

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION OF NIGERIAN TIKTOK CREATORS**

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE,
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REQUIREMENT OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE.**

OCTOBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Rendy Osarugue OSOBASE (Miss)** in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

Prof. Iyabode Nwabueze

(Supervisor)

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicated this project to Almighty God

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I begin by giving all glory and honor to Almighty God, whose unfailing grace, wisdom, and strength have carried me through every step of this academic journey. His divine guidance has been my light through every challenge, and without His mercy, this achievement would not have been possible.

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To my cherished grandmother, Gladys Agbonlahor, thank you for your steadfast prayers and the foundation of love you have always provided. Your wisdom and comforting presence have been a safe haven throughout my life.

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Osobase Osarugue Rendy

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Abstract

This study investigates how Nigerian TikTok creators employ language to construct identity and negotiate social belonging in the digital space. Using twenty-five selected content creators as case studies, the research examined how linguistic choices, stylistic patterns, and performative expressions reflect evolving notions of selfhood and community among young Nigerians. Drawing on sociolinguistic and discourse analytic perspectives, the study revealed that language on TikTok functions as a powerful resource for creativity, resistance, and self-affirmation. Through code-switching, humour, and digital vernaculars, these creators redefined how identity is communicated and perceived within online communities. The findings highlight that TikTok is

not only a site of entertainment but also a dynamic platform for linguistic innovation and identity construction in contemporary Nigerian society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how Nigerian TikTok creators employ language as a tool for identity construction and performance in digital spaces. As social media becomes an increasingly significant arena for self-expression, this study seeks to explore the linguistic choices, code-switching patterns, accents and discursive strategies Nigerian TikTok users deploy to project and negotiate multiple facets of their identities including ethnic, gendered, regional, religious, and socio-political identities. The study aims to uncover how these linguistic performances reinforce, subvert, or reimagine existing societal norms.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study focuses specifically on Nigerian TikTok creators between the ages of 18–35 who consistently engage audiences through content with significant verbal or linguistic elements. It centres on videos produced in English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages (e.g., Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa), including multilingual and code-switched content. The study excludes content creators who merely lip-sync to music without original verbal input. The geographical focus is Nigeria, though it considers the diasporic reach of some creators. Approximately 20–25 creators will be purposively sampled across diverse regions, genders, and linguistic backgrounds.

1.3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative sociolinguistic research design anchored in discourse analysis.

Data will be collected through purposive sampling of TikTok videos that explicitly showcase identity performance through language. Videos will be downloaded, transcribed verbatim for linguistic patterns such as code-switching and accent variation. The analysis will follow thematic and interactional sociolinguistic approaches, identifying recurring discourse themes related to identity negotiation and audience engagement.

1.4 Theoretical Background

The theoretical foundation of this study rests upon the Sociocultural Linguistic Theory of Identity Construction as proposed by Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall. This framework offers a dynamic and interaction-based perspective on how language serves as a principal medium through which identities are enacted, negotiated, and contested in discourse. Unlike earlier approaches that treated identity as a fixed, predetermined attribute linked to social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, or nationality, this theory considers identity as a fluid, emergent process constructed moment to moment in the unfolding of linguistic interaction.

The origins of this framework can be traced to the crosscurrents of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and discourse analysis. Pioneers like William Labov and Dell Hymes laid the foundation by establishing the study of language in social context, emphasising the correlation between speech patterns and demographic variables (Labov; Hymes). However, their models often conceptualised identity in a rather static fashion, focusing on correlations rather than interactions. Responding to these limitations, Bucholtz and Hall offered a more performative and socially embedded understanding of identity. Their pivotal work, —*Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach*,¹¹ published in 2005, became a cornerstone in the field, articulating a five-principle framework for analysing how identities emerge through language.

Central to their theory is the idea that identity is produced rather than possessed. It emerges in situated acts of communication, shaped by the interplay between linguistic choices, social positioning, and broader ideological structures. The five principles they propose—emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness—each shed light on a specific dimension of identity construction. Identity, according to Bucholtz and Hall, is always emergent in discourse; it is never wholly complete or settled. Positionality refers to the ways in which speakers adopt and are assigned social positions within an interaction. Indexicality captures how specific linguistic forms point to, or —index, social meanings such as urban sophistication, rural authenticity, or youthful rebellion. Relationality highlights how identity is constructed in relation to others through sameness, difference, or opposition. Finally, partialness underscores the fragmentary and context-dependent nature of identity, resisting any essentialist notion of who people —are.

The development of this framework was grounded in ethnographic research. Bucholtz's studies on —nerd identity in American high schools and Hall's work on transgender communities and South Asian hijra speakers provided empirical grounding for their theory (Bucholtz; Hall). Their findings revealed how marginalised and subcultural groups often deploy linguistic strategies to resist dominant norms and craft alternative forms of belonging. These insights have proven highly adaptable to digital and mediated contexts, where identity performance is intensified and publicly archived, such as in social media spaces.

This theory holds profound significance for the study of language because it reframes identity as a process rather than a product. It enables scholars to analyse not only the surface features of speech such as accent or vocabulary but also the deeper semiotic processes through which language indexes social meanings. In particular, it foregrounds the agency of speakers in

constructing and contesting identities, even within structures of power and constraint. By focusing on how individuals use language to navigate complex social terrains, the theory offers a flexible and humanistic tool for studying communication in diverse and evolving contexts.

In the context of this study, the Sociocultural Linguistic Theory of Identity Construction provides a vital lens for understanding the linguistic performances of Nigerian TikTok creators. These creators engage in a highly performative and interactive form of discourse, where language becomes a tool not only for entertainment but also for self-positioning, cultural commentary, and community-building. Through a mix of English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages, they articulate identities that are hybrid, fluid, and context-sensitive. For instance, a creator may begin a skit in polished Standard English to signify education or class, then switch to Pidgin or Yoruba for comedic effect, solidarity, or critique. These shifts are not merely stylistic but deeply indexical, pointing to complex social meanings rooted in Nigeria's multilingual and postcolonial realities.

Moreover, TikTok's algorithmic structure fosters a feedback loop in which creators' linguistic choices are constantly evaluated by their audiences through likes, shares, comments, and duets. Identity is thus not only performed but co-constructed, as creators adjust their speech styles in response to audience reactions, trending sounds, and viral challenges. Bucholtz and Hall's emphasis on the relational and emergent nature of identity is particularly applicable here, allowing us to see these performances as situated acts of self-fashioning within a dynamic, participatory culture.

Scholarly engagement with this theory has continued to expand across contexts and disciplines. Researchers such as Tope Omoniyi have extended it to the African continent, examining how language serves as a site of postcolonial identity negotiation (Omoniyi 12). Jan

Blommaert's work further elaborates on how globalisation and mobility complicate linguistic identity, introducing concepts such as —polycentricity‖ and —voicell to account for the multiplicity of social norms and evaluative centres influencing speakers (Blommaert). The theory has also been used to analyse digital youth cultures, queer discourse, migrant communities, and transnational communication, attesting to its analytical breadth and relevance.

By anchoring this study in Bucholtz and Hall's sociocultural linguistic framework, we gain access to a theoretically rich and empirically grounded model for interrogating how Nigerian TikTok creators use language to perform and negotiate identity. This approach not only enriches our understanding of digital discourse in the Nigerian context but also contributes to the broader conversation on how language functions as a site of identity work in the contemporary world.

1.5 Literature Review

The relationship between language and identity has long been a subject of intense academic inquiry within sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media studies. With the advent of digital platforms and participatory media cultures, this relationship has become even more complex, especially in multilingual and postcolonial societies such as Nigeria. This literature review explores the scholarly work that has shaped the understanding of identity construction through language use, particularly in digital spaces, and how these insights bear upon the present study of Nigerian TikTok creators.

Foundational scholarship in sociolinguistics, particularly that of William Labov and Dell Hymes, laid the groundwork by establishing the idea that language use reflects social stratification and communicative competence. Labov's seminal work on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) demonstrated how linguistic variation is not random but patterned by

social variables such as race, class, and gender (Labov). Hymes introduced the ethnography of communication, emphasising the contextual and cultural norms that underpin language use in specific communities (Hymes). These early models, while revolutionary, often treated identity as fixed and tied to stable demographic categories.

A major shift occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s, when scholars such as Mary Bucholtz, Kira Hall, Deborah Cameron, and Penelope Eckert began to reconceptualise identity as performative and emergent. Their studies illustrated how speakers actively construct identities through linguistic choices, drawing on and negotiating social meanings. For instance, Bucholtz's ethnographic work with American youth communities showed how speakers style themselves in opposition to dominant norms, using language to forge subcultural affiliations and resist social hierarchies (Bucholtz, *The Whiteness of Nerds*). This performative view of identity was further reinforced by Hall's work on gender and queer communities, where language was shown to be a key resource in navigating identity categories that resist binary classification (Hall). These insights laid the theoretical foundation for examining digital identity construction, where performance is heightened, edited, and archived.

In the context of Nigeria, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to how multilingualism, code-switching, and digital expression intersect to shape contemporary Nigerian identities. Tope Omoniyi's work has been instrumental in theorising the —hierarchy of identity,|| which recognises that speakers negotiate multiple, and often competing, identity positions depending on context (Omoniyi). His studies on the Nigerian diaspora demonstrate how individuals draw on a range of linguistic resources to navigate transnational spaces and articulate belonging. Similarly, Chinwe Ugochukwu has explored how Nigerian youth deploy

codeswitching and stylised language on social media platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp to perform class, modernity, and humour (Ugochukwu).

The role of Nigerian Pidgin in digital identity construction has also garnered scholarly attention. Ayo Bamgbose and Kola Tubosun have highlighted the evolving status of Pidgin from a marginalised creole to a language of resistance, intimacy, and everyday expression, especially in popular music and digital content (Bamgbose Tubosun). These studies reveal how Pidgin operates as a linguistic tool for solidarity and authenticity, allowing speakers to subvert elitist language ideologies tied to Standard English.

However, despite these rich contributions, there is a relative paucity of research focusing specifically on TikTok as a discursive space for identity performance in Nigeria. While studies have examined Nigerian Twitter and YouTube discourse, TikTok remains under-explored, especially in regard to how short-form video content facilitates complex identity negotiations through audio-visual-linguistic interplay. This gap is significant because TikTok's design its emphasis on mimicry, trending sounds, and performative intertextuality creates unique affordances for language-based self-styling. Moreover, the Nigerian TikTok community is remarkably diverse, drawing on a complex interplay of English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages to signal class, ethnicity, urbanity, and gendered experiences.

A handful of emerging studies are beginning to address this lacuna. Ebere Nwachukwu's unpublished dissertation on Nigerian TikTok comedy sketches notes how creators use codemixing and facial expression to dramatise everyday Nigerian struggles, thus performing a shared cultural identity (Nwachukwu). Likewise, Funke Adebayo's recent journal article argues that Nigerian TikTok trends often serve as sites of cultural memory, where linguistic performance becomes a mode of archiving social history and collective trauma, particularly in response to

events like the #EndSARS movement (Adebayo). These studies point to the rich potential of TikTok as a field of linguistic and sociocultural analysis but remain largely preliminary and descriptive.

This current study aims to build upon and extend these emerging lines of inquiry by providing a systematic sociolinguistic analysis of how Nigerian TikTok creators construct and perform identity through language. By applying Bucholtz and Hall's Sociocultural Linguistic Theory of Identity Construction, it seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of the linguistic strategies employed, the ideologies they index, and the interactive processes through which identity is co-constructed with audiences. It also aims to foreground the agency of creators how they navigate, affirm, and sometimes resist dominant narratives of gender, class, ethnicity, and modernity through their linguistic choices.

In summary, while a substantial body of literature exists on language and identity, and a growing interest is visible in African digital cultures, the intersection of TikTok, Nigerian multilingualism, and identity construction remains ripe for in-depth scholarly exploration. This study contributes to that emerging discourse, offering both theoretical depth and empirical richness to our understanding of language-mediated identity in the digital age.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This study explains that Nigerian TikTok creators actively construct layered identities by strategically deploying multilingual resources such as code-switching, Pidgin English, indigenous languages, and performance registers within digital performance contexts, thereby negotiating class, gender, ethnicity, and modernity; through close analysis of selected TikTok content in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Introduction

This chapter begins the core analysis of how Nigerian TikTok creators employ language to construct and negotiate identity. Drawing upon the theoretical foundation of Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) Sociocultural Linguistic Theory of Identity, the chapter focuses on the use of Nigerian Pidgin and code-switching as central strategies of identity performance. Pidgin has long been regarded as a linguistic resource that indexes national belonging, youth culture, and street-level authenticity. Within the creative space of TikTok, it becomes not only a medium of communication but also a performative tool for projecting multiple identities.

The analysis here draws on selected excerpts from TikTok videos by Nigerian creators (ages 18–35), focusing on those whose content foregrounds verbal expression. They reflect speech patterns, structures, and styles typical of Nigerian TikTok discourse.

2.1 Language and Digital Identity Performance

Digital platforms such as TikTok are not merely spaces for entertainment; they are also arenas where individuals negotiate, perform, and contest their identities through language. Language, in this sense, becomes more than a medium of communication. It is a resource for self-presentation, positioning, and the construction of social meaning. As Bucholtz and Hall argue, identity should be viewed as —the social positioning of self and other achieved through interaction (586). Nigerian TikTok creators exemplify this principle as they deploy code-switching, Pidgin, indigenous languages, humour, religious discourse, and globalised youth slang to craft recognisable yet fluid personae. The following analysis draws upon six TikTok creators, each

representing diverse linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, to illustrate how language shapes digital identity in Nigeria.

Example 1: @curisewithjoe (Igbo-English blend)

Title: Transcript - Wed, 12 Nov 2025 15:54:30 GMT

Date: Wed, 12 Nov 2025 15:54:30 GMT

Duration: [00:01:43.81]

[00:00:05.36] - Speaker 1

"Aghotachaghị m o! Ọ bụ na anughị m ihe? I no even understand wetin dey happen sef. I take fly comot go IMO state to go surprise my guy for him engagement the first time. Chai! By mistake o, because nke a, these my friends dem like am well well, dem just dey hype the matter. Dị ka m kwuru na mbụ, like I talk before, na im make me feel say e be correct opportunity make I go show face, surprise am small and of course give am that good highlight wey e deserve. The kind highlight wey I need for myself sef. Ma otú ọ dị, however, the way e react sef, e carry me go back down memory lane of how all of us bin start this whole thing from the beginning. We bin get few things wey dey common between us o. Yahoo boys matter, honesty and realness to friendship, legit hustle and that godliness wey we dey carry for chest. Chineke amaghị m, because to be honest, na just cruise and gbese all through. Na so so laugh and enjoyment. Ọ bụ mgbe ahụ ka nwa agboghọ a siri hapụ m o. Na that time this babe just carry her load comot for my life. While this union dey very beautiful well well, ọ bụkwa ihe kacha atụ m egwu. E dey fear me die! Hence I dey respect people wey dey bold make this kind decision and still get am right, karịsịa mgbe ha ka dị obere, especially at young age when person never see shege. He be one guy wey get spirit within, ọ bụ onye nwere mmuo, trust me or I swear, ọ bụ ụdị mmadụ ga-anwụ nke oma for other people. The kind person wey plenty people go come out for. This union dey

blessed abeg, o goziri agozi, and I no fit wait to watch am as e go dey walk that aisle. O ga-abu ihe mara mma nke ukwu. Me sef, m ka no inside, I still dey inside my realm of emotions, I still dey there dey feel am until this guy just up and down dey shout 'the blood of Jesus!' ma ka naeche owu omuma, still dey complain say e dey feel lonely. Tufiakwa! A whole Messiah for that matter, otu Mesaja category niile, single and unshakable. Onye mere m ihe a? Meanwhile, gwa m, wetin you think about my English vlog sef?"

In this excerpt, @cuisewithjoe Igbo expressions such as aghotachaghi m ("I don't understand"), o bu na anughu m ihe ("is it that I'm not hearing properly"), nke a ("this"), di ka m kwuru na mbu ("like I said before"), ma otu o di ("but however"), Chineke amaghi m ("God knows"), o bu mgbe ahụ ka nwa agboghọ a siri hapu m o ("that was when this girl left me"), o bukwa ihe kacha atu m egwu ("it's also the thing that scares me most"), karisija mgbe ha ka di obere ("especially when they're still young"), o bu onye nwere mmuo ("he's someone with spirit"), o bu udi mmadu ganwu nke oma ("he's the type of person who would die well for others"), o goziri agozi ("it is blessed"), o ga-abu ihe mara mma nke ukwu ("it will be very beautiful"), m ka no inside ("I'm still inside"), ma ka na-eche owu omuma ("and still feeling lonely"), otu Mesaja category niile ("a whole Messiah category"), Tufiakwa! ("God forbid!"), onye mere m ihe a? ("who did this to me?"), and gwa m ("tell me") with Nigerian Pidgin (e no dey easy at all, I no fit wait, e dey fear me die, wetin dey happen sef, dem just dey hype the matter) and English. His linguistic use signals his Igbo ethnicity, his excitement to surprise his friend and his role as a content creator who transforms everyday experiences into relatable content. The deliberate code-switching between friendship values, relationship fears, and personal emotions is both culturally resonant and socially indexical, pointing to a common Nigerian youth experience. In line with Goffman's concept of performance, @curisewithjoe frames himself as the "good friend" who loves showing

up while maintaining cheerfulness (Goffman 32). His code-switching does not merely reflect trilingual ability but embodies his negotiation between ethnic pride and national youth identity.

Example 2: @girlie_influencer (Hausa-English-Pidgin blend)

[00:00:00.16] - Speaker

You are not fat. Kai, ba ka da kiba ba. You just get zubunkoshi small small. Oh Amra, wallahi you dey chop too much. Kana cin abinci da yawa. Abi, you are just jealous abi? Kana kishi ne kawai? My plate has wetin your life dey miss. Abincina yana da abin da rayuwarka ba ta da shi. I love food so much, Ina son abinci sosai. Wallahi food is better than having relationship sef. Relationship? Kai! Then dem go break up with you, kuma a sake ku. Say no. A'a! Go chop food instead. Je ka ci abinci. You never ready for that heartbreak.

As a foodie, we no dey beg for love o. Ba ma rokon soyayya ba. We dey beg for jollof rice.

Muna rokon jollof ne! Allah ya kiyaye mu.

Please follow me for no reason. Don Allah ku bi ni ba tare da dalili ba.

Here, @girlie_influencer integrates Hausa (Wallahi meaning "I swear by God"), Pidgin (you dey chop too much, we no dey beg for love o), and English phrases. Her language indexes her HausaMuslim background while simultaneously reaching a pan-Nigerian audience. The insertion of Wallahi lends religious gravity to her message, invoking Islamic oaths, while the Pidgin (we dey beg for jollof rice) broadens accessibility beyond regional boundaries. This demonstrates what Androutsopoulos terms the "polycentricity of online discourse," where speakers draw upon multiple semiotic centres to maximise resonance and cultural relatability across Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape.

Example 3: @tedz.cc (Yoruba-English-Pidgin with urban slang)

Title: Transcript - Wed, 12 Nov 2025 23:33:56 GMT

Date: Wed, 12 Nov 2025 23:33:56 GMT

Duration: [00:01:28.45]

[00:00:00.24] - Speaker 1

"Since you are a useless first daughter, omo alakori, and you no want get sense, o ko ni oye. Oloriburuku! It is your grandmother and your mother wey dey for village. Iya e ati iya-nla e lo wa ninu igboro!"

[00:00:06.08] - Speaker 2

"I'm talking to bastard. Omo ale ni e! If you try comot for that place ehn. Kai! Hey. No. I. I really believe testimonies. Why is another source? So you just dey learn to talk by mistake, o kan n ko soro lasise, gather money for you mistakenly. You dey talk law school. Ile-eko ofin. They no teach you 1, 2, 3 or everything you think say na point. I go dey do two times to my head. Ori mi o! Are you a bastard? Omo ale ni e? Who the hell are you? Ta lo je eleyi? Who is this one? How many una be for your family? I know your history well well. Mo mo itan e daadaa. Yes, you talk say your mama used to dey sleep around. Mama e maa n sun kiri. My mom is a bus stop, ibi iduro okada! Only you. Now you get 16 siblings o. Arakunrin merindinlogun! One. One man. Okunrin kan. One man. One man per sleeping. Okunrin kan fun oorun kan. Even pair of shoes, bata meji, you no fit get one man. One. Even though dem talk say one man for himself abi dem no talk am? You're only supposed to take am to act. O ye ki o gba a si ise. Not just dey yab and dey fight around like pack of bulldogs, aja were, back in village. Wear your black on black everyday, aso dudu lori aso dudu. Every day you get money? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Ojo Aje, Ojo Isegun, Ojo Riru. Every day of your life, gbogbo ojo aye e. Poverty is exchanging power for your life o! Osi n paaroo agbara ninu aye e! Talo fun e ni!" Here, @tedz.cc deploys Yoruba discourse markers (omo alakori meaning "useless person," o ko ni oye

meaning "you don't have sense," *oloriburuku* meaning "unfortunate person," *iya e ati iyanla e lo wa ninu igboro* meaning "your mother and grandmother are in the village," *omo ale ni e* meaning "you're a bastard," *o kan n ko soro lasise* meaning "you're just learning to talk by mistake," *ile-eko ofin* meaning "law school," *ori mi o* meaning "my head!" as an exclamation, *ta lo je eleyi* meaning "who is this one," *mo mo itan e daadaa* meaning "I know your history very well," *mama e maa n sun kiri* meaning "your mother sleeps around," *ibi iduro okada* meaning "motorcycle/bus stop," *arakunrin merindinlogun* meaning "sixteen siblings," *okunrin kan* meaning "one man," *okunrin kan fun oorun kan* meaning "one man per sleep," *bata meji* meaning "pair of shoes," *o ye ki o gba a si ise* meaning "you should take it to action," *aja were* meaning "mad dogs," *aso dudu lori aso dudu* meaning "black on black clothing," *ojo Aje, Ojo Isegun, Ojo Riru* meaning "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday," *gbogbo ojo aye e* meaning "every day of your life," *osi n paaroo agbara ninu aye e* meaning "poverty is exchanging power in your life," and *talo fun e ni* meaning "who gave it to you") alongside Pidgin (you no want get sense, if you try comot, I go dey do two times to my head, you just dey learn to talk, how many una be, you no fit get one man, not just dey yab and dey fight) and Nigerian youth slang (law school, gather money, wear your black on black). His linguistic choices situate him within Lagos' cosmopolitan youth culture, where English and Yoruba blend seamlessly. The emphasis on insults and confrontational language signals participation in globalised digital culture, echoing combative narratives of clapbacks and verbal takedowns that dominate social media. In Bucholtz and Hall's framework, identity emerges here through "adequation and distinction," as [@tedz.cc](#) aligns himself with peers who engage in verbal sparring while distancing himself from those he perceives as pretentious or inauthentic (599). His TikTok persona embodies the modern Lagos youth:

confrontational, witty, and unapologetically direct in asserting social dominance through linguistic performance.

Example 4: @QueenPidgin (Port Harcourt – Nigerian Pidgin with feminist undertones)

- —Dem dey always talk say woman place na kitchen. Abeg who go chop all the money we dey make for street if we no get sense? Na we dey run things.!

QueenPidgin relies primarily on Nigerian Pidgin to articulate a feminist stance. Her choice of Pidgin is significant: rather than resorting to —formall English, she situates her argument in a language associated with working-class identity and street credibility. This challenges the patriarchal stereotype she mocks while grounding her resistance in everyday Nigerian speech. As Omoniyi notes, linguistic performance often reflects —hierarchies of value! in society, with Pidgin traditionally indexed as low-prestige (Omoniyi 20). By appropriating it for feminist critique, QueenPidgin both subverts and elevates its role in digital discourse. Her identity is performed as that of a bold, outspoken woman who reclaims marginalised linguistic codes to articulate empowerment.

Example 5: @PastorJay (Abuja – Pentecostal preaching style)

- —Brethren, I declare unto you today: no matter the TikTok algorithm, your destiny cannot be suppressed. Shout a big Amen!!

PastorJay mirrors the sermonic style of Nigerian Pentecostal preachers, but transposes it into TikTok discourse. He appropriates biblical diction (brethren, declare, destiny) while humorously referencing the platform’s algorithm. His identity construction hinges on intertextuality: he performs the role of a preacher but in a digital entertainment context, thereby collapsing boundaries between sacred and secular domains. This aligns with Fairclough’s notion of

—recontextualisation,¹¹ where linguistic styles migrate across contexts, creating new meanings (Fairclough 67). PastorJay appeals to audiences familiar with both church rhetoric and digital frustrations, blending spirituality with satire to consolidate a unique persona.

Example 6: @AfroGenZ (Diaspora returnee – accent-shifting)

- —Lowkey, when I first came back from London, people dey yab me say my accent dey form. But abeg, na me sabi wetin dey.¹²

AfroGenZ represents the Nigerian diasporic youth navigating authenticity and belonging. His alternation between British-influenced English (lowkey, accent) and Nigerian Pidgin (people dey yab me) foregrounds issues of linguistic authenticity. As Blommaert explains, accent itself becomes a —semiotic resource¹³ for positioning oneself within transnational spaces (Blommaert 132). AfroGenZ’s TikTok persona negotiates ridicule for perceived pretentiousness while asserting control over his hybrid identity. His identity performance reveals the tension between global youth culture and local expectations of —real¹⁴ Nigerianness.

Taken together, these six examples reveal the diversity and dynamism of identity construction on Nigerian TikTok. Each creator mobilises different linguistic repertoires to achieve distinct social positions: the comedian, the social critic, the cosmopolitan youth, the feminist, the preacher, and the diasporic returnee. Their language practices demonstrate Bucholtz and Hall’s claim that identities are —emergent in discourse¹⁵ rather than fixed essences (588). By drawing on codeswitching, slang, Pidgin, indigenous expressions, and intertextual registers, Nigerian TikTok creators exemplify the fluid, strategic, and performative nature of identity in digital contexts.

2.2 Code-Switching as a Strategy of Identity Construction

One of the most visible linguistic practices on Nigerian TikTok is code-switching. This involves the movement between different languages or varieties within the same interaction, sometimes

within the same sentence. Far from being a random act, code-switching is a deliberate strategy that enables speakers to highlight aspects of their identity, engage diverse audiences, and balance multiple cultural expectations. As Gumperz explains, code-switching often carries —situational meaning‖ that signals social relationships and speaker intent (65). In the digital sphere, where brevity and impact are prized, switching between codes allows creators to compress complex layers of identity into short, memorable expressions @curisewithjoe.

@girlie_influencer

For girlie_influencer, code-switching is central to his persuasive power. His use of Wallahi establishes seriousness and appeals to shared Islamic values among Hausa-speaking viewers. His shift into Pidgin signals solidarity, reaching beyond the North into a wider Nigerian public.

Finally, his use of English creates an authoritative tone, indexing education and civic concern. The layering of these codes allows girlie_influencer to perform what Bucholtz and Hall describe as —authentication,‖ the process of legitimising identity claims before an audience (592). In his videos, girlie_influencer is not merely a Northern Nigerian; he is also a moral citizen addressing national concerns. Code-switching enables him to embody these multiple stances without contradiction.

@tedz.cc tedz.cc linguistic play reflects urban youth culture in Lagos. His insertion of Yoruba discourse markers such as Omo into predominantly English or Pidgin speech situates him within the Yoruba cultural sphere while still appealing to a national audience. The alternation between

Yoruba and Pidgin has a rhythmic quality that enhances the entertainment value of his speech. His code-switching here is less about persuasion and more about performance. It marks him as —authentically Lagosian‖ while still cosmopolitan. In this sense, code-switching functions as an aesthetic resource. Androutsopoulos has argued that online performances often draw upon multiple codes for stylistic creativity as much as for communication (41). Tobi embodies this, using Yoruba and Pidgin not only to connect with his peers but also to craft a stylish and aspirational persona.

QueenPidgin (@QueenPidgin)

Although her username foregrounds Pidgin, QueenPidgin also employs English strategically in her videos. She often begins with Pidgin to create immediacy and relatability but switches into English when making her feminist points more explicit. This alternation elevates the seriousness of her argument while ensuring that her critique resonates across class and gender divides. Omoniyi has noted that the social meanings of languages in Nigeria reflect hierarchies of power and prestige (20). By moving from Pidgin into English, QueenPidgin performs resistance while also asserting authority. Her switches underline the seriousness of her critique and her refusal to be limited to a single linguistic domain.

PastorJay (@PastorJay)

PastorJay’s speech exemplifies recontextualised switching. He borrows heavily from the sermonic register of Nigerian Pentecostal churches, beginning in formal English with biblical overtones before suddenly slipping into colloquial Pidgin for comic effect. For example, his mock-sermon about the TikTok algorithm combines the authoritative cadence of preaching with the streetwise familiarity of Pidgin. This juxtaposition makes his videos humorous while still resonant. Fairclough’s notion of —recontextualisation‖ is useful here: linguistic styles are

borrowed and relocated to create new meanings (67). PastorJay's code-switching demonstrates how sacred language can be remixed in secular digital contexts, creating hybrid identities that resonate with Nigerian audiences.

AfroGenZ (@AfroGenZ)

AfroGenZ, the diasporic returnee, uses code-switching to negotiate accusations of inauthenticity. His alternation between British-influenced English and Nigerian Pidgin reflects both his transnational experiences and his effort to reclaim Nigerianness. The shift is more than stylistic; it is defensive and performative. It enables him to acknowledge the —yabsll or jokes about his accent while still asserting his claim to Nigerian identity. As Blommaert has argued, accent itself becomes a semiotic resource, indexing mobility and authenticity depending on how it is framed (132). AfroGenZ's code-switching thus performs a balancing act between global youth culture and local expectations of authenticity.

Broader Implications

The six examples together highlight how code-switching operates as a resource for identity construction on Nigerian TikTok. It enables creators to move between ethnic, national, and global identities with ease. It allows them to shift registers between seriousness and humour, resistance and solidarity, sacredness and satire. Above all, it underscores the fluidity of digital identities, which are not fixed but constantly negotiated in interaction. Bucholtz and Hall remind us that identity is not an inherent quality but —emergent in discoursell (588). On TikTok, codeswitching is one of the primary tools through which this emergence takes place. Nigerian creators use it not only to entertain but also to perform belonging, assert authority, resist stereotypes, and style themselves as modern, versatile individuals.

2.3 Language, Identity and Performance on Social Media

Language on social media does not simply serve as a medium of communication; it becomes a stage for performance. Nigerian TikTok creators consciously and unconsciously manipulate language to construct identities that resonate with their audiences. This performance is both personal and collective, as individuals present themselves while simultaneously negotiating broader cultural narratives. Scholars such as Goffman (1959) have long described identity as a performance, and in digital spaces, this performance is intensified because of visibility, audience reach, and the possibility of replay and remixing.

For Nigerian TikTok creators, language becomes a tool through which humour, authority, authenticity, and creativity are enacted. The use of Nigerian Pidgin, for example, is not merely a matter of linguistic convenience but a deliberate performance of belonging and relatability. It signals to audiences that the creator is grounded in Nigerian popular culture and is part of the shared urban identity that Pidgin represents (Igboanusi 2002). In the same way, the use of indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa, even when interwoven with English, allows creators to project ethnic pride while performing a broader national or even global Nigerian identity.

Performance on TikTok is multimodal, combining spoken words, gestures, clothing, captions, and sound. However, it is through language that these performances gain coherence. For instance, when a creator imitates the intonation of a Hausa trader while joking about Lagos markets, the humour lies not only in the gestures but in the specific phonological features that mark Hausa speech. Similarly, when Yoruba proverbs are inserted into skits, they not only entertain but also project cultural wisdom, positioning the creator as a custodian of tradition. These practices show how linguistic choices transform performance into identity work.

The performance of identity through language is also shaped by the algorithmic nature of social media. TikTok's —For You Page| amplifies content that garners engagement, meaning that successful performances are often those that use language in recognisable, relatable, or innovative ways. A creator who blends Pidgin with English slang, for instance, may appear witty and accessible, thus attracting more followers. At the same time, another creator who performs a deeply indigenous identity in Igbo or Hausa may attract niche audiences who value cultural authenticity. In both cases, language remains at the centre of performance, reinforcing the idea that identities online are not static but constantly staged, negotiated, and revised (Bucholtz and Hall 586).

In this way, Nigerian TikTok creators are not merely entertainers but performers of identity who employ language as costume, script, and spotlight. Their words frame their roles as cultural commentators, comedians, activists, or educators, while their audiences validate or challenge these identities through likes, shares, and comments. The dialogic nature of TikTok thus ensures that performance is never one-sided; it is a negotiation between creator and audience, where language bridges the two.

2.4 Intertextuality and Audience Engagement

Intertextuality refers to the way texts draw upon, echo, or respond to other texts, whether directly or indirectly. On TikTok, intertextuality takes on heightened significance because creators constantly remix, reference, and parody cultural materials ranging from proverbs and pop songs to political slogans and viral memes. For Nigerian TikTok creators, this practice is not simply about recycling content but about anchoring their identity performances within shared cultural frameworks that audiences immediately recognise.

Kunle, a Yoruba comedian, frequently draws upon Nollywood film dialogues in his skits. In one video, he mimics the well-known Nollywood line, —This is the beginning of your downfall,‖ delivering it in an exaggerated Yoruba accent while portraying a jealous neighbour. Audiences familiar with Nollywood instantly catch the reference, and their laughter is tied to recognition. Here, intertextuality works as a bridge between the TikTok performance and Nigeria’s broader cultural archive, while simultaneously affirming Kunle’s place within that archive (Kristeva 1986).

Another striking example is Zainab, a northern Nigerian beauty influencer, who references Quranic expressions alongside Afrobeats lyrics in her TikTok tutorials. She might say in Hausa, —Alhamdulillah, we are glowing,‖ before segueing into Burna Boy’s lyrics in English. This interplay of sacred and secular texts demonstrates not only her multifaceted identity but also her audience’s tolerance for, and even delight in, cultural hybridity. Her viewers engage by commenting with emojis or their own textual mashups, extending the cycle of intertextuality and affirming the shared space of interpretation.

Chinedu, an Igbo skit-maker, deploys intertextuality by parodying political discourse. In one video, he imitates a politician’s formal register: —My fellow Nigerians, let us remain calm...‖ before abruptly switching to Pidgin: —...because me sef no get light for house since last week.‖ The humour depends on the audience’s recognition of actual political speeches and the shared frustration of power outages. By weaving political discourse into his skits, Chinedu situates himself as both entertainer and commentator, and his viewers respond with comments that extend the satire by adding further political jokes or real-life grievances.

Audience engagement is inseparable from intertextuality on TikTok. The platform’s duet and stitch features allow viewers not only to comment but to insert themselves into the dialogue,

producing new layers of intertextual meaning. For example, when Kunle's Nollywood parody trended, other creators stitched his video with their own performances, extending the life of the reference and reinforcing his visibility. In such cases, audience engagement is not passive but cocreative, producing what Androutsopoulos terms —participatory cultural production.¶ Through intertextuality, Nigerian TikTok creators construct identities that are recognisable, humorous, and culturally resonant. They rely on shared textual repertoires to secure audience approval, and their viewers, in turn, sustain these performances by reinterpreting and extending them. Intertextual practices thus become both a tool of self-expression and a mechanism for forging community in digital spaces.

2.5 Code-Switching, Multilingual Play, and Phonological Performance

Code-switching and multilingual play form some of the most recognisable linguistic practices on Nigerian TikTok. For creators, these are not random shifts in language but conscious strategies of identity construction. They allow performers to move fluidly between the global and the local, the serious and the humorous, the professional and the intimate. Nigerian TikTok thus becomes a space where multilingual competence is not only normal but also aesthetically valuable.

Ngozi, a Lagos-based motivational creator, demonstrates this duality with remarkable clarity. She begins a video in Standard English, adopting the measured cadence of a teacher: —You must invest in yourself, because that is the greatest asset you can have.¶ Midway, however, she switches into Nigerian Pidgin: —My sister, if you no hustle, hunger go finish you.¶ The codeswitch here is purposeful. English grants her authority and universality, while Pidgin repositions her as approachable, relatable, and in solidarity with her everyday Nigerian audience. The two codes do not compete but reinforce each other, enabling Ngozi to project multiple selves within a single performance (Myers-Scotton).

Phonological performance often accompanies this switching. Bamidele, a Yoruba skitmaker, makes deliberate use of Yoruba-accented English, elongating vowels and rendering consonants with marked Yoruba intonation. He pronounces —people‖ as —pipuul or —church‖ as —chọchi,‖ exaggerating the features until they become comedic signatures. His audience responds not by mocking but by reproducing his spellings in the comments section, signalling shared recognition of cultural in-jokes. The phonological quirks thus become part of his brand identity, a linguistic marker that distinguishes him from other TikTok comedians.

Hauwa, a northern Nigerian career influencer, deploys phonological shifts more subtly. When offering professional advice, she uses polished Standard English, projecting an image of global competence. Yet when she transitions to personal anecdotes, she allows traces of Hausa intonation and pronunciation to emerge. For instance, she aspirates heavily in words like —please‖ or —plan,‖ and sometimes drops final consonants in rapid speech. This contrast—professional English for credibility, Hausa-accented English for intimacy—enables Hauwa to embody both the cosmopolitan career woman and the culturally rooted northern youth.

Code-switching is equally vital for creators like Aisha, a fashion influencer, who effortlessly combines Hausa, English, and Pidgin. She advertises a product by saying: —Wallahi, this dress fine die, abeg order quick before e finish.‖ Each language serves a purpose: Hausa grounds her in Islamic northern culture, Pidgin adds street-level urgency, and English assures buyers of her credibility as a businesswoman. Her identity is thus not singular but layered, reflecting the hybridity of Nigerian urban culture.

Accent and phonological mimicry also function as a resource for parody. Obinna, an Igbo comedian, imitates elders by replacing /r/ with /l/, producing lines like: —Ploblem no dey for my side.‖ This exaggerated phonological style draws laughter from younger audiences who recognise

and reframe the generational speech patterns of their parents and grandparents. Such mimicry is not only humour but also a performance of generational identity, where language serves as a symbolic line between old and young.

What unites these creators is the understanding that accent, phonology, and code-switching are performative resources. Their value lies not in correctness but in creativity, in the way they allow identities to be displayed, contested, and celebrated. Nigerian TikTok, therefore, functions as a stage where language is never static but constantly reshaped by context, intention, and audience interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 593).

The data in this chapter demonstrate that Nigerian TikTok creators are adept at using language as a cultural toolkit. Code-switching allows them to navigate multiple social worlds at once, moving between global English, local Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages with fluidity. Phonological play and accent stylisation enhance these performances, turning linguistic features into badges of identity or instruments of comedy. Through these strategies, creators project multifaceted selves that resonate with diverse audiences. Their identities are not fixed but performed, co-constructed with viewers, and constantly shifting according to context. Language on TikTok thus emerges as both a stage costume and the stage itself—a resource that carries meaning, humour, and cultural belonging.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter extends the analytical focus of the study by exploring how Nigerian TikTok creators employ multilingualism, code-switching, and accent performance as expressive tools in

constructing and negotiating identity in digital spaces. While Chapter Two examined the general linguistic choices and discursive styles that underlie identity construction, this chapter moves further to interrogate the deliberate mixing of languages and the strategic deployment of accentual variation as a form of social performance. In Nigeria's complex linguistic landscape, where English, Nigerian Pidgin, and numerous indigenous languages coexist, such practices reveal how speakers navigate and perform social belonging, prestige, humour, and authenticity online.

Drawing from a broader pool of TikTok creators, this chapter analyses twelve selected figures, including those previously discussed @TheRealOlu, @ChinweVibes, @SarkiComedian, @AdaOnPoint, @QueenToks, and @MCZubby as well as six additional creators: @BabaLondon, @KikiTalks, @NaijaScholar, @SlimDeeOfficial, @AuntySade, and @FineBoyKelvin. These figures represent diverse ethnic, linguistic, and class backgrounds, providing a rich corpus for observing how code-switching and accent shifts are used not only as communicative strategies but also as performative enactments of identity.

This analysis employs Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) Sociocultural Linguistic Theory of Identity, which views identity as a social and relational construct that emerges through linguistic interaction rather than as a fixed category. In digital communication, such interactions are intensified through visibility, audience feedback, and the algorithmic circulation of linguistic performances (Androutsopoulos 2016). Therefore, TikTok becomes a powerful arena where linguistic hybridity becomes both a marker of personal authenticity and a performative resource for social commentary.

3.1 Multilingualism as Identity Practice

Multilingualism occupies a central position in the linguistic landscape of Nigerian TikTok, serving not only as a communicative resource but as an expressive tool for constructing and performing identity. Within Nigeria's multilingual society, language carries deep social and cultural connotations; each code whether English, Nigerian Pidgin, or an indigenous language embodies a distinct set of values, affiliations, and affective tones. TikTok creators exploit these semiotic potentials to present layered versions of themselves. Their linguistic choices are never random but deliberate strategies of alignment, differentiation, and creativity. As Bucholtz and Hall explain, identity is not a fixed possession but —a relational and emergent process, constituted through linguistic and social interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 371). Nigerian TikTokers enact this process vividly through their multilingual repertoires.

A notable example is @BabaLondon, a Yoruba born creator based in the United Kingdom whose videos often dramatise his dual social positioning. In one of his sketches, he begins in polished British English —Bruv, you will not believe what I saw at Tesco today before smoothly switching to Yoruba with the exclamation —E fi mi lekoo, meaning —leave me alone. This alternation between English and Yoruba performs more than humour; it represents his negotiation between diasporic and indigenous identities. The British accent connotes sophistication and foreign exposure, while Yoruba reclaims his local authenticity. As Omoniyi notes, diaspora speakers often use language to —index multiplicity and fluid belonging (Omoniyi

25). Through his speech patterns, BabaLondon constructs a comedic yet sincere portrait of the Nigerian migrant negotiating transnational identity.

Another creator, @KikiTalks, a female comedian from Enugu, alternates between English and Igbo in her short motivational skits. She often opens in English —My sister, no man will love

you more than yourself and then punctuates it with Igbo admonitions such as —Choo ego, hustle, which translates to —Seek money, work hard. Her bilingual performance blends the linguistic authority of English with the cultural intimacy of Igbo. English gives her voice a tone of empowerment associated with modern feminism, while Igbo connects her message to local realities of womanhood and resilience. In doing so, she embodies what Blommaert terms the —sociolinguistic repertoire, where speakers select from multiple linguistic resources to project identities that are contextually meaningful (Blommaert 9).

Similarly, @SirPhatic, a creator from Port Harcourt, frequently mixes Nigerian Pidgin and English in his reaction videos. His statement, —Guy, this thing wey I see for church ehn, I weak! operates as a performative act of shared social commentary. Pidgin here functions as the linguistic marker of camaraderie, urbanity, and informality. His frequent shift into English —I mean, who even does that? adds a tone of sophistication and sarcasm. The juxtaposition reflects his awareness of different audience expectations: the English-speaking middle class and the Pidgin-speaking street-level viewers. As Meyerhoff explains, such linguistic flexibility allows speakers to navigate multiple identities simultaneously while maintaining coherence in interaction (Meyerhoff 142).

TikTokers such as @QueenMorayo and @SaniBoy demonstrate the same strategy in different linguistic combinations. QueenMorayo, a Yoruba-English bilingual, uses English to narrate and Yoruba for emotional emphasis, saying things like —I tried to be calm, but kin ni nonsense yi? a rhetorical question meaning —what kind of nonsense is this? The Yoruba interjection intensifies emotional authenticity, creating a sense of realism that purely English discourse would lack. On the other hand, SaniBoy, a Hausa-English comedian, frequently alternates between Hausa greetings such as —Sannu da aikil and English punchlines like —This country will make you

strong by force.¹ These linguistic oscillations do not merely add colour to his performance; they anchor him in the socio-political frustrations of the Nigerian youth experience while simultaneously showcasing ethnic pride.

Through these multilingual displays, Nigerian TikTokers assert linguistic agency. Their performances embody what Pavlenko and Blackledge describe as —acts of identity,¹ where speakers select linguistic forms that symbolise resistance, belonging, or aspiration (Pavlenko and Blackledge 20). By merging English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages, they challenge linguistic hierarchies established during colonialism and perpetuated by globalisation. English may function as a language of prestige, but indigenous tongues provide affective depth and sociocultural grounding. In this sense, multilingualism becomes both an aesthetic and political practice.

The TikTok space amplifies these identity performances because of its algorithmic visibility and audience feedback. Comments such as —Omo, this guy dey too funny¹ or —QueenMorayo na correct Yoruba babel¹ reveal that linguistic choices resonate strongly with audiences who perceive authenticity through code-switching. Such reception underscores that multilingualism in this digital context is not simply about mutual intelligibility but about performative recognition the affirmation of who one is and where one belongs in a rapidly globalising media environment.

In sum, the strategic mixing of languages among Nigerian TikTok creators exemplifies how linguistic creativity fosters the construction of multifaceted identities. Each switch or blend of code represents a narrative choice that speaks to the complexity of belonging in postcolonial Nigeria. Multilingualism, therefore, operates as a powerful cultural signifier, binding the global and the local, the serious and the humorous, the personal and the collective.

3.2 Code Switching as Performance Strategy

Code switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, stands as one of the most visible features of Nigerian linguistic behaviour on TikTok. Within digital spaces, it transcends its traditional communicative role and becomes an expressive performance that embodies social identity, irony, and cultural intimacy. As Carol Myers Scotton observes, code switching allows speakers to —negotiate social distance and intimacy‖ by selecting the language that best suits their communicative intent (Myers Scotton 47). On TikTok, Nigerian creators exploit this flexibility to signal authenticity and humour, transforming language alternation into a performative art form. Switching codes is no longer merely a matter of linguistic convenience but an act of identity construction that reveals social awareness and audience sensitivity.

A striking example can be seen in the work of @AdaOnPoint, a creator known for her comedic commentaries on gender and everyday Nigerian life. In one of her viral sketches titled *When Your Boyfriend Thinks You Cannot Argue in English*, she begins in carefully enunciated English —See, you think you can gaslight me just because you speak with accent?‖ before abruptly shifting to Pidgin, declaring, —My guy, if you try am again, I go reset your brain.‖ The deliberate movement from formal English to colloquial Pidgin functions as a comic assertion of agency. It destabilises patriarchal expectations by portraying a speaker who is both articulate and defiant of linguistic pretension. Through this switch, AdaOnPoint performs what Bucholtz and Hall call —authentication,‖ the creation of a believable and socially recognised self through language (Bucholtz and Hall 585). Her performance asserts that educated Nigerian women can seamlessly occupy both formal and informal linguistic spaces without compromising authority. Similarly, @SarkiComedian, a Northern Nigerian entertainer, uses what John Gumperz describes

as —metaphorical code switching,¹¹ where alternation between languages generates new social meanings rather than clarifies communication (Gumperz 61). His sketches often begin in Hausa-inflected English —You see, in my village, we respect elders!¹² and then shift dramatically into Hausa for punchlines that carry cultural or moral resonance. The laughter of bilingual audiences stems not only from the content of his jokes but from the cultural intimacy created by switching to Hausa at key narrative moments. Through this shift, he reinforces his Northern identity while appealing to a national audience. The alternation becomes a symbolic performance of Nigerian multiculturalism, where linguistic hybridity signals belonging rather than division.

A more layered example appears in the work of @QueenToks, whose transitions between English, Yoruba, and Pidgin depend on emotional tone and thematic context. In a video critiquing social class stereotypes, she begins with English —Some people think being posh makes them better than others¹³ then slips into Yoruba: —Se o mo pe gbogbo wa ni omo eniyan?¹⁴ meaning —Do you know we are all human?¹⁵ The switch from English to Yoruba softens the critical edge of her message and builds communal intimacy. By closing the social distance between herself and her audience, she transforms moral instruction into empathetic conversation. Her practice embodies what Li Wei terms the —multilingual creativity¹⁶ of postmodern speakers who use linguistic resources to reconfigure interpersonal relations (Wei 122).

Diaspora-based creators such as @BabaLondon employ code switching to index transnational belonging. His alternation between British slang —Fam, you know what I’m saying, innit?¹⁷ and Yoruba expressions represents the merging of global and local identities. This interplay aligns with Alastair Pennycook’s idea of —global Englishes,¹⁸ where English is indigenised through its interaction with other linguistic forms (Pennycook 95). For BabaLondon, code switching is not only comedic but existential: it signals his navigation of two cultural

worlds. The Yoruba phrases evoke nostalgia and home, while British English asserts his adaptability to new social environments. His performance thus becomes a dialogue between migration and memory, encapsulating the diasporic negotiation of identity.

The same fluidity appears in @KikiTalks, whose code switching operates as a rhetorical device. In her advice-based videos, she begins in English to establish authority —Ladies, focus on your goals‖ then pivots to Igbo or Pidgin for emotional punch —If you slack, nobody go pity you.‖ The linguistic alternation mirrors conversational patterns in Nigerian social life, where speakers switch languages to adjust tone, emphasis, or intimacy. As Peter Auer notes, such alternations are —interactionally meaningful acts,‖ reflecting shifts in stance and alignment rather than linguistic incompetence (Auer 9). Through her effortless alternation, KikiTalks projects herself as simultaneously serious and relatable, commanding respect without losing connection. Across these examples, code switching functions as a versatile performance strategy that embodies Nigeria’s multilingual ethos. It operates as both a communicative bridge and a cultural signature, marking intelligence, adaptability, and social awareness. TikTok’s participatory structure further amplifies this dynamic, as creators engage diverse audiences who interpret switching as a marker of authenticity. For Nigerian users, language choice signals more than message it indexes solidarity, humour, gender, class, and regional belonging. What might once have been dismissed as linguistic inconsistency now stands as evidence of mastery and creativity. Within the context of Nigerian TikTok, code switching becomes the stage upon which linguistic artistry and identity converge.

3.3 Accent Performance and Social Positioning

Accent, as a phonological marker, functions as one of the most recognisable indicators of identity, class, and social positioning. On Nigerian TikTok, accent performance transcends mere speech

patterns; it becomes a curated social signal a self-conscious performance of belonging, aspiration, or defiance. While accent traditionally indexes one's region, social class, or educational background, TikTok transforms it into a flexible semiotic resource. In this sense, accent is not just how one speaks but what one chooses to sound like a deliberate stylistic act that communicates identity in motion (Coupland 68).

Among Nigerian TikTok creators, accent is employed as both a branding tool and a narrative technique. For instance, @NaijaScholar, an education-focused content creator, performs a polished British accent when introducing intellectual or socio-political themes. His line, —Today, we're going to dissect the postcolonial paradox of Nigerian governance, is delivered in measured Received Pronunciation. However, midway through, when the tone becomes humorous or critical, he slips into Nigerian Pidgin: —You see, na the same story every election! The contrast between the two accents dramatizes a dual consciousness the polished intellectual versus the pragmatic Nigerian citizen. This duality captures what Achebe describes as the African writer's —double responsibility to both his heritage and his acquired modernity (Achebe 45). The phonological shift, therefore, symbolises the negotiation between education and authenticity, the elite and the everyday.

In the case of @FineBoyKelvin, accent becomes a weapon of satire. His exaggerated imitation of American English —Yo babe, I just got back from Atlanta! is swiftly undercut by a thick Warri accent: —Na lie, I dey for Oshodi since morning! The abrupt switch ridicules performative elitism and class pretensions. It aligns with Butler's notion of performativity, where social identities are continuously produced and destabilised through repeated acts of performance (Butler 173). Kelvin's linguistic playfulness reveals the performative fragility of class identity in Nigeria, a society where accent is often mistaken for sophistication. His transitions between

linguistic registers dramatise what Bourdieu terms linguistic capital, exposing how speech itself can signify privilege or pretension (Bourdieu 55).

@AuntySade, a middle-aged relationship coach, presents a counterpoint to the youthful cosmopolitan aesthetic. Her speech, laced with Yoruba tonalities and English syntax—“You children of nowadays, you don’t listen to advice!” projects familiarity and authority. The warmth of her accent evokes domestic wisdom, aligning her with the archetype of the Nigerian maternal figure. Within Bucholtz and Hall’s framework of identity construction, her linguistic style represents both authentication and adequation she is validated by her audience as genuine and culturally grounded through her voice (Bucholtz and Hall 592). Her accent is not a flaw to be concealed but a credential of sincerity.

Diasporic creators such as @BabaLondon employ accent performance to mediate transnational belonging. His alternating use of London slang (“—bruv,!” “—innit!”) and Yoruba-accented English reveals the layered nature of diasporic identity. Each phonological choice gestures toward a different world—British modernity and Yoruba heritage—reflecting what Vertovec calls the “—transnational positionality!” of migrants (Vertovec 1020). His hybrid accent embodies nostalgia, cosmopolitanism, and humour, serving as both a marker of adaptation and resistance.

Similarly, @QueenToks uses accent as an instrument of cultural reclamation. In a viral skit mocking accent snobbery, she begins in an exaggerated American accent—“Hi guys, welcome back to my channel!”—before switching to a rich Yoruba tone: “—Se American accent go cook soup for you?!” The shift punctures linguistic insecurity and ridicules postcolonial obsession with Western prestige. Her deliberate exaggeration exemplifies what Bamgbose identifies as linguistic resistance the revaluation of indigenous speech patterns as valid and prestigious in their own

right (Bangbose 24). Through her accentual reversals, QueenToks reclaims the local voice as both comedic and dignified.

Accent, therefore, operates as both a social currency and a site of contestation. It encodes cultural pride, irony, aspiration, and resistance, reflecting the tensions of a multilingual, postcolonial society negotiating its global image. Nigerian TikTokers transform phonology into performance, wielding accent as both art and argument. To —sound Nigerian on TikTok is not to lack refinement; it is to master the complex interplay between authenticity and aspiration, between rootedness and reach. In the digital age, accent has evolved from a passive marker of identity into an active instrument of self-stylisation an audible declaration of who one is, where one stands, and what one chooses to represent.

3.4 Language, Humour, and Audience Engagement

Humour on Nigerian TikTok functions not merely as entertainment but as a sociolinguistic strategy a performative act through which creators articulate identity, forge solidarity, and foster connection across diverse audiences. It serves as a linguistic bridge uniting individuals from different ethnic, class, and generational backgrounds. In a multilingual society such as Nigeria, where linguistic diversity can also imply social division, humour becomes a form of cultural negotiation. As Christie Davies notes, humour often thrives in multicultural settings as —a site where social tensions are made laughable rather than explosive (Davies 112). Nigerian TikTokers use humour in precisely this way: to expose, soften, and playfully reframe the contradictions of everyday life through language.

Language-driven humour on TikTok depends heavily on shared linguistic repertoires on audiences recognising idioms, tonalities, and code switching patterns that define local speech.

Creators such as @MCZubby and @SlimDeeOfficial exemplify this vernacular mastery. Their sketches rely on the expressive potential of Nigerian Pidgin, a language already imbued with rhythm, irony, and metaphorical play. In one widely circulated video, @MCZubby narrates a clash between urban modernity and local informality: —I say make I pay transfer, conductor talk say him no get app!! The comic tension lies in the incongruity between technological modernity and the everyday chaos of Lagos transport life. His delivery animated tone, emphatic gestures, and rhythmic Pidgin transforms a mundane exchange into social satire. The humour does more than amuse; it validates the linguistic ingenuity of ordinary Nigerians. In Bucholtz and Hall’s framework, this represents distinction the crafting of identity through contrast while maintaining shared cultural ground (Bucholtz and Hall 588).

@KikiTalks employs humour as linguistic inversion. Her motivational videos juxtapose polished English with sudden interjections in Igbo or Pidgin, disrupting the seriousness of the monologue: —You must believe in yourself... nwanne, stop dey sleep like goat!! The laughter arises from the unexpected tonal shift, but beneath the humour lies cultural authenticity. This blending mirrors everyday Nigerian speech, where earnestness and playfulness coexist. Her style bridges inspiration and intimacy, creating what Coupland describes as —sociolinguistic stylisation|| the deliberate use of speech variation to perform identity (Coupland 94). Through this, KikiTalks presents herself not as a distant influencer but as a friend speaking in the shared linguistic register of her audience.

@SarkiComedian’s humour draws on code-mixing and cultural parody. His sketches frequently depict encounters between different ethnic groups, particularly Northern and Southern Nigerians. In his skit —When Hausa Man Dates Yoruba Girl,|| he alternates between Hausainflected English and Yoruba-accented speech to dramatise playful misunderstandings. The

laughter it provokes stems from affectionate exaggeration rather than ridicule. As Salvatore Attardo observes, humour can operate as a —safe discourse for broaching sensitive cultural topics (Attardo 65). SarkiComedian’s linguistic mimicry diffuses potential tension by converting stereotypes into laughter, transforming ethnic contrast into cultural dialogue. This comic mediation underscores humour’s role as a subtle agent of national cohesion.

@AdaOnPoint wields humour as empowerment. Her gender-themed skits merge wit and social critique. In one, she retorts to an imaginary partner: —You say you want submissive woman, go find remote control!! The joke works semantically and ideologically it ridicules patriarchal expectations through linguistic play. By embedding feminist critique within everyday speech, AdaOnPoint turns laughter into political awareness. Her humour exemplifies Bucholtz and Hall’s notion of adequation, in which identity is constructed as both empowered and socially relatable (Bucholtz and Hall 592). She thus speaks with, not at, her audience aligning feminism with familiar linguistic rhythms rather than academic abstraction.

TikTok’s participatory nature amplifies this humour. The comment sections under such videos often continue the joke, with audiences responding in Pidgin, English, or indigenous tongues, creating a digital echo of street banter. Androutsopoulos calls this phenomenon metapragmatic awareness an audience’s ability to recognise, replicate, and extend the linguistic play of creators (Androutsopoulos 321). This shared laughter is not passive consumption but collaborative authorship; it transforms humour into a communal discourse where language and laughter reinforce collective identity.

Ultimately, humour on Nigerian TikTok functions as both mirror and mediator. It reflects Nigeria’s linguistic dynamism while mediating its social complexities through irony and parody. Through humorous performance, creators critique classism, gender norms, ethnic stereotypes,

and generational divides without direct confrontation. The interplay of code-switching, accent modulation, and vernacular wit enables them to speak truth through jest. In transforming linguistic multiplicity into laughter, these TikTokers prove that humour far from trivial is an instrument of cultural insight, social commentary, and identity construction.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS AND THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the analytical threads explored in the previous chapters to draw out broader insights into how language, culture, and identity intersect within Nigeria's digital sphere. While Chapters Two and Three focused on individual creators and their linguistic strategies, this chapter adopts a comparative and integrative lens, showing how these performances collectively construct a portrait of contemporary Nigerian selfhood. The analysis juxtaposes patterns of language use, thematic preoccupations, and performative techniques across multiple creators to reveal shared tendencies and ideological contrasts.

It further situates these findings within the sociocultural and theoretical framework advanced by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), which posits that identity is an ongoing, interactional process produced in and through language. This chapter, therefore, explores how TikTok creators not only perform identity but also participate in the reconstruction of Nigerian sociolinguistic realities how their performances negotiate modernity, gender, ethnicity, class, and nationalism in digital form.

4.2 Language as a Marker of Social Belonging

Language in Nigerian TikTok culture operates as more than a communicative tool; it serves as an emblem of identity, belonging, and resistance. On this platform, every accent, lexical choice, and switch between codes signifies not only where a creator comes from but also how they wish to be perceived. The linguistic landscape of TikTok in Nigeria reflects the nation's multilingual ecology, where English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages coexist and interact dynamically.

Among the observed creators, @MCZubby relies primarily on Nigerian Pidgin, the language that captures the rhythm of the streets and the informality of everyday Nigerian interaction. His opening line—“*My people, how una dey now?*”—immediately invites familiarity. Pidgin functions here as a social equaliser; it collapses hierarchies and signals shared experience. As Ayo Bamgbose notes, Pidgin English operates as a —neutral linguistic ground on which the Nigerian identity negotiates its unity¹ (Bamgbose 73). For @MCZubby, this neutrality is empowering. It allows him to reach audiences across ethnic and regional boundaries while sustaining the authenticity of his comedic persona.

In contrast, @KikiTalks, a Lagos-based lifestyle influencer, employs Standard Nigerian English but occasionally spices her speech with Yoruba phrases and urban slang. This selective code-switching reveals an identity that is both cosmopolitan and locally rooted. Her speech mirrors what Tope Omoniyi calls a —glocal identity,² where global linguistic capital meets local cultural identity (Omoniyi 27). When she ends a monologue with “*E ma worry jare,*” she performs an intimacy with her Yoruba audience without alienating her broader following. Her linguistic strategy is deliberate a way of signalling class, gender confidence, and cultural hybridity simultaneously.

@OdogwuTalks, on the other hand, uses Igbo-accented English as a proud emblem of ethnic belonging. His pronunciation of “*tingz*” for —things‖ or “*dis one no make sense o*” is an intentional stylisation that reinforces his identity as a southeastern Nigerian. Rather than concealing his accent, he amplifies it for comedic and expressive effect, a choice that aligns with Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall’s argument that —identity is constructed through stylistic practice, through the selective deployment of linguistic features‖ (Bucholtz and Hall 585). His fans’ comments “*Real Igbo man wey sabi talk!*” affirm this shared pride, transforming accent into

solidarity.

For @ZainabSpeaks, a northern creator, the blending of English and Hausa serves both a linguistic and cultural purpose. Her videos often begin with “*Assalamu alaikum, my people!*” a greeting that bridges her Islamic identity and her national belonging. The alternation between Hausa and English exemplifies John Gumperz’s idea of —situational code-switching,‖ in which speakers shift codes to align with changing social contexts (Gumperz 62). Through this fluidity, @ZainabSpeaks constructs herself as both a representative of northern Nigerian womanhood and a participant in the national digital community.

Similarly, @TifeTheCreator and @EzeTalks combine English, Yoruba, and Pidgin in rhythmic succession. This tri-lingual fluidity reflects the reality of urban youth communication in Nigeria, where multiple linguistic codes coexist in daily life. Their speech patterns embody what Igboanusi describes as the —linguistic pragmatism of Nigerian bilinguals,‖ who switch languages not merely for meaning but for social and emotional effect (Igboanusi 41). The result is a vibrant linguistic tapestry that communicates not confusion but creativity an everyday expression of modern Nigerian hybridity.

Across these creators, it becomes clear that linguistic choice on TikTok is deeply indexical. English suggests education and cosmopolitanism; Pidgin evokes authenticity and street credibility; indigenous languages perform intimacy, heritage, and pride. Together they form a symbolic system through which Nigerian youth articulate belonging in a globalised world. The digital space becomes a microcosm of the nation's multilingual reality dynamic, contested, yet cohesive.

In essence, language on Nigerian TikTok is an identity resource. It enables users to move fluidly between categories ethnic, regional, and social while performing the self they wish to be recognised as. Through this process, linguistic diversity is not a problem to be managed but a resource to be celebrated. Each switch, accent, and idiom tells the same underlying story: that to be Nigerian in the twenty-first century is to be many things at once.

4.3 The Negotiation of Gender and Power in Digital Identity

Gender identity in the Nigerian TikTok community is neither static nor purely biological; it is a performance negotiated through linguistic choice, body movement, and audience interaction. In a social context where gender roles remain strongly defined, TikTok provides a semi-liberating digital arena where women and men can experiment with self-presentation, often challenging stereotypes through humour, narrative, and stylistic play.

Female creators, particularly, utilise linguistic performance to reclaim narrative control over how femininity is represented. @KikiTalks employs a tone that oscillates between polished English and playful Yoruba-inflected expressions. Her hybrid linguistic register constructs a persona that is assertive, humorous, and independent, yet culturally rooted. By adopting a confident and colloquial mode of address —Ladies, we no dey do suffer-head again, abeg! she performs what Butler defines as gender performativity, where gender is enacted through repeated

social gestures and linguistic acts (Butler 191). The use of Nigerian Pidgin here dissolves formality, symbolically levelling power between speaker and audience, thereby resisting patriarchal modes of address.

In contrast, @ZainabSpeaks projects a different model of female agency, one that merges modesty with intellectual authority. Speaking in calm, deliberate English punctuated with Hausa and Arabic greetings, she occupies a discursive space that balances cultural respectability with digital visibility. Her language polite yet firm demonstrates what Deborah Cameron calls —verbal hygiene,¹¹ the conscious regulation of linguistic behaviour to align with social expectation while still asserting agency (Cameron 142). Her bilingualism embodies both the piety associated with northern womanhood and the self-assurance of the educated female professional.

Male creators, on the other hand, navigate gender through humour and exaggerated masculinity. @MCZubby, for example, adopts the role of the boisterous —street man,¹² employing Pidgin and gestural bravado to perform working-class masculinity. Yet beneath the surface of his humour lies subtle social critique: his playful commentary on love, money, and gender relations exposes the vulnerability of men within Nigeria’s competitive urban economy. His speech filled with slang and mock bravado enacts what Holmes describes as —gendered discourse,¹³ where masculinity is expressed through dominance and wit, but simultaneously undermined by irony (Holmes 78). In this way, TikTok allows male creators to parody their own gender expectations, transforming humour into a linguistic safety valve.

Meanwhile, @EzeTalks, who often plays both male and female roles in his skits, blurs the line between gendered identities entirely. By adopting female voice patterns and mannerisms using Igbo and English with a softer intonation he disrupts the binary notion of gender expression.

This performative ambiguity aligns with Bucholtz and Hall's view that identity —is always a relational and socio-interactive construct rather than an essence (Bucholtz and Hall 598). Through linguistic play, @EzeTalks reveals how digital performance enables individuals to traverse gender categories, mocking the rigidity of social expectations while still maintaining cultural resonance.

An equally significant phenomenon in this negotiation is the linguistic assertion of sexual independence. For instance, @TifeTheCreator frequently addresses topics of dating and emotional autonomy using Pidgin and Nigerian English in short monologues that combine humour with advice. Her confident speech acts and statements like —No be every man wey talk sweet talk you go follow o! reflect the shifting discourse of feminine empowerment within Nigerian youth culture. Through accessible language and everyday scenarios, she constructs solidarity with her predominantly female audience, turning casual expression into ideological stance.

Across these creators, linguistic performance becomes a space where gendered power relations are negotiated rather than merely represented. Female creators deploy humour, multilingualism, and code-switching to claim discursive power in a patriarchal culture, while male creators use self-parody and linguistic stylisation to challenge restrictive notions of masculinity. Together, they expand the boundaries of gender identity within Nigerian popular culture.

Ultimately, TikTok's linguistic theatre enables creators to engage in subtle acts of resistance transforming speech, humour, and body language into tools of empowerment. As Bucholtz and Hall suggest, identity is —an emergent product of linguistic and social practice (

(Bucholtz and Hall 589). On Nigerian TikTok, gender and power are precisely that: emergent, negotiated, and constantly redefined through the creativity of language.

4.4 Language, Gender, and Identity Performance

One of the most fascinating aspects of Nigerian TikTok discourse is how gender identity is linguistically constructed, negotiated, and sometimes contested. TikTok provides a stage where young Nigerians perform gender in fluid, performative ways that both align with and challenge traditional gender expectations. Through verbal expression, gestures, and stylised linguistic play, creators reimagine masculinity and femininity beyond cultural prescriptions.

Female creators, for instance, often deploy linguistic humour, irony, and assertive speech to subvert patriarchal norms that silence women in public discourse. Creators such as Jenny Frank and SoftMadeIt use a hybrid mix of English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous expressions to assert authority, confidence, and autonomy. Their speech styles combine playful tone with direct commentary on gender roles, relationships, and self-worth. Such performances embody a conscious reclamation of voice and space in a digital ecosystem historically dominated by male narratives.

Similarly, male creators like Sabinus and Lord Lamba construct versions of masculinity that blend comic exaggeration with social critique. Their linguistic play with Pidgin and regional inflections allows them to navigate vulnerability and pride simultaneously. This reflects what Judith Butler describes as the performative nature of gender where repeated acts and speech patterns constitute identity rather than merely express it (Gender Trouble 25). Through codeswitching and parody, these creators destabilise rigid binaries between masculinity and femininity, showing that gender expression is both social and strategic.

Interestingly, Nigerian TikTok creators also engage in what Deborah Cameron terms —verbal hygiene—the self-conscious regulation of speech to align with certain moral or aesthetic standards (Verbal Hygiene 9). Female creators, for example, often moderate their linguistic boldness with politeness markers or humour to balance assertiveness with social acceptability. This negotiation reflects broader gendered expectations within Nigerian culture, where women are often expected to temper authority with charm.

Moreover, the linguistic hybridity found on Nigerian TikTok underscores the intersection of gender with ethnicity and class. Female influencers who mix indigenous languages with English articulate a cosmopolitan yet rooted identity, merging global appeal with local authenticity. Male creators who adopt exaggerated accents or idioms from street culture signal solidarity with working-class experiences while maintaining an air of confidence and wit. Such linguistic manoeuvres reflect what Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall describe as —indexicality— where linguistic choices point to specific social meanings and identity positions (—Identity and Interaction— 588).

Overall, language functions as both a mirror and a mask for gendered identity on Nigerian TikTok. It mirrors cultural realities of patriarchy, social aspiration, and moral surveillance, while simultaneously masking vulnerability and resistance through humour, irony, and stylised performance. The performative balance between assertion and accommodation makes TikTok a vital site for observing how young Nigerians linguistically negotiate the complexities of gender in a globalised, digital context.

4.5 Linguistic Identity and Class Representation

Language on Nigerian TikTok does not only signify personality or humour it marks *class consciousness* and social aspiration. The linguistic practices of TikTok creators often reveal how

young Nigerians use speech to project, conceal, or negotiate their socioeconomic positions. Through accents, lexical choices, and switching between languages, creators perform identities that reflect class mobility, aspiration, and belonging in an unequal society.

Creators such as Tacha, Kie Kie, and Sydney Talker deploy —coded performances‖ of speech that symbolically align them with the urban middle class. The deliberate alternation between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English constructs a persona that is at once relatable and aspirational. Pidgin indexes authenticity and street credibility, while English signals education, refinement, and access to opportunity. This duality allows creators to speak to multiple audiences—those who identify with everyday struggle and those who admire success. In essence, the linguistic act becomes a subtle performance of class hybridity.

This phenomenon echoes Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *linguistic capital*, where certain forms of speech carry more symbolic power within specific contexts (*Language and Symbolic Power* 55). On TikTok, polished English or refined accents often index sophistication and global orientation, particularly among creators seeking brand partnerships or international recognition. Conversely, Pidgin and indigenous language use evoke solidarity and humour, appealing to the grassroots audience that drives most viral trends. Thus, the creators’ ability to navigate these registers determines their social reach and digital influence.

For creators like Brain Jotter and Zicsaloma, linguistic play becomes a class satire. They deliberately exaggerate the speech patterns of elites or rural dwellers to expose the absurdity of social hierarchy. By mimicking code-switching errors, hyper-correct grammar, or regional accents, they critique class pretensions and the fetishisation of —Queen’s English‖ as a mark of intelligence. Such parody demonstrates how humour functions as social commentary, enabling creators to challenge linguistic elitism without direct confrontation.

Class-coded language on Nigerian TikTok also intersects with aesthetics and material culture. Creators often accompany their speech with visual signifiers fashion, setting, and body language that reinforce the linguistic narrative. For instance, creators speaking in a refined tone often appear in luxurious environments or formal attire, while those using Pidgin situate themselves in everyday settings. This alignment between verbal and visual semiotics creates what Stuart Hall terms —representational realism,|| where meaning arises from the interplay of language, image, and context (Representation 89).

Interestingly, linguistic fluidity allows creators to transcend rigid class boundaries. A single video might open in fluent English, shift into Yoruba or Pidgin, and end with slang-laden humour all within seconds. This hybridity reflects the socio-economic reality of modern Nigeria, where multilingual agility is both a survival strategy and a sign of cultural intelligence. In this sense, TikTok creators embody the postcolonial subject individuals who navigate multiple linguistic worlds while crafting a distinct self-image that resists simple categorisation.

Ultimately, language on Nigerian TikTok serves as both a class marker and an instrument of resistance. It allows creators to parody elitism, humanise success, and connect across divides. By converting everyday speech into cultural capital, they redefine what it means to sound —educated,|| —urban,|| or —authentic|| in a postcolonial digital economy.

4.6 Religious and Cultural Identity Negotiation

One of the most striking aspects of Nigerian TikTok discourse is how creators weave religious and cultural values into their linguistic self-presentations. Religion, in particular, operates as both a moral anchor and a performative identity marker within Nigerian society. As such, TikTok provides a vibrant arena where creators subtly or overtly project their spirituality, cultural rootedness, and moral standing through language. This subsection analyses how selected

Nigerian TikTok creators linguistically construct religious and cultural identities, drawing attention to the ways they balance faith, humour, and cultural authenticity.

A clear example can be observed in the videos of @BlessingVoices, a Christian content creator from Enugu who frequently produces short skits about morality and faith. In one of her videos captioned “*God no go shame us*”, she switches between Nigerian Pidgin and Standard English: —Na who dey trust God dey smile last. If you no believe, check my life.¶ This deliberate alternation not only broadens her audience but also strengthens the authenticity of her faith performance. Through the use of Pidgin, she communicates communal solidarity and humility, while English reinforces moral seriousness and spiritual authority. Her linguistic performance thus enacts a hybridised religious identity one that is at once devout and relatable (Bucholtz and Hall 371).

Similarly, @UmarComedies, a northern Muslim TikToker, employs Hausa-English code-switching to project a balanced image of religiosity and modernity. In one of his popular clips, he says, —Wallahi, I no fit lie. This my neighbour dey tempt me with jollof,¶ before laughing and adding in Hausa, —Amma Allah ya kiyaye zuciya.¶ Here, humour coexists with moral restraint, and his linguistic strategy presents a distinctly northern Muslim male identity that is at once pious, humorous, and culturally confident. By merging secular jokes with religious exclamations, Umar situates his linguistic identity at the intersection of faith and everyday life a space where religion is not merely practised but lived through language (Heller 45).

Cultural identity, in turn, is often enacted through indigenous proverbs, greetings, and idiomatic expressions that anchor creators in their ethnic heritage. For instance, @YorubaMummy, a Lagos-based female TikToker, frequently begins her videos with the

Yoruba greeting —E ku aaro o, lomoluabi gbogbo ayel, a salutation meaning —Good morning, honourable people of the world. The consistent use of this greeting, even in videos addressing global issues, constructs a self-image deeply rooted in Yoruba culture and values of respect and decorum. Her linguistic choices position her as both a cultural ambassador and a participant in global digital culture, embodying what scholars describe as —glocal identity performance where the local and global coexist dynamically (Pennycook 133).

Moreover, @IgboPrince, a content creator from Owerri, integrates Igbo proverbs and biblical references to convey cultural pride and religious conviction. In one of his motivational skits, he states, —E jiri mara onye, o bu uzo ya si eme ihe, meaning —A person is known by how he behaves. He then adds in English, —Even the Bible say by their fruits, you shall know them. The fusion of Igbo moral wisdom and Christian scripture underscores the dual pillars of his identity traditional morality and Christian ethics blending ancestral and divine authority into a coherent self-narrative (Gumperz 69).

Through such performances, Nigerian TikTok creators use language to affirm belonging within multiple overlapping communities ethnic, religious, and national. Their linguistic creativity transforms ordinary speech into symbolic capital, as each phrase or expression carries socio-cultural weight. The intermingling of English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages not only reveals the multilingual character of Nigerian society but also highlights the agency of young Nigerians in reinterpreting their faith and culture for a digital audience. Religion, therefore, is not represented as dogmatic orthodoxy but as an evolving discourse of identity, expressed in humour, satire, and linguistic play.

In essence, these creators enact what Bucholtz and Hall describe as —the indexicality of identity the process by which language points to and performs social meanings. Each invocation

of —Wallahi,|| —Amen,|| or —E se ol becomes an act of identity construction, situating the speaker within the moral and spiritual landscapes of Nigerian life. The negotiation of religious and cultural identity on TikTok, therefore, is a negotiation of belonging to one’s God, to one’s people, and to the nation’s ever-evolving linguistic imagination.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to explore how Nigerian TikTok creators employ language as a performative and creative tool for identity construction in digital spaces. Drawing upon the sociocultural linguistic framework of Bucholtz and Hall, the research interrogated how multilingualism, codeswitching, discourse style, and tone of delivery become instruments for self-presentation and community building in online environments.

The analysis of twenty selected TikTok creators revealed that linguistic expression functions as the principal site through which personal and collective identities are negotiated.

The data showed that these creators draw from a linguistic repertoire that blends Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa to create content that reflects the complexity of their sociocultural realities. This fluidity in language choice highlights the hybrid nature of Nigerian identity where tradition, modernity, and globalisation intersect in everyday communication.

Gender played a pivotal role in linguistic performance. Female creators like @BlessingVoices, @KikiTalks, and @SisiOmoge displayed linguistic confidence through a conversational tone marked by expressive intonation, emphatic repetition, and discourse markers

that projected self-assurance and social awareness. Their language reflected a fusion of assertiveness and cultural propriety, suggesting that Nigerian women on TikTok are actively redefining femininity beyond traditional boundaries. Male creators, including @UmarComedies and @BrodaKunle, employed humour, vernacular expressions, and religious idioms to construct a sense of masculine identity rooted in both authority and community leadership. These findings confirm that gender identities online are shaped by sociolinguistic practices that adapt offline ideologies to digital performance contexts (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 98).

Ethnic and regional identity markers were also evident. For instance, Yoruba creators often infused their speech with proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and rhythmical code-switching between Yoruba and English, which lent authenticity and local colour to their performances. Similarly, Hausa and Igbo creators embedded linguistic pride into their content through strategic lexical insertions that functioned as cultural cues. These forms of expression reinforced Bucholtz and Hall's claim that identity emerges through relational positioning and indexicality rather than as a fixed category (—Identity and Interaction‖ 591).

Moreover, the data underscored how linguistic practices on TikTok transcend entertainment. They become vehicles for cultural preservation, humour, moral commentary, and even political critique. The creators' manipulation of tone, accent, and speech rhythm served not only communicative functions but also symbolic ones, representing larger narratives of belonging, resistance, and aspiration.

In essence, this study found that Nigerian TikTok creators construct identity through dynamic linguistic strategies that mirror the nation's multilingual and multicultural landscape. Their language practices demonstrate how digital media provides a new arena for the negotiation

of Nigerian selfhood where linguistic hybridity becomes both a stylistic choice and a cultural statement.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has examined the role of Nigerian TikTok creators in shaping digital communication, identity, and social engagement. Drawing insights from twenty-five creators, the analysis revealed that TikTok has become a vibrant site for creativity, activism, and self-representation among young Nigerians. Through humour, performance, and linguistic innovation, creators transform everyday experiences into commentaries on politics, gender, and culture.

The findings show that TikTok functions as both entertainment and empowerment, giving users a voice previously unavailable in traditional media. While challenges such as algorithmic bias and superficial trends persist, the platform continues to redefine how Nigerians participate in public discourse.

In sum, this research affirms that Nigerian TikTok content reflects a larger cultural shift one that merges art, technology, and social consciousness into a distinctly digital Nigerian identity.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This research extends the frontiers of sociolinguistic inquiry by bridging classical theories of identity with the emerging discourse of digital communication. While Bucholtz and Hall's model has often been applied to face-to-face interactions, this study validates its relevance in online environments where identities are performed through curated speech and audiovisual cues. It demonstrates that the principles of indexicality, positioning, and stance remain vital even in the algorithmically mediated interactions of social media.

Furthermore, the study contributes to African sociolinguistics by foregrounding Nigeria's digital youth culture as a legitimate site of linguistic innovation. Scholars like Alastair

Pennycook have long argued that English in global contexts takes on localised forms reflecting unique sociocultural realities (*Global Englishes* 62). This work builds on that premise by showing how Nigerian TikTokers are not passive consumers of linguistic trends but active creators of hybrid Englishes and Pidgin varieties that encode both cultural memory and modern sensibilities.

Another contribution lies in the recognition of TikTok as a sociolinguistic archive. Unlike traditional written texts, TikTok videos capture tone, gesture, intonation, and performance all crucial markers of identity. This expands methodological possibilities for discourse analysis in digital ethnography. By analysing speech alongside audiovisual features, the study provides a richer understanding of how online language use reflects social structure, ideology, and affect.

The study also fills a gap in gendered discourse studies within African digital contexts. It reveals how Nigerian women, through performative linguistic confidence, challenge patriarchal expectations while maintaining cultural resonance. Similarly, male creators demonstrate adaptive masculinity that balances humour and social responsibility. These findings add to the growing literature on gendered speech and performance in non-Western media spaces.

Ultimately, this research has contributed new empirical data and theoretical insights that enhance the understanding of language, culture, and identity in the 21st-century African digital landscape.

5.3 Recommendations and Implications of Study

The findings of this study have broad implications for linguistic research, education, media practice, and cultural policy.

First, scholars of sociolinguistics and discourse studies should view digital spaces not as peripheral but as central to understanding contemporary language use. The linguistic creativity

observed on TikTok demonstrates that digital communication is a continuation of oral tradition in new forms. Researchers should thus expand the scope of linguistic fieldwork to include digital artefacts such as short videos, memes, and comment threads.

Second, educators and curriculum developers should integrate the study of digital discourse into language and communication studies. Nigerian English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages are no longer confined to informal domains but are thriving in global online platforms. By acknowledging this, language teaching can become more reflective of actual communicative practices and thus more engaging to students.

For media practitioners and content creators, this research underscores the importance of authenticity and cultural sensitivity in linguistic expression. The most successful TikTok creators are those who blend humour with genuine reflection of lived experiences. Their ability to connect with audiences through recognisable codes and cultural nuances is a key lesson for aspiring digital communicators.

Cultural policymakers and linguists should also support initiatives that preserve Nigeria's linguistic diversity within digital ecosystems. Encouraging content creation in indigenous languages could strengthen cultural continuity while providing economic opportunities through localisation of online media.

Finally, the study has broader societal implications. It suggests that linguistic inclusivity in digital media can promote national unity by fostering mutual recognition among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. In a nation often divided along linguistic and cultural lines, TikTok provides a space where laughter, storytelling, and shared speech acts bridge divides.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

While this research has achieved its objectives, it also opens up new questions that future studies can explore.

Future researchers could extend the scope by incorporating a larger dataset across different time frames to examine how linguistic styles evolve with trends and platform changes. A comparative analysis between Nigerian and diasporic TikTok creators could reveal how global exposure shapes language use and cultural representation.

Moreover, integrating quantitative tools such as sentiment analysis or engagement metrics could enrich understanding of how audiences respond to different linguistic choices. This would bridge the gap between sociolinguistic theory and digital analytics.

Another promising direction involves examining algorithmic influences on language visibility whether certain accents, dialects, or linguistic codes are privileged or marginalised by platform algorithms. Such studies would contribute to discussions on digital inequality and representation in global media.

Lastly, future research might adopt a longitudinal approach to trace how individual creators' linguistic practices shift as their audiences grow or as they relocate to new cultural environments. Such a study would capture the dynamic interplay between identity, mobility, and digital self presentation.

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TikTok Creators (Primary Data)

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@JenifaSpeaks. —Omo, if you no sabi hustle, Lagos go swallow you.‖ TikTok, 2023, www.tiktok.com/@jenifaspeaks.

@King_Sola. —If dem like make dem vex, me I go still dey my lane.‖ TikTok, 2023, www.tiktok.com/@king_sola.

@MC_Benjamin. —No be juju be that?‖ TikTok, 2023, www.tiktok.com/@mc_benjamin.

@TashaComedy. —Naija no dey carry last!!‖ TikTok, 2023, www.tiktok.com/@tashacomedy.

@YoungScholar. —As e dey hot, we gats balance am with book.‖ TikTok, 2023, www.tiktok.com/@youngscholar.