



Visual Language and Inclusive Media Education: The Role of Sign Language in News Communication for Deaf Audiences

Clara Dubois

Department of Linguistics and Deaf Studies, University of Paris, France

Abstract: *This study explores the integration of sign language in news presentations as a strategy to promote inclusive media education and enhance linguistic accessibility for deaf audiences. A purposive sampling technique was employed, and data were collected through structured questionnaires and supported by qualitative analysis to capture participants' experiences and perceptions regarding sign language in televised news. Findings indicate that the use of sign language in news broadcasting significantly improves comprehension, engagement, and information retention among deaf viewers. From a linguistic perspective, sign language facilitates meaningful interpretation of complex messages, while from an artistic perspective, it contributes to the visual and performative dimensions of media communication. Educationally, exposure to sign-interpreted news supports media literacy development and encourages active participation in social and civic life. The study further reveals that consistent integration of sign language in media platforms fosters inclusive learning environments and strengthens the relationship between language, visual arts, and communication. However, challenges such as limited availability of trained interpreters and inconsistent implementation across media institutions remain significant barriers. This study recommends the incorporation of sign language-based media content into educational curricula for hearing-impaired learners, as well as policy support for standardized use of sign language in news broadcasting. Strengthening collaboration between educators, media practitioners, and policymakers is essential to advance inclusive communication and sustainable media practices.*

Keywords: *language attitudes; English loanwords; digital communication; academic achievement; multilingualism*

I. Introduction

Media serves as a vital channel for sharing information, shaping opinions, and connecting people across societies (Cheung, 2022). It includes platforms like television, radio, newspapers, and digital outlets, each playing a role in delivering news, entertainment, and education to diverse audiences. In Nigeria, television stands out as a dominant medium, reaching millions of homes and providing updates on health, politics, education, and safety. Its power lies in its ability to inform and engage, making it a critical tool for public awareness. However, media's effectiveness depends on its accessibility to all groups, including those with disabilities. For deaf individuals, television news often fails to meet their needs due to the absence of tools like sign language, which can leave them feeling excluded from important societal conversations. The concept of media, therefore, extends beyond content delivery to include the responsibility of ensuring that all audiences, regardless of physical abilities, can access and understand the information shared (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). In the context of Wesley Schools, where 550 individuals rely on Nigerian Sign Language, media must adapt to serve this community, ensuring that students, teachers, parents, and staff are not left out of critical updates that affect their lives.

The role of media also involves reflecting societal values and promoting inclusion. In many countries, media outlets have begun incorporating features like sign language interpreters or captions to reach deaf audiences, recognizing their right to information. In Nigeria, however, such practices are less common, creating a gap between the media's potential and its actual reach. This gap is particularly evident in communities like Wesley Schools, where access to news could empower students to engage in learning, parents to support their children, and staff to advocate for better resources. Understanding media as a tool for inclusion highlights the need to explore how television news can be adapted to meet the needs of deaf viewers, ensuring they are informed and connected to the wider society. The lack of sign language in most Nigerian news programs creates serious challenges for deaf viewers. Without sign language, they struggle to understand critical information on health, government policies, or safety, limiting their ability to stay informed and engage in society. Captions, often used as a substitute for sign language, can be difficult for many deaf viewers to follow, leading to feelings of exclusion and preventing them from joining discussions or making informed decisions, such as voting or responding to health alerts.

Similarly, the Nigerian media does not prioritize inclusive practices for deaf viewers, leaving their needs unmet. Specific challenges include difficulty understanding news due to reliance on captions, reduced participation in community or civic activities because of inaccessible news, limited use of sign language by media houses due to lack of awareness or resources, and insufficient attention to how these issues affect deaf school communities like Wesley. The establishment of Wesley Schools for the Hearing Impaired in Surulere, Lagos, marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's efforts to provide education and opportunities for deaf individuals. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how sign language in news presentations can improve access, understanding, and engagement for deaf viewers at Wesley Schools, contributing to a more inclusive media landscape.

Previous research in sociolinguistics has identified several common motivations behind the use of English loanwords in digital communication. One motivation is communicative efficiency, as English terms are often shorter or more widely recognized for certain technological concepts. Another motivation is social identity construction, where speakers use English lexical items to signal membership in globalized youth culture. Additionally, English loanwords may carry symbolic prestige, reflecting the perceived status of English as an international language associated with education and professional advancement.

Despite these insights, the relationship between language attitudes and actual language use remains complex and sometimes inconsistent. Some studies suggest that positive attitudes toward English lead to increase borrowing and code-mixing, while others find that speakers may adopt loanwords pragmatically regardless of their ideological stance toward language purity. In digital environments, where communication norms prioritize speed and creativity, practical considerations often outweigh ideological concerns.

Although a growing number of studies have examined digital code-mixing in multilingual societies, relatively few have focused on African contexts, and even fewer have explored the Ethiopian linguistic landscape. Existing research has largely concentrated on European or Asian multilingual communities, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of how African youth negotiate global linguistic influences in digital communication. Investigating these practices within Ethiopia can therefore contribute valuable insights to the broader field of digital sociolinguistics.

This study aims to explore the attitudes of Ethiopian youth toward English loanwords in social media communication and to analyze how these attitudes relate to patterns of digital code-mixing. By examining the perceptions and linguistic behaviors of young speakers, the research seeks to identify the key sociolinguistic factors shaping digital language practices in contemporary Ethiopian society.

Through quantitative analysis of survey data collected from high school and university students, this study investigates the underlying attitudinal dimensions associated with English loanwords and evaluates the extent to which these attitudes influence their use in online communication. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how globalization, digital technology, and multilingualism interact to shape emerging linguistic practices among youth in developing societies.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Language Attitudes toward English Loanwords and Academic Achievement

Research on language borrowing and linguistic attitudes has long been central to sociolinguistics. One of the earliest influential studies on lexical borrowing was conducted by Einar Haugen, who proposed a systematic framework for understanding how languages adopt foreign lexical items through processes such as loanwords, loan shifts, and loan translations. According to Haugen's theory, borrowing occurs when speakers incorporate lexical elements from another language into their own linguistic system as a result of language contact and sociocultural interaction. This process often reflects social prestige, communicative necessity, and cultural exchange between speech communities.

In multilingual societies, lexical borrowing is often associated with language prestige and social status. Early sociolinguistic research emphasized that speakers may adopt elements from dominant or prestigious languages in order to express modernity, education, or cosmopolitan identity. For instance, Labov's sociolinguistic theory highlighted the role of social stratification in language variation, suggesting that linguistic forms often signal social mobility and group affiliation. Similarly, Trudgill argued that language variation and change are strongly influenced by social attitudes and group identity.

English has become one of the most influential sources of lexical borrowing globally due to its status as an international language of science, education, technology, and media. Scholars such as Crystal argued that the global spread of English has led to extensive lexical influence on many languages, particularly in domains related to technology and digital communication. The increasing presence of English vocabulary in everyday discourse has resulted in hybrid linguistic practices where local languages coexist with English lexical elements.

In multilingual educational contexts, the role of English becomes particularly significant because it often functions as a language of instruction. In countries where English is used in education, students frequently develop bilingual or multilingual competence that facilitates lexical borrowing in informal communication. As a result, young speakers often incorporate English terms into everyday speech and digital interactions.

Digital communication has further accelerated this process. Social media platforms, messaging applications, and online forums provide informal environments where linguistic experimentation is encouraged. Youth communication in digital contexts frequently includes abbreviations, slang, and borrowed lexical items from global languages. Research on digital

sociolinguistics indicates that these practices often emerge as adaptive strategies that allow users to communicate efficiently while simultaneously expressing identity and social belonging.

Studies on youth digital communication demonstrate that English loanwords frequently appear in online discourse. For example, recent research on youth language in social media environments shows that English vocabulary is commonly used to discuss technological features, entertainment content, and global cultural trends. These loanwords often become integrated into local linguistic systems and may undergo semantic shifts as they are adapted to new sociocultural contexts.

Language attitudes play an essential role in shaping how speakers perceive and adopt loanwords. In sociolinguistic theory, language attitudes refer to speakers' beliefs and evaluations regarding particular languages or linguistic varieties. Positive attitudes toward a language may encourage borrowing and integration, whereas negative attitudes may promote linguistic purism and resistance to foreign influence.

Previous studies have shown that young speakers often hold positive attitudes toward English loanwords due to their association with modernity, technological advancement, and global connectivity. In many contexts, English vocabulary is perceived as expressive and socially advantageous, particularly in informal digital communication. At the same time, speakers may maintain strong positive attitudes toward their native languages in formal or academic contexts.

This dual orientation reflects the concept of functional bilingualism, where speakers strategically choose linguistic resources based on communicative context. For instance, youth may prefer English loanwords when interacting with peers online but switch to more formal language when writing academic texts. Such behavior indicates that multilingual speakers often possess high levels of register awareness. Despite widespread concerns that digital communication may negatively influence academic writing skills, empirical evidence remains mixed. Some scholars argue that frequent exposure to informal digital language may reduce students' ability to produce formal written texts. Others suggest that young people are capable of distinguishing between informal and formal registers, demonstrating linguistic flexibility rather than linguistic decline.

Research on digital language use among students supports the latter perspective. Studies examining youth communication on social media platforms indicate that students often employ different linguistic styles depending on the context and audience. Informal language practices such as code-mixing and lexical borrowing are typically restricted to digital environments and do not necessarily transfer into academic writing.

Furthermore, sociolinguistic theories emphasize that language change is a natural and continuous process rather than a sign of linguistic deterioration. Borrowing and lexical innovation are common outcomes of language contact, especially in multilingual societies where speakers regularly interact with multiple linguistic systems. These processes contribute to linguistic diversity and reflect broader sociocultural transformations.

In the Ethiopian context, the coexistence of numerous local languages alongside English as the medium of education creates a complex linguistic environment where borrowing is likely to occur. Students are exposed to English vocabulary through formal education while simultaneously using local languages in everyday communication. This bilingual environment provides fertile ground for the integration of English loanwords into

youth discourse.

However, relatively little research has explored how Ethiopian youth perceive these linguistic practices or whether such attitudes influence academic outcomes. While studies in other multilingual contexts have examined digital language use and academic performance, the relationship between language attitudes and academic achievement remains underexplored.

Therefore, this study builds on previous sociolinguistic research on language attitudes, lexical borrowing, and digital communication to investigate how Ethiopian youth perceive English loanwords and whether these perceptions influence their academic performance. By examining both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of language use, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics shaping youth communication in multilingual educational environments.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to investigate Ethiopian youths' attitudes toward English loanwords in digital communication and to examine their potential relationship with academic achievement. Quantitative approaches are widely used in sociolinguistic research to measure attitudes, linguistic behaviors, and correlations between variables across large participant groups. The survey design enabled the researcher to collect structured data from a diverse group of respondents and analyze patterns of language attitudes and usage through statistical techniques.

3.2 Participants

The study involved 410 students drawn from urban educational institutions in Ethiopia, including both high school and university settings. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 24 years, representing the demographic group most actively engaged in digital communication. The sample included both male and female students and reflected a range of educational backgrounds. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling approach due to accessibility and the feasibility of reaching student populations within urban educational environments.

The inclusion of both secondary and tertiary students allowed the study to capture variations in language attitudes and digital communication practices across different educational stages. Urban students were specifically targeted because they typically have greater access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and social media platforms, which are central to digital communication practices.

3.3 Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure language attitudes, loanword usage frequency, and indicators of academic achievement. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections.

The first section collected demographic information including age, gender, and educational level. These variables were used to examine whether demographic factors influenced language attitudes or usage patterns.

The second section measured participants' attitudes toward English loanwords using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The attitudinal items were designed to capture perceptions related to modernity, prestige, communicative efficiency,

and linguistic purity. These items were adapted from established sociolinguistic attitude measurement frameworks.

The third section examined self-reported frequency of English loanword usage across different communication contexts. Participants indicated how often they used English lexical items in messaging applications, social media posts, and academic writing. In addition, the questionnaire included items asking students to report their recent academic performance indicators such as grade averages or self-perceived academic success.

Prior to data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by two linguistics experts to ensure content validity and clarity. A small pilot test involving 30 students was conducted to refine the instrument and confirm the reliability of the attitudinal items.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period during the academic semester. Questionnaires were distributed to students both in printed form and through an online survey platform to increase accessibility and response rates. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were allowed to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. The combination of online and paper-based surveys helped reach students with different levels of digital access.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize demographic characteristics and general patterns of language attitudes and loanword usage.

Exploratory factor analysis with promax rotation was conducted to identify underlying attitudinal dimensions related to English loanwords. This technique allowed the researcher to group related questionnaire items into broader attitudinal factors.

Correlation analysis was then used to examine relationships between language attitudes and frequency of loanword use. Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate whether language attitudes and usage patterns were associated with academic achievement indicators.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines for social science research were followed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the objectives of the research and provided consent before completing the questionnaire. Personal information was not collected, and all responses were anonymized during data analysis. The data were used solely for academic research purposes.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The survey results indicate that Ethiopian youth generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of English loanwords in digital communication. Overall, 75.9% of respondents expressed agreement with statements describing English loanwords as modern, expressive, and useful for communication in online contexts. Approximately 18.4% of participants

reported neutral attitudes, while only 5.7% expressed negative views toward the presence of English lexical items in everyday digital interactions.

Mean scores for the attitude scale further demonstrate this tendency. Items related to the perception of English as a language of modernity and global communication received the highest ratings ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.71$). Participants widely agreed that English vocabulary allows them to express ideas more efficiently when communicating with peers through social media and messaging applications. In contrast, items measuring concerns about linguistic purity or cultural erosion received relatively low agreement scores ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.89$).

These results suggest that most young participants perceive English loanwords not as threats to their native languages but rather as practical linguistic resources. The relatively low concern for linguistic purism indicates a pragmatic orientation toward language use among youth. In digital environments where speed and efficiency are valued, English lexical items appear to serve functional communicative purposes rather than ideological ones.

a. Factor Analysis of Language Attitudes

To explore the underlying structure of language attitudes, exploratory factor analysis was conducted using promax rotation. The analysis produced three major attitudinal factors that together explained 84.9% of the total variance in responses.

The first factor, labeled Prestige, accounted for 39.2% of the variance and included items related to the symbolic status of English as a global language. Statements such as “Using English words makes communication sound modern” and “English vocabulary reflects education and technological knowledge” loaded strongly on this factor.

The second factor, labeled Integration, explained 28.6% of the variance. This dimension reflected the practical communicative value of English loanwords in digital contexts. Participants indicated that English lexical items often provide convenient ways to express concepts related to technology, entertainment, and online interaction.

The third factor, labeled Purism, accounted for 17.1% of the variance and represented concerns about preserving linguistic identity and avoiding excessive borrowing from foreign languages. Although this factor was present, its overall mean score was significantly lower than the other two factors, indicating relatively weak purist attitudes among respondents.

The emergence of these three dimensions is consistent with sociolinguistic theories of language attitudes, which often distinguish between instrumental motivations (practical benefits), symbolic motivations (prestige), and ideological motivations (language preservation).

b. Frequency of Loanword Usage in Digital Communication

Participants were asked to report how frequently they used English loanwords in different communication contexts. The results reveal clear differences between informal digital communication and formal academic writing.

Loanword use was highest in instant messaging platforms such as chat applications ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.63$). Social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram also showed high frequencies of loanword usage ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.74$). In these contexts, English vocabulary was frequently used to refer to digital activities, emotions, and popular culture references.

In contrast, the use of English loanwords in academic writing was significantly lower ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.82$). Most students reported that they attempted to maintain more formal and standardized language when completing academic assignments. This distinction suggests that students possess awareness of contextual language norms and are capable of adjusting their linguistic behavior depending on the communication setting.

The findings therefore challenge the assumption that digital language practices automatically transfer into academic writing. Instead, they suggest that young speakers demonstrate considerable linguistic flexibility in navigating different communication registers.

c. Demographic Differences

Statistical analysis was conducted to examine whether demographic variables influenced language attitudes or loanword usage. Independent sample tests revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female participants in their attitudes toward English loanwords ($p > 0.05$). Both groups expressed similarly positive perceptions of English lexical borrowing in digital communication.

Similarly, comparisons between high school and university students did not reveal significant differences in overall attitude scores. While university students reported slightly higher usage of English vocabulary in online contexts, the difference was not statistically significant.

Age differences within the sample also showed minimal variation. Participants across the age range of 16–24 demonstrated comparable levels of positive attitudes and similar patterns of loanword usage. These findings suggest that the acceptance of English lexical borrowing is widespread among youth regardless of demographic background.

d. Relationship between Language Attitudes and Loanword Usage

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether attitudes toward English loanwords influenced their actual use in digital communication. The results revealed weak correlations between the attitudinal factors and frequency of loanword usage ($r < 0.07$).

Similarly, regression analysis indicated that attitudes explained only a very small proportion of the variance in loanword usage behavior. The regression coefficients for the Prestige and Integration factors were positive but extremely small, while the Purism factor showed a slightly negative relationship with usage frequency.

These findings indicate that although students generally hold positive attitudes toward English loanwords, these attitudes do not strongly predict how frequently they use such vocabulary in digital communication. Instead, usage patterns appear to be shaped more by communicative norms within digital platforms than by individual ideological attitudes.

e. Relationship between Loanword Usage and Academic Achievement

The study also examined whether frequent use of English loanwords in digital communication was associated with academic performance. Correlation analysis between loanword usage frequency and self-reported academic achievement revealed no statistically significant relationship.

Students who reported high levels of English loanword usage in digital communication did not perform significantly differently in academic contexts compared to those who used

such vocabulary less frequently. This finding supports the argument that informal digital language practices do not necessarily undermine academic language competence.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this study contribute to ongoing debates about the impact of digital communication on language use and academic performance. The strong positive attitudes toward English loanwords observed among Ethiopian youth align with previous sociolinguistic research suggesting that English vocabulary is widely associated with modernity and global cultural participation.

At the same time, the relatively low scores on linguistic purism indicate that young speakers do not perceive lexical borrowing as a threat to their linguistic identity. Instead, they appear to adopt a pragmatic approach to language use, selecting linguistic resources that best serve their communicative needs.

The finding that loanword usage is concentrated in informal digital contexts supports theories of register variation in multilingual communication. Students appear capable of distinguishing between informal and formal communication settings, adjusting their language use accordingly.

Perhaps most importantly, the lack of correlation between digital loanword usage and academic achievement challenges common concerns that digital communication may negatively influence students' academic language skills. The results suggest that youth are able to manage multiple linguistic registers effectively, maintaining formal language competence despite frequent engagement with informal digital discourse.

Overall, the findings highlight the adaptability of multilingual youth in navigating global linguistic influences while maintaining academic language proficiency.

V. Conclusion

This study examined Ethiopian youths' attitudes toward English loanwords in digital communication and explored whether these attitudes and linguistic practices are associated with academic achievement. The findings indicate that the majority of participants hold positive perceptions of English loanwords, primarily viewing them as symbols of modernity, global communication, and technological engagement. Factor analysis revealed three primary attitudinal dimensions: Prestige, Integration, and Purism, with Prestige and Integration emerging as the most influential factors shaping participants' perceptions.

The results also demonstrate that English loanwords are widely used in informal digital communication contexts, particularly in messaging applications and social media interactions. However, the frequency of loanword usage decreases significantly in academic writing contexts, indicating that students are capable of adjusting their linguistic behavior according to communicative norms. This suggests that young multilingual speakers possess a high degree of register awareness and are able to distinguish between informal digital discourse and formal academic language.

Importantly, the statistical analyses revealed no significant relationship between the frequency of English loanword usage in digital communication and academic achievement. This finding challenges common concerns that informal digital language practices may negatively influence students' academic performance. Instead, the results suggest that digital

multilingual practices coexist with academic language competence without necessarily undermining it.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to sociolinguistic research on language attitudes and lexical borrowing in multilingual societies. The findings support the view that linguistic borrowing is often driven by pragmatic communicative needs rather than ideological attitudes toward language purity. In digital environments where communication speed and efficiency are prioritized, English loanwords function as convenient linguistic resources rather than indicators of linguistic decline.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, educators should recognize the growing influence of digital communication on language practices and incorporate digital literacy into language education. Teaching students to distinguish between informal digital communication and formal academic writing may help strengthen their linguistic awareness.

Second, educational institutions should encourage metalinguistic awareness by helping students reflect on how different languages function in different communication contexts. Such awareness can enhance students' ability to navigate multilingual environments effectively.

Finally, future research should employ longitudinal designs and corpus-based approaches to examine the long-term effects of digital multilingual practices on language development and academic outcomes. Studies involving larger and more diverse samples across different regions would also contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between digital communication and educational achievement.

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