



SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK STATUS UPDATES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, LAFIA

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Abstract

This study examines the semantic features of Facebook status updates among undergraduate students of the Federal University, Lafia, with emphasis on how meaning is constructed and interpreted within computer-mediated communication. Adopting Structural Semantics as its theoretical framework, the study specifically investigates the use of polysemy and hyponymy in students' online discourse. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, using a purposive sample of ten Facebook status updates collected from active student users. The data were analyzed to identify semantic patterns embedded in lexical choices, figurative expressions, slang, abbreviations and context-dependent meanings. The findings reveals that students creatively exploit polysemous expressions to communicate resilience, identity, emotion and shared sociocultural experiences, while hyponymic relationships organise concepts relating to academic performance, institutional identity and everyday life. The study demonstrates that Facebook discourse is governed by systematic semantic principles rather than random linguistic deviations, highlighting social media as a dynamic site of linguistic innovation and meaning negotiation. It concludes that digital communication enriches contemporary language used by adapting lexical meanings to evolving social and technological contexts. The study contributes to scholarship on semantics, computer-mediated communication and digital discourse, while offering insights into the evolving language practices of Nigerian university students.

Keywords: Semantics, Structural Semantics, Facebook Status Updates, Polysemy, Hyponymy, Undergraduate Students.

1.0 Introduction

The advent of social media platforms has revolutionised communication, especially among the youths. Facebook, as a prominent social networking site, serves as a medium where people, especially the youth, express their thoughts and share experiences. This is more so with students in tertiary institutions of learning. This shift towards digital interaction has introduced unique linguistic patterns, necessitating an in-depth

exploration of the semantic aspects of computer-mediated language within the context of Facebook interactions. Agbo and Joekin (2018, 34) opines that the pervasive use of social media language among undergraduates has sparked debates regarding its influence on formal writing skills.

Facebook status updates serve as digital expressions of users' cognitive and emotional states (Herring, 2010). These



updates often contain unique linguistic features that reflect semantic patterns in users' communication. The emergence of social media platforms, in general and Facebook in particular, has significantly transformed language use in digital communication. Facebook, as a leading social networking site, facilitates interaction among users through status updates, comments and multimedia sharing. Students, in particular, employ a unique blend of informal language, abbreviations, emojis and neologisms in their online interactions (Thurlow and Poff, 2013). Therefore, the evolution of online communication among university students has garnered scholarly attention, particularly concerning its impact on language use within academic settings.

The extent of this social media language influences students' writing abilities and has been a subject of empirical investigation (Agbo and Joeke, 2018). The adoption of social media language, especially among undergraduates, led to the incorporation of informal expressions and abbreviations into academic work, suggesting a potential erosion of formal writing standards. Furthermore, the semantic aspects of non-standard grammatical usage on social media have also been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Emphasis on the need to understand the balance between the efficiency of communication on social media and the preservation of formal writing standards is paramount. This research attempted semantic analysis of students' Facebook status updates to better understand how students navigate meaning-making in their Facebook interactions and how this may affect their overall communicative competence. This, thus, offered valuable insights into their linguistic behavior around social communication.

Language used in computer-mediated communication (CMC) has undergone significant transformations, especially among university students, who frequently engages with platforms like Facebook for self-expression and interaction. In their status updates, students often employ non-standard linguistic features such as abbreviations, emojis, internet slang and code-mixing, which often introduce semantic ambiguities and impact meaning interpretation. The deviation from conventional language norms raises concerns about how effectively meaning is constructed and understood in digital discourse. Misinterpretations arising from polysemy, semantic shifts and contextual limitations may lead to communication breakdown, misinformation, or unintended meanings. Despite the increasing integration of digital expressions into everyday communication, there is limited research on the semantic dimensions of online language, particularly among students. This study focused on the specific context of language use in Federal University Lafia, thereby exploring how these linguistic trends manifest in students' Facebook status updates.

The study aim to analyze the semantic features of the Facebook status updates of students at FULafia, focusing on word meaning, lexical choices and contextual semantics in their digital interactions, thereby examining the unique linguistic features and underlying motivations in this specific academic context, the research seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of digital communication patterns and their implications for language use among students. To achieve this aim, this study had been hinged on identifying key semantic features in the Facebook status updates of students of Federal University,



Lafia and examines how meaning is constructed and interpreted through the choice of words in the status updates.

This study is of relevance in several ways, particularly in understanding the evolving nature of digital communication among university students, thereby analysing the semantic features in Facebook status updates. The study provided insights into how students constructs and interprets meaning in an online discourse. It highlights the impact of non-standard linguistic elements such as abbreviations, internet slang and code-mixing on communication effectiveness. The findings also contributes to linguistic scholarship thereby expanding knowledge on digital semantics and how language adapts to technological advancements in communication.

This study is exclusive to Facebook status updates, excluding other forms of communication such as comments, private messages and posts on other social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, or Instagram. This, thus, limits the generalisability of findings across broader online communication contexts. Secondly, the study relies on selected status updates, which may not fully capture all possible linguistic variations among students. Lastly, ethical concerns regarding data privacy and consent may restrict access to some relevant posts, potentially limiting the depth of the study.

Literature Review

2.1.1 Semantics

Semantics is a fundamental branch of linguistics that deals with meaning. It seeks to explain how words, phrases and sentences convey meaning, both in isolation and in context. According to Lyons (2020), Semantics is “the study of the meaning of words and sentences without reference to the context in which they are used.” This

implies a focus on literal or conventional meaning. In contrast, Leech (2021) defines Semantics as “the systematic study of meaning by interpreting the meanings of words, their historical development, their combinations and their relationships with other words.” This perspective is broader and incorporates aspects of lexical semantics and semantic change.

Barbara Partee (2018) offers a formalist viewpoint, defining Semantics as “the subfield of linguistics devoted to the study of meaning as encoded in the linguistic system, independent of Pragmatic influences”. Her definition draws a clear line between Semantics and Pragmatics. Similarly, Cruse (2019) maintains that Semantics is concerned with the meaning of linguistic units, particularly how they contributes to utterances and texts. Ullmann (2019), taking a historical linguistic stance, describes semantics as “the branch of linguistics that studies meaning, including the meanings of words, the development of those meanings and the changes they undergo over time”. Each of these definitions reveals the layered and multidimensional nature of Semantics.

The historical development of Semantics as a field can be traced to ancient philosophy, with Aristotle's works on logic and categories serving as early semantic inquiries. However, the modern study of semantics gained prominence with the contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure, who introduced the concept of the linguistic sign, comprising the signifier and signified (Saussure, 2011). His distinction between *langue* (language system) and *parole* (individual speech acts) laid the foundation for structuralist semantics. Later in the 20th century, Richard Montague revolutionised the field with his formal theory, arguing that natural language could be analysed with the



same precision as formal logic (Montague, 2020). This formal approach to Semantics is further elaborated by Partee (2018), who integrated syntactic structures with logical interpretation.

Semantics has since expanded to include cognitive perspectives. According to Evans and

Green (2021), cognitive semantics posits that meaning is grounded in human perception, bodily experience and mental representation. In this view, meaning is not solely a linguistic phenomenon but also a cognitive one. This aligns with the argument by Lakoff and

Johnson (2020), who suggest that much of human meaning is metaphorically structured and rooted in physical experience. Such perspectives have significantly influenced the analysis of conceptual metaphors, image schemas and frame semantics.

Several key features define the field of Semantics. One is meaning construction, which focuses on how meanings are derived through combination of linguistic units (Yule, 2020). Another is ambiguity, which arises when linguistic expressions allow multiple interpretations; Cruse (2019) distinguishes between lexical ambiguity (e.g., bank as financial institution or river edge) and structural ambiguity (e.g., visiting relatives can be annoying). Semantics also addresses synonymy, antonymy and other sense relations, which describe the relationships between words with similar or opposite meanings (Leech, 2021).

A further critical concept is the distinction between sense and reference. According to Lyons (2020), sense refers to the conceptual meaning of an expression, while reference pertains to the actual entity it denotes in the real world. Frege (as cited in Partee, 2018) originally proposed this distinction, which remains central to truth-conditional

semantics. Another major principle is compositionality; the idea that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its parts and the rules used to combine them (Partee, 2018; Montague, 2020).

In modern linguistic applications, Semantics is indispensable in fields such as computational linguistics, artificial intelligence and natural language processing. For example, Jurafsky and Martin (2021) emphasise the role of semantics in machine translation and information retrieval. In sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, semantic analysis also aids in identifying ideological underpinnings of texts (Gee, 2020). Furthermore, in language teaching and learning, a clear understanding of semantics enhances vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (Richards and Schmidt, 2020).

In a nutshell, semantics is a rich and dynamic field of study that examines meaning in language from multiple angles. With definitions and frameworks contributed by Lyons, Leech, Partee, Ullmann, Cruse and others, it bridges linguistic structure with cognitive and philosophical dimensions. Its features - such as meaning construction, ambiguity, synonymy and compositionality - equip linguists and researchers to analyse how language conveys thought. As the field continues to evolve in response to interdisciplinary insights, the relevance of semantics in both theory and application remains profound.

2.1.2 Lexical Semantics

Language is not merely a collection of words but a system through which meaning is constructed and communicated. At the core of this system lies the field of lexical semantics, a branch of linguistic semantics, which concerned with the meaning of words



and the relationships among them. Lexical semantics investigates how words represent meaning, how they interact within the lexicon and how their meanings can shift depending on context. According to Cruse (2000: 13), lexical semantics deals specifically with the meaning of lexemes that are abstract units underlying words. These meanings are not fixed; rather, they are dynamic and often influenced by usage, social context and cognitive structures. For example, the word *bank* can refer to a financial institution or the edge of a river, depending on its usage in a sentence. This duality is explained by the phenomenon of polysemy, where a single word has multiple related meanings (Murphy, 2010: 38).

Lexical semantics also addresses issues of homonymy, where words share the same form but have unrelated meanings such as *bat* (the flying mammal) and *bat* (used in sports). These distinctions are critical for understanding how words are processed both cognitively and linguistically (Lyons, 1977: 550). Another key aspect is the relationship between sense and reference. As Saeed (2016: 22) notes, the *sense* of a word relates to its conceptual meaning, while its *reference* pertains to the actual entity it denotes in the real world. This distinction helps clarify how words function in different contexts and how meaning is shaped not just by language structure but also by external reality. Lexical semantics also explores various semantic relationships such as synonymy, where words have similar meanings (*big* and *large*) and antonymy, where meanings are opposite (*hot* and *cold*). More complex relations like hyponymy (e.g., *rose* is a type of *flower*) and **meronymy** (e.g., *wheel* is part of a *car*) are also central to lexical organisation (Palmer, 1981: 89).

In addition to these relationships, researchers have developed models like componential analysis, which breaks down meanings into smaller semantic features. For example, the word *bachelor* might be analysed as [+male], [+adult], and [-married] (Lyons, 1977: 326). This method allows for a systematic comparison of word meanings based on shared or distinct features. The prototype theory, as introduced by Rosch (1975: 193), further expands our understanding of word meaning. It suggests that categories are not defined by rigid boundaries but by central, prototypical examples. For instance, a *robin* is considered a more typical bird than a *penguin*, even though both fall under the category *bird*. This theory has significantly influenced how linguists view categorisation and meaning. Furthermore, lexical semantics considers semantic change the way meanings of words evolve over time. Words like *gay*, which originally meant "happy" or "joyful," have taken on new, socially significant meanings due to cultural shifts (Cruse, 2000: 34).

Ultimately, lexical semantics plays a vital role in language understanding, language teaching, lexicography and fields like artificial intelligence and natural language processing. It allows us to unpack the intricate web of meaning woven into words and provides tools for analysing how those meanings are organised and interpreted in real communication.

2.1.5. The Concept of Facebook Status Updates

Facebook status updates refer to brief posts made by users on their profiles to share personal thoughts, activities, or emotions with their network of friends. These posts serve as a central feature of Facebook's communication system, enabling users to present various facets of their lives in real-



time. Over the years, Facebook status updates have transformed from simple text-based messages to incorporating multimedia elements such as images, videos, GIFs and external links (Miller, 2011). This evolution makes them a dynamic form of self-expression and communication, adapting to the changing needs of digital users. Facebook status updates represent a multi-dimensional medium for personal and social interaction, allowing for spontaneous responses, social bonding and identity creation in the digital realm (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

According to Rosen, Carrier & Cheever (2013), Facebook status updates primarily serve as tools for self-presentation, where users can curate their online persona by selectively sharing content that aligns with how they wish to be perceived. This dynamic form of self-expression allows individuals to communicate aspects of their lives, moods, or opinions to their social networks, maintaining a balance between personal narrative and social interaction. As Boyd (2014) argues, users create and update their status to perform different identities in different contexts, shifting from one person to another depending on the audience. The Facebook status update thus becomes a performative act of constructing, maintaining and negotiating one's online identity. This self-presentation through status updates reflects an ongoing effort to control how others perceive the individual, particularly in terms of social influence and online reputation.

In terms of social interaction, Facebook status updates facilitate the development of virtual communities. According to Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007), these updates help maintain and strengthen connections among individuals, who share common interests and experiences. They create a

platform for users to interact and bond over shared experiences or comments, forming networks based on both personal relationships and common ideas. Suler (2004) notes that computer-mediated communication (CMC), including status updates, promotes the formation of online communities, where social capital is built through engagement with others' posts. In this way, status updates allow users to participate in virtual discussions, express opinions and receive feedback in the form of comments, likes and shares. This feedback loop is integral to the maintenance of social ties and the accumulation of social capital in digital environments (Baym, 2010).

The language used in Facebook status updates is typically informal and conversational, which distinguishes it from other forms of communication such as academic or professional writing. Derks, Fischer & Bos (2008) emphasise that the casual nature of language in CMC platforms like Facebook results in the use of more spontaneous and informal communication styles. Words and phrases are often shortened or abbreviated, with slang terms and internet acronyms such as "LOL" (laughing out loud) and "OMG" (oh my God) commonly used to convey emotions in a concise manner (Cheshire, 2013). Additionally, emojis and emoticons play a significant role in adding emotional nuance and tone to these updates, providing a layer of meaning that is difficult to capture with words alone (Derks *et al.*, 2008). These semiotic elements reflect the linguistic economy of online communication, where brevity and emotional expressions are prioritised (Herring, 2012).

Finally, Facebook status updates also reflect the fluidity and adaptability of digital language. As Miller (2011) explains, the language used on Facebook is not fixed but



evolves in response to new cultural and social trends. This dynamic aspect of digital discourse is reflected in the frequent emergence of new words, phrases and linguistic patterns within status updates. Herring (2012) notes that social media platforms are particularly conducive to linguistic innovation, with users experimenting with language to suit the informal and rapidly changing nature of online interaction. As such, Facebook status updates represent an ongoing negotiation of language norms within a constantly shifting digital landscape, allowing for the adaptation of lexical choices and discourse strategies to suit the ever-evolving nature of online communication.

2.3.Theoretical Framework

This research work adopts the Structural Semantics Theory as its theoretical framework. The Structural Semantics Theory advanced by Ferdinand de Saussure and later developed by scholars like Lyons (1977), postulates that meaning is determined by the relationships between words within a system of language. It helps to analyse how lexical items derive their meaning through contrast, opposition and association. Examples could be seen in the word 'younger' vs 'elder'. These terms obtained their meaning from contrast, not by age in years, but by relational structure within a family. One of the primary features of lexical semantics is the study of sense relations (of words) within a sentence or utterance. These relations describe how words can be related to one another in terms of meaning. There are several types of sense relations. However, this study intends to examine the corpus using Polysemy and Hyponymy.

i. Polysemy

Polysemy is a single word that has multiple meanings, depending on the context. In

other words, polysemy as a sense relation refers to a situation, where a single word can be interpreted in different ways. This is so because a single word may have different meaning depending on its usage. (Palmer, 1981). An example here is, 'If you are not sharp, Nigerian economy will humble you'. *Sharp* in this sentence also means being smart. This is different from its literal meaning, which refers to something having a thin edge that can cut or pierce through an object. According to Palmer, one cannot clearly determine exactly how many meaning a word has. The issue here is that if a word has several meanings, it is not always clear whether is an example of polysemy (a word with multiple related meanings) or homonymy (involves several words with the same form but unrelated meaning). Thus, it is clear that polysemy deals with words that have related meaning. In addition, the word "charge," for example, can mean to power a device (I want to charge my phone) or to demand a fee (The tailor charged ₦5,000 for the agbada), (Bamiro, 1994). In the CMC environment especially on platforms like Facebook, polysemic words are frequently used to convey layered messages. For instance, a student may post "We move," a common Nigerian slang phrase that, depending on context, can mean perseverance, excitement about progress, or simply transitioning to the next phase. Another example is in the word '*bank*' which can refer to either a financial institution or the edge of a river, or an assurance of certainty, when used as a verb, depending on the context of usage. This duality is explained by the phenomenon of **polysemy**, where a single word has multiple related meanings (Murphy, 2010: 38).

Polysemy becomes a powerful tool as it allows a single status to resonate with multiple audiences simultaneously, who



might each interpret it slightly differently based on shared cultural and social knowledge. This ambiguity, far from being a flaw, is often deliberately employed to create in-group solidarity or to express complex emotions succinctly. These relationships help explain how words can be connected in ways that go beyond their individual meanings and can change depending on context (Saeed, 2016).

ii. Hyponymy

This relationship describes how a more specific term (hyponym) is included under a broader category (hypernym). For instance, "Rice" is a hyponym of "Food". In Facebook statuses, students may choose specific hyponyms to express precise identity affiliations, emotional states, or institutional loyalties. For instance, a student might write, "Proud cadet of NAUB!" Here, the term "cadet" situates the student within a particular sub-category of the university community, emphasising not just membership but a certain pride and aspirational status. Semantic analysis must recognise such hyponymic structures to fully understand how students position themselves socially and emotionally through their language (Murphy, 2003).

Lyons (1977) describes hyponymy as a relationship, where the meaning of one word is included in the meaning of another. In students' CMC, broader categories such as "assessment" could include hyponyms like "quiz," "midterm," "project defense," and "oral presentation." Recognising these semantic hierarchies is essential for understanding how students structure and communicate their academic experiences. Moreover, as Murphy (2003) argues, hyponymy is crucial for the organisation of semantic fields, which are collections of related words within a particular domain. For instance, semantic fields related to

academia, military culture and social life often emerge. For instance, the hypernym "training" might encompass hyponyms like "drill," "exercise," "parade" and "fieldwork." These lexical choices reflect both the military environment of the university and the academic orientation of the students.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the semantic features in Facebook status updates of students at Federal University, Lafia. A descriptive approach is appropriate for analysing natural language use in its social context because it allows for an in-depth examination of how meaning is constructed, conveyed and interpreted within authentic communicative settings. This approach facilitates the exploration of linguistic phenomena as they occur in real-life interactions, making it particularly suitable for studying the informal and often innovative language used in digital platforms like Facebook. In the context of this study, it enables the researcher to uncover patterns, recurring expressions and contextual cues that characterise the semantic features of students' Computer Mediated Communication.

The study, therefore, examines how meanings are constructed and conveyed using various linguistic features such as figurative expressions, abbreviations, slang and neologisms. This design supports the investigation of language as a tool for social interaction on digital platforms. It also enables a contextual understanding of the evolving nature of computer-mediated communication and how students creatively adapt language in a virtual space like Facebook.

The population of this study comprises undergraduate students of Federal University, Lafia who actively use Facebook



to post status updates. These students form a linguistically diverse and digitally engaged group, making them ideal participants for examining semantic features of computer-mediated language. The population is not limited to any particular faculty or department, as social media usage cuts across all academic disciplines and levels within the university. The corpus for this study consists of 10 Facebook status updates posted by undergraduate students of the Federal University. The selected posts focus on a range of linguistic features, such as figurative language, abbreviations, slang and neologisms. The posts were extracted from publicly accessible profiles or those for which the students have granted permission to use their data. The corpus serves as the primary source of data for the semantic analysis of Facebook Status Updates within the context of university students' online interactions.

This study employed purposive sampling to select Facebook status updates from undergraduate students of Federal University, which allows the researchers to focus on specific individuals, who meet the criteria of active Facebook users and regularly post status updates. The sample included students from various academic departments, which captured a diverse range of language use across the University. A total of 10 Facebook status updates were selected and analysed.

4.0 Data Analysis

This section present the data analysis, interpretation of findings and discussion of results derived from the Facebook status updates of students of the NAUB. The analysis focuses specifically on polysemy and hyponymy, as derived from the Structural Semantics framework, which explains how meaning is determined by relationships among words within the

linguistic system. The aim was to examine how students use linguistic creativity, context and shared cultural knowledge to construct meaning in online communication. Each status update was analyzed to reveal how users employ words with multiple meanings (polysemy) and hierarchical relations (hyponymy) to encode humor, emotion, identity and institutional/sociocultural belonging. These examples reveal rich semantic play, with meanings that shift based on cultural, institutional and social context.

4.1 Analysis of Polysemy in Students' Facebook Status Updates

i. Status 1: "God will settle everyone struggling in silence."

The literal meaning for the word settle in the above status involves resolving or fixing a problem. However, that is not what it means in the status. 'Settle' as used in the status above has a contextual meaning, which connotes rewarding or paying someone. It is polysemic in the sense that it conveys different meanings; to bless, to reward or resolve. This multiplicity in meaning makes the status open to varied interpretations allowing different readers to personalise it. "Settle" has an extended meaning in this context. Traditionally, it means to resolve, but it extends to mean divine compensation or reward. The shift of meaning shows how the contextual usage of words reshapes their meaning.

ii. Status 2: "We move."

The literal meaning of the word "move" could mean going or progressing from one place to another. However in social media contexts, especially among students, it has gone beyond its literal interpretation to express resilience and determination. The expression "we move" is polysemous and it carries a connotative meaning, which signals a shared attitude of resilience, a collective



determination to keep going regardless of circumstances. The word 'move', therefore, has expanded beyond its literal meaning, which involves physical relocation. Instead, it signifies perseverance and determination..

iii. Status 3: "That guy has hands, the way he plays the piano is pure talent."

The word "hands" in this context means skill or competence, which differs from its literal meaning as body part. The expression above uses words figuratively (synecdoche). Literally, everyone has hands, but in this context, it means great skill, talent or an exceptional ability. The statement praises the person's musical skill. The word 'hands', thus carries a polysemous meaning, shifting from its literal sense that involves a physical possession of hands to a figurative one implying ability and competence.

iv. Status 4: "FULafia go whine you but no panic."

The word "whine" though not a standard word means to tease, joke or to complain in an unpleasant way, but in the above expression, it means to frustrate someone. The phrase explains the struggles students undergo in trying to meet up with the academic standard of the institution. So, 'whine' is used here figuratively to give the University a human attribute, which is capable of frustrating students, who are not serious with their studies. It is safe to say that the entire expression in better terms means that **FULafia** will frustrate you but do not give up, just be persistent. The words 'whine' and "no panic" exemplify the polysemous nature of words, which can mean a different thing depending on usage. The word 'whine, though does not have a standard dictionary meaning, created another interpretation that is contextualised by the students of **FULafia**.

v. Status 5: "Workhard because a poor man's greeting is mistaken for begging."

Literally, the statement is advising one who is poor to work very hard because most times, when such person greets, people might think the person is asking for help, mistaking politeness for begging, showing how poverty affects and how people's actions are perceived. Beyond its literal sense, the expression extends to mean that poverty devalues a person. Semantically, the word 'greeting' carries multiple layers of meaning making it polysemous. The word as used here is not limited to the simple act of saying 'hello'; it extends to mean any form of approach, communication or human interaction.

4.2 Analysis of Hyponymy in Students' Facebook Status Updates

vi. Status 6: "In my Department we are fighting for clean results, nothing concern us with First Class or Second Class Upper."

In this expression, several words and phrases demonstrate the relationship between general and specific academic concepts. The word result is the central hypernym in the sentence. It is a broad term referring to the outcome of students' academic performance. Under this general category, we have several hyponyms such as "First class", "Second class upper" and "clean results" as its hyponyms referring to specific types of results within that category. The speaker contrasts clean results, which signifies passing all courses without failure with higher classifications like First Class or Second Class Upper. Through this hyponymic structure, the statement reveals that within the broader field of academic achievement, students in the speaker's department prioritise survival and completion, which is denoted by the expression 'clean result' over excellence and ranking using language creatively to express shared academic struggle.



vii. Status 7: “4.0 CGPA with a carry over or 3.0 without carry over (?). Choose wisely.”

The above status update displays hyponymy through the relationship between academic performance categories and specific outcomes within the broader field. The general term “CGPA” functions as the hypernym, representing the overall measure of a student’s academic achievement, while 4.0 CGPA and 3.0 CGPA serve as subcategories of hyponyms, denoting specific types or levels of performance. Similarly, “carry over” represents another subcategory under the hypernym academic record, referring to a specific instance of failure or a course to be repeated. The contrast between these hyponyms; a high CGPA with failure versus a moderate CGPA without failure shows how students classify academic success differently. This expression exemplifies students’ preferences.

viii. Status 8: “Proud cadet of **FULafia**!”

The status update above reflects hyponymy. The term “cadet” functions as a subcategory of hyponym under the broader category ‘student’ representing a specific type of student, one undergoing military or paramilitary training. Likewise, “**FULafia** cadet” is an even more specific hyponym under the general term cadet. This hierarchical relationship from ‘student’, which is a broader category to ‘cadet’ a narrower one and then to **FULafia** cadet, most specific. The status expresses not only personal identity but also institutional pride, as the speaker situates himself within a precise subgroup of learners. It explains a form of belonging and pride being a **FULafia** cadet.

ix. Status 9: “I don’t mind taking mangoes and oranges everyday, they’re my favorite fruits.”

The status update above can be analysed in terms of hyponymy through the relationship between general categories and specific items. The term “fruits” serves as the hypernym, representing the broad category of edible plants. Within this category, mangoes and oranges are hyponyms, as they are specific types of fruits. By specifying these hyponyms, the speaker conveys personal preference, highlighting particular examples within the broader category. The semantic implication is that while the general category is enjoyable, the specific ones; mangoes and oranges hold greater significance for the speaker. This show how a general concept can be narrowed down to convey individual taste or choice.

x. Status 10: “In my secondary school, mathematics, biology and chemistry were my best subjects.”

The status above reflects the concept of hyponymy as well as the speaker’s personal preference. In the status, the general term ‘subjects’ functions as the hypernym, representing the broad category of school subjects. The specific names ‘Mathematics’, ‘Biology’ and ‘Chemistry’ are subcategories of hyponyms, since they refer to distinct types of subjects that fall under that general category thereby, selecting and listing these particular subjects, the speaker is indirectly communicating his academic interests. The update carries a tune of reflection suggesting that these subjects held special importance during the speaker’s secondary school years. Therefore, the status does not only exemplify hyponymy in the relationship between general and specific terms but also expresses the speaker’s favorites.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussions, the study concludes that computer-mediated language among **FULafia** students is a semantically dynamic and socially



meaningful system of communication. Through the use of polysemy and hyponymy, students construct layered meanings that reflect their life experiences, academic realities and sociocultural worldviews. The analysis affirms the validity of Structural Semantics in explaining how meaning arises through relationships between words and their contextual associations. The study demonstrates that Facebook discourse, though informal, operates on systematic semantic principles that are equivalent to those in traditional spoken and written communication. The use of polysemous expressions such as “settle,” “move” and “whine” reveals how digital users exploit multiple meaning potentials for creative communication, emotional expression and social bonding. Similarly, hyponymic structures such as “First Class” under “Result” or “Cadet” under “Student,” reveals how users classify and represent their identity within specific semantic hierarchies. In essence, this study concludes that social media platforms such as Facebook are not linguistically deficient spaces but evolving domains of linguistic innovation, where users recontextualise meaning through social and technological affordances. The Facebook discourse of **FULafia** students therefore contributes to the broader understanding of digital semantics, sociolinguistics adaptation and identity expression in modern communication.

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