

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL FRONTIER: ENGLISH STUDIES, CYBERCULTURE, AND PEDAGOGY IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the influence of cyberspace on English studies. Specifically, it aims at investigating how technology interacts with issues of English as a language, English literature/ literary studies and the teaching and learning of English. It critically examines the transformations caused by cyberspace on the concerns of English studies. This paper argues that the digital space is both the primary site of real-time language change and the richest resource for studying it. Drawing from work done on contemporary English studies, the paper notes that cyberspace is no longer just a novel object of enquiry but the primary site where English language and literature is evolving. The impact of cyberculture on English literature and literary studies has theoretical and practical implications because of new areas of enquiry in literary studies which include electronic literature, born-digital texts, hypertext and interactive fiction. Due to the fluid nature of cyberculture, there is need to find newer theories for textual analysis. All these point to the need for new research paradigms, because for English studies to develop, academics and pedagogues must intelligently utilise new technologies. This in turn means that higher institutions have to develop new courses that would cater for the digital realities that inform the mindset of a large number of contemporary students.

Introduction

English language is a prestigious language in Nigeria. Termed a global language, English is gaining more speakers every day. With an estimated

1.5 billion of speakers around the world (Ethnologue 2025), English enjoys a high status among people world over. English language and its study is seen as 'a good pursuit'. Learning English and teaching it is a thing of pride, especially among people who live in a multilingual society, such as Nigeria. Nigeria has over 141 million Internet users as of April 2025 according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (Nigerian Communications Commission Report 2025). This high number signals that the digital revolution is not a future speculation but a present-day classroom reality. That being said, several questions arise with regard to English in Nigeria in today's modern world. Why do we study English language and literature? How do advances in technology affect English studies today for us as teachers and students in the field? What challenges and benefits arise with the use of high technology in the field of English studies? How has the mass migration into cyberspace affected English Studies? Are we teaching a static, colonial-standard English, or are we preparing students to navigate, critique, and shape the dynamic, hybrid Englishes of the digital Nigerian sphere? As academics, we are at the crossroads in English studies, because the overarching influence of cyberculture and artificial intelligence is not only changing the way we teach language and literature. Rather, it is basically challenging what we teach students, the purpose of teaching them and which variety of English we teach which in turn sustains its status. This paper aims at exploring these questions and threshing out accompanying issues.

This paper argues that for English Studies in Nigeria to remain relevant, it must transform from being a passive transmitter of a monolithic standard to becoming an active, critical laboratory for investigating the very digital forces reshaping communication, identity, and creativity in our society. To do this, this paper examines the transformative pressures on language and the contradictions of pedagogy in a digitally divided context. This paper also presents the

urgent need for a curriculum that bridges the gap between canonical texts and the born-digital narratives defining a generation. Before delving into these issues, let us start by looking at the key terms of this paper, namely English studies, cyberspace and cyberculture.

English studies: What do we study in English studies?

Broadly speaking, there are three broad areas of interests in English studies. An English studies programme typically explores aspects of language, English literature and language skills such as writing and reading skills. Indeed, the scope of study is expanding to include aspects that 'traditionally' were not part of English studies, as we shall see later. It embraces language, (English) culture(s)¹, and literary output. It investigates linguistic phenomenon, that is, language as a linguistic phenomenon: this comprises the sound system of the English language, its syntactic structure, its semantic component. We study how the language is acquired or learnt. We study its vocabulary, how words are formed and how they are evolving indifferent contexts (for instance, social media and change). In doing English language studies, we examine its use in diverse contexts, for example social, religious, economic and political contexts. This vast field of study studies 'everything' human because language is central in human life.

The use of language stretches into the exploration of human creativity. English studies in many universities also include critical analysis of literary texts. Life is enriched by the presence of literary texts: millions of books and other published materials are evidence of the rich presence of imaginative texts. Poems, play texts, novels, short stories, novellas, by authors from within and without the African continent give us windows into the cultures, experiences, beliefs, fears, expectations and absurdity of human life. Worth noting is that texts translated from other languages such as French, Spanish, Russian or other languages into the English language are also studied in many universities offering the English Studies programme. Literary works which are open to different interpretations are sources of intellectual enquiry. As vast as

this field is, we are further enlightened by the outpour of prose now termed non-fiction prose. These comprise autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, narrative travelogues and diaries. They are supposedly 'factual' and historical, being rooted within a particular time and place. From an academic angle, studying literature is an intellectual endeavour that challenges passive thinking. It encourages critical thinking, thus developing the intellectual parts of the enquiring mind. English studies also comprises the teaching and learning of skills such as writing, speaking, listening and reading skills. Learning such skills are expected from students of English studies, and they improve their competence in the practical aspects of using the English language. Indeed, these skills are invaluable to contemporary academics that constantly tackle the fast paced intellectual endeavours in their lives. Generally, English studies seeks to make students develop strong analytical and communicative skills, as well as critical thinking.

Cyberculture and cyberspace: Definitions and Background

At the centre of the lives of modern people is technology. Advancements in technology are varied and have far reaching consequences. With these advancements come multitude of terms to refer to them. Terms such as *high technology*, *the Internet*, *digital world*, *smart technology*, *cyberspace*, *cyberworld* and *cyberculture* are relatively recent additions to the English vocabulary, and form part of the focus of this conference. This section offers some definitions of cyberspace and cyberculture, before proceeding to give insight into how they interact with English studies. Bennis defines cyberspace as, a vast open and malleable space that gives momentum to human communications and velocity to the multi layered process of transmission. Cyberspace, as an electronic and digital space, is widely used to create, share and transmit information... the fluid and constantly streaming aspect of cyberspace

allows the free flow of ideas, texts, artefacts, knowledge, narratives, arts, cultural heritage and identities... (2024:36).

In this definition, the words ‘electronic’ and ‘digital’ indicate that cyberspace has to do with another dimension other than the physical one that human beings were used to several decades ago. At the centre of this definition is *communication* and *information sharing* which highlights the main functions that cyberspace perform in the lives of people. Within this digital space, a set of social and linguistic behaviours developed and with frequent use of the Internet, these behaviours began to follow a certain pattern distinct from other behavioural patterns which were influenced by the technology itself. This gave rise to the notion of cyberculture. Vincente and Amaral define cyberculture as, an umbrella term for the emergent and evolving forms of engagement with the Internet, the World Wide Web and the vast array of virtual environments and digital networks, devices, interfaces and formats, and software known as cyberspace. The concept of cyber culture defines all the social-communicational space that is created through computer-mediated communications (Vincente and Amaral 2020: 430).

Another definition is given by Wees (2009) who states that cyber culture is the set of social expectations, etiquette, history and language used by a collection of people active on the World Wide Web. Similarly, Lévy (2001 cited in Bennis 2024:36) defines cyberculture as “a set of material and technical techniques: practices, attitudes, modes of thinking and values that have developed alongside the growth of cyberspace. Understood as a synonym of network, cyberculture offers a new medium of communication”. These definitions indicate that cyberspace utilises audio-visual, textual and graphical materials for computer-mediated communications. The definitions presuppose there are a body of users of cyberspace who communicate with each other and who eventually form a distinct set of practices that they use to engage with one another and the digital space as well. In other words,

due to the high frequency of use, various norms of interaction have developed and are now recognised as cyberculture.

For Paudyal (2023: 93), the wave of new media and technology has helped in shaping and developing a global culture leading to a new global identity. He further explains that the concept of cyberculture arose from thriving technologies through the development of virtual communities with multifarious and complex spaces. Various social network sites provide different opportunities for people like blogging, gaming, entertainment, political mobilization, hacking, new forums and radical subcultures. They are known by different names due to their various natures of actions (Paudyal 2023: 93).

This is why Nayar (2010 cited in Paudyal 2023: 93) discusses cyberculture using names such as *new media*, *digital media*, *network culture*, *Internet*, *digital art and culture*, *information society*, and *contemporary media* which perform several functions that offer an integrated form of communication.

Encyclopedia.com states that cyberculture refers to “cultural products and practices born of computer and Internet technologies, but also to specific subcultures that champion computer related hobbies, art and language”. Tracing the development of the Internet, changes were observed when one compares the early and later presence of the Internet in people’s lives (Encyclopedia.com). In the 1970s, cyberculture was restricted to very few technological experts (mathematicians, digital enthusiast, and academics) who were concerned with developing and exchanging ideas in the burgeoning fields of computers and electronics. This changed in the mid-1990s when the Internet and World Wide Web were commercialised. From then on cyberculture transformed drastically, and “computer and information technologies took the dynamics of culture and social relations in dramatically new directions” (Encyclopedia.com). Several scholars such as Minguez and Hernán (2009)

have noted that these new information technologies have led to the transformation of social structures, and how people relate to each other. The development of cyberspace and cyberculture and cyber studies has attracted much academic interest in different stages of its development (see Baker 2000). These interests form the distinct field of cyber studies. This field is interdisciplinary and cuts across aspects such as economy, sociology, psychology, and linguistics and literary studies. Of concern to us here in English studies is that from the mid-1990s, cyber culture provided for us, a plethora of research data. Baker (2000) points out that linguists such as Danet *et al* (1997) and Hering 1996a, 1996b, 1996c) at that time began to study the writing styles, Netiquettes, and (inter)textual codes used within online environments. In the same vein, Baker further notes the further development of textual analysis and feminist theory by researchers in feminist and women's studies (Cherny and Weise 1996; Consalvo 1997; Dietrich 1997; Ebben and Kramarae 1993; Hall 1996) which locate, construct and deconstruct gender within cyberspace.

English studies and the cyber era

English studies like other areas of life has been influenced by advancements in technology. This influence cuts across several aspects of the studies. In the upcoming sections, the paper explores areas of English studies that have transformed with technological advancements. I begin with the study of the English language. The technological era has ushered in an unprecedented volume of writing. Technology and the digitalisation of information means that we have at our finger tips access to a huge number of data. Indeed, there are now hundreds of databases which we can use to study the phenomenon of language. These databases form corpuses of English usages, thus the evolution and development of corpus linguistics. To make things even better for researchers, there are databases that contain usages of English based on geographical regions. Thus, we have corpus on Nigerian English, British English and others as well. Having corpuses mean that

linguists will make more informed descriptions and accounts of language. Linguists will also understand better how language as a system works in actual day to day activities of human beings. Issues of collocation, semantic scope and prosody and grammatical affinity of words are now studied competently. Digitalisation of information also means that now we have digital dictionaries (specialised and general) and thesauruses.

In addition, there are digital resources that seek to show the relations between words in the English language. For example, WordNet, a digital resource developed by psychologists George Miller and Christiane Kellbaum (1998), who set up a database of English words. Thus the data offer a large number of words and the meaning relations that they have such as synonymy, hyponymy, and troponymy. A linguist could use this for different kinds of linguistic investigation. With further developments in technology, new methods of analysis are developing: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now being integrated in analysis, and digital archives are used to study large corpora, and in doing so finding patterns and regularities in language use.

Another issue highlighted by the study of cyberculture is that of identity. *Identity* is a concept studied in areas of English studies such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, critical linguistics, psychoanalysis and post-colonial studies. With regard to emerging interest in identity and cyberculture, Paudyal (2023: 93), for instance, notes that the exchange of information of various social media helps in reflecting diverse cultures and promotes opportunities for multicultural integration. For Haqqo and Attas (2022 cited in Paudyal 2023) with the use of new media, hitherto behavioural practices were replaced, thus creating a cultural shift by building online communities. Advances in technology and new media are making people to “move to a broader multicultural world in which they can utilise various platforms and share the valuable world culture. By constructing a global culture,

cyberculture has enabled people in the process of cultural assimilation” (Paudyal 2023: 93). From this, one understands that hitherto ‘physical’ communities are not only the groups of interest in English studies. Now ‘virtual’ communities are formed and are evolving, hence transforming the nature of groups that fall under academic scrutiny.

From the above arguments, one understands that cyberspace has created a multicultural ‘global’ culture. However, this dominant culture appears to be shaped by western cultures. The English language as one of the languages with a high number of speakers and users appears to be at the forefront in this process of globalisation via high technology. For Banhakeia and El Kouy (2018: 16) globalization’s role is that of deleting and inserting a new perspective to all societies, ... it alters language to the extent that everything is universal. The world of universalities transforms people into a new machine of one single function to only act from one simple shot or side, in that, language communication and culture have been extremely governed in this current existing simple magic formula of globalization.

Thus, Joseph and Devi (2025) point out, the dominance of the Internet as a primary source of information and entertainment, has solidified the position of English as a global lingua franca, or to use Banhakeia and El Kouy’s (2018: 17) words, the English language is “the dominant enterprise of Global Information Infrastructure”. It is now common for content creators from non-English-speaking countries to produce and read content in English, which is influenced by local languages use. Indeed, the cyberspace has helped in the spreading of the English language, with increased hybridization with local languages and the transformation of regional Englishes. This leads to issues of language purity, standardization, and linguistic identity. At the same time, Joseph and Devi observe that this hybridisation also offers opportunities for linguistic creativity and inclusivity. Indeed, the English language is now continually being shaped by cyberspace. As Kayabaş (2021) points out, technological development in information and communication contributes in shaping economic, political and

cultural fields. Cyberculture for Kayabaş (2021) thus develops out of the use that people engage with the Internet for various reasons such as entertainment, learning and communication.

The Living Laboratory: Cyberculture as engine and archive of linguistic transformation

This section explores the digital space as both the primary site of real-time language change and the richest resource for studying it. With the development in technology and advancements in its use for communication, the digital space is shaped by its users, as it also shapes its users. Social media platforms such as Instagram, X (formerly twitter), Facebook and WhatsApp provide a rich source for linguistic explorations into the nature of language: issues of linguistic change, linguistic accommodation, morphological changes; syntactic structure, semantic narrowing and extension, multimodal media and discourse marking have generated interest among students and teachers of English studies. Indeed, cyber culture has turned the focus of researchers from traditional areas of interest (print newspapers and magazines, billboards, and radio for instance) to these newer forms of communication. With this academic focus, more is now known about the dynamic nature of language, and how various high technology media are leading to changes in language. Social media has even further shown how language itself is used with support of other modes such as emoticons, smileys, picture clips, memes, digital narratives, short videos and sounds to create different unique meanings. In addition, the digital era has given birth to a hybrid style called “netspeak” (Joseph and Devi 2025). Netspeak is characterised by combination of “elements of traditional grammar with novel conventions such as acronyms (LOL, BTW, BRB), non-standard spellings (gonna, wanna), and visual symbols”. Joseph and Devi (2025) are quick to note that these adaptations are not mere linguistic distortions but reflect evolving

norms of expression that prioritize brevity, immediacy, and creativity. Thus, the digital landscape has become, to use the words of Joseph and Devi, “a living laboratory for observing language change in real-time” (2025: 64).

Furthermore, Joseph and Devi (2025) argue that one of the prominent features of the digital age is the democratization of language change. They explain that historically, language was shaped by a select few such as academics, publishers and elites. With the advent of the Internet, users across social strata are now contributing to language development and change. They note, “[h]ashtags, viral memes, and digital trends often start in marginalized or subcultural groups and gain mainstream recognition, thereby enriching English with diverse perspectives and expression” (Joseph and Devi 2025: 70). Furthermore, English is transforming as changes in the activities of computer users are also transformed by the digital era. As Joseph and Devi point out, “[g]lobalization and widespread Internet access have led to the hybridization of English with other languages, contributing to a more inclusive and globally representative linguistic landscape. English today incorporates loanwords, idioms, and structures from a variety of cultures, making it a truly global lingua franca with regional digital flavours” (Joseph and Devi 2025: 70). Related to this is another research which shows the strong influence of cyberculture on shifts in language use among students (Zitha et al 2025). Zitha et al (2025) more specifically state that cyberculture has contributed to fostering verbification (transformation of nouns into verbs) in formal discourse, which is now a modern characteristic of formal communication. Consequently, English language has become enriched because of new words and expressions formed due to advanced technology.

Drawing from Nigerian Pidgin English, expressions such as "sef," "abi," and "gisting" have found a place in largely English-speaking online forums or social media making Nigerian Pidgin English to gain users outside of Nigeria. Cyberspace has led to a plethora of changes in the use of language, pronunciation, spelling and syntax which are in

turn influenced by regional features. This means the development of new terminologies used by academics to discuss technology related linguistic variation. Ogunyale (2025), for instance, investigates chatspeak in the Nigerian context, by first distinguishing between textspeak and chatspeak. Textspeak is the abbreviated language and slangs used in Short Messaging Service, popularly called text messages, while chatspeak refers to online interactions via social media. Chatspeak combines both elements of spoken and written language, such as words, phrases, emoticons/smiley, prosody, pictograms and short video clips. For Ogunyale, some features of Nigerian chatspeak include the omission of word final *-t*, for example, *what* is written as *wah*, *get* as *geh* and *but* as *buh*; omission of word final letter *-r*, for example, *whether* is written as *weda*; *speaker* as *speaka*; and *never* as *neva*; the omission of *-r* in various positions in the word, for example, *alright* is written as *aiit*; *sorry* as *sowie* and *friend* as *fwend*. Even a pidgin English word originally borrowed from Yoruba is used as an example – *jare* is written as *jawe*. In addition, Ogunyale (2025) points out that there are also accent stylised spellings. Here, words are spelled based on the stereotypical accent of the speakers involved, as such for Hausa speakers, spellings used include *haff* for *have* and *fee dee fee* for *PDP*. For Igbo speakers, *oil* is spelt *awyel*; for Yoruba speakers, *child* is spelt as *shild*. These usages are often used either humorously or to show prejudice against a group's way of pronunciation. Another feature is the substitution of *-th* with *-d* or *-t*, for example, *with* is spelt *wit*, *thing* as *tin*, *thanks* as *tnks* and *that* as *dat* (Ogunyale 2025). These usages have become widespread on the net. Indeed, Mair (2025) acknowledges that Nigerian Pidgin (*Naija*) now has an “impressive presence” on the Internet. He argues that *Naija* developed as a result of three factors namely, colonial history, diasporic presence and digital evolution. The sociolinguistic background of Nigerians facilitated the creativity manifested in the online use of *Naija*. More importantly, the high

stigma attached to the use of pidgin in certain areas of life is not present in its online use. Consequently, the digital space is argued to further spread the use of Pidgin English (Egbokhare 2021 cited in Mair 2025). The vibrant Naija is commonly used in a prominent Internet forum called www.nairaland.com, which talks about various issues. Established since 2004, “it brings together a wide range of Nigeria-centred but often globally dispersed communities of practice” (Mair 2025: 16). Furthermore, at present there are now online advertisements of international ventures such as Temu that are done in Nigerian pidgin.

From the discussion above, this paper argues that aspects of cyberculture have given the English language student and teacher a rich vein of linguistic research and other academic enquiry. In recent years, my undergraduate and post graduate students have worked on projects and theses that draw on the cyberspace as sources of data. These students have studied diverse aspects related to the cyberspace, which include the thematic structure of scam e-mails, expressions of emotions on Twitter posts, morphological structures of COVID-19 related words on the Internet, linguistic change in Nigerian English based on a digital corpus on Nigerian English and online discourse of cyber currency. Presently, I am supervising a work on the use of non-basic colour terms in online blogs on wedding reportage; another on linguistic change spread by a popular Nigerian social media influencer; and another on semantic changes in English-language-based beauty and lifestyle vocabulary. The list of potential aspects of study on cyber-space related issues are numerous. Language is made more vibrant by today’s high technology and the potential research areas are there waiting for researchers to explore them. Indeed, Joseph and Devi (2025) in their exploration of the evolution of the English language in the digital era, note that the digital era has led to changes in linguistic and communication practices. For these scholars, the Internet, social media, and instant messaging platforms, has transformed English as the language has undergone lexical, syntactic, and semantic shifts. As noted

in the previous sections, several new words have emerged, word meanings have changed their semantic scope, and abbreviations, emojis, and Internet slang are becoming frequent in everyday discourse.

Critical digital pedagogy: Using AI without being used by it

This section examines the use of Artificial Intelligence in English studies, especially in learning and teaching aspects. As mentioned earlier, modern technology can now be used in language teaching and learning. In other words, technology has provided newer, faster and more effective teaching and learning materials. Teaching and learning materials include multimedia devices, language laboratories, interactive boards, mobile phones and tablets, and online learning platforms. As mentioned earlier, these include learning applications such as online dictionaries and thesauruses. Digital technology, including Artificial Intelligence, has transformed aspects of English studies by making the teaching and learning of English language and literature more effective, vibrant, engaging and accessible. Integrating digital tools into the English studies programme is believed to improve learner outcomes and foster collaboration. With the growing users of the Internet, language users can engage with scholars, students and teachers via virtual communication. Feng (2005), for instance, asserts that virtual reality has great potential in the teaching of English culture and situations because it makes students enthusiastic to learn English and enhances their learning of the language. Other such studies include Lobanova *et al* (2024) that argued that virtual reality can be used as an additional tool for improved academic performance in English learning; Wang (2004), similarly, demonstrated the advantages of virtual reality in English language education; Lou (2025) studied the impact of virtual reality environments on English language acquisition; and Yu (2025) which focused on virtual reality enhanced teaching for

boosting classroom interactivity, language application proficiency and learner confidence.

In some Nigerian universities, English studies, learning and teaching can be done through virtual reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), online communities and language exchange platforms. Seminars that were traditionally done physically by groups of scholars are now held online, thus the coining of the term *Webinars*. Interactive workshops are now made possible via cyber tech and enhanced teaching and immediate responses/feedback are possible. During the unfortunate COVID 19 pandemic, people were forced to seek alternative means of communication, since face to face contact was restricted. This led to rapid advancements of virtual meetings such as Zoom meetings. Now, Zoom meetings are common among students and their teachers. Indeed, teaching and tutorials are done via zoom and other similar applications. Furthermore, the effects of cyberculture is far-reaching. As Paudyal (2023: 95) states, cyberculture links human activities with “network technologies in people, and these activities focus more on global trends and value digital literacy”. Thus, students now more than ever rely on digital materials because such sources are readily available. Marcinkowski (2014 cited in Paudyal 2023) similarly notes that using the Internet and social media such as Facebook and Twitter has given teachers and students a means of searching reading materials, and analysing both appropriate and inappropriate postings so as to supplement their texts.

Additionally, advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and the various applications that derive from it could be used to improve the broad field of English studies. Research on AI started formally at the 1956 Dartmouth workshop where McCarthy coined the term “artificial intelligence,” proposing that “every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it.” (McCarthy *et al* 1955 cited in Mele 2025: 12). This earliest conceptualisation of AI meant that intelligence was seen as *computable*.

Over time AI's development was propelled by increase in data growth, improved algorithms, and high-performance GPUs and this led to the use of AI as central to global innovation. As Mele (2025: 15-17) reports, developed systems such as such as DeepMind's AlphaGo, IBM's Watson, and large language models such as OpenAI's GPT and Google's BERT show AI's remarkable abilities in aspects such as language understanding, strategic gameplay and medical analysis. Such models include Anthropic Claude (Claude 1, Claude 2, Claude 3); Cohere Command R (Command R+, Command R++); Google DeepMind Gemini (Gemini 1.5, Gemini 1.5 Pro); LLMs, (such as the OpenAI's GPT series - GPT-3.5, GPT-4, GPT-4o, GPT-5); Meta LLaMA (LLaMA 2, LLaMA 3); and Mistral & Mixtral (Mistral 7B, Mixtral 8x7B). Using huge amounts of text corpora, these models were created and can now be used for several purposes. AI applications could be used by students to help them understand a novel or a creative piece of writing. Such applications can tell a person the gist of an entire text. Other functions these applications do is to summarise chapters, paragraphs of a text or even entire novels. For students, complex texts can be made more accessible by the applications through simplifying arguments and using easy-to-understand words to explain concepts. As Mele points out, AI models "generate clear language, summarize information, answer questions, and hold smooth, natural conversations" (Mele 2025:16). Thus, they appear to be good resources for scholars in English studies and pedagogy. Indeed, using AI to teach and learn facilitates personalized learning, smart tutoring, instant feedback, and translation, and this increased use of AI has led teachers and researchers to rethinking "what kinds of thinking and reading tasks should be handled by machines and which should stay human" (Mele 2025: slide 16). Mele lists some computer applications and systems used for reading and/or comprehension:

- i. **ChatGPT** - Reads and understands text, answers questions, summarizes, translates, explains and more
- ii. **Google Bard / Gemini** - Similar to ChatGPT—comprehends and responds to written queries
- iii. **Microsoft Copilot** - Integrated into Word, Excel, ...; can read and analyse documents, summarize content, answer questions ...
- iv. **Claude (Anthropic)** - AI assistant that can read long documents and comprehend meaning, structure and purpose.
- v. **IBM Watson NLP** - Used in business and healthcare to extract meaning, intent and sentiment from documents (Mele 2025: 17).

In contemporary times, android phones are commonly used by people, both students and teachers alike. Such phones now have the ChatGPT application, and the frequent advertisements on AI applications which pop up when one is on the Internet enumerates their many functions, making them an attractive resource to download for contemporary needs.

However, several concerns have been highlighted as to the adverse effects of high technology. Mele (2025: 28) in his presentation on AI and reading shows such studies as follows: According to GPT-based tool studies, 2024, when students use AI-generated summaries excessively, higher-ability readers show decline in comprehension. Similarly, shallow digital skimming can rewire reading habits, making deep reading more difficult over time, according to neuroscience research (Maryanne Wolf, *Reader, Come Home*, 2018 cited in Mele 2025). In addition to these, Mele (2025: 28) states that use of AI may discourage productive struggle in L2 and young learners that builds vocabulary and inferencing skills; AI could delay development of executive function and self-regulation in reading; unequal access to AI technologies also leads to the risk of widening existing achievement gaps – students in well-funded schools may benefit while others are left behind; and finally, the opaque nature of many AI systems makes it difficult for educators and students to understand how decisions or suggestions are generated. Indeed, Mele (2025: 28) notes that there is a

risk that AI models perpetuate existing linguistic and cultural biases embedded in their training data, which can marginalize diverse voices and experiences in reading content.

To tackle such concerns, the present paper notes that there is a need to re-educate students as they embark on scholarship in English studies. Students should be taught how to recognize features of AI-generated texts. They should be made to understand the style of AI writing (for example the overuse of "delve," "underscore," and "tapestry"); the use of bullets to list ideas and the use of certain punctuation marks. By implication then, teachers must become acquainted with the style of AI writing and understand how to tackle excessive imitation by students. In addition, teachers and lecturers should devise assignment questions that are *critical*. In other words, assignment questions should be worded such that they task the intelligence of a student. Assignments should be designed which would be hard to be substituted by AI. For instance, instead of a question like 'What are the themes of this poem?', teachers could ask "using this list of AI themes of the poem, identify three major omissions and argue why they are crucial for a Nigerian reader." In doing this, the AI is used to complement teaching, and awaken the critical minds of students.

In relation to making AI a viable tool for English studies, it is necessary to re-appropriate tasks so that AI can be used creatively and intelligently by students and lecturers. For example, students can be asked to use an AI tool to translate or re-write a passage of classic English literature into Nigerian English or to situate the themes of a popular novel in a local setting such as a market in Dutsen Ma for instance. In this way, AI is positioned as a collaborator in localized creativity.

The AI Homogenization Counter-Force

A major development in today's world, as stated earlier, is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, despite the

preponderance of different ‘voices’ on the Internet because of multitude cyberspace users, the presence of AI appears to challenge this multiplicity. AI now plays a major role in the lives of people, especially the Gen Z generation. Paudyal (2023:92) asserts, the “use of the Internet has made us the first generation of artificial intelligence (AI) overcoming the limitation of time and distance”. The Internet now offers myriad of applications that use AI to perform different functions, from games, to solving mathematical problems to writing essays and offering advice. As would be expected, AI has a huge influence on people who frequently use the Internet, as more incursions into cyberspace would lead to more exposure to the rather overwhelming influence of AI. Elgan (2025) discusses the influence of Artificial Intelligence on our use of language. He argues that the widespread use of AI is affecting how we talk, choose words, and express our opinions. Drawing from the views of Altman, Elgan points out that Altman suggests some factors why AI is changing how people talk which makes people to sound ‘fake’. These factors include:

1. People are using Large Language Models (LLM) style of writing
2. More and more frequent users of the Internet are moving towards similar forms of expressions and framing
3. Social platform by the way they are constructed to engage people, allow frequent repetition and exaggeration
4. For financial reasons, content creators make people to use a particular way of expressing themselves.

Citing research done by Székely, Miniota and Hejná, Elgan (2025) argues that there may be grounds for believing that talking machines are affecting how people talk. Speech as we know is a singular marker of identity. Sociolinguistics studies and discourse analysis have investigated how speech contributes to identity construction, be it ethnic, racial, dialectal, age, gendered or social class. With the emergence and use of AI, some people are now modelling the way they speak to sound like the synthetic voices that they hear on AI. What all this implies is that gradually people are tending to speak in a certain

manner, thus creating a homogenization of speech patterns. The once highly rich variation in speech is now on a steady decline. While the rate of this process is relatively fast, technology has over the years been an instrument of lessening speech differences. In the 20th century, with the widespread use of the radio and television, for example, England saw a decline in its dialectal variations, such that many regional differences in dialects began to fade because people were listening to the BBC English and RP variety on the radio and television. This resulted in people speaking more of the RP variety with their own local accent. In other words, a kind of dialect levelling² began to occur. This is what is now happening at a faster rate with the high use of AI by Internet users, leading to what Elgan calls 'GPT English'. If this kind of language comes to be accepted as the standard prestigious variant, it would then be used as the prestige variant in social and professional contexts.

Elgan (2025) also draws on research by scholars in UCLA and University of Copenhagen, who find the use of ChatGP has led to the rise in the frequency of use of words such as *underscore*, *delve* and *showcase* in academic discourse. The use of these words increased with the use of ChatGP. Additionally, people who saw other people using such words also began to use them, thus creating a massive change in the frequency of use of such words.

Joseph and Devi (2025) also note that the concerns about artificial intelligence and machine learning influences how English is produced and understood:

Predictive text, autocorrect features, and AI-driven chatbots are not only assisting users but also shaping language use in subtle ways. These technologies often reinforce dominant language patterns while also introducing standardization across digital communication. As AI systems learn from vast corpora of digital English, they play a significant role in defining what is considered "normal" usage, potentially

marginalizing regional or non-standard variations (Joseph and Devi 2025: 64).

In other words, implications arising from the influence of AI on language users is that it is affecting how people *think* (Elgan 2025). With the high use of AI, comes the imitation of phrasing and expression: the end result being a focus on clarity and efficiency. The downside of this is that people would lose nuance, narrative flow and creativity in speech, which make human language unique. Consequently, conversations would begin to follow a certain pattern as determined by the Large Language Models (LLM) which are used to programme machine language. This could lead to reinforced accent bias, which Elgan claims, could make people who do not talk like AI to be discriminated against in the workplace or customer-facing roles. This could in turn lead to viewing people who use AI standard expressions as competent, while those with regional or informal styles to be looked at as incompetent (Elgan 2025). However, perhaps if there are widespread agitations against AI, Elgan points out that AI language could lead to many people rejecting it in favour of natural human language with all its colourful nuances and creativity, as all the above conjectures can only be proven as time passes. Nevertheless, despite the overarching potential of cyberspace to promote different groups' usages of language, AI appears to function as a standardizing and homogenizing force. This creates a central tension in contemporary times: thus we have a bottom-up, user-driven linguistic creativity striving to exist amidst a top-down, algorithmically-enforced "GPT English." For instance, Nigerian students could face some challenges while using the Internet: on the one hand, their authentic digital voice will likely be flagged as "incorrect" by AI tools trained on Western corpora, on the other hand, they could face a linguistic identity crisis within what Banhakeia and El Kouy (2018) would call the "Global Information Infrastructure." Linguistic identity crisis arises in individuals in a multilingual or post-colonial settings who do not feel a bond with the languages they speak or the culture of their indigenous

language or even lack a sense of belonging with the people of the society in which they live. This is as a result of confusion brought about by the dominant language(s) spoken in the community. This loss of self is an identity problem for such individuals. Decades ago this crisis was rooted in the physical settings of a person. With advances in technology, identity crises could be exacerbated by cyberculture which is dominated by an English medium Netspeak (see Chakenetsa 2021 on identity crisis). In other words, Nigerian expressions commonly in use would be flagged as incorrect or even auto-corrected, for example *sef*, *abeg*, would be highlighted as typos on Twitter/X, or *now now* would be highlighted as reduplication when chatting on WhatsApp.

In the educational sector, more and more students are relying on GPT for their assignments, projects, theses, dissertations, seminars and term papers. Such papers and academic papers are modelled using what Elgan calls 'GPT English'. For some teachers, they prefer the AI-polished language in the students' submission instead of the authentic expressions of their students. This is without doubt, an ethical and pedagogical crisis which privileges algorithmic fluency over authentic student voice and intellectual struggle. Dismissing the intellectual struggles of our students is truncating their paths to knowledge, because making mistakes and learning from them will only strengthen the intellectual development of a student. Allowing a student to depend on the AI to write their assignments is doing students a great disservice, for they will not be capable of independent and critical research.

Furthermore, Joseph and Devi (2025) point out that while digital communication has enriched English, educators and linguists are now worried about the decline of formal writing skills. Given the fluidity of modes of the Internet, one wonders how cyberspace has affected the way we express ourselves in terms of style: Do we now distinguish formal and informal language or even colloquial usage? Indeed, cyberculture has tended to even out such differences which we

teach in our classes on writing styles or perhaps Sociolinguistics in which the relation between English language usage is linked to social contexts or situations. Holmes (1997) notes that there is danger of losing individual identity and community with increased immersion into cyberspace. This is because cyberspace has a dissolution of time and space and excessively simulates reality. For Joseph and Devi (2025) the English in the digital era is linked to issues about linguistic identity, and standardization. The differences between formal and informal English are gradually no more clear-cut in academic and professional settings, which “compels educators, employers, and institutions to reconsider what constitutes ‘correct’ or ‘standard’ English in a world where linguistic flexibility is both a necessity and a norm” (Joseph and Devi 2025: 63). For these scholars, the evolution of English in the digital era reflects a broader transformation in human communication. This shows a shift from “rigid linguistic norms to a more fluid, expressive, and user-centred model”, and with developments in technology and interlinking of societies, English will continue to change to accommodate diverse digital experiences.

In relation to the above, the argument is that, on the one hand, “constant exposure to informal digital writing may erode grammatical accuracy, spelling, and critical thinking” (Joseph and Devi 2025: 64). On the other hand, “the digital environment fosters new literacies, including multimodal communication, linguistic flexibility, and audience awareness, which are increasingly relevant in a media-rich world” (Joseph and Devi 2025: 64). For Joseph and Devi (2025), there is a strong need to reassess educational strategies and linguistic norms in light of digital realities. The digital era is challenging educators to make pedagogical decisions with regard to the teaching of standard English conventions in the light of digital literacy. Doing this would make students to be able to effectively communicate across different mediums, which would prepare them for academic and real-world interactions (Joseph and Devi 2025). This approach is necessary in the light of the encompassing nature of the Internet in the lives of people.

From the above, it is clear that cyberspace is no longer just a novel "object of enquiry" but the primary site where English language and literature is evolving, and as noted, the researcher's role has shifted from distant observer to an analyst working within a "living laboratory". All these point to the need for new research paradigms. English studies must develop and embrace new technologies. Research in the field as is gradually being done in some institutions must combine Corpus Linguistics which use digital corpora of Nigerian English (like the ICE Nigeria) to track change; Digital Discourse Analysis which studies conversations on X (Twitter), WhatsApp, Instagram and blogs; and Critical Algorithmic Studies which interrogate how AI writing assistants shape expression. This transformation has to be made given the changing realities for scholars and researchers in English studies.

Cyberspace and Literature in English studies

Historically, before the plethora of literary online content that we now have, there was what was called 'electronic literature'. This digital literature formed the stepping stone from which contemporary e-literature emerged and developed. In their editorial introduction of electronic media, literature and cyber culture, Zalbidea et al (2014) surveyed literature-related activities done with the advent of high technology. Starting from the 1980s when computers began to be widely used, electronic literature developed within the field then called 'digital humanities'. At that time, a huge corpus of electronic literature which included poetry was developed, as well as archiving of electronic literature and research projects. Hayles (cited in Zalbidea et al 2014) explains that electronic literature is "generally considered to exclude print literature that has been digitized, is by contrast 'digital born,' and (usually) meant to be read on a computer" (<<http://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html>>)." Zalbidea et al (2014) report that early works in English in this regard were Judy Malloy's (1986)

Uncle

Roger

<<http://www.well.com/user/jmalloy/uncleroger/partytop.html>> and multimedia CD texts including Michael Joyce's (1987) *afternoon: a story*, Stuart Moulthrop's (1991) *Victory Garden*, and Shelley Jackson's (1995) *Patchwork Girl*.

With the emergence of the World Wide Web in 1994, electronic literature developed with large corpus available in many languages. Webcams also became a tool in electronic literature which allowed new kinds of reading experiences that are like performances, such that reading can be experienced by a reader alone who can see his/her own face on the screen becoming a protagonist of the story as it happens in Serge Bouchardon's and Vincent Volckaert's 2010 *Loss of Grasp* <<http://lossofgrasp.com>>. Or, one can read visual poems with one's own webcam in Amaranth Borsuk's and Brad Bouse's 2012 *Between Page and Screen* <<http://www.betweenpageandscreen.com>> or watch online a live performance in Judd Morrissey's and Mark Jeffery's 2014 *Reality ATOM-r: Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality* <<http://atomr.com>>. (Zalbidea et al 2014: 1).

These developments in literature do not stop here. Zalbidea *et al* (2025) note that different artistic and scholarly organizations and associations for electronic literature and its research also emerged. These included the Electronic Literature Organization <<http://eliterature.org/>>, the Electronic Poetry centre <<http://epc.buffalo.edu/>>, Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice <<http://elmcip.net>>, Hermeneia <<http://www.hermeneia.net/>>, I ♥ E-Poetry <<http://iloveepoetry.com>>, Arquivo Digital da PO.EX <<http://po-ex.net>>, Ciberia <<https://www.ucm.es/leethi/ciberia>>, Literatura Electrónica Hispánica <<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/bib/portal/literaturaelectronica/>>, and Literatura Electrónica en España.

Consequently, the innovations found in this genre of literature highlight unique developments in digital literature. Indeed, there is presently an increasing number of academic corpuses on all aspects of

electronic literature, which include the perspective of digital humanities. Scholars investigate theories and methodologies for the study of electronic writing. Pawlicka (2014), for instance, explores theoretical frameworks of electronic literature. Tracing the phases that electronic literature went through, she argues that electronic literature moved from text to techno-text. It transformed from text-as-decoding meaning to text-as-a-process-of-information and information system. Indeed, electronic literature shows a shift from an interpretation to experience, from visual perception to performativity and from close reading to hyper reading. Scholarly work has also been done on digital culture, electronic poetry and new media art. For instance, Brito (2014) examines some early digital repositories of electronic poetry and concludes that digital repositories help in the development of poetry. Such repositories allow networking and fast publishing of innovative poetry. This digital medium makes the reading experience to be quite intense and at the same time attract a large readership that print poetry cannot. Brito (2014) argues that digital culture (networking and web-based communication) actually strengthens the writing and reading experience, and at the same time leads to the emergence of new modes of discourse. In sum, digital repositories contribute to the development of aesthetics of poetry as a continual process of innovation. Other scholars focus on aspects of gender in electronic literature and cyberspace, digital literacy and the preservation of electronic literature (see Zalbidea *et al* 2014).

From the above discussion, digitalisation has not only affected aspects of language in English studies. It has also transformed literary studies. In contemporary times, literary texts, classical and non-classical, have been digitalised and open for reading online and offline. Teachers and students are now able to have access to literary writings without the burden of lugging around with heavy books. Additionally, there are many applications that offer e novels for reading. These applications

provide for teachers and students alike a source for popular fiction across genres such as mystery, romance, suspense, thriller and fantasy. Various novels translated into the English language from languages such as Chinese are now available. Interest in English literary works from different geographical regions has now been enhanced with the massive outpouring of fictional writing by burgeoning and experienced writers. E-books have now opened up access to information. Whatever a person is interested in, critical works or creative writings, are now available online.

Therefore, cyberspace is now an arena for a huge number of literary outputs; novels, short stories, travelogue, diaries, poetry and play texts. All these provide rich fields for academic scrutiny. Hundreds of applications in the English language are now available to any reader. A look at google play store shows applications such as Novel Up, Novel Full, Webnovel, Light novel, Mist novel, Inkitt: Books, Novels, Stories and AlphaNovel. E-novels show a shift from traditional novel. Unlike most traditional novels, e-novels engage the reader on a more personal level. In e novels, writers can ask for comments on the novel chapter by chapter. Due to the fluid nature of online communication, writers can release book chapters one after another in a timely fashion. They can even reach out to their readers by telling them that a chapter will be delayed, or the reasons that a chapter is short or long. Thus, e novels are on the one hand like an 'oral' storytelling in a face to face interaction, on the other hand, they are like a television series that unfolds in episodes. Reading, which used to be an individual preoccupation, now has become a 'communal' activity, with novels having an online community where readers can share their views about the novel or even the writer.

Certain developments by Nigerians are worth pointing out. Some Nigerians have developed digital content sourced from indigenous languages and Nigerian Pidgin, which are used in AI for different purposes. Consequently, there are now AI tools such as the Nigerian Pidgin English Translator which can translate pidgin English

into the standard one. Furthermore, Nigerian "e-novel" platforms are now on the rise. These platforms allow Nigerian writers to write, publish and sell their e novels digitally. Writers can serialize fiction for mobile readers, and these novels use colloquial dialogue and local settings. According to Statista (<https://www.statista.com>), there is a growing demand for eBooks in Nigeria that shows a shift towards digital literacy and availability, especially among youths and people in urban areas. Statista further notes that cultural diversity is embraced by publishers who welcome local content that portray various ethnic groups. What this signals to academics interested in the transforming face of literature, is that creativity thrives within, not just in response to, cyberculture.

Despite all this, it is pertinent to note that the component that makes us human and not machine, may be lost in the euphoria of cyberculture. Some of our cultural styles of writing prose and poetry appear to follow a general global trend. The fast flow of information tends to level differences; globalisation is now here to make things look similar and to remove uniqueness. Cyberculture has made creative writing to become more and more similar. Where regional differences contribute to the production of beautiful, memorable creative works, the bland use of English found in creative works by our students makes one wonder whether we are being buried by the cyberculture created by our own hands. What is *creative work* is now under question. As academics we are confronted by issues such whether to accept as original work, poems or stories turned in by students who used AI to generate them. Or whether to accept narrative essays written by AI as part of a student's competence in English writing skills. Other issues scholars face deal with whether reading digitally generated summaries of novels or textbooks make a person knowledgeable with regard to the subject matter. In other words, by relying on high technology in English studies, what has been gained, and what has been lost, and do the

benefits outweigh disadvantages? Indeed, it is necessary for us in English studies to know how to use traditional critical skills in the light of contemporary digital era.

Without doubt, cyberculture has theoretical and practical implications on English literature and literary studies. New objects of enquiry in literary studies include electronic literature, born-digital texts, hypertext and interactive fiction. Due to the fluid nature of cyberculture, there is need to find newer theories for textual analysis. Authorship and audience interpretation have now transformed because of the dynamicity of cyberculture: what constitutes *literature* in network spaces has to be re-theorised in the light of Do It Yourself Publishing and multitude born-digital texts. In contemporary times, cyberculture is increasingly blurring the traditional differences between the roles of the author/reader and reviewer (Murray 2025). With the bonding of Internet communities via readerly affect, literary studies of texts would need to consider emotional responses to texts (Murray 2025). The question of who is the audience for literary discussion is a bone of contention because technology has made access to information much easier and widespread.

Presently, there are thematic shifts in literature as contemporary literary works now explore themes that are related to virtual space, high technology and digital existence. The changing representation of reality in science fiction and contemporary novels is different from what we used to read in books before the digital era. Such books now depict how technology affects how we perceive reality. Literary texts now dwell on fluid identities which result from anonymity and flexibility of cyberspace. For example, *cyborg literature* explores issues of how technology changes what it is to be human and how the difference between machine and the human self is no longer distinct. This type of literature explores fragmented technologically mediated existence, and the cultural anxieties about advances in technology and alienation (Stojnić 2013). Cyborg literature also examines the physical and existential aspects of being a cyborg (Adji et al 2024). In recent times,

scholarly debates are conducted regarding how AI platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini are used in collaboration with human beings to make literature which is called cyborg literature (Sherin 2023). To sum up, the 'cyborg self' and 'cyborgian texts' which are hybrids challenge traditional literary analyses and are subjects of discussion in contemporary literary criticism.

The Infrastructure Gap: The Digital Divide as a Pedagogical Reality in Nigeria

Despite the millions of users of the Internet in Nigeria, there are some harsh truths to face. The presence of the Internet and the influence of cyberculture is real. However, another reality that Nigerian scholars and academics face is that Nigeria still has infrastructural problems that pose a challenge to scholarship and progress. For many public Nigerian universities, "virtual reality labs" remain a fantasy. The high costs of data, unstable network connectivity/ Internet access, poor electricity supply, and limited hardware to implement digital pedagogy pose serious problems to the development of English studies in line with contemporary technological development.

It is an unfortunate fact that insecurity is bedevilling Nigeria and is affecting our tertiary institutions which offer programmes such as English studies. It is at this juncture that one can see the solution offered by cyberculture to counter the risk of travelling for external moderation or examinations: With the surge of insecurity in the country, virtual external examinations are a safer alternative for many external examiners who have to travel to or through troubled areas. This forced innovation shows resilience of academics in Nigeria to forge ahead despite infrastructural restrictions and institutional dangers. However, the preparedness to utilise high technology in the teaching practices of academics differ from institution to institution. Some institutions do not have the structures or facilities needed to utilise the

potentials and ease provided by cyberculture in pedagogy. Some state universities may not have infrastructures that are available in some few federal universities. This further widens the digital gap among institutions in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has raised and discussed several issues in relation to English studies and cyberculture in Nigeria. While we live in an era highly influenced by high technology, let us not lose sight of some issues arising therefrom. High technology has brought us smart phones, smart watches, smart 'lifestyles'. It has given us improved materials and resources to use in English studies. It has led to the development of newer forms of expression using language alongside other media. High technology has given us Artificial Intelligence which for both teachers and learners of English studies is a new reality that we face. However, what does this spell for us in English studies? Or what has changed for us as academics? Without a doubt, cyberculture has transformed the discipline of English, by affecting its objects of enquiry, its methods and the directions of future research. The presence of cyberculture is not only concerned with the use of computers and the Internet in classrooms, and the study of literature. Rather, it has implications on textual constructions, literary analysis, the nature of books, the psychology of reading and pedagogy. Indeed, high technology and cyber culture have implications for English studies. They have changed or are changing how we teach, learn and interact with people in English studies. They have opened up new doors of research. They have given us avenues to understand the complexity of language and interrelatedness of disciplines in the academia.

In the light of such concerns, the future of English Studies in Nigeria hinges on strategic, conscious action, which I propose below. There are several ways of tackling the transformations caused by cyberculture. One way is to become more multidisciplinary and use approaches that are drawn from fields such as technology and information and communication studies. Departments of English

studies need to re-assess their curricula. Some universities have already included new courses that deal with cyberculture, digital literature and other aspects of the digital world. Such courses include Introduction to digital humanities (a field which uses computational tools and digital resources such as Shakespeare First Folios via the Bodleian Library to study texts) and Text Analysis in Digital Humanities. The National Universities Commission (NUC) and university departments should design a curriculum which would include a new core module, with a proposed title such as 'Digital Literacies and Nigerian Cyberculture,' that teaches critical analysis of online discourse, digital content creation, and the ethics of AI. Teachers on their part should become critical digital pedagogues. They should be aware of what the AI can do and how they can use it constructively in their lecture halls. They should know how to share open-source, low-bandwidth teaching resources, for example, text-based analysis tools instead of video-heavy Virtual Reality. In other words, academics now need to have the know-how about digital tools so as to improve literary pedagogical practices and connect with millennial age students (Murray 2025). There is, thus, the need to merge literary studies with the digital present (Murray 2025). Furthermore, teachers should adapt their teaching strategies to reflect the teaching of standard English amidst the presence of digital literacy.

On a final note, it has to be stated that Nigerian policymakers and university administrators should treat stable electricity, affordable campus Wi-Fi, and device loans not as Information Technology issues, but as essential educational infrastructure for equity. Funds should be given to enable research in locally developed educational AI and digital archives of Nigerian English. In doing so, English Studies in Nigeria will evolve from a colonial inheritance into a discipline that empowers Nigerians to master the global digital arena on their own terms.

Notes

1. With the widespread use of English, several varieties have evolved, hence the term Englishes. Thus, the study of English will also necessarily be the study of the cultures of those people who speak it, either as native speakers or non-native speakers.
2. For a wider perspective on dialect levelling see N. Armstron and I. Mackenzie (2021) *Standardisation, Ideology and linguistics*. Palgrave Macmillan; Beaman et al (2020) *Advancing socio-grammatical variation in change: In honour of Jenny Cheshire*. Routledge.

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