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A Social Network Analysis of Lexical Variation in the Nigerian Air Force Base, Kaduna

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Abstract

This study applies Milroy's Weak Tie Theory to examine the variation of military jargon within the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) at Kaduna NAF Base. It investigates specialised terms and slang usage across social classes, focusing on interactions between military personnel and civilians. A checklist method gathered responses from 87 participants on 18 key lexical items. Findings reveal differing military jargon usage among officers, airmen, and civilians, highlighting a linguistic divide shaped by social connections. Civilians interacting closely with airmen adopt informal military language, showcasing blended communication styles. This research enhances our comprehension of how weak ties among social groups foster linguistic change. By addressing language-related dynamics, this study has practical implications for understanding communication patterns within institutional settings. The findings contribute to the development of effective communication strategies at play in military contexts.

Keywords: Lexical variation, military jargon, Weak Tie Theory, Nigerian Air Force, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

Language plays the dual roles of communication and a marker of identity and group membership. When a group of persons uses language at the level of social or geographical distinction, there is the possibility of dialectical variation (Longe 2-3).

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This view is corroborated by Milroy and Milroy, who state that variability in language is a natural feature, occurring at phonological, syntactic, vocabulary, and lexical levels over a process of time and correlating with spatial patterns (45). It is possible to come across unique institutions and speech communities where certain lexical terms and jargon are used in varying degrees of linguistic manipulation. One unique institution where linguistic variation exists is the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), where hierarchy and discipline serve as clues for the creation and maintenance of specialised jargon and slang to reflect both organisational structure and social relationships within military settings.

The NAF, one of Nigeria's three military formations, was established in April 1964 by an Act of Parliament to bolster national defense (Zighadina 1-2). Its creation followed Nigeria's peacekeeping missions to Congo and Tanzania, where foreign aircraft were used, highlighting the need for an air force. Over time, the NAF has become essential to Nigeria's military, particularly in counter-insurgency efforts (Martin 84–89).

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) is overseen by the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), who directly reports to the President of Nigeria (Zighadina 2-4). The NAF has service headquarters and staff branches led by Air Vice Marshals, as well as direct reporting units. Additionally, it operates seventeen Operational Commands which are referred to as 'Bases' and are located across Nigeria. The Nigerian Air Force Training Command (ATC), located in Kaduna state, is primarily responsible for training recruits, ground support crew, and technicians.

The NAF recruits through three methods: Regular Combatant (RC), a five-year programme at the Nigeria Defence Academy where the trainees graduate with a Bachelor's degree and are commissioned into the Flying Officer's Rank; Direct Short Service Commission (DSSC), a six-month programme for degree holders (Martin 85); and the Basic Military Training Course (BMTC) for secondary school certificate holders who graduate as Airmen (Other Ranks). All applicants must be Nigerian by birth and medically fit (Zighadina 1-10).

Craig Hoyle states that in addition to military personnel, there are civilian support staff members at the Kaduna NAF Base who perform various civil duties for the military, including aviation, banking, chaplaincy, education, engineering, healthcare, sports, transportation, and other administrative duties (55). The deployment and assignment of these civilian personnel are somewhat less flexible due to their non-traditional employment arrangements, often working as contract staff, which allows

for greater job flexibility and mobility. Both military and civilian personnel hold various roles within the Air Force structure, reflecting the NAF's professional approach in recruiting individuals for not only combat-related roles, but also for essential non-combat functions.

The Kaduna NAF Base, established as Nigeria's Air Force training hub, initially comprised two Airmen's blocks for 60 recruits and two officers' quarters by September 1963. Subsequently, additional structures were built as the NAF expanded by enhancing resources and professional incentives (Zighadina 16).

The settlement of persons in the Kaduna NAF Base is categorised into three divisions: administrative sites, residential quarters, and centres for socio-economic and religious activities. The Administrative sites include offices, training centers, parade grounds, hospitals, hangars, and landing strips, all of which are strategically located to minimise unauthorised access. The Residential areas are organised by rank irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliations. The commissioned officers have exclusive quarters, while airmen (other ranks) and their families are housed according to their ranks, such as Master Warrant Officers in Omo Quarters. The civilians reside near the officers' and airmen's quarters in designated areas like Boys Quarters and California Quarters.

The Socio-economic sector features markets, banks, schools, sports facilities, and recreational centers. Mess Halls serve multiple functions, including dining and relaxation spaces for different ranks. Additionally, religious centres cater to diverse faiths, promoting informal interactions across rank structures in communal settings.

In the NAF, distinct linguistic variations arise from language norms and institutional restrictions that conform to military ranks, occupational roles, and social affiliations. Personnel at different levels – officers, airmen, and civilians – develop unique terminologies and jargon that reflect the degree of formality or informality in their interactions in varying geographical contexts. The military have administrative and social contexts where formal and strong-knit associations co-exist alongside more casual, loosely connected groups. This supports Milroy and Llamas's view that social ties align with interlocutors' agency, attitude, and cultural orientation, and their relationships form part of the larger web of ties linking speakers linguistically (407-27).

Although jargon plays a vital role in the military communication, research has largely overlooked its lexical variations. This gap is particularly noticeable when evaluated along the lines of how informal social networks and loose-knit relationships

influence language change in this hierarchical institution. While military specialised codes have witnessed progressive research interests in recent years, less is known about how officers', airmen's, and civilians' interactions contribute to language change in formal and informal settings. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how weak social ties between officers, airmen, and civilians within the NAF promote the development of distinct slang and jargon. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into how military culture influences language use and social relationships within institutional settings.

2. Theoretical Framework

Social network theory examines the relationships that exist between social groups and how these impact linguistic structures and properties within communities (Milroy and Llamas 407). These social groups are connected by networks of language users, which could include family, friends, and colleagues at work, and their network structures are sometimes perceived as a "web of ties."

British sociolinguist Lesley Milroy's studies of social networks in Belfast, Northern Ireland, between 1975 and 1980, extended the frontiers of social networks as an essential element in variationist studies. According to Susan Sprecher, Milroy's work focused on open and closed networks: weak ties or open networks emphasize groups built on acquaintanceship (weak ties or loose-knit relationships), while strong ties or closed networks link closely bonded individuals who already have good knowledge of one another (425-50).

In handling the areas with weak ties, Milroy employed innovative measures to elicit data. She adopted a surreptitious identity by posing as a "friend of a friend" during her data-gathering sessions among working-class communities with high unemployment in the Protestant suburbs of Ballymacarett and Hammer (East and West Belfast) and the Catholic area of Clonard in West Belfast in her 1975 Belfast English study (Hickey 224). Her research used five indicators to measure the complexity and density of social group ties: membership in a locally-based group, affiliations with at least two households in the neighbourhood, sharing a workplace with two or more persons from the environment, sharing a workplace with same-sex individuals from a specific residential area, and involvement in voluntary activities with individuals from the same workplace. The responses from the Belfast English study were used to create a network strength scale, important parameters for assessing language variation in Ireland.

During the research, Lesley Milroy formulated the Weak Tie Social Network Theory, which postulates that language change can result from weak ties (acquaintanceship) among persons loosely connected due to differing job descriptions, migration, and residency in isolated areas (Milroy, "Social Networks" 549-72). Weak ties are built on second-level and infrequent relationships which promote linguistic innovation and creativity due to the need to accommodate speakers from diverse multicultural backgrounds.

Milroy's Weak Tie Theory is revolutionary because it counters the age-long accepted belief that language variation is the direct consequence of strong bonds existing in areas of close-knit relationships like kinship and work-related associations. Her theory looks at variation from the stage that persons of unrelated or unacquainted backgrounds co-existing within a linguistic circle may develop informal terms in a bid to accommodate lapses in language usage. Also, because these weak ties are made up of speakers from diverse multi-ethnic and multilingual locations, varieties are naturally developed to cater for their linguistic needs which could be short-term or long-term.

Applying Milroy's Weak Tie Social Network Theory in the study of lexical variation can reveal how loosely connected social groups are under less social pressure to conform to standard codes. The framework helps evaluate how the distribution of linguistic variants reveals patterns of language change in line with interlocutor variables like social class, geographical location, gender, and age, contributing to variationist studies in sociolinguistics (Kennedy–Terry 113; Watt and Milroy 25-46; Jones 467-96).

3. Review of Related Literature

This review evaluates existing scholarly works on lexical variation and social networks, focusing on language use and social connections within speech communities.

Werner Botha and Tobias Bernaisch explore connections between world Englishes and sociolinguistic variation, utilizing Kachru's Three Circles model and sociolinguistic theory (169). Their findings shed light on vernacular language practices and corpus approaches in contexts outside L1 countries. Burnett et al. extend this line of inquiry by introducing "discursive worlds" as a measure for analysing linguistic variation. By compiling referents cited in interviews, their work constructs similarity spaces and categorises speakers in the study of current linguistic trends. Burnett et al.

assert that francophone feminist and queer activist interviews demonstrate the effectiveness of capturing instances of language use and innovation.

The dynamics of language variation in specific cultural contexts are further illuminated by Marcus Callies and Folajimi Oyebola's study on Nigerian Pidgin English proverbs' influence on Nigerian English idiomatic phraseology. Similarly, Noraishah Gulnazir and Khazriyati Salehuddin investigate lexical variation and change in Malaysian English, focusing on American English influences. Evaluating19,050 tweets (203,482 tokens), Gulnazir and Salehuddin examine the adoption of "lit" and "on fleek" in Malaysian Twitter. These studies mirror linguistic trends and support the World System of Englishes theory by demonstrating language mobility on social media.

The significance of language contact in shaping lexical variation is a theme explored in James M. Stratton's diachronic study, which tracks the evolution of third-person male adult noun referents from Old to Middle English (199). Stratton's findings highlight the dynamic, heterogeneous structure of semantic domains, a position shared by Bernd Kortmann's comprehensive overview of syntactic variation across 70 English varieties (299). These studies highlight cross-linguistic perspectives on nonstandard varieties and address language complexity, language change, and the evolution of future standard Englishes.

This review also explores language variation research methodologies, with some studies projecting the need for more innovative research methods in sociolinguistic enquiry. Beth Malory demonstrates the effectiveness of change point analysis in detecting prescriptive impact on language use (131). Mari C. Jones's critical work on linguistic variation in Jerriais highlights challenges in attributing extra-linguistic meaning to variation in obsolescent languages (467). Moreover, the role of social networks in shaping language use is evident in Tarrade et al.'s examination of how Twitter users' network positions influence lexical innovation success. The paper supports sociolinguistic theories on weak ties for innovation and strong ties for establishment.

Egbah and Efobi's study on language variation at NAF Base Kaduna reveals a significant relationship between linguistic variation and social class (89). Using Milroy's Social Network theory, their questionnaire-based study reveals how factors like group membership, education, and gender influence linguistic variation. A similar study by God'sgift Ogban Uwen and Stella Ikhesor Ekpe on the use of workout songs in the Nigerian Army offers further insights into the multilingual identity of military communities.

The review of existing research on language variation and social networks offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of language use in diverse speech communities. However, significant gaps in these studies require attention, such as a lack of analysis on lexical variation among specific social networks, as well as the influence of social networks in language variation in military settings.

This research seeks to fill these gaps by examining lexical variation within social networks at NAF Base Kaduna and exploring the weak ties existing between speakers in various military contexts. This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex dynamics of language use in Nigerian social networks by investigating group-level language use and the impact of language contact.

4. Methodology

In this study, a total of eighty-seven (87) participants were selected using specific criteria, including (i) involvement in an occupational activity within the Kaduna Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Base, (ii) residency in one of the NAF residential apartments, and (iii) willingness to participate in the interview sessions. The selection of participants did not adhere to any strict theoretical framework and demographic factors as age, sex, religious affiliation, geopolitical background, and duration of stay were not considered due to the use of the checklist in restrictive military settings in the NAF.

A checklist method was applied during live sessions to gather responses from participants. These sessions were conducted after written permission was granted by the authorities at the Nigerian Air Force Headquarters (HQ NAF). The focus of the study was on eighteen (18) lexical items commonly used within the Kaduna NAF Base. The lexical terms are:

(1) Airmares
(2) Air Police
(3) Cheese
(4) Cut Out
(5) Dish
(6) Fatigue
(7) Guardroom
(8) Kanwi

(9) Kolito
(10) Kurata
(11) P.D. (Punishment Duty)
(12) P.D.P. (People's Democratic Party)
(13) P.T. (Physical Training)
(14) Pay Slip
(15) Skilled Player
(16) Wee-wee
(17) White House
(18) Wicked Officer.

These specialised jargon and slang terms were examined along selected contexts to understand the unique pattern of linguistic variation across different social groups within the military community. The four contexts selected for this analysis are the administrative, residential, sports and recreational, and general/casual settings.

5. Analysis of Lexical Variation in Selected Contexts

This section presents and examines the responses of the informants in line with lexical variation of military terms in selected contexts within the NAF Base Kaduna.

5.1 Administrative Context

The administrative context (encompassing offices, parade grounds, hangars, and training locations) are sites for strategic meetings, briefings, updates, real-time missions; as well as drills and skill development. In these areas, specialised military terms are used more formally among all the occupational classes (commissioned officers, other ranks, and civilians).

Table 1.1 shows the patterns of lexical variation by the social groups within the administrative sites. These responses not only demonstrate the hierarchical differences within the military but also reveal how language adapts and evolves across the different social classes.

Table 1.1: The responses of different groups to the usage of some military jargons within the offices and administrative sites.

Military Expression	Personnel in Officers' Quarters	Personnel in Airmen's Quarters	Civilians in Boys' Quarters	Civilians in Airmen's Quarters
Airmares	NAF Medical Centre, Aeromedical	Airmares, NAF Medical Centre, Aeromedical	Airmares, NAF Medical Centre, Aeromedical	Airmares, NAF Medical Centre, Aeromedical
Air Police	Air police, provost	Air police, provost	Air police, provost, A.P., White cap	Air police, provost
Guardroom	Guardroom, cooler	Guardroom, cooler, galo	Guardroom, cooler	Guardroom, cooler, galo
Kolito	Kolito, Short service, Oscars	Kolito, Short service, Oscars, small boys	Kolito	Kolito, Short service, Oscars
Kurata	Kurata, samaboys (males), samakwe (girls)	Kurata, samaboys (males), samakwe (girls), blinging shits, clowns, motherless babies.	Kurata, samaboys (males), samakwe (girls)	Kurata
P.D. (Punishment Duty)	P.D., Serve job	P.D., Serve job	Serve job	Serve job
Wicked Officer	Strict disciplinarian	Bad soldier, hunch master, saboteur, malamugu, mugu, Strict disciplinarian, Wicked Officer	mugu, Strict disciplinarian, Wicked Officer	mugu, Strict disciplinarian, Wicked Officer

The term 'Airmares' is a variation of 'M.R.S.' (Medical Registry System) and it is uniformly understood across all groups, with most using the formal terms "NAF Medical Centre" or "Aeromedical." The concept 'Air Police' shows minimal variation, though civilians in Boys Quarters include the slang "A.P." and "White Cap," terms not used by other groups, likely indicating a looser, more informal interaction with military personnel. This reflects how civilians, particularly those in more casual or peripheral roles, tend to incorporate more colloquial terms.

The expression 'Guardroom' (a military cell) similarly sees consistent usage, with civilians and airmen adding "galo" and "cooler" to the vocabulary. These terms are clearly more informal, showing how lower-ranking personnel and civilians adopt more casual language, perhaps to lighten the serious nature of certain military terms.

Terms like 'Kolito' and 'Kurata', which refer to officer and airmen cadets, respectively, reveal the largest degree of lexical variation. Among airmen, terms such as "small boys" for Kolito and more humorous or derogatory terms for Kurata like "blinging shits," "clowns," and "motherless babies" surface. This illustrates the informal, often humorous lens through which these groups view their cadet counterparts, as well as a sense of distance from these formal ranks.

For 'P.D.' (Punishment Duty), most groups use the expression "serve job," showing a shared understanding of its function across social lines, though officers add no alternate terms. Lastly, the 'Wicked Officer' expression is another site of linguistic diversity. Airmen and civilians deploy more derogatory terms like "mugu," "saboteur," or "bad soldier," which reflect a negative attitude toward strict disciplinarians, often softened in more formal, officer-heavy circles where "strict disciplinarian" prevails.

In administrative settings, weak ties between officers and civilians allow for greater linguistic variation. Civilians and airmen, who interact less formally with officers, introduce casual terms and slang into their vocabulary. This flexibility in language use shows how weak ties foster linguistic innovation within workplace settings.

5.2 Residential Contexts

The earlier part of this paper has discussed the settlement pattern of the NAF Base as highly structured along social class and rank diversity. As a result, the military terminology in these residential settings reflects daily life, community interactions, and local cultural exchanges through the use of colloquialisms and informal codes. This linguistic behaviour leads to the growth and maintenance of hybrid expressions that blend military jargon with civilian language. Table 1.2 illustrates the responses of different groups to military jargons within residential areas.

Table 1.2: The responses of different groups to the usage of some military jargons within the residential sites.

Military Expression	Personnel in Officers' Quarters	Personnel in Airmen's Quarters	Civilians in Boys' Quarters	Civilians in Airmen's Quarters
Cheese	Cheese, chadaz, Kabadise	Cheese, chadaz, Kabadise	Cheese, chadaz, Kabadise	Cheese, chadaz, Kabadise
Dish	Fast Food	Fast Food	Dish, Fast food, organise, sharp-sharp, contribution.	Dish, Fast food, organise, sharp-sharp, contribution.
Fatigue	Fatigue, environmental cleaning exercise	Fatigue, environmental cleaning exercise	Fatigue, environmental cleaning exercise, chop grass, clear.	Fatigue, environmental cleaning exercise, chop grass, clear
Kanwi	Kanwi, grub	Kanwi, grub, chaun	grub, chaun	Grub, chaun

For the term 'Cheese', which refers to money, there is a uniformity across all groups. "Cheese," along with slang alternatives like "chadaz" and "Kabadise," is used by both military personnel and civilians alike. This reflects the broad appeal and widespread acceptance of informal slang for money, bridging both rank and social status within the military community.

When it comes to 'Dish', which relates to quick meals or food contributions, there is a bit more variation. While officers and airmen stick to the term "Fast Food," civilians in boys' and airmen's quarters expand the terminology to include more casual expressions like "organise," "sharp-sharp," and "contribution." These terms highlight the collaborative, and at times resourceful, nature of food preparation and sharing among lower-ranked personnel and civilians, reflecting a sense of community and informal interaction in these groups.

The jargon 'Fatigue', relating to environmental cleaning exercises, is similarly used across the board, but civilians and airmen further add colloquial expressions such as "chop grass" and "clear." This lexical variety indicates that while the task remains the same, the language around it becomes more relaxed and humorous among civilians and lower-ranking personnel, softening the otherwise rigid nature of military duties.

Finally, 'Kanwi', referring to food (particularly among cadets), sees some additional slang such as "grub" and "chaun." While officers and airmen use the

basic term 'Kanwi, civilians prefer the more colloquial alternatives. This again suggests how language tends to shift toward informal, even playful terms among those less bound by military hierarchy, creating a distinct linguistic landscape in more relaxed environments.

In these residential settings, the weak ties between civilians and military personnel encourage a fluid exchange of language, where slang and informal expressions infiltrate daily conversations. This interaction fosters a flexible linguistic environment that reflects the social dynamics of these mixed communities.

5.3 Sports and Recreational Context

In the sports and recreational locations within the NAF Base Kaduna, the military jargons adopt a more relaxed tone. At this stage, the lexical variation allows for a blend of professionalism and informal expression. The terms here include slang and playful adaptations of formal terms, reflecting camaraderie among personnel during recreational activities. Table 1.3 outlines how different groups in sports and recreational centres within military environments respond to and use various military jargons.

Table 1.3: The responses of different groups to the usage of some military jargons within the sports and recreational sites.

Military Expression	Personnel in Officers' Quarters	Personnel in Airmen's Quarters	Civilians in Boys' Quarters	Civilians in Airmen's Quarters
P.D.P. (People's Democratic Party)	P.D.P., Partiality	P.D.P., Partiality	P.D.P., Partiality	P.D.P., Partiality
P.T. (Physical Training)	P.T., Exercises, sports	P.T., Exercises, sports	Training	Training
Skilled Player	Skilled Player	Ésin (horse, senior), skilled player, star, superstar, ukwalist	Ésin (horse, senior), skilled player, star, superstar, ukwalist	Ésin (horse, senior), skilled player, star, superstar, ukwalist

For the term 'P.D.P. (People's Democratic Party)', used to indicate favouritism or partiality. All groups use this expression consistently, without introducing alternative terms. This suggests that the concept of partiality, often linked to sports team selections or recreational decisions, resonates universally within these groups, regardless of their rank or civilian status.

With 'P.T. (Physical Training)', officers and airmen use a more formalised structure, sticking to "P.T." or the general terms "exercises" and "sports." Civilians, however, simplify this to "training," reflecting a more basic or less regimented understanding of the term. The civilians' approach seems more direct and less embedded in military jargon, indicating their looser affiliation with the structured military environment.

The expression 'Skilled Player' shows the greatest diversity across groups. Officers maintain the term "skilled player," while airmen and civilians in both boys' and airmen's quarters employ the slang term 'Esin' (meaning horse or senior), along with "star," "superstar," and "ukwalist" to describe exceptional athletic ability. These more informal and vibrant terms suggest that lower-ranking personnel and civilians enjoy greater linguistic freedom, often drawing from local or cultural expressions that inject humour and personality into the sports domain.

This analysis demonstrates how language shifts occur in the sports and recreational centres along social rank and proximity to formal military structures, with the civilians serving as key instruments of lexical variation due to their weak social links.

5.4 General or Casual Contexts

Casual conversations and banter among military and civilian personnel are significant factors of lexical variation. Informal settings like the mammy market and centres of religious worship encourage the use of slang, abbreviations, and localized expressions that differ from standard military language.

Table 1.4 highlights the variations in the use of general or casual military jargons across different groups within military quarters. It reveals how personnel from the selected domains adopt, modify, or retain military slang in their everyday language, reflecting differences in rank, social status, and familiarity with military culture.

Table 1.4: The responses of different groups to the usage of some general and casual military jargons.

Military Expression	Personnel in Officers' Quarters	Personnel in Airmen's Quarters	Civilians in Boys' Quarters	Civilians in Airmen's Quarters
Cut out	Give them	Cut out, light one, fire-by-movement	Cut out	Cut out
Pay slip	Pay slip	A.E.E. (Authority to Expire Expenditure), Aisha, Pepper rest, pay slip, rainfall, commander wife don born.	Aisha, Pepper rest, pay slip, rainfall, commander wife don born.	Aisha, Pepper rest, pay slip, rainfall, commander wife don born.
Wee-wee	Ganja, hemp, wee-wee	Choko, fish, Ganja, hemp, wee-wee	Choko, fish, Ganja, hemp, wee-wee	Choko, fish, Ganja, hemp, wee-wee
White House	Alawi, bank, white house	Alawi, bank, white house	Bank	Bank

For the term 'Cut out', which refers to taking an unauthorised trip or break, personnel in officers' quarters use the phrase 'give them,' revealing their distinct, more formal vocabulary. Meanwhile, airmen and civilians opt for variations like 'light one' and 'fire-by-movement' in addition to 'cut out,' which indicate their tendency to adopt more informal and creative expressions.

In the case of 'Pay slip', officers stick to the standard term, while airmen and civilians use a variety of euphemisms such as 'A.E.E. (Authority to Expire Expenditure)', 'Aisha', 'Pepper rest', and more. These colourful, informal terms reflect their playful approach to discussing income, indicating a more relaxed or irreverent attitude toward military bureaucracy compared to their officer counterparts.

The term 'Wee-wee,' referring to cannabis, also shows notable lexical variation. Officers tend to use more formal terms like 'ganja' or 'hemp', while airmen and civilians employ slang such as 'choko' and 'fish', illustrating their preference for casual, less conventional vocabulary in private conversations about taboo topics.

Lastly, 'White House' is used across all groups to refer to banks or financial institutions. However, officers and airmen additionally use the term 'Alawi', a slang term for financial benefits. This suggests that while financial matters are common across the ranks, the informal term 'Alawi' is more prevalent among those closer to lower ranks and civilians, highlighting its integration into non-official discourse.

Overall, the analysis of these responses demonstrates the dynamic nature and usage of military jargon within the NAF Base Kaduna community, where rank and

formality influence the adoption of slang and special terminologies. The lower-ranking personnel (airmen) and civilians, with their weaker ties to strict military protocols, have more freedom to experiment with language, leading to greater linguistic variation.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of military jargon usage within different contexts in the NAF involving three main social groups— officers, airmen, and civilians— reveals significant linguistic variation influenced by rank, formality, and familiarity with military culture. The Officers tend to use more standard or formal terms due their status on the military echelon, while airmen and civilians incorporate more creative, informal, and sometimes irreverent slang. For example, terms like 'Pay slip' are replaced with colourful phrases like 'Pepper rest' or 'Commander wife don born' among airmen and civilians, reflecting a more casual attitude to language use. Similarly, the civilians in airmen's quarters adopt slang terms such as 'fire-by-movement' for unauthorised trips, thereby highlighting the civilians' freedom to experiment linguistically.

These patterns of variation shape, and are shaped by, the nature of interactions within each social group in specific contexts (Longe 3). In administrative settings within the Kaduna NAF Base, for instance, weak ties between officers and civilians allow for greater linguistic variation. On the other hand, the civilians and airmen, who interact less formally with officers, introduce casual terms and slang into their vocabulary.

This research contributes to sociolinguistics by illustrating how social network theory, particularly the concept of weak ties, can account for linguistic changes within specialised settings like the military. The study shows that in less formal environments, where weaker ties exist between officers, airmen, and civilians, there is a greater propensity for lexical variation and slang usage. This supports the stance of Lesley Milroy's Weak Tie Social Network Theory, which argues that loosely connected individuals are less pressured to conform to language norms and are more open to linguistic creativity. Thus, the study enriches our understanding of how hierarchical structures, like that of the military, influence language variation through the activities of social networks.

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APPENDIX I

Glossary of Nigerian Air Force Specialised Jargon and Slang Terms

(1) Airmares or M.R.S.: Medical Registry System, encompassing 'Aeromedical' and 'NAF Medical Centres'.

(2) Air Police: Air Force Police Unit members, also known as 'A.P.' or 'White Cap'.

(3) Cheese: Money, alternatively referred to as 'chadaz' or 'kabadise'.

(4) Cut Out: Unauthorized trip, synonymous with 'give them', 'light one', and 'fire-by-movement'.

(5) Dish: Quick, informal meal; also called 'contribution', 'organise', or 'sharp-sharp'.

(6) Fatigue: Weekly Base cleaning exercise, similarly known as 'clear' or 'chop grass'.

(7) Guardroom: Military cell, equivalently termed 'galo' or 'cooler'.

(8) Kanwi: Food among cadets, also referred to as 'grub' or 'chaun'.

(9) Kolito: Officer cadets via short-service recruitment.

(10) Kurata: Non-commissioned cadets.

(11) Pay Slip: Monthly salary, colloquially termed ‘Authority to Expire Expenditure’, ‘Aisha’, ‘pepper rest’, ‘rainfall’, or ‘Commander Wife don born’.

(12) P.D. (Punishment Duty): Punitive tasks, also known as ‘to serve job’.

(13) P.D.P. (People’s Democratic Party): Favoritism indicator.

(14) P.T. (Physical Training): Scheduled exercises.

(15) Skilled Player: Talented athlete, praised as ‘Ësin’, ‘senior’, ‘star’, ‘superstar’, or ‘ukwalist’.

(16) Wee-wee: Cannabis, alternatively called ‘ganja’, ‘choko’, ‘fish’, or ‘morocco’, with users dubbed ‘Jamaican Soldiers’.

(17) White House: Bank/financial institution, informally termed ‘Alawi’.

(18) Wicked Officer: Strict officer, labelled ‘strict disciplinarian’, ‘bad soldier’, ‘hunch-master’, ‘saboteur’, ‘malamugu’, or ‘mugu’.

APPENDIX II

CHECKLIST OF SELECTED MILITARY EXPRESSIONS AND JARGONS
Date: _____ Venue: _____ Time _____
Number of Participants: _____
Description of participants: Officers__ Order Ranks ___ CIV (Officers) CIV (OR)

S/No	Key Military Expression and Jargons	Alternate Forms	Context of Usage
1.	Air Police		
2.	Airmares		
3.	Cheese		
4.	Cut out		
5.	Dish		
6.	Fatigue		
7.	Guardroom		
8.	Kanwi		
9.	Kolito		
10.	Kurata		
11.	P. D.		
12.	P.D.P.		
13.	P.T.		
14.	Pay Slip		
15.	Skilled Player		
16.	Wee-wee		
17.	White House		
18.	Wicked Officer		

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