly becomes good incentive to proofread social media posts.

Social media teaches users the value of short storytelling, twitter’s 140-character limit forces users to make every word count. It takes some level of skill to communicate briefly and effectively, and that shorter is better if it can be done well. It is a society in which fewer and fewer people read. What they do write tends to be short messages in a sort of meta-language, with meta-spelling, on Twitter and Facebook.

Social media neologisms help social networking sites users to keep current with the evolving language. Some people are left behind by the neologisms being used every day, other users despair at how use of this informal medium can lead to an equally casual attitude to grammar. Social media provides a rich playground for experimenting with, developing, and subverting language. It is a great way to keep up with changes by paying attention to discussions in social networks and one can spot emerging new words, new uses of words, and maybe even coin.

4.5.1 Effectiveness on message delivery and interpretation

Giles and Coupland (1991:69) states that addressers commonly seek to maximize communication. Effective communication is achieved by addressers avoiding focusing on themselves, this is accomplished by means of linguistic accommodation; where by addressers evaluates with the purpose of adjusting messages and ensuring successful communication. Choice of words are said to reflect the addresses identity, neologisms or new words, also play a

significant role in accommodation. Accommodation is a complex phenomenon; the perception of non-linguistic factors affecting addressees is vital for shaping messages effectively. In social networking sites, users choose neologisms that their communication circles are most likely to understand, and identify their social circles by the sociolinguistic factors with which they are familiar, age, gender and ethnicity. Labor (1972) states that these variables (age, gender, ethnicity) are powerful predictors of how individuals use linguistic patterns as well as the social reasons they have for doing the same. In social media communication is effective especial in a setting where the users share an element in common. Users of the same age or gender are more likely to understand their neologisms without difficult than random users who have nothing in common. In social media it is common for groups to be formed where users can identify with one another. Milroy (1980) claims that individuals seek grouping (networking) because they are social beings who only develop their attributes and satisfy their needs within a group. Effective communication through the use of social media neologisms is explained below.

4.5.1.1 Speed of communication

Social media is a very fast mode of communication targeting a very wide audience. When social media users post online their messages reach millions of users almost instantly as there is no restriction to the time one should be online. According to Hong-mei (2010) internet English is used for instant communication, therefore, it must be short, brief and convenient for users to communicate with each other, use of abbreviations simplifies the article, saves printing space and reading time, thus meeting the requirements of computer science and high-speed development of network technology. Social media neologisms particularly on twitter are shortened translating to very short messages. It's not only easy and fast to write short messages but also but it's also easier and quick to read short messages. In social media users tend to pay attention to updates and posts that are short rather than the long stories. Most online users access the social networking sites via their mobile phones while doing other things therefore, shorter messages are easily accessible and appealing hence more effective in communication.

4.5.1.2 Ease of interpretation

In communication if a person doesn't understand the meaning of a word, they have to look it up in the dictionary, and there are words that are ambiguous or polysemous, making a dictionary

crucial. With social media neologisms, however, getting the precise meaning of a word is easy, social networking sites are accessed via internet and if a word is difficult to understand a user can look up the exact and precise meaning online via internet at the urban dictionary which is easily accessible and up to date with all the old and current social media neologisms ever produced..

According to Cabre (1996) neologisms are new words acting as communicative unit which identifies speakers by the way they can use them in certain expressive or communicative situations. He further states that neologisms can be classified according to the value they characterize; social neologisms exemplify a collective value, which embodies the public and moral codes. Social neologisms are said to appear due to evolution of socio-culture values leading to change in stereotypes. This, in social media can be seen through the examples below.

53.

- a. *Nigress* (female for nigger)– ‘a ride or die lady- one who is there through thick and thin’

The above example, formed through affixation, has deviated from the American usage which is derogative for a African-American lady to mean a tough lady who is always ready to support someone regardless the situation one would say, ‘She is my *nigress* for life ‘.

- b. *Empress* – ‘one who rules over others by beauty and brains’

This term would be used by men to refer to their girlfriend or wife, in an effort to praise her strength as a woman and her beauty. Originally the word meant the wife of an emperor.

In social media, however the popular classification is the functional neologisms which represent a use value, which refer to the ease of expression of a word. Functional neologisms can be rapidly produced, read and delivered, because their meaning cannot be generally deduced from their morphological construction, comprehension is based on the regular encounter of the word to ensure it is remembered. The morphological construction generally includes abbreviation, acronyms and clippings. Cabre further adds that functional neologisms are said to be principally motivated by online communication.

- c. *IDK* – ‘I don’t know’
- d. *LY* - ‘love you’
- e. *TTYL* – ‘Talk to you later’
- f. *FOMO* - ‘Fear of missing out’
- g. *Adorbs* – ‘adorable’

The above examples are formed through abbreviation and acronym, are understood through familiarization, the number of times a user has come across them and used them. After acquiring the meaning the user is then able to remember the meaning and use them appropriately in communication.

4.5.1.3 Exposure and Keeping current

In Social media, users are able to keep up with the up to date internet language. Through interaction with an audience at a global scale they are enlightened on how people use language. Particular social media neologisms attract a kind of audience, women are attracted by certain words and men alike, that they feel it’s in their circles and they can use. Social media neologisms, therefore, serve to expose users to new language and language is transmitted with certain values that are also acquired by the users. Neologisms are constantly produced and one can only understand them if they are online.

4.5.1.4 Brevity and time sensitive

Social media neologisms are short and precise. Shorter messages are easier read and interpret than longer messages. Social media with the heavy usage of shortened and clipped neologisms ensures that the posted messages are short. Brevity in social media makes it easy for an online user to scan a message with ease. Chris, (2009) in his article ‘Does length matter’, says shorter messages tend to get straight to the point better than drawn out messages. Shorter messages are more engaging but for the message to be adequately understood simplicity has to be observed. In social networking platforms, therefore, users ensure that they stick to the neologisms that the majority of the users are familiar with or the ones that can be easily accessible for interpretation. People are starved for time and as such they greatly value short correspondence, updates and videos. Chris further says, the current generation of internet consumer lives in the world of

instant gratification and quick fixes which lead to loss of patience and lack of deep thinking. When a user post long messages, chances are few users will read the entire message rendering it less effective than the short messages. Short messages, however, entail using neologisms that are catchy and appealing to the target audience. Twitter applies social media neologisms and also links alternative content such as videos, picture and articles for the short message to be well documented.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been able to establish there are reasons as to why social media users participate in online activities. There are needs that are gratified when the users interact with one another online. The research further identifies importance of language use in social media; language in social media is a tool through which people are able to express, share and transmit culture. The chapter has also been able to identify and establish that there are factors that contribute to the rapid and consistent production of social media neologisms, and that neologisms are easily produced and understood amongst social media users. Finally study looked into how effective the social media neologisms in communication amongst the online users.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The essence of this chapter is to provide a summary, conclusion and recommendations for further research. This study had specific objectives to guide in the research, to investigate the deviation of social media neologisms from the standard usage of English. The study also set to investigate the factors that influence the production and usage of social media neologisms. The other objective of the study was to determine the effectiveness of social media neologisms in communication. This study has used the objectives in different chapters as guidelines to the entire research.

5.2 SUMMARY

The study set out to investigate the use of English neologisms in social media based on Kenyan context. In the expository chapter, a general introduction was provided in which a background of the study and the problem of study was given: the role and importance of social media was highlighted. This was followed by research questions and objectives of the study; which served as guideline for the study ensuring the problem of the study was tackled effectively. The justification and scope and limitation of the study were handled giving a clear outline of the extent to which the research would be done: the study was limited to English neologisms in twitter Kenyan context. Literature review on related aspects of this study were briefly focused on: prior studies on neologism, *netspeak* and the role of social media gave insight to the study at hand. The theoretical framework that was used in this research was lexical pragmatics, its choice being how online users are able to understand the encoded concept of the neologisms from the communicated concept of the words. Probability sampling was used as the research design where three strata were selected; male, female and age to come up with the population that will be administered to questionnaires.

Chapter two of the study dealt with neologisms and the concept of social media, specifying the social networking site of study as twitter. The chapter dealt with the morphological structure of social media neologisms by examining the word- formation processes, coming to a conclusion that social media neologisms undergo similar word-forming processes found in Standard English identifying, compounding, conversion, clippings, acronyms and abbreviations as the most commonly used processes in the production of social media neologisms, as well as sources of social media neologisms. The findings of this chapter were useful for discussion in chapter three.

Chapter three dealt with the deviation of social media neologisms using a linguistic description approach. The linguistic levels of analysis were used to illustrate deviation occurrence at different levels. Graphological, phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical and semantic levels were analyzed and appropriate examples given. This chapter was able to affirm the hypothesis that social media neologisms deviate from the use of Standard English. The findings of chapter two were later to be used in chapter four.

Chapter four focused on identifying the factors that influence the production and usage of social media neologisms and the effectiveness of social media neologisms in communication amongst the social media users. The chapter looked into reasons why people visit social media, importance of language in social media in order to determine and connect the production, usage and effectiveness of the social media neologisms in communication. This chapter dealt with confirming the hypotheses; there are factors that influence the production and usage of social media neologisms and that social media neologisms are effective in communication.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study set out to test three hypotheses. First hypothesis was that social media neologisms deviate from the standard usage of English. The study validates this hypothesis as seen in chapter three, which demonstrates that social media neologisms deviates from the standard English using linguistic description approach; the linguistic levels of analysis. The deviation of social media neologisms is associated with the need for human beings to manipulate language in order to ease communication. This is evident in levels such as phonological seen through elision. The findings

were further demonstrated using examples. The second hypothesis of the study was that, there are factors that influence the production and usage of social media neologisms. This was demonstrated in chapter four, the findings observed factors: quick transfer of information, avoidance of grammar and spelling conventions, age, gender, ease of understanding, meaning impact and creativity influence the production of social media neologisms. The final hypothesis of the study; neologisms in social media are effective in communication. This is explained in chapter four by identifying the ways in which social media neologisms are effective in communication. The observations were: speed of communication, ease of interpretation, exposure and keeping current and brevity and time sensitivity contributed to effectiveness of social media neologisms in communication. The main interest of this study was looking into the use of English neologisms in social media using a Kenyan context, identify how social media are produced; this was focused in chapter two using the word-formation process. The study was able to demonstrate how the neologisms deviate from the standard usage of English, and connect the factors that influence the production and usage of the neologisms and their effectiveness in communication in the social networking sites. Social media provide the avenue for interaction making communication easy globally. Neologisms in social networking platform used every day for communication essentially affect the language used generally offline and online, therefore they contribute greatly to the evolution of language.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this section of the study, suggestions for further research in areas related to this study are given.

First, the study into the use of social media neologisms, a case of Kenya, raises the question of Kenyan variety of neologisms made in Kenya, used by Kenyans within Kenyan context. This study therefore suggests that a research be carried out on social media neologisms produced in Kenya for Kenyans in social networking sites.

Second, this study has identified new means of communication other than words, use of *emoticons* and *emojis* is very popular in social media. In the light of this, a detailed study should

be carried out on purely the use of emoticons and *emojis* as a form of expression and communication in social media in the future.

Third, this study established that social media has been incorporated in the Kenyan society for different purposes, and that a large number of online users are youth. A study should be carried out to investigate how internet English has affected students' language use at both high school level and university level.

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www.urbandictionary.com

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondents,

I am Ruth Mworira undertaking a master's in linguistics at the University of Nairobi, conducting a research on: Use of English language in technology: A case of neologisms in social media.

This is an academic requirement to fulfilling the award of master's in Linguistics, kindly assist by filling the questionnaire; any information will be treated with confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Please reply to all questions honestly.

Tick [] and print appropriately.

SECTION A

1. Gender of the respondent.

Male []

Female []

2. Age bracket.

18-23 []

24-28 []

29-35 []

36-40 []

41-45 []

46-50 []

51-55 []

55-Above []

3. The respondent has online profiles on:

Facebook []

Twitter []

Instagram []

All the above []

Others [] specify.....

4. Logging in frequency

Hourly []

Daily []

Monthly []

Other [] specify

SECTION B

5. What words do you neologisms do you use on and what so they mean.

Facebook

.....
.....
.....

Twitter

.....
.....
.....

Instagram

.....
.....

6. Why do you use the mentioned neologisms in social media.

.....
.....

7. What value do the mentioned neologisms add to your communication?

.....
.....

8. Are social media neologisms generally effective in communication? Explain

.....
.....

9. What factors do you think, lead to the production and use of social media neologisms.

.....
.....

10. How often do you use the same words offline

.....
.....

APPENDIX I

GLOSSARY

VERBS

1. *Re-tweet* – post someone else’s tweet
2. *Un-follow* – cease to interact with a user on twitter
3. *AMA* - ask me anything
4. *MT* - modified tweet
5. *RT* - re tweet
6. *Ikr* - I know right
7. *SMH* - shaking my head
8. *LMAO* - laughing my Ass off
9. Geobragging – geographical bragging
10. *BRB*- Be Right Back
11. *IDK* – I don’t know
12. *LY* - love you
13. *TTYL* – Talk to you later
14. *Donno* – don’t know
15. *Ama* – am gonna
16. *Opt’* – option
17. *Sync* – synchronize
18. *Sossion* – threaten
19. *#Icantkeepcalmitsmyb/day* – I can’t keep calm It’s my birthday.
20. *Gerrahhia* – get out of here
21. *Isorait* – it’s alright
22. *Seal the deal or bang* – have sex

NOUNS

23. *Friend* - accept a friend request
24. *Follow* – interact with someone on twitter
25. *Bridge* - make peace
26. *Ego-surfer* One who boosts his own ego by searching his own name
27. *Tweetup* - in-person gathering for people who use twitter
28. *Slanguage* – language that employing much slang
29. *Twicide* - one becomes unpopular on twitter because of something they did.
30. selfie – a picture taken by oneself
31. *Troll* - obnoxious online attacks
32. *Ancestor*- older sugar mummies/daddies
33. *BAE* - before anyone else
34. *Favorite* – preserve a tweet that impressed on into the archives
35. *Cookie-face* - cookie + face – one with acne
36. *Photo bomber* – one who invade someone else’s photo
37. *FOMO* – fear of missing out
38. *WOMBAT* – waste of money, beauty and brains
39. *WCW* - Woman Crush Wednesday
40. *FBF*- Flash Back Friday.

41. *DM* – direct message
42. *Rep* – reputation
43. *flim flam* – deception
44. *Slang whang* – nonsense
45. *Hum drum* – bore/ monotonous
46. *Bootyless* – with a small posterior.
47. *Bootyful* - with a big posterior.
48. *Twitterhollic* – addicted to twitter.
49. *Tweep* – twitter people (users)
50. *Dweeps* – drunk tweets
51. *Tweepup* – meet up for tweeps
52. *Staycation* – vacation at home due to financial constraints.
53. *Madodology* – a meal made of beans
54. *Kimenyanzization* – favoritism
55. *Fossils* – a really old man in a relationship with a girl fit to be his granddaughter
56. *Sponsors* – An older man who maintains a girl’s lavish lifestyle regardless of the age
57. *Beast*- a powerful and expensive car
58. *Fun bags* – breasts

ADJECTIVES

59. *#adorbs* – adorable
60. *#MCE* – man crush every day
61. *Adorbs* - adorable
62. *Fab* - fabulous
63. *Rips* – kick ass / impressive video or picture.
64. *Aiit* – alright
65. *Slip slop* - intoxicated
66. *Feelanga* – boastful
67. *Needle neck* – really skinny person
68. *Harder* – someone who is physically appealing
69. *M-boree* – a boring person
70. *Blonde* – dumb or shallow
71. *Light skin* – proud and self-centered
72. *#TGIF* - Thank God it’s Friday.
73. *Luotide* – Luo (Kenyan tribe) attitude
74. *Fleek* – awesome or fabulous
75. *Nasty* – incredibly mean
76. *Digital afterlife*- ‘life after one deactivates all online social activities’
77. *Niggress* (female for nigger)– a ride or die lady

ADVERBS

78. *Oft*’ – often
79. *Ne’er* – never

DEMONSTRATIVES.

80. *’Em* - them

PREPOSITIONS

81. *’Bout* - about