International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7 (4.21) (2018) 102-106

International Journal of Engineering & Technology

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJET

Research paper



Social Media and Its Impact on Students' Writing Skills

Harwati Hashim, Melor Md Yunus*, Nur Shazana M. Ibrahim, Ivy Elmira Jeri, Muhammad Afifie Mohamad Sukr, Noor Syahirah Nazor Ilahi & Muhammad Afif Nor Hassim

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
**Corresponding author E-mail: melor@ukm.edu.my*

Abstract

Nowadays, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are very popular among the young generations and they are easily influenced by these technologies. However, there are negative influences of using social media towards the language acquisition of the young generations. The aim of this paper is to identify positive and negative impacts of social media on students writing skills. To achieve the aim of the study, primary research was conducted using questionnaires which were distributed among 88 secondary school students at an academy in a state in Malaysia. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative. Data were then analysed and reported in tables using frequencies and percentages. The findings showed that there the students' writing skills was impacted by the use of social media.

Keywords: *21st century learning; ESL learning; impacts; Social media; writing skills.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, social media such as Facebook [1], Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp [2] are very popular among the young generations [3] [4] and they are easily influenced by these technologies [5][6]. However, there are negative influences of using social media on the language acquisition of the young generations. Most of the time they keep on connected with other people through social media, thus influence them of the trend of using a new language style [7].

With the frequency of using technologies as well as smart phones for texting, they are learning and creating new language through their conversation in social media [8]. They are using many different types of language in the social media like abbreviations or slang. Therefore, teachers are worrying about their student's language acquisition which will give effect on their writing skill. The young generations often develop some new popular terms like BRB for "be right back" which is developed into unique words. Although they are using this term with their friends informally, but unintentionally they are acquiring these languages and they tend to use it in their formal writing and speaking. As a result, they are destroying their language in certain aspects.

With the increasing number of social media sites in existence and the increasing number of registered users, therefore there is no doubt that social media is influencing the writing and speaking of the students [9]. It will become new challenge for teachers to make sure students comply to the rules of language. For that reason, in this research, the aim is to investigate how social media influences the writing skills. The main objective of the paper is to identify positive and negative impact of social media on students writing skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Human Learning

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning explicates learning as a social procedure and the instigation of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development. In the digital era, the process of writing on social networking technologies, particularly social media, was normally integrated by students for interaction and socializing purposes. Because of social interaction process is not always done on a faceto-face basis, people nowadays especially students often find it is easier to converse with technology as they are no longer constrained by time and location. Text messages, image, voice can be received and responded to without meeting each other in person.

Technology has made it possible for human social interaction to happen in a great variety of forms. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the digital form of social interaction using social media and its influence on its users' academic writing, which is a significant part of the learning that is supposed to happen especially in educational setting. Hence, the major hypothetical basis of this study can be built upon the framework of [10] sociocultural theory of human learning. Sociocultural theory brings a great influence on learning and teaching profession.

The theory encourages learning, including second language (L2) acquisition, a semiotic process where involvement in social facilitated activities is important [11]. It believes that learning in an L2 context should be a collaborative achievement and not an isolated individual's effort where the learner works unassisted and unfacilitated. Hence, with the boom of 21st century, social media, the popular online social networking websites/applications like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, serves as a rich instructional

Copyright © 2018 Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

writing medium consistent with the goals and assumptions of sociocultural theory and the process approach to writing [12]. These technology applications can be used for sharing of information, communication platform, and importantly for educational purposes.

2.2 Internet Slang

Technology is used to promote education in writing in the digital age. With the advance of the technology and with the help of internet, the new internet language is created. This internet language creates new forms of writing which people especially younger generations use for communication. The language which is also known as internet slang refers to different kind of slang used by different people in communicating on the internet.

Internet slang provides a channel which facilitates and constrains the ability to communicate in ways that are fundamentally different in terms of various writing aspects. The usage of internet slang is very common in social media as the language is easier, instant and short which saves time when communicating online. There are many types of internet slang and the variety used differ according to the user and its context. The slang usually refers to the abbreviation, acronym, new jargons that younger people used on the Internet.

2.3 The Impacts of Social Media on Students' Writing Skills

Students are more exposed and influenced by social media since it is a medium of social interaction in present day. Besides that, social media has been used in many ways for different purposes. For example, YouTube is used to watch video and online streaming, Wattpad for online novel sharing and many more. In education setting, social media is used for sharing notes and informational videos online, as well as is used for blended-learning purpose. The three top of social media tool that college students normally used are Facebook, Wikipedia and YouTube, for social engagement, direct communication, speed of feedback, and relationship building [7].

Previous research implies that writing associated with texting and social media are now infiltrating academic writing. The main issues that most studies are finding deal with spelling, grammar, sentence or paragraph structure and formality. Formality is an issue because students are writing papers in a more casual tone. In Jamie Perkins' study he noticed that people were not using complete sentences and were using a shorthand approach in their formal writings.

This also relates to grammar problems where students tend to use internet slang, abbreviations to keep writing short hence, influenced their formal writing. This attitude and form of writing are unacceptable for academic and professional writing. Hence, this study will discover the types of academic writing errors being committed by students that are influenced by the utilization of social media for communication. Throughout the data sets, the researchers were keen to identify how the formal writing process is altered by the use of texting on social media.

3. Methodology

The study intends to investigate the impacts of social media to students' writing skills. The study will determine how social media is beneficial in education as well as useful for future needs. To achieve the aim of the study, primary research is conducted using questionnaires distributed to 88 secondary school students at an academy in a state in Malaysia. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and data were then analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1 displays the students' perception towards the use of English on social media.

Table 1. Students' perception towards the use of English on social media

	Statement	Yes		No	
1	I prefer English when using social media.	68	74.7%	23	25.3%
2	I believe that social media is the best platform to learn English.	71	78.0%	20	22.0%
3	I feel comfortable to practice English on social media with my friends.	64	70.3%	27	29.7%
4	I feel confident to use English on social media with my friends.	48	52.7%	43	47.3%
5	I feel good to use English language on social media.	66	72.5%	25	27.5%
6	My friends will correct my mistakes on my status or comment.	65	71.4%	26	28.6%
7	I am conscious about grammatical structure when I write on social media (chat, comment and write status).	71	78.0%	20	22.0%
8	I am conscious about spelling when I write on social media (chat, comment and write status).	70	76.9%	21	23.0%
9	I am conscious about punctuation when I write on social media (chat, comment and write status).	62	68.1%	29	31.9%

Based on Table 1, English language is prevailing among students when they are online. The first question proves that students really prefer English in their online communicative activities with 68(74.7%) students who use English and 28 (25.3%) who do not. Besides, a total of 71 (78.0%) students believe that social media is the best platform to learn English while the other 20 (22.0%) students against the notion. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. A total of 64 (70.3%) students agree that they feel comfortable to practice English with their friends online while 27 (29.7%) students disagree.

Next, a total of 48 (52.7%) students agree that they feel comfortable to practice English with their friends while the other 43 (47.3%) do not feel comfortable in doing so. A total of 66 (72.5%) students feel good to use English on social media while 25 (27.5%) students don not feel good about it regardless of the online activities they do. As stated in the result, a great number of 65 (71.4%) students agree that their friends will correct the mistakes (i.e. grammatical errors, contextualisation, etc.) on their status or comments while 26 (28.6%) students disagree. Based on the result, a total number of 71 (78.0%) students agree that they are conscious about grammatical structure when posting something on social media but the remaining 20 (22.0%) students are not aware of that. Besides, 70 (76.9%) of them agree that they are aware of the spelling when writing on social media but not the other 21 (23.0%) students. There are 62 (68.1%) students who are conscious of the use of correct punctuation when constructing sentences on social media but the remaining 29 (31.9%) students are unaware of that.

The research was also taken part in inspecting how social media helps the students in writing skills. The tabulated data in Table 2 presents the varied quantity of students who have their own personal views upon how social media benefits them in writing.

Table 2. Personal Opinion about the Use of Social Media in Writing

	Statement	Yes		No	
1	I think online chatting helps me to improve my writing.	60	66.0%	31	34.1%
2	I think social media (writing status, comment) helps me to improve my writing.	72	79.1%	19	20.9%
3	I think social media language influence my formal writing	53	58.2%	38	41.8%

	positively.				
4	I use social media to enhance my writing skill.	62	68.1%	29	31.9%
5	I use social media for learning and academic purposes.	73	80.2%	18	19.8%

From the first item in Table 2, a sum of 60 (66.0%) students think that online chatting does help them to improve their writing while 31(34.1%) students do not think such activity would work on them the same way. Apart from that, social media activity such as writing status and posting comments would facilitate them in writing with 72 (79.1%) students who agree with the statement. In contrast, a total of 19 (20.9%) students disagree with the statement.

In term of knowledge skill, a total of 53 (58.2%) students agree that the language of social media positively influence their formal writing while the rest of 38 (41.8%) students disagree. Additionally, a total of 62 (68.1%) students use social media for the purpose of enhancing their writing skill while the other 29 (31.9%) students do not use social media for the same reason. A sum of 73 (80.2%) students admits that they use social media for learning and academic purposes. The remaining of 18 (19.8%) students would not use social media for learning and academic purposes.

Apart from that, this study also investigates analyse the common errors that the students would likely do on social media. The common errors comprise of the use of capitalisation, punctuation, spelling, new and unusual jargons as well as Acronyms. Students were asked about the errors they made on social media like code switching, letter homophone, the combination of number and letter, the use of Manglish, repetition and eccentric spelling.

Table 3 indicates the number of students who do not use capital letters correctly on social media. A total of 55 (60.4%) students are admitted using the capitalisations incorrectly sometimes, whereas 17 (18.7%) students are stated doing it frequently and 19(20.9%) of all students are claimed to have never done that.

Table 3. The Incorrect use of Capital Letters on Social Media

	Common Errors	Number of Students and Percentage					
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never	
1	**Capitalization** Use capital letters wrongly. Example: OKAY, I Don't Undertand.	17	18.7%	55	60.4%	19	20.9%

Besides, the incorrect use of punctuation is commonly executed by the students. For example, the repetition of question marks in one question. Based on Table 4, it is clear that majority of them which is 53(58.2%) students sometimes use punctuation incorrectly on social media followed by 27(29.7%) who do it frequently and 11(12.1%) students who have never done it.

Table 4. The Incorrect Use of Punctuation on Social Media

	Common errors	Number of Students and Percentage					
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never	
2	**Punctuation** Use punctuation wrongly Example: Really???? I think….	27	29.7 %	53	58.2 %	11	12.1 %

One of the major errors includes the wrong spelling of words. For instance, the word don't is commonly written as dun and who as hu. Based on the Table 5, majority of them which is 47(52.6%) students claim to have never misspelled a word or missed any alphabet in a word while writing on social media. On the other hand, a sum of 29(31.9%) students sometimes changes the spelling of a word and 15(16.5%) of them does it frequently.

Table 5. The Misspelling and Missing Words on Social Media

	Common errors	Number of Students and Percentage					
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never	
3	**Misspelling and missing words** Change the spelling of a word. Example: dun (don't), dunno (don't know), hu (who).	15	16.5%	29	31.9%	47	51.6%

People are now getting used to new jargons to represent their social media activities. These words are also referred as new internet language. The words like blogging, tweeting, facetiming and so forth have been rampantly used by the social media users including the students. From Table 6, there is a little difference between the numbers of students who sometimes use new jargons and those who do not ever use them. A sum of 38(41.8%) students uses new jargons sometimes, while 33(36.3%) students have never used them and 20(22.0%) students use them frequently.

Table 6. The Use of New Jargons on Social Media

	Common errors	Number of Students and Percentage					
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never	
4	**New jargons** New internet language. Example: Texting (typing a message), googling (searching the internet), tweeting (posting a tweet on Twitter).	20	22.0%	38	41.8%	33	36.3%

Table 6 indicates the use of unusual jargons such as noob, meme, troll and so forth on social media. Based on the result, both groups of students who sometimes use such words and those who never used them collected the same number which is 34(37.4%) students respectively. However, there are only 23(25.3%) students who frequently use unusual jargons on social media.

Table 7. The Use of New Jargons on Social Media

Common errors		Number of Students and Percentage					
		Frequently		Sometimes		Never	
5	**Unusual jargons** Use weird, unusual jargons to replace the English word. Example: noob, pwned, meme, troll.	23	25.3%	34	37.4%	34	37.4%

The use of acronyms has been synonymous with our daily life especially when writing messages on paper or electronic devices. Acronyms are known as abbreviations formed from the initial letters of a word such as LOL (Laughing out Loud), OMG (Oh My God), FYI (For Your Information) and so forth. Table 8 illustrates the use of acronyms by the students on social media. Based on the result, there is a slight difference between the numbers of students who sometimes use acronyms and those who frequently use them which are 39(42.9%) and 38(41.8%) students respectively. A sum of 14(15.4%) students claims to have never used them.

Table 8. The Use of Acronyms on Social Media

Common errors		**Number of Students and Percentage**					
		Frequently		**Sometimes**		**Never**	
6	**Acronyms** Abbreviations formed from the initial letters of a word. Example: LOL (Laughing out loud), OMG (Oh my god).	38	41.8%	39	42.9%	14	15.4%

People tend to leave out letters from a word to make it shorter when writing on social media to save time and limited characters on certain social media platforms. According to the result, both groups of students who sometimes shorten words and those who have never shortened any word collected the same number which is 35(38.5%) students respectively. However, there are only 21(23.1%) students who frequently shorten words on social media.

Table 9. The Use of Shortened Words on Social Media

Common errors		**Number of Students and Percentage**					
		Frequently		**Sometimes**		**Never**	
7	**Shortening of words** Leaving out letters from a word to make it shorter. Example: msg (message), rly (really), sleepin (sleeping).	21	23.1%	35	38.5%	35	38.5%

This study has two major components. First, it is to describe the types of writing errors that are influenced by social media usage. Second, regarding the access of texting in social media style into academic writing. More than half of the respondents think that online chatting helps them improve their writings and that social media plays a role in it as well. Nearly half of the respondents do not think that social media influence their writing positively even if some of them use social media to enhance their writing skill. However, more than half of the respondents use social media for learning and academic purposes. This fits into the Vygostsky's Sociocultural Theory of Human Learning which "encourages learning, including second language (L2) acquisition, a semiotic process where involvement in social facilitated activities is important."

In relation to the impacts of social media on students' writing, the respondents claimed that they could learn magniloquent or bombastic words from the statuses shared on the social media platforms. These would in turn, help them to write better, learn new languages and read sample essays that are made available online. Aside from that, the respondents also stated that they could self-learn by utilising video-sharing websites like YouTube where educational videos are accessible.

However, mishandling of social media can lead to negative effects of students' writing. According to the responses, some of the respondents believe that social media platforms do not help to improve their writing, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling or other linguistic features. Some students might even plagiarised works of others with the social media being so readily available with many sources. Not only that, they also agreed that social media influenced them to code-switch in their writing. Majority of the respondents feel more comfortable to use informal English when interacting on social media, and the formality is only applied only when they want to improve their writing skills. All of these reaffirms the claim that writing associated with texting and social media are now infiltrating academic writing.

5. Conclusion and Implication

As a conclusion, the use of social media has given impacted on one particular aspect which is the performance of student's writing skills. Students were found to have both positive and negative impacts on their writing. The positive impacts of social media include the learning of bombastic words from posted comments or status. Moreover, social media enables students to write better, improve their communication skills by interacting through visual conversation, learn new languages and read sample essays that are available online. Video sharing websites like YouTube assisted students to write better through self-learning. Other positive impacts are overcoming anxiety, generate new ideas for their essay writing and correcting their pronunciation. Meanwhile, social media also does have its own negative sides. If the students failed to manage the social media rightly, it would cause their writing negatively. Some of the students think that social media would not contribute much to improve their grammar, vocabulary, spelling or other linguistic features. One of the most dangerous threat is if the students plagiarized content from the internet. Lastly, students tend to use informal English as they feel more comfortable to converse and interact online. This would not be suitable in a formal writing situation and students definitely would face troubles to separate between informal and formal writings. That is why, it is true that social media has an important role in student's daily life, however, it could come in both forms which are positive and negatives ways.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to acknowledge Akademi Menara Gading for allowing the research to be conducted and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for funding this research under research grant no. GG-2018-001.

References

[1] Kamnoetsin T. Social media use: A critical analysis of facebook's impact on collegiate EFL students' English writing in Thailand.Dissertations and Theses (2014). http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations

[2] Zaki AA, Md Yunus M. Potential of mobile learning in teaching of ESL academic writing. English Language Teaching. 2015 May 28;8(6):11-19. Available from, DOI: 10.5539/elt.v8n6p11

[3] Yunus MM, Nordin N, Salehi H, Embi MA, Salehi Z. Future of ICT as a pedagogical tool in ESL teaching and learning. Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology. 2014;7(4):764-770.

[4] Abe P, Jordan NA. Integrating social media into the classroom curriculum. About Campus. 2013 Mar;18(1):16-20.ABOUT CAMPUS. https://blogs.ubc.ca/georginamartin/files/2014/10/IntegratingSocial-Media-Into-the-Classroom-Curriculum.pdf
[5] Said NEM, Yunus M, Doring LK, Asmi A, Aqilah F, Li LKS. Blogging to enhance writing skills: A survey of students' perception and attitude. Asian Social Science. 2013 Nov 28;9(16 SPL):95-101. Available from, DOI: 10.5539/ass.v9n16p95
[6] Manan NA, Alias AA, Pandian A. Utilizing a Social Networking Website as an ESL Pedagogical Tool in a Blended Learning Environment: An Exploratory Study. International Journal of Social Sciences & Education. 2012 Jan 1;2(1).
[7] Wen H. Use of social networking technologies: Effects on college students' academic writing.
[8] Hashim H, Yunus MM, Embi MA, Ozir NA. Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) for ESL Learners: A Review of Affordances and Constraints. Sains Humanika. 2017 Mar 29;9(1-5).
[9] Saad NSM, Yunus MM, Embi MA, Mohd Yasin MS. Conducting online posting activity on a social networking site (SNS) to replace traditional learner diaries. In Cases on Critical and Qualitative Perspectives in Online Higher Education. IGI Global. 2014. p. 489-508. Available from, DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-5051-0.ch025
[10] Vygotsky L. Social development theory. Instructional Design. 1978.
[11] Liu M, Moore Z, Graham L, Lee S. A look at the research on computer-based technology use in second language learning: A review of the literature from 1990–2000. Journal of research on technology in education. 2002 Mar 1;34(3):250-73.
[12] Bouchikhi M, Dounyazed B, Sabrina A. The Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Writing in the Department of English at Tlemcen University (Doctoral dissertation).Skills You Need. 2011. Formal and Informal Writing Styles.