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THE USE OF ICT-ROOTED COMMUNICATION CODES AND SLANGS AMONG NIGERIAN POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Slang is "language of a highly colloquial type considered as below the level of educated speech, and consisting either of new words or current words employed in some special sense" (Beale, 1999). According to Oni and Oke, the term 'slang' made its appearance in the 18th century and it has since been undergoing a dramatic transformation over time. (Oni & Oke, 2010).Early origin of the use of slang had negative connotations. The original use of the word was a verb for abuse. (Patridge, 1937). Similarly, Williams (1992) assert that the word translated "offensive language". Slangs were used by people of low and disreputable character – for instance thieves. Apart from scholars who see slangs as a norm in mainstream linguistic culture, members of the society tend to look down on those who use slangs. But lately many slangs have found their ways into formal language codes in Nigeria – typical example is the use of "Naija" for "Nigeria", which is widely used even by people of the high social class. In fact, "Naija" was emblazoned on the country's apparel at the prestigious World Cup tournament in Russia in 2018. This study is an exploratory investigation on the patterns and meanings of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs used by polytechnic students in Nigeria as a step towards codifying the most popular slangs used so that they can be better understood as communication tools. The study found that many of the communication codes and slangs being used by the subjects studied were ICT-inspired. The research presents analysis of meanings, usage patterns and nature of such slangs.

KEY WORDS: Slangs, ICT, Communication codes, Polytechnic students

INTRODUCTION

Slang is language of a highly colloquial type considered as below the level of educated speech, and consisting either of new words or current words employed in some special sense. (Beale, 1999). According to Oni and Oke, the term 'slang' made its appearance in the 18th century and it has since been undergoing a dramatic transformation over time. (Oni & Oke, 2010).

Early origin of the use of slang had negative connotations. Patridge, a lexicographer, for example stressed that the original use of the word was a verb for abuse. (Patridge, 1937). Similarly, Williams (1992) assert that the word translated "offensive language". It described words used by people of low and disreputable character – for instance thieves.

But by the 19th century, the meaning of the slang has changed dramatically. It now meant a sub-standard language of highly colloquial type consisting of new words or current words employed in some new, special sense. Though it still shares the attributes of gang-language associated with crime, violence, and secrecy, the use of slang has been very popular among adolescents just as 'secret language' for socialization. (Oni & Oke, 2010).

Despite the general notion that slangs are unpopular and offensive, they are still commonly in use especially among youths. Apart from scholars who see slangs as a norm in mainstream linguistic culture, members of the society tend to look down on those who use slangs.

Much slang have found their ways into formal language codes in Nigeria – in typical example is the use of "Naija" for "Nigeria" which is widely used even by people of the high social class. Therefore, if slangs are moving from the pejorative or negative to the positive, are there no ways of formally integrating slangs into mainstream linguistic codes? Since language (formal and informal) are key instruments in studying culture and norms, it is arguable then that studying slangs among students would help in understanding the culture and norms of students. As Babatunde and Ayodele found in their study of University of Ilorin students, many slangs in use on campuses today are both positive and negative. Examples of positives: *Efico* (a brilliant person), *Acada* (academic matters), *Popsy* (father), *O-Y-O* (On Your Own), *I'm cool* (I'm alright, *I feel you* (I like what you are doing). Examples of negatives: *Cockroach* (one who studies at night), *Boob* (a woman's breast), *fashy* (forget) *Orobo* (fat person), *Aristo babe*. (prostitute*), 9* (parent watching), 99 (parent gone), *DBA* (Don't Bother Asking), *TDB* (Till Day Break, usually of sex), *Flash* (fake phone call) etc.

A **language code** is a code that assigns letters or numbers as identifiers or classifiers for languages. These codes may be used to organize library collections or presentations of data, to choose the correct localizations and translations in computing, and as a shorthand designation for longer forms of language-name.

On the other hand, a **communications code** is a system of rules to convert information—such as a letter, word, sound, image, or gesture—into another form or representation, sometimes shortened or secret, for communication through a communication channel or storage in a storage medium (Vladutescu, and Smarandache., 2018).

Interestingly, many slangs and communication codes have roots in Information Communication Technology (ICT). Examples are: *Yahooze* (rich fraudulent person), *Yahoo-Yahoo* (Internet fraud)), and *delete* (*verb:* to kill). (Babatunde & Ayodele, 2010). But the usage patterns have not been properly researched. This study is an exploratory investigation on the patterns and meanings of ICT-rooted communication codes and slangs used by polytechnic students in Nigeria and why tertiary education students derive communication codes and slangs from ICT.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Given the dynamic and transient nature of slangs, its study is supposed to be frequent. Even though slangs change frequently (far more than standard languages), they remain very much in use as vehicle of communication and interaction; hence systemic study of slangs is ideal.

One of the most comprehensive studies on slangs in Nigerian universities is contained in the LINCOM Studies in Pragmatics edited by Babatunde, Odebunmi, Adetunjii and Adedimeji (2010). The effort examined the origins of slangs generally; slangs and politics; slangs among university students generally and with particular references to University of Ilorin. (Babatunde,etal, 2010)

While research has confirmed that slangs are commonly used on Nigerian campuses, its patterns and meanings have not been sufficiently studied. This study is to provide additional baseline information upon which more comprehensive studies can be built upon. If the slangs in use in selected Nigerian polytechnics are codified across its campuses, socio-linguists would have primary data on slangs to work with in further studies of slangs.

With the baseline study on slangs by Babatunde et al., there ought to have been many further updates – especially across various facets of lives and among different categories of people in the society. For example, the study in reference did not include polytechnics. This researcher intends, among other objectives, to compare the codes and slangs in use in four campuses of polytechnics in Nigeria, with a view to determining how varied the codes and slangs are, from campus to campus. It is important to also determine the origin and purposes of these codes and slangs. Of particular interest to the researcher was how ICT crept into the slang world of youths. Some of the common slangs used by students (according to a pre-test by this researcher) were build-ups from communication codes that they used on the Internet, on the computer and during mobile phone apps. The origin and usage patterns of these codes and slangs are yet to be properly studied.

RATIONALE

This study is expedient for the following reasons:

1. Most studies on communication codes and slangs in the past decade in Nigeria have not sufficiently dwelled on particularly polytechnics.
2. Available studies are in specific campuses (not comparative of campuses).
3. ICT-inspired slangs and communication codes have not been adequately studied in Nigeria.
4. There not enough recent studies on slangs and going by the ephemeral nature of slangs, they may fizzle out without proper scientific analysis

OBJECTIVES

The researcher set out to achieve the following:

1. To find out the popular communication codes and slangs used by polytechnic students
2. To investigate which communication codes and slangs have origins in the Information Communication Technology (ICT)
3. To establish similarities and differences in communication codes and slangs being used in the different campuses under study
4. To find out the relationship between social background of students and the slangs they use?
5. To find out why students use communication codes and slangs?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two principal questions and three subsidiary questions were asked in the investivation:

1. What are the popular communication codes and slangs used by polytechnic students?
2. What are the Information Communication Technology (ICT) related communication codes and slangs in the study locations?

3. What are the similarities and differences in communication codes and slangs being used in the different campuses under study?
4. What is the relationship between social background of students and those who frequently use ICT-related communication codes and slangs?
5. Why do students use communication codes and slangs?

TERMS AS USED IN THE STUDY

Slangs: All forms of informal vocabulary, written or colloquial.
Use: Adoption of a practice or concept in practical terms
Polytechnic students: Full time students of tertiary institutions registered as polytechnics in Nigeria
Social-economic background of respondents: :Lower, middle and upper classes of respondents' parents as determined by their residential location.
ICT – Information, Communication Technology (including the social media and the Internet)
Language code - a code that assigns letters or numbers as identifiers or classifiers for languages.
Communication code - a system of rules to convert information—such as a letter, word, sound, image, or gesture—into another form or representation, sometimes shortened or secret, for communication through a communication channel or storage in a storage medium
Social media network - a web – based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semi – public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.
New media – application software used as platforms in social media network.

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Language as communication

According to McQuail, language is a form of communication code. Although all languages are verbal, most, if not all languages have on-verbal components that aid this use of the language for communication purpose. (McQuail, 2015). McQuail has identified five characteristics of language code:

1. Linear character or sequential (linear succession of symbols)
2. Systematic Character (lexical rules and grammar)
3. Systemic character (a system that keeps differences and contrasts)
4. Arbitrary character (does not exist a compulsory relation word and appointed object)
5. Conventional character (implicit on convention of users)

ICT codes and slangs share 3,4 and 5 of the foregoing characteristics.

ICT and social media networks

Ikpa and Olise (2010) argues that the new media are new communication technologies that combine computer and telecommunication technologies which are used as channels of information

dissemination to heterogeneous audiences without the constraints of time, space or distance. This view agrees with McQuail's, who had described the new media as disparate set of communication technologies that share certain features apart from being new, made possible by digitalization and being widely available for personal use as communication device. From McQuail's point of view one can deduce that *new media* are developments of the old media through digitalization and the merging together of both old and new media. McQuail (2005).

Digitalization is the process by which all texts (symbolic meaning in all encoded or recorded forms) can be reduced to a binary code and can share the same process of production, distribution and storage. It includes the computerization of all data transmission, storage and processing, employing the binary code, and as such leads to the basis for convergence of the media. In other words, it is the combination of services that are separate including the internet, digital television, cable and mobile phones.

The United Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

The ground theory for this investigation is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, UTAUT). Vankatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis propounded the theory in 2003. Research on individual acceptance and use of information technology (IT) is one of the most established and mature streams of information systems (IS) research. (Venkatesh, et al. 2000) synthesized these models into the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT). UTAUT identifies four key indicators (i.e., performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions) and four moderators (i.e., age, gender, experience, and voluntariness) related to predicting behavioural intention to use a technology and actual technology use primarily in organizational contexts.

According to UTAUT, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence were found to influence behavioural intention to use a technology, while behavioural intention and facilitating conditions determine technology use. Recently, Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu (2012) proposed and tested UTAUT2, which incorporates new constructs (i.e., hedonic motivation, price value, and habit) that focus on new theoretical mechanisms (see Davis, 2007; Venkatesh and Speier., 2000) in a consumer context. UTAUT2 explained 74 percent of the variance in consumers' behavioral intention to use a technology and 52 percent of the variance in consumers' technology use. (Venkatesh, 2016).

Two types of motivation (*intrinsic* and *extrinsic*) are distinguished. ***Intrinsic motivation*** can be defined as performing an activity for inherent satisfaction rather than for an instrumental consequence while ***extrinsic motivation*** can be defined as performing an activity in order to achieve some instrumental outcome. (Sun, et al., 2014).. In the context of technology acceptance, *perceived enjoyment* is considered as *intrinsic motivation*. (Davis, Bogozzi & Warshaw, 1992). Because of its focus on actions rather than goals and seeing the product as an end itself, *perceived* will dominate during system use in action mode. Although Davis et.al (1992) among others identified the importance of *intrinsic motivation* (derived from system use) as having a strong influence on *behavioural intention,* Vankatesh *et. al.* (2003) dismiss the inclusion of *intrinsic*

motivation in UTUAT because its effects on acceptance outcomes are mediated by UTUAT variables. However, Sun and Zhang (2008) submit that for search engines, *intrinsic motivation* (or perceived enjoyment) is an antecedent of *performance expectancy* which in turn is mediated by *effort expectancy.* (www.researchgate.com, 2018)

The theoretical value of the UTAUT theory in this study is in that it suggests undercurrents that explain why youths use language codes and adopt slangs related to information technology. When several theories could as framework for a study, it is better to adopt a theory that is most fit to the study. (Folayan, 2018). Essentially, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has its own language. Users of ICT must therefore "speak its language" to effectively use the technology. For example, Komolafe (2017) has reported the difficulty in getting Yoruba (language) equivalents for certain ICT-related words and terms (such as ICT, mouse, laptop, flash drive, compact disk). Similarly, youths in everyday conversations would invent their own ICT protocols to get bye and attain more effective communication. The 'habit' and 'social influence' elements in UTAUK offer explain explanations as to why youths and students do invent communication codes that are technology-related.

Related Studies

Many ICT- rooted communication codes and slangs were coined by computer and phone users involuntarily. The world's first text message was sent from a computer to a cell phone by British Engineer, Neil Papworth on December 3rd, 1992. It read "Merry Chritmas". Since then, there have been over 1,500 chat and text message abbreviations around the world. (Webopedia.com, 2018).

Van Shaik (2009) has explored the application UTAUT to websites used by students in higher education. Both prescribed websites and user-selected sites were studied using a non-experimental research design and questionnaire-based measures. The results supported direct and moderated effects of technology-acceptance variables on acceptance outcomes in the research model, supporting UTAUT. The research model-based on UTAUT was more successful in explaining the acceptance of a prescribed library site than that of a prescribed virtual learning environment. User-selected sites were especially intrinsically motivating.

A study by Kibaru and Njoroge (2013) on the impacts of social media among the youth on behaviour change in Kenya found out that the youths in Kenya use social media a lot and they spend more time on the computer and that 60.3% of the youth spend 2-5 hours a day on the computers. According to the findings, the most common activity they are usually doing is surfing the internet and a majority of 39.7% agreed to doing so. The study further found out that most of the youth were on social media with Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter topping the list, Most of the youths used their mobile phones to access the internet especially on Whatsapp- a mobile phone application. The most common activity is chatting or texting on their mobile phones.

Another study by Chan and Feng (2007) showed that, the Internet plays a prominent role among the young people in Hong Kong. A majority of respondents aged 15 to 24 spent one to three hours per day in the Internet. The main reasons for Internet usage were for listening to music and for fun. The Internet was the preferred media choice for information driven activities. Magazines retained

importance for entertainment and shopping activities while the television retained importance for news and current affairs. Most of the respondents found useful websites through search engines. Interpersonal information sources gave way to the Internet for obtaining information about sensitive issues.

Ajibade, Simon and Balofin in a recent study of University of Lagos undergraduates and their use of the Internet found that imitation and social cognitive learning through the Internet were strong factors that aided the students' exposure to pornography. (Ajibade, Simon, and Balofin, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

A combination of qualitative and quantitative designs was adopted for this study. Creswell recommends this approach for inquiring into a social issue when the researcher intends to build a complex, holistic picture, derived from a natural setting and reporting detailed views of informants. (Creswell, 2002). According to Garba (2018), "in the quantitative paradigm, scholars work with the assumption that there is a social reality out there which can be apprehended and interrogated in their bid to understand its nature and discover the cause and effect relationships behind this reality… the belief is that the researcher can investigate an object without necessarily influencing or affecting it." (p. 175).

Four polytechnics in South West Nigeria were purposively selected to represent the *population* of the study (polytechnic institutions in Nigeria). The study locations were picked based on location, ownership, age, and student population size. The researcher selected ICT Polytechnic, Papalanto, Ogun State because it operates more or less as a monotechnic, focusing on ICT The institutions are:

i) ***The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro*** (Federal Government-owned; located in the rural border region in Ogun State; 10,000 student population, excluding part-time students; 40 years old)

ii) ***Yaba College of Technology***, Lagos (Federal Government-owned; located in the heart of Lagos megacity, Lagos State; 13,000 student population, excluding part-time students; over 70 years old – Nigeria's first tertiary institution)

iii) ***Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu*** (State Government-owned; located in an urban town, Lagos State; 15, 000 student population, excluding part-time students; 52 years old); and

iv) ***Adegbenro ICT Polytechnic***, (formerly Ogun State ICT Polytechnic; located in the rural community of Itori, Ogun State; 3,000 student population, excluding part-time students; 12 years old).

Using the *quota sampling method*, a total of 390 students were selected through purposive simple randomization, (that is, to ensure diversity of respondents, the researcher ensured that the respondents cut across age groups, educational level and pursuit) to represent the four selected institutions as follows:

- The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro: 100

- Yaba College of Technology: 120
- Lagos State Polytechnic: 120
- Adegbenro ICT Polytechnic: 50
  Total: 390.

Questionnaires tailored to the principal research questions were designed and distributed to the sample with 100 per cent return rate. The second data collection instrument used was the *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD). Four FGDs were conducted – one in each institution- across the study location. Seven persons were invited to participate in the FGDs (making 8 members plus the Researcher). The seven persons were:

- A very sociable student; peer group leader between 200-400 level
- A very sociable student; peer group leader in 100 level
- A non-sociable student formal group leader (religious); male
- A non-sociable student formal group leader (Head of Class/Class Governor); male
- A non-sociable student formal group leader (religious); female
- A non-sociable student formal group leader (Head of Class/Class Governor); female
- The social secretary of the Students Union

While the Questionnaires were used to source data on the particular communication codes and slangs being used on the campuses, the FGDs were focused on why and how they used the codes and slangs. While the Questionnaires focused on individual respondents, the FGDs focused on the attitude and behaviour of the larger population as seen by typical subsets selected by the Researcher.

FINDINGS

Questionnaire return rate was 100 per cent and the four FGDs were successfully held across the four campuses. The returned questionnaires and the FGDs were analysed separately and the findings were compared based on the objectives of the study and the research questions.

Bio-data of respondents

Not less than 70 per cent of the respondents are less than 25 years old. Within this group only 30 per cent are aged less than 17 years. This means that most of the respondents are very young. In In terms of level of education, 55.1 per cent of the respondents are National Diploma students while the rest are pursuing Higher National Diploma certificates. Almost two-thirds of the respondents are Christians while about 40 per cent are Muslims. Similarly, more than two-thirds of the respondents (67.9 per cent) are female.

Frequently-used slangs

A total of 145 slangs was listed by the respondents as "most common slangs" in their campuses; either used by the respondent or heard from other students. Among these, the researchers took out slangs with a minimum of 10 (ten) mentions from the 390 respondents and generated 50 slangs (See Table 1).

From Table 1, it can be seen that *Sabalistica* ("You are telling a lie") and *Fun mi je* ("Gist me") were least popular while the two commonest slangs are *Yahooze* ("Internet fraud") and *Yahoo-Plus* ("Internet fraud with cultism"). The high variety of slangs (145) seems normal because slangs tend to be spontaneous and short-lived.

Table 1- The Top-50 Most Frequently-Used Slangs

Sn	Slang	Source/Root	Meaning	Frequency of mention	%
1	Japa	Yoruba Language	Go away; also 'be wise'	231	4.25
2	Sabalistica	English Language	You are telling a lie	10	0.18
3	Cool	English Language	Alright or Ok	170	3.16
4	Jayelo	Yoruba Language	Enjoy yourself	15	0.27
5	Oshaprapra	Pidgin	It's new/fascinating	103	1.91
6	Shakushaku	Pidgin	Flirts/promiscuous persons	41	0.76
7	Well done sir	English Language	I know you are lying	23	0.42
8	Paraporo	Yoruba Language	Rich/Person of high status	65	1.20
9	O.T.	English Language	Orientation	120	2.23
10	Ji-Ma-sun/Soji	Yoruba Language	Be alert/ be smart	125	2.32
11	Epo	Yoruba Language	Girl in menstruation period	73	1.35
12	Dub	English Language	Copying another's work (illegally)	226	4.70
13	Chips	English Language	Pieces of paper containing answers smuggled into exam room	97	1.80
14	K-more	English Language	Drugs	56	1.04
15	Epa or Ref	Yoruba Language	Drugs (esp. rephynol)	170	3.16
16	Block	English Language	Talking to a lover outside restricted area	23	0.42
17	Yahooze	ICT	Internet fraud/fraudsters	293	5.45
18	Yahoo-plus	ICT	Internet fraud with cultism and vices such as kidnapping	293	5.45
19	Zobo	Pidgin	Lying; lie	194	3.60
20	Delete	ICT	To die	68	1.26
21	Aristo	English Language	Man friend, often married; also promiscuous lady	184	3.42
22	Bee-eff (bf)	ICT	Boyfriend	181	3.36
23	Starlite	English Language	Old or returning student	53	0.98
24	Jambite	English Language	New or fresh student	53	0.98
25	Beef (someone)	English Language	Annoy or taunt (someone)	106	1.97
26	Boo	ICT	Boyfriend	201	3.73
27	Bae	ICT	Girlfriend	201	3.73
28	Stab (lecture)	English Language	Deliberate absence	63	1.17
29	Legbegbe	Yoruba Language	Filfering/deceptive	45	0.83

30	420	ICT	Marijuana/Indian hemp	63	1.17
31	Enuwa	Yoruba Language	Boastful person	61	1.13
32	Big boys/big girls	English Language	Rich/comfortable students	206	3.83
33	Ganja	Pidgin	Indian hemp/marijuana	93	1.73
34	Flasher/flash	English Language	Person who makes fake phone call/fake phone call	217	4.03
35	Popsy/Momsy	English Language	Daddy/Mummy	46	0.85
36	Oldman/Oldwoman	English Language	Father/Mother	48	0,89
37	Affairs	English Language	Love relationship/dating	73	1.35
38	Ef-bee	ICT	Facebook	86	1.60
39	Chilanka	Pidgin	Girlfriend	43	0.80
40	Coded	ICT	Secret	43	0.80
41	Bucks	English Language	Money	91	1.09
42	Naija	Pidgin	Nigeria	93	1.73
43	Chemicals	English Language	Illicit drugs	94	1.74
44	Science Students	English Language	Illicit Drug users	126	2.34
45	Orobo	Pidgin	Fat person or thing	194	3.60
46	Oja	Yoruba Language	Illicit drugs	43	0.80
47	Nigga/Alaye	Yoruba Language	Gang members	80	1.48
48	Maga	ICT	Fraud	83	1.48
49	Fun mi je	Yoruba	Gist me	10	0.18
50	Expo	English Language	Leaked exam papers	52	0.96
	TOTAL			**5,375**	**100%**

Sources of slangs

Two of every five slangs used by the students were derived from the English Language. Table 2 shows further that slangs traceable to ICT and the Internet make up about one-third of total slangs-mention. Yoruba/local languages and pidgin account for the least sources.

When related across campuses, Yaba College of Technology recorded the highest number of slangs sourced from the English Language (803) and this was followed by The Federal Polytechnic Ilaro (712), Lagos State Polytechnic (558) and ICT Polytechnic Itori (79). Both Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and Lagos State Polytechnic however recorded more Yoruba Language-rooted slangs (328 and 311 respectively). The differences in use of ICT-rooted slangs were not remarkably different amongst Yaba Tech, Lagos Poly and Federal Poly Ilaro as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sources of Slangs across campuses

Sources of slangs	Yaba Tech	Lagos Poly	Federal Poly Ilaro	ICT Polytechnic	Total

Yoruba/local language(s)	200	311	328	79	918
Pidgin	306	259	108	88	761
English Language	803	558	712	111	2,184
ICT/Internet	422	533	470	87	1,512
Total	**1,731**	**1,661**	**1,618**	**365**	**5,375**

Major reason for use of slangs

This investigation shows that students in Nigerian Polytechnics use slangs for at least three major reasons: as part of the socialization process (that is, through subconscious interactive learning), to belong to peer groups and to communicate effectively. Other less dominant reasons include "fun", "conscious imitation" and "other reasons" that the respondents could not explain. As presented in Table 3, over one-third of the students use slangs due to pure culture. (n=138; 35.9%). Those who do not use slangs are seen as archaic hence slangs usage. Ironically, more than a quarter of the students claim to use slangs in order to communicate effective (n-=107; 27.4%). Slangs are often difficult to understand (except one is in the peer group or social frame of users; how then would many students claim it is to aid their effective communication? The answer to this may be found in the fact that a major purpose of using slangs generally is to hide intended meanings from other people who may be listening to the conversation. Thus, to communicate effectively without letting others understand, slangs and codes become essential. Examples include; *japa* ("go away" or "be smart") and *chips* ("pieces of paper containing answers smuggled into examination halls"). Some of the slangs (e.g. "science students" (drug users), Epo (menstruation), chemicals (illicit drugs), Maga (fraud) and "nigga"/"alaye" (gangsters) have hidden, often negative denotations.

Table 3: Major reason for use of Slangs

Major Reason for using slangs	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
I was socialized into it	95	24.3
Peer culture/I want to belong	138	35.9
To communicate better/effectively	107	27.4
I can't say/I don't know	50	12.0
Total	**390**	**100**

The most popular slangs

Slangs tend to vary in popularity across campuses. While some are very popular in particular institutions, they may not be so popular in other campuses. The researchers sought to know the top-12 slangs across the four polytechnic campuses studied. As Table 4 shows, the most popular slangs in all the four study locations are *Yahooze, Yahooze-Plus, Dub, Japa, Flasher/Flash, Boo, Bae, Orobo, Aristo, Bee-eff* and *Cool*. It is noteworthy half of these slangs that cut across all campuses have roots in ICT (See Table 4). This suggests pervasive nature and increasing incursion of ICT in human activity.

Table 4: Most popular slangs

Sn	Slang	Source/Root	Meaning	Frequency of mention	%
1	**Yahooze**	ICT	Internet fraud/fraudsters	293	5.45
2	**Yahoo-plus**	ICT	Internet fraud with cultism and vices such as kidnapping	293	5.45
3	**Dub**	English Language	Copying another's work (illegally)	226	4.70
4	**Japa**	Yoruba Language	Go away; also 'be wise'	231	4.25
5	**Flasher/flash**	ICT	Person who makes fake phone call/fake phone call	217	4.03
6	**Big boys/big girls**	English Language	Rich/comfortable students	206	3.83
7	**Boo**	ICT	Boyfriend	201	3.73
8	**Bae**	ICT	Girlfriend	201	3.73
9	**Orobo**	Pidgin	Fat person or thing	194	3.60
10	**Aristo**	English Language	Man friend, often married; also promiscuous lady	184	3.42
11	Bee-eff (bf)	ICT	Boyfriend	181	3.36
12	**Cool**	English Language	Alright or Ok	170	3.16

Frequently-used communication codes

The top-50 commonly-used communication codes by students in the study locations are presented in Table 6. More than 90 per cent of these codes are ICT or Internet-related. CYT (See You Tomorrow) and E123 (Easy as 123) are the least in the top-50 scale while UAW, TNX and LOL are on top of the pack. (Tables 6 and 7).

Expectedly, the codes are technical(have specific specialized meaning and difficult to interpret) – as codes are generally are. More than two-thirds of the codes recorded less than 100 mention, suggesting that not many student were familiar with them yet. This could be attributed , perhaps, to the level of computer literacy by the students which is just above average. Although computer skill are not necessary to use these codes, since they were mostly derived from ICT, it should be expected that computer literacy and access should aid understanding and usage of the communication codes.

Table 6- The Top-50 Most Frequently-Used Communication Codes

Sn	Communication codes	Source/Root	Meaning	Frequency of mention	Relative Percentage
1	LMAO	ICT	Laugh My Ass Out	17	0.32
2	LOL	ICT	Laugh Out Loud/Lots of Laughs	303	5.81
3	Bf	ICT	Boyfriend	71	1.36
4	9 (or PIR)	ICT	Parent watching/Parent in Room	42	0.80
5	420	ICT	Marijuana	17	0.32
6	TMR	English Language	Tomorrow	143	2.74
7	Ack	English Language	Acknowledge	86	1.64
8	Btwn	English Language	Between	50	0.95
9	Bc	ICT	Because	122	2.33
10	EOD	ICT	End of Discussion	63	1.20
11	OYO	ICT	On Your Own	43	0.82
12	IJN	ICT	In Jesus Name	192	3.68
13	TDB	ICT	Till Day Break	63	1.20
14	TBC	ICT	To Be Continued	36	0.69
15	THX, TX, TNX	ICT	Thanks	304	5.83
16	K (or KK)	ICT	Ok (or very Ok)	352	6.75
17	MBD	ICT	My Birth Day	49	0.93
18	BTT	ICT	Back To The Topic	43	0.82
19	HBD	ICT	Happy Birth Day	174	3.33
20	UAW	ICT	You are welcome	333	6.38
21	OT	ICT	Off Topic	43	0.82
22	FB	ICT	Facebook	165	3.16
23	OTP	ICT	On the Phone	24	0.46
24	SUB	ICT	Subscription (phone data)	204	3.91
25	NC	ICT	No Comment	21	0.40
26	OMG	ICT	Oh My God	198	3.79
27	419	Pidgin	Fraud/Fraudulent	211	4.06
28	88	ICT	Hugs/Kisses	10	0.19
29	ADD	ICT	Address	56	1.07
30	10k	ICT	Thanks	71	1.36
31	E123	ICT	Easy as 123	6	0.11
32	6xy	ICT	Sexy	47	0.90
33	AMOF	ICT	As a Matter of Fact	51	0.97

34	ABTA	ICT	About to Say Good Night	73	1.40
35	AIIT	ICT	Alright	202	3.87
36	CID	ICT	Consider It Done	31	0.59
37	X	ICT	Kiss	70	1.34
38	X	ICT	Former boyfriend/girlfriend	73	1.40
39	ATM	ICT	At The Moment	23	0.44
40	IBB	ICT	I'LL Be Back	54	1.03
41	GN	ICT	Good Night	112	2.14
42	SOWIE	ICT	Sorry	271	5.19
43	Awwww.	English	(feeling) Sorry	214	4.10
44	ALOL	English	Actually Laughing Out Loud	74	1.41
45	ALAWIE	Pidgin	NYSC Allowance	176	3.37
46	AOTA	ICT	All of The Above	18	0.34
47	W8	ICT	Wait	7	0.13
48	CYT	ICT	See You Tomorrow	6	0.11
49	G8	English	Great	114	2.18
50	SMS	ICT	Text Message	86	1.64
	Total			**5,214**	**100**

Table 7: Most popular communication codes

Sn	Communication code	Source/Root	Meaning	Frequency of mention	%
1	**UAW**	ICT	You are welcome	333	6.38
2	**THX, TX, TNX**	ICT	Thanks	304	5.83
3	**LOL**	ICT	Laugh Out Loud/Lots of Laughs	303	5.81
4	**SOWIE**	ICT	Sorry	271	5.19
5	**Awwww.**	English	(feeling) Sorry	214	4.10
6	**419**	Pidgin	Fraud/Fraudulent	211	4.06
7	**SUB**	ICT	Subscription (phone data)	204	3.91
8	**AIIT**	ICT	Alright	202	3.87
9	**OMG**	ICT	Oh My God	198	3.79
10	**IJN**	ICT	In Jesus Name	192	3.68
11	**ALAWIE**	Pidgin	NYSC Allowance	176	3.37
12	**HBD**	ICT	Happy Birth Day	174	3.33

Most popular communication codes

As stated earlier in this report, ICT-rooted slangs dominate the communication codes by students. Only three could be attributed to other sources – dominantly pidgin (Table 7). The reasons students use communication codes are: to save time, to save cost, to hide meanings from others and "unknown reasons". Unlike use of slangs which were used mainly as a show of peer culture and socialization, communication codes were mainly deployed to reduce time spent sending text messages or constructing sentences online or through social media and to reduce the amount of space used thereby saving cost. A third reason major reason for using communication codes was however to "hide meanings from others" similar to why slangs are also used. It is worthy of note that the students represent many negative things via codes. Examples include: 9 (Parents watching), 420 (Marijuana/Indianhemp); 6x (sex),. In comparison to slangs, communication codes used by the students generally do not change in terms of what they *connote* (ordinary meaning) and *denote* (understood meaning). In the case of slangs, the denotative meanings are often different from the connotative.

Focus Group Discussions

All these findings were corroborated by the Focus Group Discussions conducted across the four campuses. Formal and informal leaders who took part in the FGDs provided insights into why students use codes and slangs. The following excerpt by a peer group leader typically explains this:

> On the campus, you want to show you belong. You do as they do in Rome to be a Roman. We students like to do everything differently – that includes our language. More important is that we like to speak in codes and slangs so people will not get (understand) what we mean. Sometimes we can say it openly – for example how can someone say he or she is going to buy illicit drugs? Of course we use data (ICT) a lot …for phone, computer, social apps… and that explains why we use those ICT terms.

Other Findings

This investigation also reveals the following findings:

- There is no significant difference in the use of slangs and codes along gender, socio-economic class, religion and educational status factors.
- Most students do not have difficulty in interpreting the meaning of slangs and communication codes (compared to non-students)
- Most respondents started using communication codes frequently after their admission to the respective schools. This suggests that many of the slangs are actually "campus slangs".

CONCLUSION

This study discovered at least 50 slangs and 50 communication codes used by students of Nigerian polytechnics. It further explains the origins of the codes and found that nearly all the

communication codes were ICT-related while about a third of the slangs were ICT-related. The study thus proves that ICT has become very dominant in the communication habits of undergraduates.

Across campuses, there are no substantial differences in communication codes but slangs across campues are more dissimilar. However, over three of dozens of slangs have same meanings across the campuses. The institutions in the cities tend to derive more of their slangs from the English Language, Yoruba and ICT in that order volume while those in sub-urban areas derived more of their slangs from Yoruba and local languages. While students use slangs as peer and socialization habits, they used communication codes more for cost management (time and money) reasons. Both slangs and codes were used effectively to manipulate denotative meanings of their communication (hide meanings from others).

There is no significant difference in the use of slangs and codes along gender, socio-economic class, religion and educational status factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

The study has contributed to communication and social linguistics scholarship in Nigeria in the following ways:

1. This study has provided evidence-based contribution to the debate as to whether slangs is good or bad way of communication.
2. It has provided primary data on patterns of ICT-related communication codes and slangs in tertiary institutional setting in Nigeria. Although some of the codes and slangs documented in this investigation cut across countries, many of them are home-grown(Nigerian) codes and slangs.
3. The study has provided a lexicon for students and varsity administrators in Nigeria in understanding how students communicate thereby potentially enhancing the efficacy of communication with students.
4. Since slang users deploy them partly as secret codes, this study is valuable in unlocking the language codes of students (for instance, parents and educational administrators can use this study to unlock information hidden by these students).
5. The study has unraveled the relevance of ICT in communication codes and slangs development thereby opening up further research in this area.

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