

## **Impact of Social Media Technology in The Development of Igbo Language Among University Students: A Study of Imo State University Students**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper studied the potential of using social media in the teaching and learning of Igbo language among linguistics students of Imo State University, Owerri. Igbo language is native to Igbo race of Nigeria. Descriptive method, involving questionnaires, were distributed to 140 Igbo linguistics students in the university. Data collected were analysed using SPSS package into percentages and means scores. Results showed students are aware of the existence of social media. Students strongly agreed that social media can be used in the teaching and learning Igbo. But factors, such as cost and poor internet connectivity, unavailability of Igbo modules, and lack of computer sets with Igbo vowels are limiting factors. Therefore, the university can provide free internet services for students. Igbo Modules can be prepared uploaded to the internet. Computer sets and keyboards with Igbo vowels can be manufactured.*

**KEYWORDS:** social media, Igbo, language, learning. mother tongue.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language, as a concept is one's most prized possession, and as Denham & Lobeck (2013) put it, "Language is what makes us human and we all seem to be naturally curious about it". This assertion reminds us that language, (especially speech) is species-specific and perhaps; the only feature that distinguishes human from other animals. In view of this, Amadi & Agena (2015) opined that "Language is man's major vehicle for self expression and a mark of his personal and group identity". They further asserted that: "It is man's integral component and sometimes, a product of culture". This indicates that the language of a person can affect his/her culture and identity (Onuh, 2020). Language is seen as the totality of one's personality used in different ways and in individual capacities for the purposes of achieving effective communication. This important status placed on language by nature itself probably is the reason for constant enquiries on it by language researchers.

Sociolinguists consider language as a social tool that operates within the society, used for social interactions. This ideology is upheld here based on the conviction that language, which is primarily speech, is a human attribute. People operate in a society where they socially interact, and the use of language is primarily to foster connectivity and relatedness among them. It is

justifiable also to say that language is human specific in the sense that, it is only humans that use language to its full capacity; which is to communicate and transfer ideas from one person to another, making meaning in the process.

According to O' Grady (2011), language is not just a part of us, it defines us. It is part of the social structure of our communities" This emphasizes the indispensability of human language. In a social community, language serves as the unifying factor for people in a particular speech community. Without language, the world and its views will, of course, remain bleak. Language promotes our status and identity. Anchoring of the relevance of language also, Carroll (2004) posits that language is our most important tool in communicating our thoughts and feelings to each other." This assertion is true and based on the fact that although we may have several other forms of indicating our moods, language remains the most effective tool to create meaningfulness in communication. Language, therefore, is assumed as next to life itself. It is a system of conventional signals used for communication by a whole community (Every speech community has a language that not only eases communication, but also binds the members of such a community culturally). Language is also a viable tool in the enhancement of cultural values in our community. Thus, language is the major means through which humans transfer their culture, values and civilization from one generation to another. In Nigeria, English, though a second language, has become the official language of communication and doing educational, social, economic and entertainment businesses in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, the language policy as introduced by the colonial administration and adopted by Nigeria after independence contributed immensely to the promotion of English language in Nigeria. The prestige and social acceptance given to the English language is so immensely felt because the language policy made it the official language in Nigeria. The insistence that one must have a credit grade in English language before one gets admission into tertiary institutions of learning, or before one is gainfully employed, is an indication of the indispensable hold which English had on Nigeria. This has of course facilitated its spread and promotion in Nigeria. Being an official language, so many functions have been allocated to it. It is for instance, the language of the media, politics, education and legal drafting. The use of English as a language of education, employment, legislation, media and admission placement in schools led to the infiltration of English and European literature in the Nigerian intelligentsia.

The official adoption and use of English have, since independence of Nigeria, put the native tongue (Igbo language) speaking by the Ibo race of South-East Nigeria, in serious competition and jeopardy of development. Parents, educated or not, would want their children to use the English language from infancy, thereby losing touch with their mother tongue (MT) because they have this mentality that English is now an "open door" language, Anukam (2016).

Igbo language is one of the major native languages in Nigeria, speaking by the Ibo ethnic group in the South-Eastern part of the country. The language in its entirety, describes the expression of the cultural heritage of the people of the South-East Nigeria. According to Nweze & Ugbor

(2018), without the language, it would be difficult to talk about cultural revival, research, teaching and learning of Igbo in schools or in the world. They also posited that, it is the language of tradition and cultural communication in the markets, farms, village meetings and day-to-day transactions outside the offices, in the churches, public gathering and in Igbo social and political arena. Most Igbo people are into business, therefore, knowing the language helps to interact freely with them without the fear of being deceived.

It is learned at home, schools and colleges and in tertiary institutions, but today, according to Nweze & Ugor (2018), it is being feared of extinction due to the inversion of Western culture and the attitudes of Ndi Igbo towards the language. According to Ohiri-Aniche (2008), as reported in Ihezue & Otutu (2015), in Imo state, 7% of the children, age six years to eleven years and 9% of them, age five years and below do not speak Igbo. The corresponding figures for Igbo resident in Lagos are 35% and 52.5% respectively. In the study of Ohiri-Aniche also, 50% of parents in Imo state and 80% in Lagos State speak mostly English or a mixture of English and Igbo to their children. Their fear is that, when the children themselves become parents, they will be unable to bring up their own children to speak Igbo thus, exposing Igbo language to the danger of extinction in the near future.

Hitherto, the teaching and learning of some languages, like Igbo language, is formerly done in school, but today, the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has made it possible to teach and learn most languages through online social media networks. There is no doubt that social media has transformed the way we interact with each other, from sharing our thoughts and photos to planning a business. Social networking sites aim to build social ties and make virtual friendships to introduce a culture of communities, to present personal ideas and to express specific situations, as well as to convey information from person to person. The objective of this study therefore is to assess the impact of social media platforms (an appendage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)) in the development of Igbo language among university students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW.**

Information technology, as at today, is rapidly changing the way learning and teaching occurs. Liverpool (2002) on the introduction of ICT in education, noted that technology has included ICT as a subject of study; as assisting tool for collecting data and writing assignments by students; for communicating and conducting research; as a medium for teaching and learning; as a tool for organization and management in schools, (examples is the use of ICTs to handle school records and other activities). Davitt (2005) discussed how ICTs can be used in accelerated teaching and learning and said that it lowers threats and provides second and third chances of learning; allows teachers to create, store and deploy multimedia resources and activities to work; provides different points of access for learners with different learning styles; and provides new ways of making connections.

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Currently, there is a paradigm shift in learning method and for that within the education system, there are evidences of change in the teaching and learning method. Classrooms and learning materials are no longer situated in one physical environment, but on virtual, online cyberspace. “Online availability of educational materials or digital resources has opened up new avenues for teaching and learning” (Siddiqui, 2004).

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the inadequacies and lack of online learning facilities in many countries of the world, including Nigeria. The precautionary measures taken by majority of countries, including restricted movements and in most extremes, total lockdown of the country, made it difficult for physical teaching and learning in the educational institutions. According to Alghamdi, (2021), this scenario affected the students’ social and educational life aspects. Consequently, there has been a radical change in favor of online learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemics. The current COVID-19 situation makes it necessary for the surge in the use of social media as a means of interaction and communication in the entire world.

In the assessment of Muftah (2022), social media refers to websites, blogs, chats, computer programs, i.e., any content-based form of e-communication that enables users to share information and expose ideas. While social networking sites for language learning represent the corpus of those social media channels and service, mainly designed for specific purposes, devoted to foreign language learning.

Baldwin (2012), as reported in Mufta (2022), suggests that social media can be both a friend and a foe for natural language processing. However, while he considers social media a cause for “spelling inconsistencies, the free-form adoption of new terms, and regular violations of English grammar norms,” he refers to the advantage of “lexical normalization” in the same linguistic setting. On this basis, Thurairaj *et al.* (2015) examined whether social media networks were “making or marring academic English” and whether infrequent online code-switching and inconsistent spelling affect non-native learners’ language learning process. However, provided that members of the platform understand the communication skills used, we qualify the activities as proper communication. According to Britannica encyclopedia, language is described as, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves.

Nevertheless, Mutum & Wang (2010) posited that, simplified online interactions can assist speakers achieve meaningful exchanges whilst using the target language in a useful manner. But, one more advantage of social media is the reduced communication anxiety among language learners. The near anonymity of users’ identity in the social media has encouraged People to often exchange materials on Learning English language, share information and construct new personal and linguistic identities on social media, because of being satisfied that their identity is well hidden from the general public as provided by the online pattern (Blattner & Fiori, 2011). Similarly, Al Jahrami (2019) reported that lowered anxiety in online settings coined with

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heightened motivation and self-confidence have been shown to provide L2 learners with anxiety-free zones that enable them to produce language spontaneously and creatively.

Studies conducted by Slim & Hafedh (2019), Thurairaj *et al.* (2015) have revealed that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter enhance students' overall language learning process. Social media is making it easier than ever to contribute to the evolution of language. One does not have to published through traditional avenues to bring word trends to the attention of the masses.

The social media is, as well, an avenue to the promotion of individual and group interests such as indigenous languages due to the ease and cheaper cost of joining the platform, ease of content upload and information exchange (Castell, 2001). In this manner, many indigenous languages, which had little chance of getting attention in the mainstream media, are turning to the social media option in India, Indonesia, and South Africa (Kperogi, 2011; Lawson-Borders, 2011; Putra, 2015, McLachlan, 2016). Users particularly are examining options for promoting many indigenous languages, which some researchers have predicted might soon be extinct. Because of the openness and freedom of expression in the social media, users find it comfortable to post and upload materials they feel that might be of interest to others. Uwechia (2016), points out that, "the kind of communication that thrives on the internet is related to free expression in all its form, most often it is open source, free-posting, decentralized broadcasting, serendipitous interaction. However, Uwechia expressed that while this basic nature of the internet has made it open to abuses, it has also created opportunity for positive uses. But, as the social media is used by people in some countries to promote development of their indigenous languages, to prevent them from going into extinction, others engage their own efforts in posting pictures of birthdays and anniversaries events.

Olasina (2012) studied the uses of the social media among professionals in workplaces in Nigeria. He found that professionals use the social media more for entertainment. On the other hand, Edogor (2012) examined the uses of the social media among students in Nigeria tertiary institutions. His study indicated that students used the social media for chatting, relating with friends, downloading music and sending online comments on social issues. He also reported that students posted a lot of pictures from dramatic and non-dramatic occurrences around them including pictures of birthdays, weddings and hostel parties.

Putra (2015) as cited in Ukonu *et al.* (2020), assessed the use of Lampung (an indigenous language in Bandar, a province of Lampung, Indonesia) among four multi-ethnic youth in Bandar, Lampung. The four youths studied Lampung at school, and the study examined how they used Lampung in their use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Path. The study indicated that the youths used Indonesian and English in the majority of their posts, but had also used Lampung, and code-switched in all the languages they knew. Though, Social networks members that did not speak Lampung restricted the extent to which the youths used Lampung in their



social media. On the other hand, Sawyer (2011) as also cited in Ukuno (2020), studied applications of the social media among foreign college students in the US. He found that foreign students in the United States used the social networking sites to acquaint themselves with alien cultures. He equally noted that foreign students used the social media “to become more familiar with the culture through talking with their friends about the cultural experience,”

However, the experience in the use of social media by students in Nigeria seems a bit different. For instance, Ogwo (2016) studied the social media and the redefinition of Igala (an ethnic group in Kogi state, Nigeria) core values among the Igala youths. She found out that “although the youth can identify the Igala core values, but they adopted the Western values they were exposed to on the social media, because they described the Igala values as archaic.” As a result of this, some researchers believed that the social media is only another tool by the West to culturally dominate other developing countries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Agba, 2002; Nwosu, 1990), like the domination of Igbo language by English among the Ibos of Nigeria (Onuh, 2019).

Nonetheless, according to Slim & Hafedh (2019), with the interaction opportunities social media platforms, like Facebook offers its users, it is the embodiment of the social-interactionist approach to language acquisition advocated by Lantolf (2000), in keeping with Vygotsky (1978), cited in Slim & Hafedh (2019). Facebook, as posited by Harrison (2013), cited in Slim & Hafedh (2019), can provide language learners with new prospects of real time cultural and linguistic interchange. However, according to van Lier (2004), cited in Slim & Hafedh (2019), from an ecological perspective, which views context as fundamental to language learning (van Lier, 2004), considering the contextual clues and conversational features it provides, Facebook can represent ideal sites of language learning.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the current study is to find out the impact of social media platforms on the development of Igbo language among university students.

### **Research Design**

The study was conducted at the Imo State University, Owerri, on linguistics students studying Igbo language. Igbo linguistics is a four-year programme, categorized into 100 level, 200 level, 300 level and 400 level.

The research design employed for the study is a descriptive survey which involves obtaining information from respondents based on the responses from a section of respondents which represent the entire population used for the study.

### **Data Collection**

The research was conducted after the suspension of teaching and learning in the university, as a result of the lockdown, occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic that ravaged the entire world in

2020 and 2021. The sample consisted of 140 students: 20 male and 120 female students which were randomly selected from the levels 100 to 400 of students in the Igbo linguistics programme. The students are native speakers of Igbo language, who use the language in their everyday interactions in the school and hostels.

The instrument was structured on a 4-points Likert scale on which the students responded to. The items in the questionnaire were weighted in the following manner: Strongly agree (SA)-4 points, Agree (A)- 3 points, Disagree (D) -2 points and Strongly disagree (SD) -1point.

### Data Analysis

The standard mean of acceptance is 2.50. The instrument was validated by a lecturer in the department of Statistics of the University. The Cronbach Alpha, Co-efficient method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, and it yielded a co-efficient of 0.90. A total of 140 copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved from the sampled students. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods of simple percentages, and mean scores calculation as contained in the SPSS package, version 22. Based on the calculated mean scores, any item statement (hypothesis) with mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while item statement with a mean score less than 2.50 was rejected.

### RESULTS

The outcomes of the responses from the sampled students, based on the items in the study questionnaire are presented in the following tables.

**Table 1. Level of awareness of social media network, and access to internet provision among the students**

Question item	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Total respondent
1). Do you have android phone?	Yes	125	89.29	140
	No	15	10.71	
2). Do you have knowledge of existence of social media networks?	Yes	140	100	140
	No	0	0	
3). Have you used any of the social media network?	Yes	133	95	140
	No	7	5	
4). How often do you use social media networks?	Always	100	71.43	140
	Not always	40	28.57	
5). Does the university	Yes	0	0	

provide free internet access to students in the school?	No	140	100	140
6). How do you get internet connection to access social media networks?	Buying data bundle	126	90	140
	Using free wifi from friends	14	10	
7). Do you find it difficult to connect to internet whenever you want to access social media networks?	Yes	91	65	140
	No	49	35	
8). If answer in question no.7 is yes, is it the problem of the social media platform or internet network?	Social media platform	12	8.57	140
	Internet network	128	91.43	

**Source:** Study data (2020)

From the Table 1 above, on the item 1: “do you have android phone”? it was observed that 125 students, representing 89.29 % of the total students have android phones. But 15 students, representing 10.71% of the total students do not have android phones. On the other hand, all the sampled students (140), representing 100 %, without exception, agreed that they have knowledge of the existence of social media, based on the item 2: “do you have knowledge of existence of social media”? as presented in the Table 1. On the item 3: “have you used any of the social media networks”? it was observed that 133 students, representing 95 %, agreed of having used the social media platforms. But, 7 students, representing 5 % have not used any of the social media platforms.

Looking at the Table 1 on the item 4: “how often do you use social media”? 100 students, representing 71.43 % of the sampled students agreed that they always use social media while, 40 students, representing 28.57 %, on the contrary, responded that they do not always use the social media. On the item 5: “does the university provide free internet access to students in the school”? 140 students, representing 100 %, did responded that the university does not provide any internet access for students to carry out their internet related activities. Response from the item 6: “how do you get internet connection to access social media networks”? as presented in the Table1, showed that 126 students, representing 90 %, stated that they buy their own data bundle for internet connection. However, 14 students, representing 10 % stated that they use free wifi from their fellow students. In response to the item 7: “do you find it difficult to connect internet whenever you want to access social media networks”? 91 students, representing 65 %, agreed to their difficulty in connecting the internet, as presented in the Table 1. But, 49 students, representing 35 %, do not find it difficult in connecting the internet. However, when asked in the item 8, whether the problem of connecting the internet was as a result of the social media



platform or the internet network, 128 students, representing 91.43 % stated that the poor connection was from the internet network. Though, 12 students, representing 8.57 %, accused the social media platform (Table 1).

**Table 2. Social media networks should be used only for posting pictures, forwarding messages, watching movies and sports.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Strongly agree	7	5	1.59	Reject
Agree	15	10.71		
Disagree	28	20		
Strongly disagree	94	67.14		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

Source: Study data (2020)

From the Table 2 above, 7 students, representing 5 % strongly agreed that social media networks should be used only for posting pictures, forwarding messages, watching movies and sports. On the contrary, 94 students, representing 67.14 % strongly disagreed to the assertion. Based on the observed responses, the estimated mean score is 1.59 which is below the 2.50 standard mean score. Therefore, the assertion that social media networks should only be used for posting pictures, forwarding messages, watching moves and sports is rejected.

**Table 3. Social media networks can also be used for teaching and learning of educational subjects, including linguistics.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Strongly agree	85	60.71	3.36	Accept
Agree	29	20.71		
Disagree	18	12.86		
Strongly disagree	8	5.71		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

Source: Study data (2020)

Analysis of the collected data in the Table 3 on the assertion, “social media networks can also be used for learning and teaching of educational subjects, including linguistics” showed that 85 students, representing 60.71 %, strongly agreed on the assertion. Twenty-nine (29) students, representing 20,71%, also agreed to the assertion. However, 18 and 8 students, representing

12.86 % and 5.71 %, respectively, disagreed and strongly disagreed to the assertion. The data gave a mean score of 3.36, which was significantly higher than the standard mean of 2.50 (Table 3). Therefore, the decision was to accept the hypothesis that social media networks can equally be used for teaching and learning of educational subjects, including linguistics.

**Table 4. Materials in Igbo language such as proverbs, jokes and Igbo movies should only be posted in the social media networks.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Strongly agree	12	8.57	1.65	Reject
Agree	16	11.43		
Disagree	23	16.43		
Strongly disagree	89	63.57		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

Source: Study data (2020)

Table 4 above shows result of the assertion, “posts in Igbo language such as proverbs, jokes and Igbo movies should only be posted in the social media networks”. Eighty-nine (89) students, representing 63.57 %, strongly disagreed to the assertion. Also, 23 students, representing 16.43 %, disagreed to the assertion. On the other hand, 12 and 16 students, strongly agreed and disagreed, respectively, to the assertion (Table 4). Analysis of the data gave a mean score of 1.65, which is below the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the assertion was rejected.

**Table 5. Educational materials like folk tales, Igbo names of animals and plants should also be posted in the social media networks.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Strongly agree	95	67.86	3.40	Accept
Agree	19	13.57		
Disagree	14	10		
Strongly disagree	12	8.57		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

Source: Study data (2020)

The assertion, “educational materials like folk tales. Igbo names of animals and plants should also be posted in the social media networks”, as presented in the Table 5, showed that 95 students, representing 67.86 %, strongly agreed to the assertion. Equally, 19 students,

representing 13.57 %, agreed to the assertion. Conversely, 12 and 14 students, representing 8.57 % and 10 %, respectively, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion (Table 5). The data gave a mean score of 3.40, which is greater than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the decision was to accept the hypothesis that educational materials like folk tales, Igbo names of animals and plants should also be posted in the social media networks.

**Table 6. Igbo natives, and especially, linguistic Igbo language students should use Igbo language to make posts in the social media networks.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Strongly agree	106	75.71	3.62	Accept
Agree	20	14.29		
Disagree	9	6.43		
Strongly disagree	5	3.57		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

**Source:** Study data (2020)

Table 6 presents results of the students' responses on the assertion, "Igbo natives, and especially, linguistic Igbo students should use Igbo language to make posts in the social media networks". It was observed that 106 students, representing 75.71 %, strongly agree to the assertion, while 20 students, representing 14.29 %, agreed to it. On the other hand, 5 and 9 students, representing 3.57 % and 6.43 %, respectively, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion (Table 6). The mean score for the data is 3.62, which is greater than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the hypothesis that Igbo natives, and especially, linguistic Igbo students should use Igbo language to make posts in the social media networks is accepted.

**Table 7. Challenges against the learning of Igbo language, using the social media networks.**

Question item	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
Lack of Igbo modules in the social media networks	Strongly agree	98	70	3.57	Accept
	Agree	28	20		
	Disagree	10	7.14		
	Strongly disagree	4	2.86		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		
Lack of internet services	Strongly agree	92	65.71	3.43	Accept
	Agree	25	17.86		
	Disagree	15	10.71		
	Strongly disagree	8	5.71		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		
Lack of ICT knowledge among students	Strongly agree	7	5	1.46	Reject
	Agree	11	7.85		
	Disagree	22	15.71		
	Strongly disagree	100	71.43		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		
Lack of computer and keyboard configured in Igbo vowels	Strongly agree	96	68.51	3.40	Accept
	Agree	17	12.14		
	Disagree	15	10.71		
	Strongly disagree	12	8.57		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>		

**Source:** Study data (2020)

Table 7 presents challenges against the teaching of Igbo language, using the social media networks, as perceived by students.

On the lack of Igbo modules in the social media networks, 98 students, representing 70 %, strongly agreed to the assertion. Also, 28 students, representing 20 %, agreed to the assertion as shown in the Table 7. However, 4 and 10 students, representing 2.86 % and 7.14 %, respectively, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion. Mean score, as calculated from the data, is 3.57, which is greater than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the hypothesis that lack of

Igbo modules in the social media network is a challenge to the learning of Igbo language in the social media is accepted.

Lack of internet service was also suspected as one of the challenges against Igbo language learning in the social media networks. Results presented in the Table 7 showed that 92 students, representing 65.71 %, strongly agreed to the assertion. On the contrary, 8 and 15 students, representing 5.71 % and 10.71 %, respectively, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion. Means score for the data is 3.43, which is greater than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the hypothesis of lack of internet service as a challenge to Igbo language learning in the social media networks is accepted.

Tested equally is the assertion that lack of ICT knowledge among students could be a challenge to Igbo language learning in the social media networks. The results presented in the Table 7 showed that 100 students, representing 71.43 %, strongly disagreed to the assertion. Also, 22 students, representing 15.71 % disagreed to the assertion. On the other hand, 7 and 11 students, representing 5 % and 7.85 %, respectively, strongly agreed and agreed to the assertion. Mean score calculated is 1.46, which is lower than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the hypothesis that lack of ICT knowledge among students.

On the lack of computer and keyboard configured in Igbo vowels as among the factors against Igbo language learning in the social media, the results are presented in the Table 7. It was observed that 96 students, representing 68.51 %, strongly agreed to the assertion. Seventeen students, representing 12.14 %, also agreed to the assertion. Conversely, 12 and 15 students, representing by 8.57 % and 10.71 %, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion. A mean score of 3.40 was calculated, which is higher than the standard mean score of 2.50. Therefore, the hypothesis that, lack of computer and keyboard configured in Igbo vowels is a factor against learning of Igbo language in the social media networks is accepted.

## **DISCUSSION**

Level of awareness of social media network, and access to internet provision among the students was assessed, and it was observed that majority of the students (89.29%) have android phones. This indicates that the students have the device that has the capacity to connect to the internet for any online activities. It was awesome when all the sampled students (100%) agreed that they have knowledge of the existence of social media networks and have also used them for one activity or the other. This indicates that the students are not novice in social media activities, a sign that, if exposed to language learning with the social media networks, they will be able to acquaint with it.

Majority of the students accepted that they use the social media very often, indicating that the use of the platform to aid language learning, like Igbo language, will not be hard to achieve. However, the handicap to effective use of the social media to learn the Igbo language could be

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lack of access to the internet services. This is as a result of the response from all the sampled students (100%) that the university does not provide internet services to enable students to carry out some internet activities. Consequently, students are forced to buy internet bundle data to connect to the internet. The observation where students spend their little meager allowance on buying bundle data for internet connection may work against the use of social media networks to teach Igbo language. This is because, any student that does not have money to buy data bundle will not connect to the internet for any internet related activities, including assessing the social media networks.

Another area of concern is the poor connectivity to the internet, where majority of the students (65%) agreed that they find it difficult to connect to the internet. On the effort to find out whether the poor connectivity is as a result of the social media network or from the internet providers, majority of the students (91.43%) agreed that the poor connectivity is from the internet providers.

Social media platforms provide opportunities for individuals all over the world to communicate and interact with each other, either in personal capacity or group form, where pictures, news, moves etc., are shared. Therefore, persons have freedom to join any social media platform however, in keeping with the terms and conditions as provided. As a user of the network, one is free to post and share anything he wants to expose to public knowledge. According to the study by Edogor (2012), who examined the uses of the social media among students in Nigeria tertiary institutions, students used the social media for chatting, relating with friends, downloading music and sending online comments on social issues. However, results of this study showed majority of the students (67.14%) strongly disagreed that social media networks should be used only for posting pictures, forwarding messages, watching movies and sports. This is an indication that social media networks are free platform that any person who subscribes is free to use and interact with others in any manner necessary, not limited to sharing and watching pictures and movies, but also language leaning. This observation is in line with the report of Castell, 2001), who posits that social media is an avenue to the promotion of individual and group interests such as indigenous languages due to the ease and cheaper cost of joining the platform, ease of content upload and information exchange (Castell, 2001). This view was corroborated by the students when majority (60.71%) strongly agreed that social media networks can also be used for teaching and learning of educational subjects, including linguistics. Students' Acknowledgement of the possible use of social media to teach and learn linguistics indicates that they are ready to learn Igbo language if opportunity provides for it in the social media. In this manner, many indigenous languages, like Igbo, which had little chance of getting attention in the mainstream media, are turned to the social media option as it has been done in India, Indonesia, and South Africa (Kperogi, 2011; Lawson-Borders, 2011; Putra, 2015, McLachlan, 2016).

Similarly, majority of the students (63.57%) strongly disagreed that materials in Igbo language such as proverbs, jokes and Igbo movies should only be posted in the social media networks. This observation indicates that students would also want to see educational materials, such as



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modules, that can facilitate the learning of Igbo language in the social media networks. If learning material on Igbo language are available in the social media, students will be willing to access them to improve on their Igbo language proficiency. This is evidenced by the response of Majority of Students (67.86%), who strongly agreed that educational materials like folk tales, Igbo names of animals and plants should also be posted in the social media networks. In a study earlier by Putra (2015) as cited in Ukonu et al. (2020), he observed that students overwhelmingly used Lampung (an indigenous language in Bandar, a province of Lampung, Indonesia) in their use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Path. This shows the enthusiasm of the natives in using their mother tongue to communicate in the social media. This observation can be achieved in the Igbo language if learning materials are made available to enable students to use them in their social media interactions. Perhaps, it is in the bid to achieve this level of enthusiasm that majority of students (75.71%) strongly agreed that Igbo natives, and especially, linguistic Igbo language students should use Igbo language to make posts in the social media networks.

However, there are some challenges that work against the learning of Igbo language, using the social media networks. These include Lack of Igbo modules in the social media networks. Result of the study showed that majority of students (70%) strongly agreed that the unavailability of modules on Igbo language in the social media networks is hampering the learning of Igbo in the social media. Also, majority of the students (65.71%) strongly agreed that lack of internet services is among the factors working against the learning of Igbo language in the social media networks. It had earlier been stated about the frustrations students go through in accessing the internet, this is capable of discouraging learners of the language from the use of social media to improve their proficiency.

It was suspected that lack of ICT knowledge among students could be among the factors that militate against the use of social media in the learning of Igbo language. But, result of the study stated the contrary. Majority of the students (71.43%) strongly disagreed with the assertion. This is an indication that the students could have been knowledgeable in the area of ICT. However, students blamed lack of computers and keyboards configured in Igbo vowels as part of the challenges affecting the learning of Igbo language using the social media network. This is evidenced by the percentage of students (68.51%) who strongly agreed that lack of computers and keyboards configured in Igbo vowels is one of the challenges in learning Igbo in the social media networks.

## CONCLUSION

Social media is a computer-based application that facilitates users to share information about themselves and other people. It has, without doubt, constantly been changing the way people live in different aspects. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, not only give users the possibility to generate information but also to share it with other users around the globe. Social media networks have been shown through this study that they can also be used to facilitate the teaching and learning of endangered native languages, like Igbo. From this study, students

are enthusiastic in performing their social media operations in the Igbo language. However, there were identified factors that hamper the actualization of this objective. These factors include; inability of the students to access the internet as a result poor internet connectivity, cost of buying data bundle. Of more important is the lack of Igbo modules, and computer sets and keyboards that are configured in Igbo language vowels.

Therefore, this paper is recommending the following:

1. Igbo language lecturers and experts should develop modules that can be uploaded in the internet to help Igbo learners.
2. The university can make arrangements to provide free internet access within and around the campus, so that students, especially the linguistics learners, can connect to the internet without difficulty.
3. Government can enter into agreement with computer makers to produce computer sets and keyboards that are configured in Igbo language vowels.

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