Jane Chinelo Obasi[1]
University of Nigeria
Department of English and Literary Studies

Chinenye Mary Obasi
University of Nigeria
Department of English and Literary Studies

COMMUNICATIVE FEATURES OF SELECTED NIGERIAN ESL GENERATION Z'S LANGUAGE USE ON TWITTER

Abstract: *Various studies on Generation Z have concentrated on other social media platforms, but less attention has been paid to the micro-blogging site, Twitter (recently renamed as X). This study fills the gap by examining the various communicative features and factors that influence the language use of selected ESL Generation Z individuals on Twitter. The study adopts purposive sampling to select 5 popular Nigerian Generation Z media personalities (Enioluwa Adeoluwa, Rinu Oduala, Emeka Nwagbaraocha, Hauwa Lawal and Abdulsalam Idris) who constitute the population size. Data analysis is subjected to qualitative method with analytical drawn from the tenets of Lesley Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics theoretical framework:* naming and describing, representing action/events/states, equating and contrasting, *and* prioritising. *Although there are several social media influencers on Twitter, the sample is concerned with influencers who are first Nigerians, between the age bracket 18-26 years and active users of Twitter. This, however, formed the population for this study. From the findings, five communicative features are commonly employed by ESL Generation Z individuals: emoji, slang, meme, hashtag, and code-switching. However, slang expressions and memes are more commonly used than code-switching and hashtags. This study, therefore, demonstrates that ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including character limits, social issues, social identity, pop culture, and digital nativity, ultimately shaping their unique online language practices and identities.*

Keywords: *ESL, Generation Z, language, Twitter (X), slang, memes.*

[1] jane.obasi@unn.edu.ng

1. Introduction

The widespread adoption of the internet in 1995 marked the beginning of a new era of rapid technological advancements, ultimately paving the way of the emergence of the Generation Z. (Seemiler & Grace, 2017:p.22). This generation stands out due to their innate familiarity with digital technology, their ability to make swift decisions, and their strong global connectivity. Driven primarily by technological progress, as well as economic circumstances and global social justice movements, these factors have given rise to a generation characterised by unique communication traits distinct from those of previous generations (Seemiler & Grace, 2017). The preceding generations, including the Traditionalists (1928-1944), Baby Boomers (1945-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), and Generation Y (1980-1994) are undeniably not influenced by these factors. Generation Z (Gen Z) has experienced a distinct and profound impact. This can largely be attributed to their unfettered access to information in a globally interconnected world facilitated by the Internet. The communication landscape has transformed from a linear approach to a dynamic transactional process, involving ongoing interactions between senders and receivers. Generation Z stands out as the initial cohort to predominantly utilise digital platforms for communication, leading to the rise of internet memes as a prevalent mode of connecting through shared humour.

The digital world has become even more popular and friendlier for Generation Z due to the vast world of social media (Hajare, 2023:p.739). Social media platforms encompass online domains and software applications designed to enable individuals to engage in communication and information dissemination over the internet (Obasi & Etike, 2023:p.2). These digital interfaces facilitate the exchange of textual content within collective cohorts, thereby fostering interconnectedness among individuals. Nevertheless, in its capacity as a social media instrument, Twitter (X) has arisen as a pivotal platform wherein individuals utilizing mobile or electronic devices can actively participate in different domains of issues raised in everyday discourses. Twitter (X) constitutes a significant component of the Web 2.0 technological landscape within the realm of social networking phenomena. This social networking tool is integrated into the fabric of everyday existence (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The platform formerly known as Twitter, now under new ownership and renamed 'X', can be conceptualised as an internet-based service for succinct message dissemination. Users on this platform can send and receive text-based messages, originally limited to a maximum of 140 characters, but under the new

management, this limit has been expanded to 280 characters, along with the introduction of other new features like, a dedicated meme tab, reactions, and creation and customisation of avatars by users among other new features. These users, commonly referred to as "Twitter users" engage in the creation and sharing of messages, which are commonly referred to as 'tweets'. These tweets are then read by individuals who have chosen to follow the activities of the original user or who have adopted a shared thematic classification indicated by a common Twitter hashtag, as described by (Anderson, 2011:p.28). Within the realm of scholarly inquiry, tweets can be meticulously crafted to express an idea, rephrase existing content, or assess a conceptual framework. This medium facilitates a form of communication known as the virtual space, enabling conversations that resemble in-person dialogic interactions. Twitter boasts widespread popularity among the contemporary Generation Z cohort, who are recognised for their adept integration of technology into their social interactions.

The increasing prevalence of digital media has allowed educationalists and practitioners to assimilate new technologies while designing diverse pedagogies in the English language learning. An earlier study (see Mak & Coniam, 2008:p.439) suggests that meaningful online interactions will not only equip learners with language skills but also provide learners with an authentic learning context that traditional classroom setting does not offer. Given the popularity of Twitter among Gen Zs, particularly ESL Gen Zs, and the potential influence of various factors on their language use, this study aims to examine the communicative features and language use on Twitter by ESL Gen Zs and the factors that influence it from the theoretical perspective of Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics.

A burgeoning body of research has investigated the language practices of Generation Z, both online (via social media) and offline, garnering significant scholarly attention. This trend is exemplified in the works of Cilliers (2017), Alharthi, Bown, and Pullen (2020), Mansor and Abd-Rahim (2020), Maqbool, Ismail, and Maqbool (2020), Meliani, Ratminingsih, and Mahendrayana (2021), Jeresano and Carretero (2022), Yusuf, Fata, and Aini (2022), Puspita and Ardianto (2024), Tufail, Asgher, and Ali (2024), Ivenz and Polakova (2024), Juli, Suci, and Esti (2024), Shruthi, Aravind, and Mathivysali (2024), Telaumbanua, Zendrato, Nazara, Herefa, and Harefa (2024), among others. These studies collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of Generation Z's language use and its implications.

The above-mentioned studies, taken together, imply that social media can serve as a valuable tool for ESL learning and studies on the effect of social media have

continued to engage the attention of scholars. However, there is a noticeable gap in the existing literature when it comes to understanding the specific communication aspects of how ESL Gen Z individuals use language on Twitter. This gap is significant because Twitter's distinct characteristics, such as character limits, hashtag usage, and its connection to pop culture, have an impact on how ESL Gen Z individuals communicate and utilise language in this digital environment. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the communicative traits of ESL Gen Zs' language usage on Twitter. Using Lesley Jefferies' (2010) analytical tools in critical stylistics, this research intends to uncover the subtle linguistic patterns and influences that shape the language usage of ESL Gen Z individuals on Twitter. In doing so, it aims to offer a thorough understanding of how Twitter's elements, including character limits, hashtags, virality, multimodal communication, and linguistic diversity, affect the language use of ESL Gen Z learners on this dynamic platform.

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become an influential mode of communication, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. This digital revolution has also had a significant impact on the field of education, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition. Among these platforms, Twitter stands out as a dynamic microblogging platform that is widely used by a diverse range of users, including teenagers, influencers, artists, public figures, and, notably, ESL Gen Z learners.

2. Studies on ESL Generation Z's Language Use

The significance of social media in ESL education has garnered substantial attention in recent years. Research studies have consistently unveiled the potential benefits of incorporating social media into ESL learning environments.

Cilliers (2017) explores the technology preferences of Generation Z students within formal educational systems. A 7-year survey of Urban Planning students at North-West University in South Africa revealed their perspectives on technology usage. The study also investigates lecturers' views on teaching Gen Z students, highlighting challenges and complexities. The research presents conclusions from both student and lecturer perspectives, offering solutions to bridge gaps and enhance teaching-learning strategies. This research is similar to this current research as both studies examine the characteristics, preferences, or language use of Gen Z individuals. Also, both studies involve technology, although the current research focuses on social media (Twitter) while Cilliers' study explores technology usage in educational settings. Furthermore, both studies differ from each other in terms of research focus.

While the current study analyses communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, Cilliers' study investigates Gen Z students' technology preferences in formal education.

Alharthi, Bown, & Pullen's (2020) study reviewed research on Social Media Platforms (SMPs) for vocabulary learning between 2014 and 2018. Analysing 15 relevant studies from 50 peer-reviewed articles, the researchers found that SMPs enhance learner engagement, motivation, and vocabulary development. They conclude that SMPs are valuable tools for facilitating learning. The authors also proposed a definition for "social media" due to the lack of a standardised definition in educational literature. While both studies examine social media platforms, they differ in scope. The current study focuses on ESL Gen Z users on Twitter, whereas this reviewed study examines SMPs for vocabulary learning more broadly.

Mansor & Rahim (2017) explore the effectiveness of Instagram as a tool for language learning, by examining its impact on student motivation and interaction. The study's aim is to reveal students' experiences in using Instagram to enhance their interest in participating and interacting with their peers in language learning activities. The methodology of this study involves investigating students' participation in online discussions and their feedback on the use of Instagram as a platform for language learning activities. The findings of this study reveal that Instagram is an effective tool for students' interactions, particularly in task-related discussions. The results also showed that students were more motivated and enthusiastic about participating and interacting with their peers when using Instagram. This study shares some similarities with this current study in terms of their focus on social media platforms and explore language learning and communication in online environments. However, differences exist in the specific platforms used. While the reviewed study focuses on Instagram's effectiveness in language learning, the current research focuses is on communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter.

Maqbool, Ismail, & Maqbool's (2020) study explores the language learning strategies of Gen Z ESL learners as digital natives. Using a phenomenological survey method, the study collected quantitative data from 120 Master's students at NUST University Islamabad through two adapted questionnaires: Oxford's Language Learning Strategies and Timothy Teo's Digital Natives Assessment Scale. The findings indicate that Gen Z learners prefer digital strategies, leveraging multitasking, technology, graphic communication, and rewards. While direct and indirect strategies were significant, effective strategies were not. The study also found minimal gender differences in learning strategy selection. Both studies are

similar in terms of focus. That is, they examine aspects of Gen Z language use or learning. They also both investigate how Gen Z individuals use language or employ learning strategies. They, however, differ in terms of methodology. While the current study purposively sampled the tweets and it discussed applying Jeffries' Critical Stylistics approach, the reviewed study uses a phenomenological survey method with questionnaires.

Meliani, Ratminingsih, & Mahendrayana (2021) investigate code-mixing among Twitter users, exploring types and influencing factors. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study collects data through tweet documentation and user interviews. Analysis reveals insertion code-mixing as the dominant type, influenced by internal (language speaker) and external factors. This study is similar to the current study as they both examine language use on Twitter and investigate specific language features: code-mixing in this reviewed study and communicative features in the current study research. They however differ as the current study analyses communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, whereas the reviewed study explores code-mixing types and influencing factors. Jeresano & Carretero's (2022) study examines the digital culture and social media slang of Generation Z (Gen Z). It investigates the digital culture present in their language and its impact on their conversational language and essay writing. Using a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), the study analysed Facebook posts, Messenger messages, and survey questionnaires from Grade 10 students. Semi-structured interviews are also conducted. The findings reveal that Gen Z slang undergoes morphological processes, reflecting digital culture. While it aids language fluency, communication skills, and confidence, it creates language barriers for older generations and negatively impacts writing skills. As a result, teachers discouraged Gen Z slang in class discussions and essays but allowed its use among peers. The study led to the development of a self-learning guide, "Flexin' the Trend," to address the communication gap between different generations in the school community. The current study and the reviewed study are similar as they both examine aspects of Gen Z language use, including social media slang. However, they differ as the current study analyses communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, whereas the reviewed study explores Gen Z slang, digital culture, and its impact on conversational language and essay writing.

Yusuf et al (2022) analyse the slang used by Indonesian Generation Z in WhatsApp groups. To achieve this, the researchers employ a qualitative research design while utilising content analysis as the primary method of data collection. This study is grounded in Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory on slang, which provides a framework for understanding the functions and types of slang used by the participants. The findings reveal 50 slang expressions used to increase intimacy in daily conversations. Yusuf et al's study is similar to this current research as they both study Gen Z's language use. However, while Yusuf's study focuses on Generation Z's language practices and informal language features, this current study focuses on communicative features of selected ESL Generation Z language use on Twitter. However, differences exist in language context (Indonesian vs. ESL) and platform (WhatsApp vs. Twitter) respectively. Additionally, the both research studies differ in the theory employed as the current study leans on Lesley Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics.

Puspita & Ardianto (2024) explore the dynamics of code-switching in Generation Z's communication practices. This study explores how Gen-Z utilises code-switching in diverse social contexts. The research method employed is a qualitative method that focus mainly on 19-22 years old participants. This diverse sample allowed for in-depth analysis and representation of the Generation Z population. Findings reveal that Gen-Z employs context-specific code-switching, using informal language with peers, formal language in professional settings, and seamlessly transitioning between languages in familiar contexts. This study bears some similarities to this current study as both focus on Gen-Z's language use and communication practices on social media. However, differences exist in the language context, with Puspita and Ardianto's (2024) study focusing on multilingual Gen-Z individuals, whereas this current study focuses on ESL Gen Z learners. Also, while the above study focuses on code-switching and general social media platforms, the current study focuses on Twitter and various communicative features.

Also, Tufail et al (2017), investigate the role of slang in Gen Z's online communication. They explore the reasons behind the popularity of slang words while exploring their types, forms, functions and meanings in the online space. The study employs a qualitative content analysis approach as its methodology, drawing on the framework developed by Allan & Burridge (2006). The sample consisted of 30 university students shared between 20 females and 10 males. The findings reveal that Gen Zs use slang to increase intimacy in their conversations, with the popularity of slang linked to the progress of science and technology. This study shares similarities with this current research as both focus on Gen Z's language use

and explore informal language features. However, the platforms for both studies differ. While the reviewed study focuses on WhatsApp and Instagram, the current research explores the Twitter platform. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks used in the two studies differ, with the above reviewed drawing from Allan and Burridge's framework while the current research employs Jeffries' (2019) Critical Stylistics approach.

Ivenz & Polakoya's (2024) study investigates Gen Z students' perceptions of technology, specifically Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and ChatGPT, in second language acquisition. The research explores how these tools influence language learning across different English proficiency levels. A survey of 151 students (A2-C2 levels) revealed that students of all levels engage with NMT and ChatGPT, primarily for word translation. Higher-proficiency students also use ChatGPT for complex tasks like mistake correction and summary writing. The study highlights Gen Z learners' positive attitudes toward technology as a flexible and valuable educational resource, motivated by the desire to learn vocabulary, comprehend English content, and enjoy flexible learning. This study is similar to the current study because both studies focus on Gen Z and their language use/learning. Also, technology plays a significant role in both studies: while Twitter platform was used for this current study, NMT/ChatGPT was used in Ivenz and Polakoya's study. Also, differences abound in both studies. While this current research analyses communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, Ivenz and Polakoy's study explores Gen Z students' perceptions of technology in second language acquisition.

Juli et al (2024) study aims to compare the semantic phenomena of slang used by the Millennial generation and Gen Z on social media. The research focuses on identifying the types of slang used by both generations, understanding the meaning and reasons for the use of slang by the Millennial generation. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, gathering data through journal reviews and analysis of documentation from social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. The study's findings reveal significant differences in the types of slang used by the Millennial and Gen Z generations, influenced by cultural and technological developments. Furthermore, the research shows that the Millennial generation uses slang on social media primarily to strengthen social ties, show familiarity, follow trends, and create a unique and relevant digital identity. Suffice it to say that this study shares similarities with this current research as both explore language use and slang among younger generations on social media. However, differences exist in the generational focus, methodology, and theoretical

framework. While the current study research focuses solely on Gen Z, the reviewed study examines both Millennial and Gen Z generations. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the differences and similarities in slang use among Millennial and Gen Z generations on social media. The findings highlight the importance of considering the cultural and technological contexts in which language use evolves.

Shruthi, Aravind, & Mathivysali's (2024) study aims to identify individuals familiar with Generation Z vocabulary and understand their characteristics. The researchers collected data through Google Forms, asking 40 participants from diverse backgrounds and age groups to identify 20 Gen Z slang terms. Using a quantitative approach, the study reveals that many individuals do not use Gen Z-associated language in conversations. The findings also suggested that Gen Z slang consists of a limited number of terms, mostly unknown or unused by the general public. Both studies are similar because they examine aspects of Gen Z language use or vocabulary. However, there are differences in the focus and methodology. While this current study analyses communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, the reviewed study investigates familiarity with Gen Z slang terms.

Finally, Telaumbanua et al. (2024) examine the language styles used by Gen Z teenagers on Instagram, identifying factors that influence these styles. Using a constructivist approach, this qualitative study analysed interviews and Instagram posts from 10 Gen Z teenagers between January 2023 and June 2024. The findings reveal that Gen Z teenagers predominantly use casual language styles, characterised by slang, colloquialisms, abbreviations, and informal greetings. The study identifies technological affordances, social factors, and linguistic trends as key influences on these language styles. While this study and the current study explore the language patterns and styles used by Gen Z individuals on social media platforms they differ in approach. The current study examines communicative features of ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter using Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, whereas Telaumbanua et al.'s study focuses on language styles and influencing factors on Instagram and adopts constructivist approach.

While these studies collectively suggest that social media can be a valuable tool for ESL learning, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the specific communicative features of ESL Gen Zs' language use on Twitter (X). This gap is significant because the unique attributes of Twitter (X), including its character limitations, use of hashtags, and pop culture, influence how ESL Gen Z learners communicate and use language in this digital space.

The present study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the communicative features of ESL Gen Z language use on Twitter. By leveraging on Lesley Jefferies' (2010) analytical tools in critical stylistics, this research aims to unravel the nuanced linguistic patterns and factors shaping ESL Gen Zs' language use within the Twitter (X) verse. In doing so, it aspires to provide a thorough understanding of how Twitter factors, including character limitations, hashtags, virality, multimodal communication, and linguistic diversity influence language use among ESL Gen Z learners on this dynamic platform.

3. Theoretical Framework

The current study leans on Lesley Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics. Lesley Jeffries is the authour of the book *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English*, which heralded this approach. Its goal is to encompass ideologies within texts by providing the necessary analytical linguistic skills that critical discourse analysis lacks. Critical stylistics, according to Jeffries (2010), is a technique for locating ideology in any text, regardless of the critic's viewpoint. The critical stylistics method developed by Jeffries focuses on linguistic and stylistic analysis of literary texts. It aims to discover how these elements affect the interpretation and overall meaning of the text. In relation to the larger cultural and historical context as well as within the text itself, it highlights the significance of context. This approach entails spotting linguistic patterns, such as those in sentence structure, word choice, rhythm, and imagery. By doing this, reviewers can learn more about the authour's motivations, themes, and emotional effects on the reader. Considering how linguistic signals influence the reader's comprehension, Jeffries also considers the reader's part in understanding the text.

The multidisciplinary nature of Jeffries' method, which incorporates linguistics, literary theory, and cognitive science, is a crucial component. This enables a comprehensive investigation of how language influences literary experiences. It is important to note that Jeffries' critical stylistics promotes a nuanced understanding of literature by exploring the complex connections between form and content as well as the lively dialogue between the author, text, and reader. It is a method of approaching language that is based on critical discourse analysis and stylistics. This approach is not limited to a particular type of text, rather it applies to various types of texts including literary, and social texts.

Ahmed (2022) states that Halliday's meta-functions must be mentioned when discussing this method critically because Jeffries (2015) recreates them by renaming them and developing the textual conceptual model. The text's meta-function transforms into linguistic meaning, which entails the study of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. By establishing the language systems' structural frameworks, the ideational meta-function transforms into the textual meaning that produces the co-textual impact. The pragmatics of the circumstance and the text's contextual frame make up the interpersonal meaning. The meta-functions of language proposed by Halliday, in which meaning mediates between language structure and language in context, are the foundation of critical stylistics. Language resources should be used at this level to reveal the authour of the text's worldview (Jeffries, 2014). The method by which this approach operates is explained and summarised in the accompanying figure:
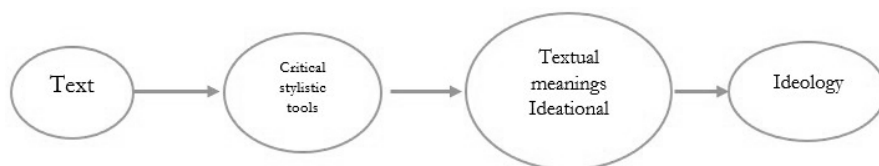
Jeffries (2010) posits that a text producer sees the world through the lens of language. According to her, all texts are ideologically grounded, and language analysis can show whether the intended audience approves or disapproves of such ideas. This suggests that not every person who receives a text will be impacted by such views, thus they are still capable of at least being aware of them.

Lesley Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistic approach includes among many others the following analytical tools:

i. Naming: This examines how language users label and categorise entities, concepts, and ideas to create specific meanings and associations.

ii. Describing: This analyses how language users create vivid descriptions of entities, concepts, and ideas to construct specific meanings and atmospheres.

iii. Representing Action, Events, and States: This examines how language users represent actions, events, and states to create specific narratives, convey attitudes, and construct social relationships.

Sub-tools for Representing Action, Events, and States

i. Transitivity: This analyses how language users represent actions, events, and participants.

ii. Aspect: This examines how language users represent the duration,

completion, or repetition of actions and events.

iii. Tense: This analyses how language users represent time and temporal relationships.

iv. Equating: This investigates how language users create equivalences or similarities between entities, concepts, or ideas to construct specific meanings and relationships.

v. Contrasting: This examines how language users create contrasts or differences between entities, concepts, or ideas to construct specific meanings and relationships.

vi. Prioritizing: This analyses how language users assign importance or prominence to specific entities, concepts, or ideas to create specific meanings and emphasis.

These analytical tools enable researchers to critically examine how language users construct meaning, negotiate social relationships, and create specific effects through their language choices. However, among all the listed analytical tools above this current study identified and adopted four analytical tools relevant to the context of the study. They are: *naming and describing*, *representing action/events/states*, *equating and contrasting* and *prioritising*.

3.1. Aims of Critical Stylistics

As was already indicated, Jeffries seeks to inform any text recipient about the underlying philosophies of any text. In addition, the main goal of this approach is to offer linguistic proof for each assertion made regarding a particular ideology present in a book. According to Jeffries, textual analysis and stylistic decisions are important in illuminating the type of decisions the text creator takes. Additionally, Jeffries is interested in conveying an ideology to the recipient of a text message, even though such messages are intentional regardless of whether the recipient is persuaded by them or not. Jeffries (2010) claims that ideology is an unavoidable fact of all discourse.

Furthermore, she argues that ideology is not always corrupted because it supports the egoistic goals of some political factions and, it may be a good ideology or be limited by culture. Ideology in critical linguistics refers to how people's speech and cognition interact with society. As with the ideologies of powerful political and social institutions, such as the government, the law, and the medical professions, dominant ideologies are those that represent the values and beliefs of the powerful group. Critical linguistics holds that language is not context-free and that it develops

in social contexts where it is intended to "reflect" and "construct" ideology. Ten analytical strategies for approaching a material critically are suggested (see by Jeffries, 2010). These techniques offer clearer ways to understand what the text is doing when compared to earlier works on critical language studies (Ononye, Esan, & Yunana,, 2021). The range of techniques Jeffries suggests includes: naming and describing, representing actions/events/states, equating and contrasting, prioritising and assuming and implying.

Critical stylistics offers a framework for critically analysing language use, power dynamics, and social context which is essential for understanding how Nigerian ESL Generation Z users communicate on Twitter. Jefferies approach recognises the social and cultural contexts in which language is used. This sensitivity to context is vital for analysing Twitter data, which is often shaped by factors like online communities, hashtags, and trending topics. By employing Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics approach, the study can provide a nuanced and contextualised understanding of the communicative features of selected Nigerian ESL Generation Z's language use on Twitter.

4. Method

The study uses a qualitative design, which enables the classification and analysis of the data used in this study. The researcher analyses selected tweets posted by popular Nigeran Gen Zs' social media influencers; Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_, Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu, Emeka Nwagbaraocha @Emeneks, Hauwa Lawal @Hauwa_L and Abdulsalam Idris @the_smallie. The sample size for this study comprises 30 tweets from the selected 5 Gen Z's popular Nigerian influencers. This sample size enables an exploration of Gen Z's digital literacy practices, including their use of language, hashtags, and emojis. This sample size also provides a focused dataset for applying Critical Stylistics, allowing for a detailed examination of language use, power dynamics, and social relationships. Since the study requires tweets of ESL Gen Zs, a purposive sampling technique is adopted in the selection of influencers. This enables the selection of tweets that are information-rich and relevant to the study objective, providing an in-depth insight into Gen Z's language use. Although there are several social media influencers on Twitter, the sample is concerned with influencers who are first Nigerians, between the age bracket 18-26 years and active users of Twitter. The distribution of the tweets among the influencers are presented in **Table 1** below for clarity.

Table 1: Distribution of Tweets among the Influencers

S/No	Name of Influencer	No of Tweets	
		Texts	Memes
1	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	6	-
2	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	5	-
3	Hauwa Lawal @Hauwa_L	2	2
4	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	7	1
5	Abdulsalam Idris @the_smallie	1	6

4.1. Method of Data Analysis

The analysis involves examining the communicative features of ESL Gen Z individuals. The selected tweets are marked with structures representing the "underlying ideologies" of Gen Zs. These tweets are analysed in line with the tools offered by the adopted theoretical framework, critical Stylistics of Jeffries (2010). The study identifies four analytical tools relevant to the context of the study. The selected tools are; *naming and describing*, *representing action/events/states*, *equating and contrasting,* and *prioritising*. Discussions on factors that influence ESL Gen Z's language use on Twitter are also presented.

Table 2 below gives a brief description of Jefferies' (2010) that our analytical tools adopted for the study.

Table 2: Definitions of Analytical Tools Relevant to the Study

S/N	Analytical tool	Description
1.	Naming and Describing	This tool focuses on the text names and describes people, places, things, and events. For example, ESL Gen Z users may use slang terms like "on fleek" to describe something fashionable as this is common in their use of languages on social media.

2.	Representing Actions/ Events/States	This tool focuses on how the text represents actions, events, and states of being. ESL Gen Z users may use abbreviations or acronyms to represent actions or events, as these are common in text messaging and social media. For example, they might say "JK" to represent "just kidding" or "IRL" to represent "in real life".
3.	Equating and Contrasting	This tool focuses on how the text equates or contrasts two or more things. ESL Gen Z users may use emojis or memes to equate or contrast things, as these are visual ways of communicating ideas. For example, they might use a heart emoji to equate love and happiness, or they might use a side-by-side meme to contrast two different things
4.	Prioritising	This tool focuses on how the text prioritises certain information over other information. ESL Gen Z users may use capitalisation or exclamation points to prioritise information, as these are ways of making text stand out. For example, they might capitalise the first letter of each word in a sentence to emphasise its importance, or they might use an exclamation point to show excitement or surprise.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis/Discussion

This section examines the communicative features of ESL Generation Z's language use on Twitter with specific focus on applying the analytical tools outlined in Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics framework. This application aims to validate the efficacy of Critical Stylistics in analysing the language use patterns of ESL Generation Z's Twitter users.

Table 3: Presentation of Tweets from the Selected Nigerian Gen Z Influencers

S/N	Twitter Handles	Tweets	Influencer's Background
1	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	Miss Imo is Imoing	Media Personality, Actor, and Writer. **96.7K Followers**

2	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	One thing Cee C will do is say the truth! A top babe	Media Personality, Actor and Writer. **96.7K Followers**
3	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	Meet World Record Holder, Tobi Amusan! That's on period! 🖤	Media Personality. **694K Followers**
4	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	Elozonam we don't want ship	Media Personality, Actor, and Writer. **96.7K Followers**
5	Hauwa Lawal @Hauwa_L	Don't air me plis. What's the least amount of money you can survive on, in a month? The absolute least."	Social Media Influencer, Screenwriter and Digital Content Writer. **170K Followers**
6	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	Baddies dey this Lagos sha, everywhere you turnto; baddies! The girls are girling! 💅🏻	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**
7	Abdulsalam Idris @the_smallie	August dump! Let's have it 🐱	Social Media Influencer. **768K Followers**
8	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	This babe will use her hand and destroy the good PR she has. Why are you talking about penis in an interview?	Media Personality, Actor, and Writer. **96.7K Followers**
9	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	And the prayer is, Dear God, keep my friends closer to me and my enemies far away from me. Surround me with	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**

		people who genuinely like me and want the best for me. Surround me with friends who will see me naked and clothe me. Oluwa, ma je kin fi ota mi sore! Amen.🖤	
10	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	It's good to know their twitter, so you can be catching your sub jejely. Emeka	Media Personality, Actor, Writer. **96.7K Followers**
11	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	If Beyonce comes to Nigeria and she says, "look around, everybody on mute," I don't want to hear one word o. One word. All of you must do like we are in school and teacher said they should write list of noise makers!😭 and nobody should come and tell me "Bey cannot come , Bla Bla Bla" just shut up and leave me and my Delulu!😭	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @ tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**
12	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	I can't be shamed by someone with Zero morals. Irrespective of the outcome. Go and touch grass.	Media Personality, Actor, Writer. **96.7K Followers**

13	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	That's how @Obacruze said, Eni let's quickly go and film something like that. Next thing I know, we are in BADAGRY!!😂😭 Shank ma pa mi na	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @ tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**
14	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	Jack,so you suppose don dey give us money since buy you no give us. Ogun laakaye, do justice to him	Media Personality. **694K Followers**
15	Emeka Nwagbarocha @Emeneks	Drag them with your full chest!!! My Idolo"	Media Personality, Actor, Writer. **96.7K Followers**
16	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	Every Nigeria must shine eyes on the judiciary. Even if NEPA takes light, we carry torchlight and candles to shine! The summary is, #AllEyesOnJudiciary!	Media Personality. **694K Followers**
17	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	EndSARS Protesters Reject Lagos State's Mass burial of #EndSARS Victims. The Coalition of #EndSARS Protesters and Supporters, national and globally are horrified by the planned mass burial of 103 Protesters and civilians who tragically lost their lives in the	Media Personality. **694K Followers**

|		October 2020 state sponsored violence… .	
18	Hauwa Lawal @Hauwa_L	Baby:*exists adorably* Heaven:*raises baby* he is going to grow up to become the president of a cou…. His Dad somewhere: Hay! Hay! Creep! I want sexual creep! Kreeeeepppppp. *pulls hair* Run trainssss. * pounds wall*. Take the Benzzzzzzzz. Arggh	Social Media Influencer, Screenwriter and Digital Content Writer. **170K Followers**
19	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	Yasssssssss!!!😭😭😭	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @ tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**
20	Enioluwa Adeoluwa @Enioluwa_	BEYONCE posted 8 times today, 8 times!!! And she ate every single time 🐝👑	EU-Africa Ambassador, Social media influencer, and Host @ tonightwitheni. **230K Followers**
21	Rinu Oduala @SavvyRinu	What opinion about Nigerian Banks will have you like this? #MoneyDeservesBetter	Media Personality. **694K Followers**

Presentation of Memes

Fig. 1

Fig. 2
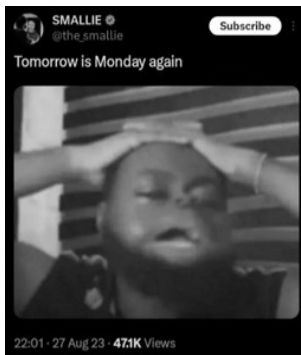
Fig. 3
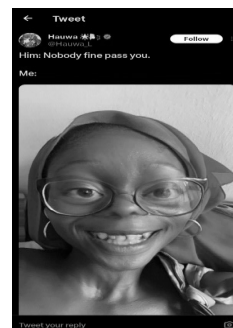

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Table 2 gives a presentation of the data (tweets) analysis. Thirty tweets from the selected ESL Gen Zs are coined into selected tool categories. In order to analyse specific tweets that contained ESL Gen Z communicative features, these tweets are first scanned to select recurring patterns and then categorised accordingly into the various analytical tools as suggested by Jeffries' (2010) critical stylistics.

5.1. Communicative Features Employed by ESL Generation Zs

5.1.1. Use of Emojis

Emojis are a complex and versatile form of communication that have been used to express a wide range of emotions and ideas among Nigerian ESL Gen Zs. They often use emojis to convey emotions and nuances in their messages. This category includes tweets of the selected influencers who made use of emojis as can be seen in **Tweets 1, 6, 11, 13, 19**, and **20** in **Table 3 above**.

Tweet 1 uses an emoji to equate *Miss Imo's* beauty with the characteristics of someone for *Imo*, reinforcing her exceptional beauty. Whereas, in **Tweet 13**, the emoji '😄' is often used to express happiness while the emoji '🙊' is often used to express sadness. The combination of these two emojis equates and contrasts two emotional states, conveying a complex sense of amusement, surprise, and sadness. The "tweeters" are amused by the situation, but they are also surprised and sad. This is a common experience for Gen Zs who are often caught up in unexpected and chaotic situations. Also, in **Tweet 19**, this emoji '😭' which is used in expressing sadness is also used to express tears of joy. However, the surrounding context, tone, and language of the tweet help to disambiguate the intended meaning. Here, it is used to express tears of joy as the tweeter celebrates his friend. The emoji equates the tweeter's emotional state with one of extreme happiness for their friend's latest achievement.

Tweet 6 uses the emoji '💅' to represent makeup and manicures which are seen as symbols of beauty and femininity. In this case, it is being used to represent the women of Lagos who are confident and stylish. Similarly, in **Tweet 20**, the use of the '🐝👑' emoji represents the admiration and respect the tweeter has for the music icon, Beyonce.

5.1.2. Use of Code-Switching

Code-switching is the use of two or more languages or language varieties in a single conversation. It is a common phenomenon in many parts of the world arising from language contact. It is also a characteristic of ESL Gen Zs. And it can be used for a variety of purposes, such as to express identity, to accommodate the listener, or to add emphasis as seen in the **Tweets 9, 13**, and **14** in **Table 3** above. These tweets are examined using both the ***Equating and Contrasting*** tool and the ***Prioritising*** tool.

Tweet 9 illustrates *equating* and *contrasting* where the tweeter's prayer in Yoruba serves to underscore the significance of the prayer made in English, effectively drawing an equivalence between the two.

In **Tweet 13**, prioritising is evident as the tweeter emphasises the unexpected trip to Badagry, using strong language to express surprise and amusement. **Tweet 14** employs a similar strategy, with prioritising highlighting the significance of Jack's refusal to give money. The tweeter's code-switching to Yoruba, accompanied by curse and/or strongest language, conveys intense anger and frustration.

5.1.3. Slangs

Slangs are used by young people to express themselves and create a sense of community. It can also be a way to avoid using more formal language. This category includes tweets of selected ESL Gen Z Influencers that made use of slang. Identifying and analysing these slang expressions help to gain a deeper understanding of the speaker's identity, ideology, and relationships. To effectively analyse the **Tweets 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15**, and **18** in **Table 3** above that contain slangy expressions, Jefferies' (2010) analytical tools such as; **equating and contrasting, naming and describing, representing actions/events/states and prioritising** are engaged.

In **Tweet 11**, the tweeter recognises that he is delusional as it is impossible for Beyonce to host a show in Nigeria but chooses to stay in that state of being delusional also known as '*delulu*' by Gen Z individuals. By mentioning '*delulu*', the tweeter' lexical choice equates the above sentence of him fantasizing about watching his musical icon perform in his country.

In **Tweet 2**, the key terms being named are "*Cee C*", and "*top babe*". The term "*Cee C*" refers to a popular Nigerian reality TV star. The term "top babe" refers to a woman who is attractive and simply stylish. In **Tweet 4**, the key names are "*Elozonam*" and "*ship*". The term "*Elozonam*" refers to a popular Nigerian reality TV star. The term "*ship*" is a slang term that refers to the act of wanting two people to be in a romantic relationship.

In **Tweet 5**, the speaker's use of the word "*plis*" can be described as a way ESL Gen Zs soften their request and make it more polite. This may be a way of negotiating meaning with the listener, as it implies that the speaker is aware that their request is asking for a favour. Additionally, the speaker's use of the slang term "air me" can be analysed to examine the speaker's identity. The term "*air me*" is a word that is often used among Gen Zs to describe the experience of being ignored or neglected because they identify with the experiences of other Gen Z people.

In **Tweet 7**, the speaker names and describes the act of sharing content from the month of August. The speaker is using the informal word "*dump*" to describe the content, which suggests that it is a large and varied collection of items. "*August dump? lets have it*" can be seen as a reflection of the Gen Z aesthetic. Gen Z is known for its appreciation of authenticity and self-expression. The sentence "*August dump? lets have it*" encourages people to be themselves and share their own unique experiences with the world.

In **Tweet 12**, the naming element is "*go and touch grass*" which is peculiar to the ESL Gen Zs. This is a common insult that describes someone who is out of

touch with reality. It also implies that the speaker believes that the other person is immature and childish.

The specific way in which information is prioritised in a text can reveal a lot about the speaker's values and priorities. This tool involves identifying how information is prioritised in a text. In **Tweet 15:** *Drag them with your full chest!!! My Idolo*, the term "*full chest*" is prioritised over the term "*drag*", revealing the speaker's emphasis on confidence and willingness to express themselves. This prioritisation suggests that the speaker values assertiveness over criticism.

In **Tweet 18**, it is observed that the tweeter prioritises the use of exclamations and expressions to construct an image of Seyi of "*Big Brother Nigeria*" as a stereotypical man who is aggressive and objectifies women when he finally becomes a father judging by his takes on gender topics that took place during the course of his stay in the house. It is also observed that the use of these expressions can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes.

The analytical tools of *representing actions/events/states* are observed in **Tweet 3**where the speaker uses the language to represent Tobi Amusan as a world record holder. The tweeter is excited about Tobi Amusan's latest achievement at the World Athletics Championship. The speaker uses the phrase "*on period*" to express their strong approval of Tobi Amusan which cannot be debated.

In **Tweet 8**, the acronym "PR" which means Public Relations represents the publicity a housemate from the popular reality show (BBN) has got which she is about to ruin with her hot takes on vulgar topics.

In **Tweet Excerpt 10**, the slang "*Jejely*" means "*smoothly*" or "*easily*", which further represents the ease and regularity with which the speaker expects housemates of the popular reality show (BBN) to be able to catch their sub and by '*catching their sub*', he means the shades being thrown at them for their silly actions in the course of their stay at the reality show.

5.1.4. Use of Hashtags

A hashtag can be a word or phrase preceded by a "#" symbol, commonly used on social media platforms like Twitter, to denote digital content related to a specific subject. Gen Z's use hashtags (#) to categorise and find content on Twitter. They also use them to express emotions or to air their opinions.

In **Tweet 16**, the use of the hashtag "*#AllEyesOnJudiciary*" suggests that it represents the state of feeling (a feeling of uncertainty) happening in the country at the time the masses looked up to the judiciary to do the right thing. The use of

the hashtag also suggests that the tweeter is aware of the power of social media to mobilise people and to hold institutions accountable. Equally, in **Tweet 17**, the use of the hashtag "*#EndSARS*" represents the events that happened during the protest. The *#EndSARS* movement was a social movement that started on October 3, 2020-October 20, 2020 which sought to end police brutality in Nigeria. The tweeter uses the hashtag to mobilise people to oppose and question the Lagos State government's plan to mass-bury the murdered victims of #EndSARS whom they denied earlier. **Tweet 21**, was posted during a time when there was a lot of public discussion about the economy in Nigeria and the incessant bank charges. In this tweet, the tweeter asks a question and uses the hashtag *#MoneyDeservesBetter* to represent the actions that must be taken to stop the incessant charges by Nigerian Banks thereby encouraging others to respond to create more awareness. This suggests that the tweeter is interested in getting feedback on their opinion about Nigerian banks.

5.1.5. Use of Memes

Memes are amusing or interesting images (such as captioned pictures or videos) or genre of items that is spread widely online, especially through social media. This can be said to be one of Gen Zs' most preferred form of communication as it saves them time and explicitly relay messages. In examining the images paired with texts, **equating and contrasting and Representing actions/events/states** are the most prominent analytical tools that are common in the memes.

In **Figs. 3**, **4, 5** and **6** above, the tweeters use the images either to back up their texts or contrast their texts. On equating a text with an image in **Fig 3**, the tweeter expresses his unhappiness with the next day being Monday: "*Tomorrow is Monday again*" as Monday is believed to be the beginning of the work day after the weekend holiday. So, he uses an image that shows one that is unhappy. In **Fig. 4**, the tweeter, regardless of the chaos he faces daily chooses to stay positive due to his forthcoming birthday: "*Shege here and there but na who dey alive dey complain. Birthday in a week. Grateful for live…*". The tweeter then pairs the text with an image that shows one who is being defeated but courageous enough to grant an interview. The tweeter in **Fig. 5** tells his audience that he is unhappy that Manchester United football club won their match: *"Man U later win Arsenal no win",* but he is happy that Arsenal football club lost their match. On the other hand, in **Fig. 6**, the tweeter believes her admirer's compliment is in contrast to what she actually looks like. For this reason, she used a filtered image that makes one look old and unkempt to describe her looks.

In **Figs. 1, 2, 7, 8** and **9** above, the texts together with the images can only be understood if only the reader is familiar with events or actions surrounding such tweets and this can be analysed using the presented tool. In **Figs. 1, 7, 8** and **9**, the tweeters are responding to the happenings in the popular *Big Brother Naija Reality Show.* **Fig. 1**, uses the picture of a woman in despair to represent and describe how he thinks the wife of the housemate (popularly known as Seyi Awolowo) must be feeling as her husband has displayed misogyny in the house. However, in **Fig. 2**, the tweeter makes use of images that depict a tough situation to represent the state of the situation in the match between two strong football clubs: Real Madrid (a Spanish club) vs Napoli (an Italian club).

In **Fig** 7, the tweeter represents how Vee (a former housemate of BBN) must be feeling (a feeling of mischief) after her prediction of a lady being in love with her former lover became a reality that everyone could testify to.

Similarly, the tweeter in **Fig. 8** makes a caricature of Frodd, a housemate in the BBN house who is regarded as an impostor. His disqualification appears to be a thing of joy for the tweeter judging by his choice of words.

Finally, **Fig. 9**, represents the state of feeling conscious as a housemate, Tolanibaj popularly known for her dislike for men that dance at the club has been disqualified from the reality show which implies that she most likely might come for them if she sees any man dancing at the club. The tweeter, therefore, sends a warning to men who might be going to the club henceforth to desist from dancing seriously at the club thereby using an image to represent.

5.2 Factors that influence the language use of ESL Gen Zs on Twitter

Several factors influence the language use of ESL Gen Z individuals on Twitter. These factors include:

5.2.1. Pop Culture: Popular culture, which includes music, movies, and TV shows, can significantly impact the language choices of Gen Z individuals. They may incorporate references from these sources into their tweets. For instance, in **Tweet 4**, the tweet "*Elozonam we don't want ship*" reflects the influence of pop culture by using the term "ship". In TV Shows like *Big Brother Naija*, "*shipping*" refers to fans expressing support or desire for a romantic relationship between two individuals or celebrities. In this tweet, the person is addressing '*Elozonam*' and indicating that they do not want to see any romantic pairing or "*ship*" involving him. This demonstrates how pop culture terminology and concepts can easily

permeate everyday communication and social media discussions. While the study by Juli et al (2024) does not directly investigate the influence of pop culture on ESL Gen-Z language use on Twitter, it, however, provides an indirect support for this claim. The study highlights the importance of cultural and technological contexts in shaping language use, emphasising slang as a key cultural indicator. These findings imply that pop culture contributes to shaping the language use among ESL Generation Z's Twitter users, influencing the linguistic landscape.

5.2.2. Digital Native Environment and Peer Influence: Gen Z individuals have grown up in a digital world which has shaped their communication style. They are highly influenced by their peers which makes them modify their language use to fit in with online communities and follow language trends. ESL Gen Z's are more comfortable with online platforms and often use abbreviations, emojis, and internet slang. In **Tweet 20**, peer influence plays a significant role in shaping Gen Zs' language use on Twitter. In this tweet, the mention of Beyoncé posting eight times with excitement and using emojis like '🐝👑' is likely influenced by the desire to fit in with the online community and engage in trends. When peers use such language and express enthusiasm in a particular way, it encourages others in the same age group to adopt similar language patterns and expressions to connect with their peers and be part of the conversation. It is a form of social validation and belonging, contributing to the evolution of language on platforms like Twitter among Gen Z users. This observation aligns with Mansor and Rahim's (2017) findings, which underscore Instagram's potential as a language learning tool. Their research emphasizes the significant role of digital nativity and peer influence in shaping language use of Gen Z individuals. The intersection of digital nativity and peer influence fuels language evolution, as Gen Z individuals continually adapt and innovate their language use in response to shifting online environments and social contexts. Online language communities, facilitated by social media platforms, reinforce peer influence and digital nativity, shaping language use and promoting the development of online language varieties.

5.2.3. Social Issues: Gen Z individuals are known for their engagement with social and political issues. They may use Twitter to discuss and advocate for these causes, influencing their language use to reflect their beliefs and values. In **Tweet Excerpt 17,** the hashtag *#EndSARS* emerged in Nigeria as a social movement against police brutality and sparked conversations on social issues, particularly among Generation Z individuals on Twitter. Gen Zs who are known for their activism and digital fluency, adopted this hashtag to raise awareness and share their perspectives.

This social issue influenced Gen Zs' language use on Twitter by promoting activism, solidarity, and engagement in discussions related to justice and societal change. It led to the creation of new slang '*e shock you*', '*werey dey disguise*', hashtags, and expressions that reflect their values and concerns about social justice. Although, Yusuf et al's (2022) study on Indonesian Generation Z's slang use in WhatsApp groups examines a different language context and platform, its findings offer valuable insights into Gen Z's language practices in online environments. Moreover, the study's framework for understanding the relationship between language use and attitudes can be applied to the topic of social issues influencing language use by Gen Zs on Twitter.

5.2.4 Social Identity: Factors such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation can influence language use, as individuals may use specific terminology to express their identity and connect with like-minded individuals. Also, the region or country where ESL Gen Z individuals live can impact their language use. They may blend elements of their native language with English, creating a unique linguistic mix or code switching in their tweets. In **Tweet 13**, code-switching plays a significant role in conveying a sense of cultural and linguistic diversity. The tweet begins in English ("*That's how @Obacruze said, Eni let's quickly go and film something like that*"), but then seamlessly switches to a combination of Yoruba and Pidgin English in the latter part ("*Next thing I know, we are in BADAGRY!!*😭😭 *Shank ma pa mi na*"). This reflects the speaker's ability to switch between different languages and dialects to express their emotions and experiences effectively. It also adds a personal and relatable touch to the tweet, making it more engaging for a diverse audience who may understand these languages and cultural references.

This observation aligns with the study by Puspita and Ardianto (2024) which demonstrates the relationship between code-switching, language use, and social identity among Gen Z individuals. By adapting their language use to navigate diverse social contexts, Gen Z individuals are able to perform and negotiate their social identity, using language as a key resource to construct and signal their affiliation with specific social groups, communities, or cultures. The findings reveal that Gen Zs employ context-specific code-switching, adapting their language use to navigate diverse social contexts. Multilingualism provides Gen Zs with a rich repertoire of language resources, enabling them to navigate complex social contexts and perform different aspects of their social identity. This study's exploration of code-switching on social media platforms implies that online environments play a crucial role in shaping Gen Z's social identity. Social media provides a space for Gen Zs to perform their social identity, using language as a key resource to construct and negotiate their online presence.

5.2.5. Character Limit on Twitter: The constant evolution of technology and social media platforms introduces new features and communication styles that can influence how ESL Gen Zs communicate on Twitter. The character limit on Twitter, which was historically set at 140 characters and later increased to 280 characters, encourages users to be concise and creative with their messages. This constraint often leads to the use of acronyms, abbreviations, and slang to effectively communicate within the limited space. These linguistic resources help convey information and emotions more efficiently while staying within the character limit. In **Tweet 11,** the character limit on a tweet, typically 140 characters, influences the content and expression of the message. The character limit forces the user to be concise and creative in conveying their message by using humour '*bla bla bla*' and informal language '*delulu*' to engage the audience effectively within the given constraints**.**

Ultimately, each ESL Gen Z user on Twitter has their own personal preferences and communication style which can be a combination of the above factors. Understanding these influences can provide insights into the language choices and communication patterns of ESL Gen Z individuals on Twitter. This limited space encourages creativity and informality, making slang an ideal choice for conveying complex ideas and emotions efficiently. Similarly, the study by Tufail et al. (2017) on the popularity of slangs among Gen Z individuals on social media supports this idea, suggesting that Twitter's character limit fosters an environment where slang can thrive, promoting a relaxed and conversational tone characteristic of Gen Z's online communication.

6. Conclusion

This study examines the communicative features peculiar to the Nigerian ESL Gen Zs on Twitter and identifies the factors that influence the language use of Gen Zs on Twitter. Attention is paid to the five major communicative features peculiar to ESL Generation Zs on Twitter which are; the use of emojis, code-switching, use of slang, use of hashtags, and use of memes. It is observed in the study that slang and memes are most commonly used among this age group while the use of hashtags and code-switching appears less in their tweets. This could be because the use of hashtags among these people is basically for political issues while that of code-switching might be limited because of the many ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The analysis of the data within the four theoretical analytical tools of Lesley Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics (*equating and contrasting, naming and describing, prioritising, and representing actions/events/states)* exposes the underlying ideologies

(social meaning) in the tweets made by the selected Nigerian Gen Zs on Twitter. For *equating and contrasting*, this tool is designed to analyse how the text draws comparisons or distinctions between two or more elements while the *naming and describing* tool centres on identifying and detailing entities such as individuals, locations, objects, and occurrences within the text. For *representing actions/events/ states*, the emphasis of this tool lies on analysing how the text portrays actions, events and states of being and for *prioritising*, the emphasis of this tool lies on analysing how the text gives priority to specific information over others. The analysis shows that the communicative features determined the categorisation and interpretation of certain social meanings. Consequently, no tweet is classified under any analytical tools without first accounting for their social meaning.

Furthermore, the constant evolution of technology introduces new features that directly impact how messages are conveyed. Updates like character limitations make this age group maximise their use of slang and memes as they are effective in conveying their nuances. Pop culture and the digital native environment have a heavy impact on this age group which leads to coinages and neologisms that are peculiar to them which are found in their tweets. Also, social identity and social issues foster their language use that is easily understood by Nigerian Gen Z individuals since they share in the experience which is evident in their use of hashtags.

This study, thus, shows that each ESL Gen Z user on Twitter has their own personal preferences and communication style which can be a combination of the above factors. In other words, their language use on Twitter is significantly shaped by a dynamic of convergence of factors, including the constraints of character limits, the influence of social issues, the performance of social identity, the presence of pop culture, and the affordances of digital nativity. Understanding these influences can provide insights into the communication patterns and linguistic choices of Nigerian ESL Gen Zs on Twitter. Subsequent research endeavours could explore more extensive sample sizes encompassing both EFL and ENL Generation Z individuals, as well as other age cohorts such as Gen Alphas or Millennials. These studies might delve into the analysis of language in banter tweets and offer additional insights into the linguistic patterns exhibited by Generation Z on various social media platforms.

References

1.   Ahmed, H. A. (2022) Critical stylistics vs critical discourse analysis: A general review of the two main critical approaches to language studies. *Social Science Journal* 12(2), 6791–6801.

2. Alharthi, M., Bown, A., & Pullen, D. (2020) The use of media platforms to enhance vocabulary development in learning a new language: A review of the literature. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* (6), 318–331.

3. Anderson, S. (2011) "The Twitter toolbox for educators". *Teacher Librarian; Bowie* 39 (1), 27–30.

4. Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B. (2007) Social network sites: Definitions, history and scholarship. *Journal of Computer: Medicated Communication* 13(1), 210–230.

5. Cilliers, E. J. (2017) The challenge of teaching Generation Z. *International Journal of Social Sciences,* 3(1), 188-198. https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2017.31.188198 [Accessed 27th December 2024].

6. Hajare, R. A. (2023) Slang language and generation 'Z': A sociolinguistic study. *International Journal of Current Science* 13(1), 739–743.

7. Ivenz, P. & Polakova, P. (2024) Gen Z students and their perceptions of technology in the process second language acquisition based on the language proficiency level. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ),* 15(3), 3-17. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no3.1 [Accessed 27th December 2024].

8. Jeresano, E. M., & Carretero, M. D. (2022) Digital culture and social media slang of Gen Z. *United International Journal for Research & Technology* 3(4), 11–25.

9. Jeffries, L. (2010) *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English*. Palgrave Macmillan.

10. Jeffries, L. (2014) Critical Stylistics. In M. Burke (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 408–420.

11. Jeffries, L. (2015). Textual meaning and its place in a theory of language. *Topics in Linguistics* 15(1), 1–10.

12. Juli, A., Social, M. & Esti, A. (2024) Comparison of slang in millennials and Gen Z: A semantic analysis in the context of linguistic learning. *Semantik: Jurnal Riset Ilmu Pendidikan, Bahasa dan Budaya,* 2(3), 206–215. https://doi.org/10.61132/semantik.v2i3.792 [Accessed 27th December 2024].

13. Mansor, N., & Abd-Rahim, N. (2017) "Instagram in ESL classroom". *Man in India* 97(20), 107–114.

14. Mak, B., & Coniam, D. (2008) Using Wikis to enhance and develop writing skills among Secondary School Students in Hong Kong. *System* 36, 437–455.

15. Maqbool, S., Ismail, S. A., & Maqbool, S. (2020) Language learning strategies for Gen Z ESL learners as digital natives. *Universal Journal of Education Research* 8(8), 3439–3448.

16. Meliani, P. E., Ratminingsih, N. M., & Mahendrayana, G. (2021) Code-mixing as a language style in communication through social media Twitter. *Journal of English Language Education* 4(2), 1–11.

17. Obasi, J. C., & Etike, V. E. (2023) Representation of power relations in Twitter feud between the US and Iranian politicians after the killing of Qasem Soleimani. *Howard Journal of Communication,* 34 (5), 477–499.

18. Ononye, C. F., Esan, O. I., & Yunana, A. (2021) Participant's roles and cognitive relations in Niger Delta conflict news discourse. *Sage Open,* 11(2), 1–10.

19. Puspita, G. V. & Ardianto, A. (2024) Code-switching and slang: An analysis of language dynamics in the everyday lives of Generation Z. *Linguistics Initiative* 4(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.41127 [Accessed 27th December 2024].

20. Seemiler, C., & Grace, M. (2017) Generation Z: Educating and engaging the next generation of students. *About Campus* 22 (3), 21–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21293 [Accessed 27th December 2024].

21. Shruthi, S., Aravind, B. R., & Mathivysali, M. L. (2024) Quantitative research on Gen Z slang terms for a diverse group of people. *Emerging Trends in Languages (ETL)* 1(1), 24–31.

22. Telaumbanua, Y. A., Zendrato, N. E. V., Nazara, B. T., Harefa, E. C., & Harefa, A. (2024) Analyzing the language style of Generation Z teenagers in their Instagram posts. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature (JELITA),* 5(2), 2721–1916 https://doi.org/10.56185/jelita.v5i2.790 [Accessed 28th December 2024].

23. Tufail, Asgher, & Ali, 1. (2024) Deciphering the digital vernacular: A study of Generation Z slang on social media platforms. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 8(2), 835-847. https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8–11)75. [Accessed 28th December 2024].

24. Yusuf, Y. Q., Fata, I. A. & Aini, R. (2022) 'Gotchuu!': The use of slang in social media by Generation Z. *LiNGUA* 17 (2), 167–174.

Џејн Чинело Обаси
Универзитет Нигерије
Одсјек за студије енглеског језика и књижевности

Чинење Мери Обаси
Универзитет Нигерије
Одсјек за студије енглеског језика и књижевности

КОМУНИКАТИВНА ОБИЉЕЖЈА ОДАБРАНИХ ПРИМЈЕРА УПОТРЕБЕ ЈЕЗИКА НА ТВИТЕРУ ГЕНЕРАЦИЈЕ „З" ИЗ НИГЕРИЈЕ КОЈОЈ ЈЕ ЕНГЛЕСКИ ДРУГИ ЈЕЗИК

Резиме

Разнолике студије понашања генерације „З" тичу се многих друштвених мрежа, али се много мање пажње поклања Твитеру (однедавно мрежа Икс), као мјесту на коме се објављују микроблогови (концизни текстуални садржај као реакција на неку актуелну друштвену тему или одговор на нечији став). Ова студија попуњава ту празнину тако што испитује разнолика комуникативна обиљежја и факторе

Jane Chinelo Obasi, Chinenye Mary Obasi

који утичу на употребу језика одабраних појединаца генерације „З” којима је енглески други језик на Твитеру. Намјерно смо одабрали пет популарних медијских личности генерације „З” у Нигерији (Ениолува Адеолува, Рину Одуала, Емека Нвагбараока, Хаува Лавал и Абдулсалам Идрис) који представљају огледну групу. Приликом обраде података примијенили смо квалитативну методу у комбинацији са аналитичком која проистиче из принципа наведених у публикацији *Теоретски оквир критичке стилистике: набрајање и описивање, представљање радњи/ догађаја/стања, изједначавање и супротстављање те успостављање приоритета* Леслија Џефриза (2010). Иако у датом случају постоји неколико утицајних личности на Твитеру, узорак се бави онима који су Нигеријци, старости од 18 до 26 година, те активни корисници Твитера. Но, то је узорак за ову студију. На основу резултата студије, пет комуникативних обиљежја које често користе појединци генерације „З” којима је енглески други језик јесу: емотикони, сленг, мимови (графичке анимације), обиљежавање теме или садржаја, те промјене језичког регистра. Међу поменутима, сленг и мимови чешћи су од посљедња два. У том погледу, ова студија показује да на наведена комуникативна обиљежја дате групе утиче сложени колоплет фактора, укључујући ограничење броја словних мјеста, друштвена питања, друштвени идентитет, поп културу, те сналажење у дигиталном окружењу, што напосљетку обликује њихову јединствену праксу и идентитете у електронској комуникацији.