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## Digital Stylistics and Identity Construction: A Stylistic Analysis of Micro-Narratives On X (Twitter) In Nigerian Digital Discourse

YUSUFF A. A

Department of English, University of Ibadan

Correspondence Email:

[adekunleakeeb@gmail.com](mailto:adekunleakeeb@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This study examines how stylistic strategies shape identity construction and emotional expression in Nigerian micro-narratives on X (Twitter), foregrounding the interplay between language, culture, and digital communication. Given social media's role embedded in everyday interaction and self-presentation in Nigeria, this study investigates how linguistic and multimodal resources operate within character-limited narrative forms (Igboanusi, 2002; Adegbija, 2004). Adeola (2020), Adegbija (2004), Igboanusi, (2002), among other scholars posit that social media users utilise the creative expressiveness found in styles to criticise governance, facilitate social movements and construct inter-generational identities but have not specifically examined micronarratives on X in Nigerian digital discourse; the gap that this study aims to address. Using a qualitative, multimodal stylistic approach, this article analyses one hundred purposively sampled Nigerian micro-narratives, focusing on lexical choice, figurative language, punctuation, narrative perspective, code-mixing, emojis and hashtags. Findings show that identity is enacted through deliberate lexical selection, code-mixing involving Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous languages, and the deployment of multimodal symbols, which allow complex meaning-making despite brevity constraints (Elugbe & Omamor, 1991; Banjo, 1996). On the other hand, emotional expression is stylised through metaphor, hyperbole, orthographic deviation, prosodic elongation, and visual cues like emojis, which index both collective and individual affective stances in culturally situated ways (Page, 2012; Zappavigna, 2018). The study argues that stylistic resources are creatively exploited by users to negotiate social identities, alignments, and emotional experiences in digital spaces. It concludes that digital discourse offers fertile ground for extending the scope of stylistics beyond traditional literary texts.

### Keywords

Digital discourse, Identity construction, Micro-narratives, Social media language, X (Twitter)

## Introduction

Social media platforms have changed how people communicate, express identities, and build relationships in digital spaces (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Herring, 2013). These platforms emphasise participation, immediacy, and visibility, highlighting the importance of language for self-presentation, expressing views, and connecting with communities. In Nigeria, platforms like X (formerly Twitter) serve not just as information channels but as lively spaces where users negotiate social belonging, share emotions, and express opinions on issues ranging from politics and culture to daily life experiences (Igboanusi, 2002). Given Nigeria's complex mix of languages, digital discourse provides an intriguing look at how language and other modes of expression reflect identities and emotions in subtle ways (Elugbe & Omamor, 1991; Adegbija, 2004).

Nigeria's linguistic landscape includes English, Nigerian Pidgin, and hundreds of local languages that exist in constant contact. In digital settings, these languages not only coexist but often blend together through code-switching and code-mixing. This creates hybrid language forms that indicate identity, group unity, and effective communication (Adegbija, 2004 and Banjo, 1996). These multilingual practices resonate with global trends in diverse online spaces, while also reflecting Nigeria's unique sociocultural context. They show how digital communication is

intertwined with local language ideologies, cultural symbols, and power dynamics (Leech & Short, 2007). This context makes Nigerian digital discourse particularly useful for stylistic analysis.

Traditionally, stylistics focused on the systematic study of language choices and their impact on meaning in literary texts. Its scope has broadened to include non-literary and digital texts as valid subjects for research. Modern stylistics acknowledges the roles of multiple modes, interactivity, and user-generated content in creating meaning in digital environments (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). In Nigeria, academic work has looked at language variation, Nigerian English, and code-mixing practices as mirrors of identity, ideology, and social class (Igboanusi, 2002). These studies lay the groundwork for exploring stylistic choices in new genres like social media micro-narratives, where brevity and multimodality create unique challenges and opportunities.

Micro-narratives are concise, self-contained story fragments that have gained importance on social media because of character limits, algorithm-driven visibility, and fast-paced interactions (Page, 2012; Zappavigna, 2018). They capture moments of personal and shared experience, often merging evaluative positions, narrative voices, and emotional stances. Beyond words, they use multiple modes, including images, GIFs, playful punctuation, and hashtags to convey layered meanings and interpersonal effects

(Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Tagg, 2015). In Nigerian digital spaces, these micro-narratives often communicate humour, satire, political commentary, spirituality, resilience, and shared challenges, reflecting the everyday realities of life. These features make micro-narratives valuable tools for examining how identity and emotion are stylistically constructed.

Despite the growing research on online communication and African digital cultures, there is still limited research specifically focused on the stylistic elements of Nigerian micro-narratives (Igboanusi, 2002). Previous studies have looked at broader topics like language variation, policy, and digital multilingualism, yet less attention has been given to the detailed stylistic strategies that reveal identity and emotions on platforms like X. Recent research on African social media calls for a deeper analysis of how various modes of expression and languages combine to influence meaning and power in online interactions (Bamgbose, 1991). Addressing this gap, this study investigates the stylistic strategies Nigerian users use to build identity and convey emotions in micro-narratives on X.

Specifically, the study explores how word choices, figurative language, punctuation, narrative perspective, code-mixing, images, and hashtags function as stylistic tools in these micro-narratives and how they contribute to meaning-making within the limits of brevity and high reference to other texts. By doing this, the

research shows how digital stylistics can reveal the relationship between language, technology, and society in modern Nigeria. It also emphasises the importance of educating students and digital users about the significance of stylistic choices in online communication, linking stylistic analysis to digital literacy and active citizenship.

The rest of the study is organised as follows. The next section reviews relevant literature on stylistics, micro-narratives, and digital discourse. This is followed by the theoretical framework guiding the analysis. The methodology section explains how data was gathered and analysed, after which the findings are presented and discussed. The paper concludes with implications for digital literacy, teaching stylistics, and future research on Nigerian digital communication.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Digital Stylistics and Social Media**

"Digital stylistics is concerned with the use of stylistic resources in technologically mediated communication, and it is interested in the interaction between linguistic, visual, and symbolic modes in online communication" (Bednarek, 2021). Contrary to previous stylistics, which essentially targeted literary texts, "digital stylistics encompasses stylistic analysis of social media postings, blogs, WhatsApp conversations, memes, and all manner of online postings" (Page, 2018). These online postings are characterised by their concision, interactiveness, and multimodal

nature, which in sum and substance define stylistic practice online (Crystal, 2011).

Social media talk is characterised by speed and dialogism, which means that participants address an anticipated audience, which is simultaneously private and public (Boyd, 2014; Zappavigna, 2018). This context is conducive to creative linguistic behaviours such as playful scripts, phonetic spellings, intertextual language, and hashtagging, which all have style and interpersonal pragmatic functions. According to Bednarek (2021), such style features not only encode message meaning but also build meanings related to stance, identity, and effect.

The Nigerian context presents digital stylistics with the challenge of operating within a multilingual society. Nigerians use English, Nigeria Pidgin, and their local languages like Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa on the internet (Adegbija, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002). One of the stylistic techniques here would be code-switching and code-mixing, which symbolises "urbanity, solidarity and also functions to create intimacy and humour on the internet" (Banjo, 1996). The technique of code-switching and code-mixing defies the notion of monolingualism and the way multilingual speakers use their linguistic resources creatively

The Nigerian online discourse is also grounded in the larger sociopolitical contexts. The online volunteers utilise the creative expressiveness

found in the styles to criticise governance, facilitate social movements, and construct inter-generational identities (Adegbija, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002). For example, the strategic use of slogans, hashtags, and metaphors for current affairs has become a resource in the culture of resistance and solidarity. Adeola (2020) demonstrate that the use of humour, satire, and hyperbole has become a commonality in the narratives for the online discourse of Nigeria, presenting the intersections between creative expressiveness and political undertones.

Thus, digital stylistics offers a theoretical framework that reveals how the language used in Nigeria on the Internet is not only communicative but is also constitutive in that it builds identities, relations, and collective emotions, as it proves that social media is an active site of cultural production.

## 2.2 Micro-Narratives

Micro-narratives consist of shorter stories that contain the essence of personal or communal experiences, shared through platforms that support the use of short phrases, such as the use of the social platform X, statuses on Facebook, or WhatsApp messages (Page, 2012; Zappavigna, 2018). These types of messages often combine the elements of narrative, including orientation, complication, and evaluation, within the span of a sentence or two, leaving the reader to interpret. Due to its concise nature, the micro-narrative

promotes stylistic density, where each lexical, grammatical, and multimedia element is densely packed with meaning (Page, 2018).

Micro-narratives on social media platforms differ from mainstream narratives not only in terms of length, but in terms of interactivity and multimodalism as well. Micro-narratives can be replied to, retweeted, emojified, and repurposed, allowing the interpretation of narrative to occur between users (Boyd, 2014; Georgakopoulou, 2017). Hashtags mark topics of narrative, link users to communities, and help narratives to be woven together into umbrella topics of socio-political discussions (Zappavigna, 2018). Emojis serve as a tool of affective framing to help interpret, mitigate, or enhance critique (Tagg, 2015; Danesi, 2017).

For instance, micro-narratives in Nigeria have increasingly been deployed as a potent tool for the documentation of daily experiences, comedy, religious expressions of devotion and passion, and activism. The narratives of movements like #EndSARS explain how small texts may be deployed to synthesize collective identity and resistivity (Opeibi, 2020). Other micro-narratives showcase scholarship success, expressions of despair at infrastructural deterioration, and interpersonal relationships, which may be accomplished through humour and proverbial formats sympathetic to indigenous oral traditions (Adeola, 2020; Onyejekwe, 2017).

These narratives are very self-referential, where they draw from Nollywood films, music, proverbs, memes, and religiosities. These narratives are very stylistically made up of English and Nigerian Pidgin, which communicate identity positions or alignments (Igboanus, 2002). From these studies of micro-narratives, researchers get to learn about the process of Nigerians representing sociocultural complexities in very condensed online narratives.

### **2.3 Language, Identity, and Emotion in Nigerian Contexts**

Nigeria has one of the most linguistically diverse environments globally, with more than 500 languages and various contact varieties (Bangbose, 1991; Adegbija, 2004). Language variation has high indexical properties; that is, it is communicative of ethnicity, class, education, geographic location, religion, and generation (Banjo, 1996; Igboanus, 2002). Nigerian English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and African languages interact and are used as resources for identity construction (Banjo, 1996; Igboanus, 2002).

The performance space of online communication intensifies these choices in digital spaces. Users switch languages strategically to express intimacy, claim authority, create humour, or mark in-groups. The choice of English, perhaps, indexically indicates formality or cosmopolitan identity, whereas Pidgin is mainly associated

with displays of solidarity, street credibility, or informality (Bamgbose, 1991). The indigenous languages place users within ethnic or cultural belonging more often during celebratory moments or when experiencing strong emotional states.

Emotion in Nigerian digital discourse is similarly stylised. The same logic of Adeola shows that users depend on hyperbole, metaphors, ideophones, elongation of letters, and unusual punctuation to dramatize emotional states. Oguchukwu illustrates that affect online is rarely individualistic; rather, it is co-constructed through commentary, retweets, and shared hashtags. Expressions of anger, joy, or grief typically invoke collective identities such as "Nigerian youth," "my people," or ethnic communities, which indicate how digital emotion is always socially distributed.

Consequently, identity and emotion interlink and become mediated linguistically. Stylistic analysis reveals how choices in code-mixing, figurative language, and multimodal cues mediate belonging, exclusion, and solidarity within Nigerian digital communities.

#### **2.4 Multimodality and Nigerian Digital Communication**

Multimodality refers to the combination of verbal, visual, and symbolic resources used to make meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Meaning is rarely made with text alone in digital

environments. Emojis, gifs, images, typography, and layout provide interpretive cues which shape how messages are received.

In Nigerian social media discourse, there are distinctive ways in which multimodality interacts with multilingualism: emojis can supplement or even replace language, while hashtags categorize discourse and develop shared participation frameworks (Danesi, 2017). Nigerian users also creatively manipulate typography through the elongation of vowels or consonants and repetition of punctuation to index emphasis, ridicule, or emotional intensification.

Multimodal options often share relations with local cultural symbolism. For example, praying hands, heart, or laughing emojis are mobilised in context with religious devotion, solidarity, or satire and through repeated usage gain culturally specific meanings. Combined with code-mixing, multimodality expresses hybrid identities traversing global digital cultures across local linguistic ecologies (Danesi, 2017). Therefore, in the analysis of digital communication, Nigerian multimodality will be indispensable in illustrating the ways in which users draw upon multiple semiotic modes for constructing identity, emotion, and stance in contextually situated ways.

### 3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research adopts an integrated theoretical framework, marrying up multimodal stylistics with a social constructionist theory of identity. This integration allows for the analysis of the microlevel stylistic features of texts and the macrolevel social meanings attached to the performance of identity and the expression of emotion.

#### 3.1 Multimodal Stylistics

Multimodal stylistics extend the purview of traditional stylistic analysis beyond verbal language to encompass visually and symbolically framed resources (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bednarek, 2021). Multimodal stylistics follows the approach that meaning diffuses across modes, with stylistic effects often arising from that interaction. On X and other social media platforms, written language interacts with emojis, images, hyperlinks, and layout features, thus any analysis which considers language in isolation is incomplete (Page, 2018).

In multimodal stylistics, stylistic meaning is said to relate to the patterned choices users make. Hashtag repetition, inventive punctuation, capitalisation, and emoji sequences are stylistic markers that index both affect and identity (Zappavigna, 2018; Tagg, 2015). These resources are also further inflected by local languages and references in Nigeria. Also, users apply indigenous proverbs, expressions of religion, or

even Pidgin idioms with emojis and hashtags to create meanings which are culturally rooted (Adeola, 2020; Igboanusi, 2002).

Therefore, multimodal stylistics offers sets of analytical tools for analyzing how the linguistic and non-linguistic features together configure identity and emotion in Nigerian micro-narratives.

#### 3.2 Social Constructionist Theory of Identity

Social constructionism views identity not as an attribute but as a performance and negotiation through discourse and interaction (Agha, 2007; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Individuals draw on available linguistic and cultural resources to present particular versions of themselves in specific contexts.

Social media, however, amplifies identity performance through awareness of audiences, visibility, and interactivity of audiences (Boyd, 2014). Individuals create profiles through curation, choose styles of language use, affiliate with communities through the use of aggregated hashtags, and take stance through narrative voice. In Nigeria, multilingual repertoires and multiple layers of intersecting categories (ethnicity, religion, youth culture, and professional status) further complicate how identities are constructed (Adegbija, 2004; Banjo, 1996).

Code-switching, figurative language, and stylistic innovation, therefore, become means through

which users perform multiple, sometimes competing identities. Social constructionism foregrounds how these performances are shaped by social norms, power relations, and cultural expectations-highly salient in Nigerian digital discourse (Adeola, 2020; Igboanusi, 2002).

### 3.3 Integration of Frameworks

The combination of multimodal stylistics with social constructionist identity theory allows for a proper comprehension of Nigerian micro-narratives. Multimodal stylistics explain how linguistic and visual resources operate in texts, while the theory of social constructionism explains why these linguistic or visual resources would matter socially-that is, how they constitute identities, emotions, and relationships contextually (Igboanusi 2002).

Taken together, they enable this research to analyse linguistic, visual, and symbolic features occurring in micro-narratives, interpret how these features index identify positions and emotional stances locate stylistic choices within Nigerian sociocultural realities and multilingual practices. This integrated framework is therefore well-suited to examine the construction of identity and the expression of emotion in Nigerian micro-narratives on X.

## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a qualitative multimodal stylistic approach, in line with existing Nigerian

and international research into digital discourse. The present study focuses on the ways in which stylistic features of Nigerian micro-narratives contribute to identity construction and emotional expression.

### 4.1 Data Collection

A purposive sampling technique was applied, selecting 100 Nigerian micro-narratives from X. The stylistically rich and culturally relevant posts reflecting varieties of social and emotional experiences were of more interest in this study. Data collection took six months (between January and June of 2025) selecting trending hashtags like #EndSARS, #NaijaLife, #Blessed, and #GraduateLife, using keywords to ensure that the socio-political, educational, and personal narratives are captured (Onyejekwe, 2017; Adegbija, 2004).

Other ethical considerations included anonymising user handles and paraphrasing of posts, while maintaining stylistic features of these posts to assure participants' confidentiality (Igboanusi, 2002).

### 4.2 Analytical Framework

The analyses below focus on the following stylistic elements, drawing on Nigerian sociolinguistic research and multimodal stylistics:

1. Lexical choice: slang, evaluative adjectives, intensifiers, and culturally specific expressions.
2. Figurative language: includes metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification.
3. Punctuation and typography: capitalisation, repeated punctuation, orthographic deviation, and ellipsis.
4. Narrative perspective: first-person, second-person, and third-person usages.
5. Code-mixing and multilingualism: admixtures of English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages.
6. Emojis and hashtags: multimodal cues for emotion and identity.

These elements were documented, coded, and analysed to identify patterns of identity construction and emotional expression.

#### **4.3 Procedure for Data Analysis**

Each micro-narrative was analysed for both linguistic and multimodal features. Recurring patterns were identified and classified within the analytical framework. In interpreting meaning, the study accounted for Nigerian cultural and linguistic conventions, in keeping with Igboanusi's 2002 and Adeola's 2020 calls. The contribution of multimodal elements such as emojis, hashtags, and typography to the tone, stance, and social identity was also analysed in accordance with the principles of multimodal stylistics.

## **5. DATA PRESENTATION AND STYLISTIC ANALYSIS**

The section discusses and interprets the data collected from the Nigerian micro-narratives on X (Twitter). A stylistic multimodal analysis has been conducted in this study to examine how language choices, figurative language, punctuation, narrative perspective, code-mixing techniques, and symbols combine in the construction of identity and expression of emotions. The analyzed posts consist of 100 purposively selected micro-narratives created by Nigerian contributors on different sociolinguistic profiles. The results show that although short as they are in conventional texts on X, such texts exhibit extremely intricate stylistic practices that are tapped from the multi-language environment and the elaborate oral tradition existing in Nigeria. The results will be presented thematically based on the prominent features extracted.

### **5.1 Lexical Choices and Identity Performance**

Lexical choice appeared as one of the most observable stylistic resources employed by Nigerian speakers to code identity positions like ethnicity, gender, youth, social class, and affiliation. As would have been expected, following some earlier observations in Nigerian English varieties (Adegbija, 2004; Banjo, 1996; Igboanusi, 2002), speakers deliberately choose

words with Nigerian culture in mind as their target.

Words like "wahala," "sabi," "o," "abeg," "gist," "wah," and "na so" allow Nigerian micro-narratives to be marked distinctly within global English discourse as Nigerian socio-cultural identity is projected clearly.

For instance:

- "Life no balance at all today, na wah o!"

This phrase combines the use of Nigerian Pidgin and lexical items of no balance and na wah to articulate emotional stance and a sense of belonging. As stated by Elugbe and Omamor (1991), Nigerian Pidgin is a pan-ethnic identity tool that promotes mutual intelligibility among linguistic groups. Therefore, the use of lexical styling not only carries the emotional meaning of frustration but also projects a Nigeria-specific communicative persona.

Another example is:

- "Finally defended my thesis today, your girl don graduate o!"

The lexeme "your girl" is youth-oriented, female, relationship-oriented, and playful. The lexeme showcases identity on various levels, including female, youthful, non-formal, and socially networked. The lexeme "don graduate" not only promotes identity within Nigerian Pidgin but also signifies accomplishments on the social level.

Such lexical expressions can be attributed to the concept of performance identity, promoted by Adeola (2020).

The use of intensity markers and evaluative adjectival expressions is another important element of stance and affective discourse. The employment of "very", "super", "mad", "soooo", or "extremely" achieves a certain indexical function of expressing attitudes and synching the writer's emotions with those of his readers. The employment of evaluative expressions such as "crazy traffic," "mad joy," or "heavy day" anchors a particular form of discourse; such as a narrative, in Nigerian local reality. The reality involves Nigerian stress at schools and power supply challenges.

The use of word repetition also featured prominently:

- "Tired, tired, tired"

Repetition reflects rhythm and oralness in Nigerian oral tradition. According to Onyejekwe (2017), in Nigerian discourses, repetition is often employed to highlight mood and also to engage readers. It also serves to compensate for space limitations to amplify emotion.

Specifically, the choice of words in micro-narratives in Nigeria is far from random and is actually indexical to a great extent. It indicates:

- ✓ ethnicity or pan-Nigerian identity

- ✓ urban youth culture
- ✓ gendered personas
- ✓ social belonging and solidarity
- ✓ Humorous or Ironic Positioning

As a result, lexical styling emerges as an essential tool in performing socially recognisable identities online.

## 5.2 Figurative Language and Emotional Intensification

In spite of character limitations in X, figures of speech are rich and widespread. Social media practitioners are quite creative in using metaphor and personification, simile, and hyperbole to conceptualise and convey emotional and personal experiences in a condensed statement (Adeola, 2020; Bednarek, 2021).

Consider the metaphor:

- “My heart dey carry cement today.”

In this case, the metaphor of feeling the weight of emotion is constructed in terms of the weight of cement, something from the Nigerian culture and experience. This makes it possible to understand the weight of emotion in the case without much description, satisfying the theoretical argument by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) about the use of metaphor in the conceptualisation of experience.

Another example:

- “Happiness siddon for my side today.”

The idea of happiness as a companion seated alongside the speaker conveys the speaker’s intense happiness but also leads to the creation of comic effects. The animated expression of intangible happiness reflects the orally transmitted poetic traditions that exist in the storytelling culture of Nigeria, as argued by Adegbija in 2004.

Hyperbole also manifests another typical stylistic device:

- “I don’t suffer pass the Wi-Fi for this hostel o!”

In this case, exaggeration is utilised to dramatise the struggle that one goes through and create comic relationality among the audience that is familiar with Nigerian internet connectivity. Exaggeration, therefore, is utilised for the dual purposes of affect expression and community building, since, according to Banjo (1996), Nigerian speakers of English use exaggeration to create rhetorical effect.

The other function of language is encoded socio-political information. The metaphorical examples, ‘we are being strangled by this country, Nigeria don tire me, hope don dey comot small small,’ symbolise collective frustration and strength. According to Zappavigna (2018), identity markers, such as figuratives, incorporate micro-narratives, representing how people share a position. In a Nigerian scenario, estas ‘otros,’ or figuratives, are viewed as having connotations to

‘economic hardship, academic struggles, and nationalism.’

So, figurative language facilitates emotional intensification, economising of expression, humour, and critique; and these features have been deemed fundamental to digital identity-building.

### 5.3 Punctuation, Typography, and Orthographic Deviation

The punctuation and typography of the data indicate a creative manipulation of orthographic rules to produce a more forceful effect. Writers on digital discourse (Tagg, 2015; Herring, 2013) point out that such departures from rules indicate visual prosody to compensate for a lack of vocalisations in digital communication.

A number of key factors were seen:

#### 1. Ellipsis

- Example: “We move...”

"The unfinished idea implies a sense of continuation, tension, or stoicism, which has close associations with the idea of youth resilience in the Nigerian environment

#### 2. Capitalisation

- "I AM TIRED"

Capital letters are used metaphorically for shouting or strong emphasis. Examples of capital

letters from Nigerian writing choose to emphasise frustration relating to economic, academic, or political issues.

#### 3. Repeated punctuation

- “!!!”, “???” ,or both “?!!”

Such forms of art index heightened emotions like shock, excitement, confusion, or disbelief.

#### 4. Lengthened spellings

- “soooo”, “happpppyyy”, “plsssss”

These reproduce the visual representation of the tone, rhythm, and pause found when intonating or emphasising words or phrases during spoken discussion

#### 5. Lowercase Narrative Style

- “today was heavy but i survive”

This stylistic minimalism is squarely suggestive of casualness, vulnerability, or reflectiveness.

Orthographic play is more than a technique to increase emotional complexity; it is a sign of digital literacy and group identity. Adeola (2020) points out that Nigerian users deliberately defy standard spelling conventions to achieve a form of identity through orthographic play in online communication. These practices transcend mechanical punctuation and are more meaningful semiotic resources.

#### 5.4 Narrative Perspective

"Narrative perspective in micro-narratives serves a relational task in positioning the self in relation to other selves." The pronouns "I, me, my" are prevalent in this regard, which highlights how self-narrative is oriented in relation to social media platforms, through which people construct personal narratives (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

First-person narratives permit the following expressions:

- ✓ vulnerability
- ✓ pride and achievement
- ✓ complaint or frustration
- ✓ everyday reflection

For instance,

- "I no fit shout again. This traffic don break my spirit."

Meanwhile, first-person plural (we, our) invokes group solidarity:

- "We no go gree again" during political activism
- "We move" during collective perseverance

This practice helps to promote group identity and has a resonance that promotes collectivism in the Nigerian discourse systems, as discussed by Adegbija (2004).

Second person is pivotal to the construction of imagined communicative partners:

- 'You sabi how e dey feel when exam just finish? That na my feeling today.'

The addressee you address inclusively, presuming shared experience and establishing audience identification with the addressee on a subjective level. Zappavigna's take on ambient affiliation illustrates the presumption that the addressee online has affiliations that can't be perceived but establish a connection with the addressers offline nonetheless.

So, narrative perspective is not only about referring experience but is essentially involved in forming social relations, as well as optimizing audience involvement.

#### 5.5 Code-Mixing and Multilingual Identity

Code-mixing is one of the most noticeable stylistic features in micro-narratives among Nigerians. Codes used in micro-narratives in Nigeria combine English with Nigerian Pidgin and local dialects like Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. This is consistent with the linguistic repertoire of Nigeria and supports previous research that claims code-switching and code-mixing correlate with a flexible and fluid identity with respect to language (Adegbija, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002).

Typical examples of such cases include:

- Emphasis: "Na God go bless am!"

- Humour: "Wahala dey o"
- Intimacy: use of Yoruba or Igbo terms of relationship
- Prayer modes: "Insha Allah", "Amen o"

Code-mixing yields the following stylistic effects:

- i. indicate cultural closeness and common ancestry or cultural ties
- ii. adds to expressiveness not possible when speaking only English
- iii. permits softening or intensification by pragmatics
- iv. serves identity display and community membership

Elugbe and Omamor (1991) suggest that the role of Nigerian Pidgin is to create a linguistic arena that is "ideologically free from the quest for power and the struggle for everyday survival" and that brings together "different ethnics." In the online world, it becomes a democratising "stylistic resource."

Moreover, it is argued that the phenomenon of code-mixing is also manifesting itself in new digital language registers, in which the process of translanguaging is no longer rigid but dynamic (Adeola, 2020; Herring, 2013). In other words, instead of switching languages, people are blending them.

## 5.6 Emojis, Hashtags, and Multimodal Meaning

Emojis and hashtags are not mere add-ons but some of the most important tools of semantic building. Emojis indicate affect, softening the intonation or conveying the meaning through the absence of words. For example:

😏 for humour or irony

😞 indicating sadness, grief, or disappointment

❤️ expressing love or support

These facilitate the disambiguation process of an otherwise ambiguous text and also encode visual emotion (Bednarek, 2021).

Hashtags also serve several stylistic purposes in equal manner:

- index topics (#EndSARS, #FuelSubsidy)
- signal stance (#Blessed, #Grateful)
- uses identity definitions (#Naija, #ProudYoruba)
- to mobilise activism or collective memory

For instance,

- "Finally done with exams! 🎓 ✨  
#Blessed #GraduateLife"

The graduation cap and glitter recreated a visual story of success, and the use of hashtags built a

connection to communities of discourse surrounding celebrations. There is value to applying a theory of multimodal meaning, from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), to this situation. In the Nigeria community, the use of hashtags can merge English vocabulary and indigenous expressions, such as #NaijaNoDeyCarryLast. This reflects a level of creativity and consciousness of identity regarding the virtual sphere (Oguchukwu, 2025).

### Summary

In these stylistic areas: lexis, figurative language, orthography, narrative perspective, code-mixing and multimodality, there is clearly a strong sense of creative semiosis. Nigerian social media users are not merely conveying information; they are performing selves and conveying emotions. Stylistic practices give them the ability to encapsulate complex social meanings in those short posts and to show how powerful micro-narratives are with regards to self and emotional expression.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis highlights the importance of stylistic resources and not just fourth language linguistic practices when mapping identity and emotion expressions in Nigerian micro-narratives on X. The Nigerian sociolinguistic context, which is rich and diverse, is leveraged by the users to interpret their identities, emotions, and intentions on the online platform. The findings of this

analysis thus support and complement previous work on Nigerian English, identity, and online discourses on Nigerian communicators on various linguistic and online platforms (Adegbija, 2004; Adeola, 2020; Bednarek, 2021).

### 1. Identity is Discursively Constructed

Identity in micro-narratives in Nigeria appears less as a fixed quality and more as a process of performance. Users of micro-narratives use linguistic devices like lexicographic choice, slang vocabulary, evaluative adjectives, kinship vocabulary, and popular phrases to identify with a community in particular, and in this case, with young audiences. Lexicographic devices like “wahala”, “abeg”, “sabi”, and “no wahala” can potentially identify a writer as Nigerian. This aligns with the assertion by Banjo’s (1996) that linguistic variation in Nigeria is deeply tied to social belonging.

Code-mixing allows code-switchers to convey ethnicity and culture-related information. Flows between English, Nigerian Pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo, and other languages indicate versatility in code-switchers’ language skills. Narrative frames through use of “we,” group-related humour, and joint complaints indicate code-switchers’ placement within imagined communication contexts to indicate code-switchers’ relational, performative, and context-dependent identities (Zappavigna, 2018).

Identities are, thus, neither replicated in languages nor in language varieties. Identities are instead produced in discourse. Identities can be placed in communication contexts to indicate location within imagined worlds. I

## **2. Emotion is Stylised and Performative**

Emotional display is far from being ambivalent in Nigerian micro-narratives. Emotions are staged not only through the use of metaphor, hyperbole, orthographic games, punctuation, and emojis. Findings indicate that rather than write about emotions, people demonstrate them – “My heart dey carry cement” or “I AM TIRED!!!” – turning them from subjective states to communicable performances, thus confirming what Onyejekwe (2017) found regarding the use of repetition and exaggeration to create emphasis in Nigerian speech.

The use of ellipsis and lower case is reflective/reserved, while the use of capital letters and punctuation is more intensified. The use of emojis represents sadness, joy, sarcasm, or celebration visually (Bednarek, 2021). These illustrate Adeola’s (2020) point about emotions in digital communication being multimodally realised on the basis of audience expectation.

## **3. Micro-Narratives Preserve Narrative Form**

In spite of their brevity, many of the messages contain implicit narrative structure. The messages contain situations, complications, and

evaluations, following the structure of narratives. The small narratives, following the lead of Page (2012), contain missing links of context, facilitating the audience to complete and indulge in collective story-telling. This resonates with the conception of “small stories” put forth by Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) as a site of meaning and identity work. The small story of exams, heartbreaks, and politics on a small screen might thus have the structure of orientation, evaluation, and stance.

## **4. Multilingualism as Stylistic Resource**

Code switching in multilingualism is a strategic and metaphorical toolkit of styles. It is more than a characteristic of a Nigerian linguistic context. Code switching is done to emphasize, to bring intimacy, to be humorous or to be sarcastic or to be cultured through English and indigenous languages. The observations confirm previous remarks by Elugbe and Omamor (1991) about Nigerian Pidgin English being a cohesive language and Adegbija’s (2004) assertion about multilingualism being a Nigerian identity. Translanguaging presents new chances to develop fluid identities in web communication beyond language limits.

## **5. Multimodality Enhances Meaning**

It means that meaning within micro-narratives is constituted across texts, images, and graphic arrangements. Use of emojis, hashtags, GIF citations, and fonts complements language,

creating meaning, stand, and alignment. This validates the theory of multimodal discourse, identifying digital communications as inherently multimodal (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Hash tags not only mark content but can imply stand, activism, or values, as witnessed in hashtags such as #EndSARS, #NaijaSpirit, and #Blessed. Hash tags represent metacommentary, influencing how a post ought to be understood (Tagg, 2015).

### **6. Style-Based Clustering and Multi-Layered Meaning**

What emerges from the data is the fact that stylistic features do not alone exist. Users will resort to metaphor, code-mixing, use of punctuation, and emojis, creating complex discourses. For instance, the meaning of a post can be: “Life don tire me 😞... we move!!!” yet convey messages of despair, strength, comic relief, and solidarity among the viewers. Clustering, therefore, confirms the assertion by Adebija (2004) in that Nigerian discourse is complex, playful, and full of rhetorical flourishes, and it also confirms the assertion by Onyejekwe (2017).

### **Overall Significance**

In These results vindicate general findings that online communication is a site for the performance of identity, affect expression, and social alignment (Bednarek, 2021; Zappavigna, 2018). The results also demonstrate that despite

the brevity of the micro-narrative genre, Nigerian participants use linguistic and multimodal affordances to create nuanced developments in social meaning. Therefore, the application of stylistics is critical for the understanding of current trends in Nigeria’s online communication and has useful applications in teaching digital literacy, sociolinguistics, and stylistics.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

In this study, the stylistic techniques found in Nigerian micro-narratives on X (Twitter) are discussed, focusing on the use of language and other semiotic resources that create identity as well as express emotions. A purposive selection of messages has made it clear that Nigerian messages utilise significantly the lexis, figuration, punctuation, narrative point of view, code-mixing, emojis, and hashtags to create meaning as well as express emotions (Adebija, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002).

The results show that digital micro-narratives can be characterized not only by their casual talk features but also by their sophisticated genre features. Multiple and intertwined identities of Nigerian people, including personal, ethnic, community, religious, and professional ones, are managed by multilingual and multimodal means due to the sociolinguistic realities of Nigeria (Banjo, 1996; Elugbe & Omamor, 1991). The emotional expression of the narratives is highly dramatic and accomplished through hyperbole,

metaphors, repetition, orthographic variation, and emoji use to convey joy, sadness, pride, and solidarity (Adeola, 2020; Onyejekwe, 2017).

In any case, what this research makes clear is that length is not a limiting factor of creativity but rather a trigger for creative expression in style and semantics. The interlocking of knowledge of local cultures, shared humour, and resource-capabilities, of course, points to the importance of considering sociocultural contexts for analysis of discourses on the Nigerians online (Bamgbose, 1991; Oguchukwu, 2025). Further studies could perhaps be pursued to explore differences or changes over time, or even further, the intersection of micro-stories and activism within Nigerians.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Further Nigerian-focused research

There is a great need to conduct more empirical research on digital discourse online in the Nigerian environment, particularly from the perspective of regional languages and Pidgin English (Adegbija, 2004; Igboanusi, 2002).

### 2. Integration of Computational Stylistics

Employ corpus linguistics and AI technology to investigate a large number of Nigerian social media discourse while

retaining interpretation depth (Bednarek, 2021; Tagg, 2015).

### 3. Pedagogical Application

Integrate Nigerian micro-narratives into language and literature curricula to illustrate the applicability of stylistics in the digital era of communication (Adeola, 2020).

### 4. Digital Literacy and Ethical Awareness

Users need to remain aware of the permanent nature of online postings and their implications with regard to identity and emotional projection in cyberspace (Igboanusi, 2002; Oguchukwu, 2025).

### 5. Platform design

Social media platforms may incorporate more diverse and sophisticated forms of multilingual language, emoticons, and symbols to reflect the stylistic creativity of Nigerians (Tagg, 2015).

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