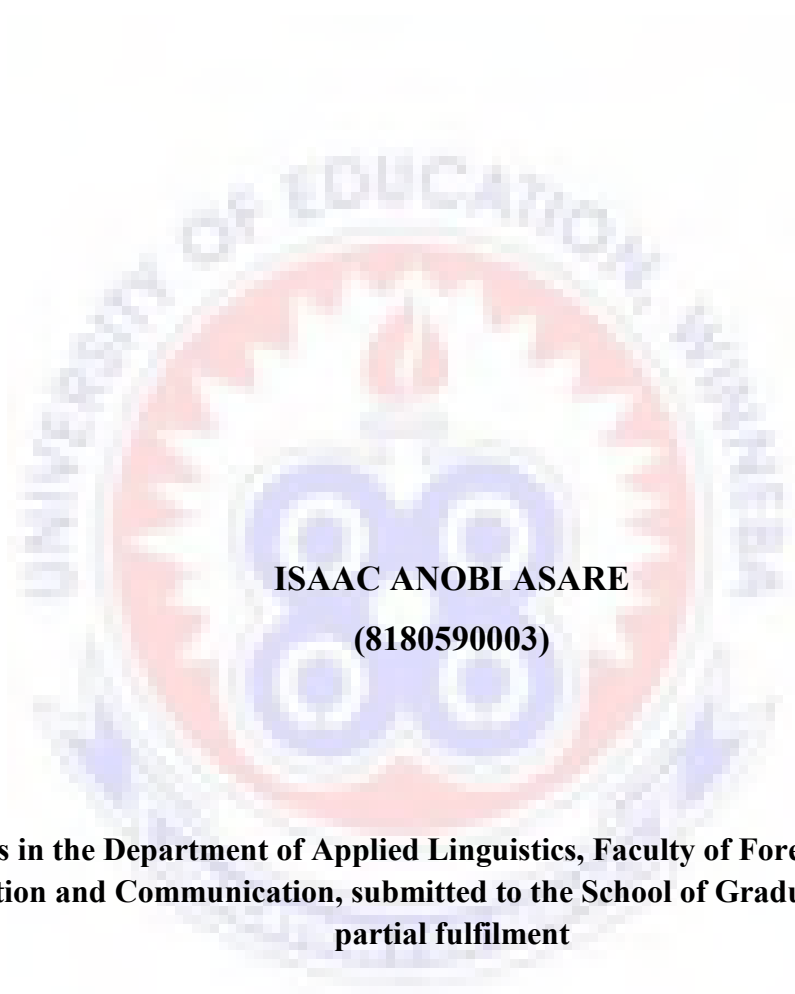


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON STUDENTS' WRITING: THE
CASE OF MOUNT MARY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**



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**A thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign Languages
Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, in
partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Teaching English as a Second Language – TESL)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

SEPTEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Isaac Anobi Asare, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my elder brother Mr. Alex Asare Anobi who has been my mentor and inspirer.



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Glory and honour be ascribed to the name of the almighty God for his unconditional love, his wisdom, knowledge and divine favour in all diverse ways for accomplishing the research to a successful end.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at assessing the effects of social media language (net language) on the formal writing of Mount Mary College of Education students. A total of 150 students made up of 60 males and 90 females who study English language and French were used for this research. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The Initialism Theory which was modified by David Crystal was used as a framework for this study. Respondents' whatsapp screen shots, marked quiz papers and group assignments were analysed. The study concluded that social media do affect respondents' formal writing when they write individually. However, it does not affect students when they work in groups. Another conclusion that was drawn from the study was that respondents use all kinds of social media language such as clipping, abbreviation, alphanumeric homophony, vowel deletion, and graphone among others. The study revealed that most of the respondents use social media or internet language when typing on social media to facilitate their communication process.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The whole world in the 21st century is very joyous over improvements in communication technology. According to Kolan and Dzandza (2018), the advent of the internet in the 1990's led to major developments in the world of communication, hence the introduction of social networking sites. The evolution of the internet has led to its usage as the best medium of communication whereby two-third (2/3) of the internet world's population visit social networking sites thus, serving as communication and connection tools. These networking sites are referred to as social media (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The first social media site is called Six Degrees.com which was launched in 1997. Then from 1998 to 2001, other social media sites such as Asian Avenue, Black Avenue, Blackplanet, MiGente, Ryze.com, Friendster among others also sprang up (Cohen, 2003). Contemporary social media sites were also created between 2003 to 2011. These sites include Facebook (2004), twitter (2006), Whatsapp (2007) and Instagram (2010). Interestingly, all these sites were created in the United States of America. Just after their creation, they started spreading very fast into other parts of the world including Ghana.

It is an undeniable fact that social media is playing a great role in the life of many by connecting and linking people far and near. The young generation (students) like to follow the new trend as well as imitate their peers. Nowadays, the young imitate what others are doing on social media, what activities people like most, and they are

inspired by that. Young generations like to observe, imitate and try to acquire their behaviours and finally portray those behaviours through their actions. Bandura (1997) said that behaviour is learnt through observation, imitation and modeling from others. One thing that is obvious is that most people interact on social media sites through writing and during the process of writing, students tend to imitate the netspeak language from their friends or peers. Now, one can reach millions of people through a single post.

In recent times, people can easily communicate to each other through social media and most of them prefer to communicate through writing. Nowadays, the writing of the younger generation as well as students is changing rapidly. They use abbreviated forms on social media to express their thought and this sometimes affected their formal writing. Social media do not only affect students writing but also help students to interact with friends and relatives.

According to Brown (2005) Schroeder, Minocha and Schneider (2010) cited by Kolan and Dzandza (2018), “the factors for adoption of social media are the progressively ubiquitous access, convenience, functionality and flexibility of social technologies have made adoption of social media very easy”. Some scholars insist that writing has a negative influence on standard writing, spelling and grammar (Siraj & Ullah, 2007). A study conducted by the Jackson City Patriot Staff and Jamie Perkins, found out that social media sites are not encouraging proper Grammar usage. Twitter for example only allows people post tweets of 140 characters which does not always allow for complete sentences, and usually results in run-ons and fragments. Perkins (2014) believes that the short character count is leading to shorter attention span when it comes to writing and it affects people daily sentences. This also leads to poor word choice. Students tend to use abbreviations to keep text short which had led students

using these abbreviated forms in their essays, quizzes, assignments and even examinations. The phenomenon of students' usage of abbreviated forms in their writing has become very common among students worldwide including students of Mount Mary College of Education as well. Social media is accessed through internet connectivity together with technological tools such as phones, laptops, desktops, ipads among others.

According to the National Communications Authority (NCA, 2018), Ghana is one of the first countries in sub-Saharan Africa to be connected to the internet in August 1995. This connectivity became possible with effort of several organizations such as Network Computer System, Pipex International, The Ministry of Transport and Communication, Ghana Telecom and British Telecom (NCA, 2008). In 2010, around 5% of the entire Ghanaian population was connected to the internet. This figure increased a year later to 10 %. In 2009, there were nearly one million internet users in Ghana (Graphic.com.gh). An annual report released by global digital agencies *we are social and hoot suite* indicated that ten million one hundred and ten thousand (10, 110, 000) Ghanaians are using the internet as of 2017. Since 1995 when internet was introduced in Ghana, there has been an upsurge of its users.

Table 1: Internet usage statistics in Ghana from the year 2000 to 2016

Year	Internet Users**	Penetration (% of Pop)	Total Population	Non-Users (Internetless)	1Y User Change	1Y User Change	Population Change
2016*	7,958,675	28.4 %	28,033,375	20,074,700	14 %	976,984	2.27 %
2015*	6,981,691	25.5 %	27,409,893	20,428,202	37.9 %	1,919,024	2.33 %
2014	5,062,667	18.9 %	26,786,598	21,723,931	57.3 %	1,844,442	2.38 %
2013	3,218,225	12.3 %	26,164,432	22,946,207	18.9 %	510,501	2.43 %
2012	2,707,724	10.6 %	25,544,565	22,836,841	20.7 %	464,159	2.47 %
2011	2,243,565	9 %	24,928,503	22,684,938	18.3 %	346,782	2.51 %
2010	1,896,783	7.8 %	24,317,734	22,420,951	47 %	606,787	2.55 %
2009	1,289,996	5.4 %	23,713,164	22,423,168	30.7 %	302,946	2.58 %
2008	987,050	4.3 %	23,115,919	22,128,869	13.8 %	119,720	2.61 %
2007	867,330	3.9 %	22,528,041	21,660,711	45.1 %	269,541	2.62 %
2006	597,789	2.7 %	21,951,891	21,354,102	52.6 %	206,104	2.63 %
2005	391,684	1.8 %	21,389,514	20,997,830	9.5 %	33,895	2.63 %
2004	357,789	1.7 %	20,840,493	20,482,704	47.7 %	115,534	2.64 %
2003	242,255	1.2 %	20,305,396	20,063,141	47.4 %	77,957	2.61 %
2002	164,298	0.8 %	19,788,181	19,623,883	325.8 %	125,709	2.56 %
2001	38,589	0.2 %	19,293,804	19,255,215	33.4 %	9,671	2.49 %
2000	28,918	0.2 %	18,824,994	18,796,076	50 %	9,634	2.4 %

* Estimate for July 1, 2016

** **Internet User** = individual who can access the Internet at home, via any device type and connection.

Source: *Internet Live Stats* (www.InternetLiveStats.com)

Elaboration of data by *International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Bank, and United Nations Population Division*.

Based on the table, internet users in Ghana rose from 28,918 in year 2000 to 7,958,675 in 2016. The more people access the internet, the higher the number of social media users.

In recent times, social media usage among students is no more limited to laptops and desktop computers but through smart phones. Negussie and Ketena (2014) research in Jima University, Ethiopia, showed that most students use laptops and smart phones to access social media such as Facebook. This study is supported by another study conducted by Ahmed and Qazi (2011) in America that most students access social media with the use of their phones. Mehmood and Taswir (2013) conducted a research in Oman and found that 80% of students access social media by their mobile phones. Based on these studies, there is an indication that more people are now accessing social media with the use of their mobile phones. These findings are not different from what pertains in Mount Mary College of education where students are seen visibly using their phones to access social media.

The usage of social media in Mount Mary College of Education is very common. Almost all the students access social media by the use of their smart phones. Most of these students buy these smart phones because they want to access social media. The popular social media sites these students visit are Whatsapp messenger and Facebook. They use these social media sites to communicate with their friends, parents and family member as well as their teachers.

Most of these students are seen browsing on these sites during social gatherings such as morning devotions, dining sections, matriculation ceremonies among others. The students also use these social media sites in the classroom even during instructional hours. During break time too, when the students are loitering on the college campus,

the researcher observed that some of them fidget with their phones and chat on social media. The students also use their phones to access social media in their dormitories. The common medium of communication among these students is texting. As people communicate on these sites, they meet different people from different countries and they also begin to learn their way of writing on social media. As these students visit these social media sites, they use different types of communication in the social media world like netspeak or overuse of abbreviations. So it undeniable fact that our real world social lives have got some form of transformation. The abbreviation “LoL” has now got more than one meaning. LoL is now used like a kind of punctuation to add a joking or cheerful intonation to messages. Its meaning has gone beyond literal laughter. Though students are using these abbreviations and shorthand informally and unintentionally with their friends, they are acquiring and getting used to these languages and use them in their formal writing such as quizzes, examinations, assignment among others. Netspeak which is supposed to be an informal language has now found its way into public discourse and now affecting students’ spellings, grammar and their academic performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The internet is today the most important source of information. The growing dimensions of the use of social media by students cannot be underestimated (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018). Due to the popularity of social media, a lot of researchers have carried out studies on its impact (Choney, 2010; Mehmood & Taswir, 2013; Kisk, 2008; Jacobson & Forste, 2011). These researchers averred that the use of social media networks and the internet is one of the important factors that can influence educational performance of students both positively and adversely. Their findings were that social media affect students’ academic performance including their writing.

Ndaku et al., (2013) and Ahmed and Qazi (2011) also noted that there was no significant relation between time spent on social media networks and students' academic performance. Students tend to use abbreviated forms to chat with friends and get used to it thereby replicating the same errors during examinations (Obi, Bulus, Adamu & Sala'at, 2012). Students from the basic schools, second cycle and the tertiary levels have been using social media for different purposes. After marking students' class exercises, assignments, end of semester examinations, it was revealed that most students use abbreviated forms which affected the meaning of what they intended to communicate. According to O'Connor (2005), netspeak violates the rules of proper English in the aspects of capitalization, punctuation and sentence structure. O'Connor's view was supported by Oluga and Babalola (2013) who also said that netspeak affects students' spellings thereby preventing them to get the correct orthography. This clearly indicates that social media is causing harm to students. This usage of abbreviated forms of students could be attributed to the influence of social media usage. Additionally, several researches have been carried out in Ghana's Universities and Polytechnics with regard to the impacts of social media on students.

For instance, Kolan and Dzandza (2018) carried out a research among University of Ghana students. They came out with the findings that a number of students were addicted to social media. A similar research by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) conducted at the Koforidua Polytechnic found out that social media have negative influence on academic performance of students and that there is a direct relationship between the use of social media sites and academic performance. The work of Appeanti and Danso (2014) at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) revealed that students of UEW had positive views about the academic use of social media. Mingle and Adams (2015) did a similar work on the effects of social media on Senior

High Schools. They came out with the finding that the amount of time spent on social media sites robs students of enough time for productive academic activities. Mahama (2016) also conducted a research on the use of social media among Senior High Schools using Armed Forces Senior High School, Accra, as a case study. She came out with the findings that social media help students in their academic work. Amofa-Serwaah and Dadzie (2015) researched on social media in basic schools. Their study came out with both positive and negative findings. The former shows that social media do not affect the behaviour of children while the latter finding showing that social media distract pupils' attention from their studies and frequent usage of Pidgin English by the pupils.

In relation to this particular study, there have been similar publications and articles such as those from Marwa and Sabrina (2017). They carried out a research in the Department of English, University of Tlemcen, Algeria. They found out that texting on social media sites affected students' academic writing. Their finding was corroborated by Abdul-Fattah (2012) when he carried a research in a private University in Saudi Arabia which revealed that students' writing on whatsapp messenger have significant effect on their writing skills. Nutakor (2015) established that the trends of writing on social media sites affect students' spellings and their academic performance. Nutakor carried out her work on four Senior High Schools in the Agona West Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. Yousaf and Ahmed (2013) research indicated that netspeak has both positive and negative impact on writing skills of students. The research design used for this study was quantitative research design. Other studies carried out in relation to this research are those from (O'Connor, 2005; Shaughnessey, 2008 & Sakowicz, 2005). These scholars found out that social media sites have negative influence on the writing of students.

However, Ghaleb (2013); Harris and Dilts (2014); Fishman et al. (2005) and Yunus et al. (2013) also stated in their findings that social media is an effective tool in improving the students writing skills. All the studies mentioned in relation to this study have been conducted mostly in Senior High Schools and more especially at the universities.

This study is, therefore, essential to fill the gap that has been created in Colleges of Education in Ghana and other parts of the world because most studies carried out in this topic focused more on universities and Senior High Schools. The problem that necessitated this research to be carried out is that students in the Colleges of Education are using shorthand or netspeak in their quizzes, assignments, examinations and it is affecting their spellings and their academic performance. Since colleges of students are trained to teach at our basic schools, if the issue of netspeak on their writing is not checked it will have great impact on the younger generations. Hussein and Lingwood (2012) indicated in their research that one of the effects of netspeak on students' writing is that it is a laid back to Standard English. Achimbe and Achimbe (2011) defined Standard English as the language spoken by people of higher strata whereby the more you move down in the social strata, the more English becomes a non-standard. According to Widdowson (1994) English is preserved through a brand of exclusive quality known as the Standard English. Widdowson further stated that Standard English is well suited for written communication including its grammar, lexis and spellings. It is imperative for the student teachers to have good written communication devoid of errors and netspeak.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine and explore the effects of social media on the writings of students of Mount Mary College of Education.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to find out the impact of social media on students' writing. These are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To ascertain the trend of social media writing by Mount Mary College of Education students.
2. To examine the effects of these trends on the writings of Mount Mary College of Education students.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the trends of social media writing among students of Mount Mary College of Education?
2. What are the effects of these trends on the writings of Mount Mary College of Education students?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the government, teachers, language planners, learners and curriculum developers in the following ways:

For the government through the National Council for Tertiary Education to the Ministry of Education the findings of this study will help inform these authorities on the impact of social media on students writing and formulate appropriate policies to develop students' writing skills.

To the English teachers, it is believed that they will identify the sources of students' writing errors and prescribe the best way to deal with them.

To the curriculum planners, it will enable them to integrate technology especially social media into the curriculum to help improve proper communication among students.

This study will also benefit learners and create the awareness that writing or texting on social media is different from academic writing or formal writing.

Finally to the research community, this research will provide a better understanding of the effects of social media on students' writing and also add to the literature on social media for further research.

1.7 Limitations

Some of the participants were not co-operative with the researcher because they felt reluctant to be interviewed.

Sometimes, retrieval of information from the internet becomes difficult as a result of slow network.

Most of the literature that the researcher came across that were related to Ghana in this field were not scholarly articles. Most of them were blog posts and pieces of opinion without empirical studies backing their conclusions.

Finally, there were some difficulties and challenges in getting respondents' screen shots messages from social media. Most of the respondents were not willing to share these messages since they believe that such messages were private and confidential information.

1.8 Delimitation

Owu-Ewie (2011) indicated that "the delimitation of a study deals with how the study will be narrowed in scope". He further indicated that the delimitation sets the study's boundaries. There are forty-six (46) Colleges of Education spread across Ghana but the research was narrowed to only Mount Mary College of Education. Mount Mary

College of Education was chosen because that is where the researcher teaches and therefore can have access to information for the study.

The study dealt with only one aspect of the language skills which is writing thereby leaving out listening, speaking and reading skills.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study has been organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitation of the study and delimitation of the study. Chapter 2 presents theoretical framework and relevant literature related to the topic. The literature is based on the subheadings related to the study. Chapter 3 discusses the research designs and methodology. Results and discussions of data have been presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5, which is the final chapter, discusses the summary of findings, pedagogical implications of this study, recommendations, and suggestions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will have an in-depth review of social media. The researcher will review a major supporting theory of the research: Theory of Initialism by Marchand (1969). It will then look at the positive and negative effects of social media as well as negative and positive effects of social media on students' writing.

2.1 Definition of Social Media

Looking at the topic for this study, "social media" is a key term that ought to be discussed. There are various scholars who have defined social media in different ways:

Jacka and Scott (2011) argue that there is no single recognized definition for social media. They believe that social media evolves and its uses change and expand, so does the social media definition. These scholars averred that as social media grows its meaning also changes.

Junco et al. (2010, p. 1) defined social media as a "collection of internet websites, services and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation and sharing". Similar views were shared by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who also saw Social Media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. Web 2.0 is the technology that allows one to like, comment, dislike or review information. Social media started with web 1.0 which only allows people to receive information but the information that one receives cannot

be edited or commented upon. Later, the web 1.0 was improved upon and upgraded to web 2.0 to allow for peoples comment on issues.

Researchers argue that the impact of social media relies on the fact that they employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share and co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. This means that one needs an instrument such as laptop, computer, iPad, or mobile phone to be able to connect to social media. According to a research conducted by Negussie and Ketena (2004) in Jima University, Ethiopia revealed that most students use laptops and smart phones to access social media. This finding is not different from what happens in Mount Mary College of Education where most of the students use phones to access social media. Through these social media sites, students share information among themselves.

Kirschner and Karpinski (2010, p. 86) indicated that “social media is an online directory that allow people to find their friends, family and colleagues through looking them up on social network sites”. They were talking about how social media is a social structure which is made up of individuals or organizations called “nodes” which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types or inter-dependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, sexual relationship or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. Through social media a lot of students have maintained their friendship whether during school or after school. It has also unified, strengthen the ties and bonds between relatives, friends and families.

Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 53) indicated that “social media are web – based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other uses with whom they share a connection and those

made by others with the system”. Boyd and Ellison were saying that social media put people into groups whereby they share things of common interest. For example, people create social media sites for specific purposes including learning, dating, preaching among others. These social media sites are used to interact with friends, peers and others that are found in groups on these sites.

The sharing of information ranges from news, debates, gossips, feelings or statements of mind, opinions, research etc. (Mingle & Adams, 2015).

Adeboye, (2012) cited in Asemah and Edegoh (2012) is of the view that social media is used to create specific ties among individuals. For Adeboye, the nodes to which an individual is connected are the social contacts of the individual; the media can also be used to measure social capital – the value that an individual gets from the social media site. Social media is the platform used for interactive, educational, informational or entertaining purposes (History of social network, 2016). This means that social media are opening a new world for people where they can be aware of the latest news, create their profiles, upload photos and videos, make friends, and share their memories with dear ones (History of social network, 2016; Didelot, 2013). One can say that today’s social media are the replacement of previous mailing or communicating system.

Davis et al. (2012, p. 1) refer to social media as “web – based and mobile application that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage and share new user – generated or existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication”. Through social media, people create profiles, share and exchange information on various activities and interests. One thing that is significant about

social media is that, it is not limited to desktop or laptop computers but could be accessed through mobile applications and easy to use.

Examples of these social media platforms both on the web and mobile applications include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp messenger, Instagram, Viber, and others (Mingle & Adams, 2015).

According to Swist et al. (2015) Social media is “a set of Web applications that (a) rely on the participation of mass group of users rather than centrally controlled content providers, (b) aggregate and remix content from multiple sources, and (c) more intensely network users and content together”. It is a way through which individual’s link up to show and share common interest (Bagget & Williams, 2011 cited in Al-Sharqi, Harshim & Kubi, 2015). The common interest may be in terms of research, business among others. People form or join social media platforms based on their own interest. Some join because they want some business opportunities such as getting contracts, employment opportunities. Students more especially may also join Social media platforms to seek information for research purposes.

Ezeah et al. (2013) define social media as a modern interactive communication channel through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest. This definition sums up the whole idea and functions of social media. These functions of social media are sharing ideas, pictures, videos, information among others manifest in the daily lives of Mount Mary College of Education students.

2.1.1 Summary of the meaning of social media

The themes that can be identified in all the various definitions are that social media involve some form of communication between individuals or groups over the internet.

It is obvious that without an internet connection, access to social media becomes almost impossible, Through the various definitions it is manifested that people use social media for so many purposes such as entertainment, communication, advertising, common interest among others. These definitions on social media also pertain to what happens in Mount Mary College of Education. The definition of social media is important to this study because it explains a key aspect of the topic.

In sum, social media simply means the media circulated through interactions. It is the cybernetic and stimulated relations among people, organizations, and companies. This involves the creation, exchange or sharing of information through texts, images and other symbols (Asare-Donkor, 2018).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

According to Ennis (1999, p. 129), “a theoretical framework is a structure that identifies and describes the major elements, variables or construct that organize your scholarship”. A theoretical or conceptual framework must be linked with the research focus, guides the design of individual studies and structures your research presentations and publications (Ennis, 1999) cited in Mingle and Adams (2015). The theory of initialism relates to the research questions which talks about the trends and its effects on respondents“ social media writing. The theory will also be used to analyse and discuss the research questions in chapter 4 of this study.

2.2.1 Initialism Theory by Marchand (1969)

According to Marchand (1969), initialism is a type of word formation which is used for names of organizations and names of scientific discoveries. For example, North Treaty Atlantic Organisation (NATO). However, these initialisms are used in recent times on social media by students for communication and other purposes. This

indicates that the original aim and function of initialism as viewed by Marchand has changed in this contemporary world. This theory of initialism was reviewed by Crystal and he calls it „netspeak“. The language online is called netspeak by Crystal (2001) which contains a new kind of initialism, which refers to acronyms, abbreviations, graphemes, alphanumeric homophony and multi-word phrases that are compressed into a single word.

Marchand (1969) calls the process of forming acronyms and abbreviations „word manufacturing“ and describe these initialisms as “more or less arbitrary parts of words that have been welded into an artificial new word” (Marchand,1969, p.45). At the time Marchand wrote on initialism there was no social media but his theory is relevant to social media today. This is because most students use initials or shorthand in their writing today on social media. For example laughing out loud (Lol), Oh My God (OMG), and Thank God Is Friday (TGIF) among others.

Ljung (2003, p.1) defines abbreviations as a” string of letters, most of which are spelt with capital letters”. Ljung (2003) furthermore lists „DNA“ as an example of abbreviations. Currently, on social media students use abbreviated forms of words to chat with both their peers and elderly people including their teachers and family members. Crystal (2008) puts it better when he said that netspeak is a new kind of language. It is a new kind of language that has emerged and it is used especially among the youth.

The only difference between abbreviations and acronyms is that acronym “has to be pronounceable” and that acronyms “can only contain letter sequences permitted in ordinary English words” (Ljung, 2003, p.158). Furthermore, Ljung lists „NATO“ (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) as an example of an acronym. Another kind of

initialism according to Ljung comprises a word such as „RAF which stands for ROYAL AIR FORCE“, which can be treated either as acronyms or abbreviations (Ljung, 2003, p.157). The next form of initialism contains blends of acronyms and abbreviations, where one part of the word is pronounced as an actual word and another is pronounced as letter at a time. Words such as „CDROM“ and „Email“ are examples of this category (Ljung, 2003, p.2). Abbreviations and acronyms are most often used to create names for different organizations, although they do sometimes refer to concepts such as „DNA“ (Ljung, 2003). Initialisms are a form of extreme clipping, and while this kind of word creation has been used since the 1800s, it did not become a popular form of creating words until the second half of the 20th century (Harley, 2006). “The process of creating initialisms was born “as a natural outgrowth of a proliferation of bureaucratic institutions named with long, unwieldy compounds and phrases” (Harley, 2006, p.97). Harley (2006) categorized initialism into three; abbreviations, acronyms, and words that originally were initialisms that now have undergone a change and are nowadays more like blends. For example jeep, originally G.P, for General Purpose, is another category of initialism (Harley, 2006). Denning, Kessler, and Leber (1995, p. 3) point out that initialisms are created because people want to “reduce potentially long names to something manageable” (Denning et al, 1995). So on social media, students would want to avoid typing long words which make them to resort to using initialisms or abbreviations. Of all authors mentioned above, only Ljung (2003) and Harley (2006) acknowledge that there seems to be a new kind of initialisms currently in the process of becoming popularized. Ljung (2003,p. 46) describes them as “a smaller group of abbreviations and acronyms that stand for more common phrases...examples include „ASAP“ for „as soon as possible“ (Ljung, 2003). Harley describes these as “initialisms that have come into use

primarily in electronic communications of one kind or another; email, instant messaging and chatrooms” (Harley: 2006,). These initialisms are used on tweeter, facebook, whatsapp, text messages, email and other social media networks. Furthermore, “people who are typing have a particular impetus to economize on frequently used phrases, or phrases inserted to maximize communicative flow rather than convey actual information” (Harley, 2006, p.1). Harley (2006) believes that these new initialisms are a result of the advent of the Internet and social media, while Ljung (2003) thinks otherwise. However, both authors published after the introduction of the Internet; before that, this kind of initialisms were not acknowledged by these scholars, which indicates that this kind of initialisms may indicate a new morphological process.

Crystal (2001, p.86) claims that instant messaging has “motivated a whole new genre of abbreviated forms. The acronyms are no longer restricted to words or short phrases, but can be sentence-length” (Crystal, 2001). Coleman (2012) discusses the process of using initialisms to create slang expressions. Coleman (2012) notes „LOL“, which is initialism created from the phrase „laughing out loud“, as being a good example of slang initialism. It can either be an abbreviation or an acronym, depending on whether you choose to spell the word out or pronouncing it like words typically are pronounced (Coleman, 2012: 39). Coleman furthermore notes that several of these initialisms concern laughing. Apart from „LOL“, there are initialisms such as „ROFL, which stands for „rolling on floor laughing“; and „PMSL“, which stands for „pissing myself laughing“ (Coleman, 2012). Many of these initialisms are used online as a substitute for laughing, in an attempt to convey feelings in a way that resembles that of spoken language (Coleman, 2012). Kinsella (2010) claims that in some cases, these initialisms are not to be interpreted literally; the initialism is simply there to convey

the tone of the utterance (Kinsella, 2010: 65). Netspeak has become a code which parents cannot comprehend, which makes teenagers use it whenever they want to distinguish themselves from their parents and want to create an inner feeling among themselves (Kinsella, 2010). Baron (2011) looked at previous studies that focused on netspeak, and concluded that teenagers in general seem to be able to distinguish between formal and informal writing, and that netspeak seemingly does not influence teenagers' literacy (Baron, 2011). However, it is probably premature to claim that netspeak has not influenced language in more formal situations (Baron, 2011). Baron claims that historically, there are ample cases in which language judged to be somehow improper works its way into more formal everyday speech and writing (Baron, 2011). However, Baron (2011) also notes that there is little evidence that online and mobile devices will be radically reshaping offline language anytime soon (Baron, 2011). Given their relative high frequency in netspeak, it would not be surprising if a few elements such as „lol“ and „brb“ eventually found their way into offline language as well (Baron, 2011). Baron is making the argument that students who communicate on social media are able to distinguish between formal and informal writing.

Crystal (2008) modified the Initialism Theory by going beyond abbreviations and acronyms and categorizing the netspeak people use on social media as: shortening or reducing, clipping, numbering/alphanumeric homophony, abbreviated forms, contraction/ vowel deletion, spelling in accordance with pronunciation / graphemes, using single letter method and letter repetition to achieve speech like quality or lay stress. These linguistics features or texting processes as identified by Crystal are explained as follows:

Shortening/reducing: this is a writing process by which the lexical item is reduced or shortened in most cases so that the message is carried appropriately or it is the process in which a letter or a group of letters from a word are elided in writing. Some examples include *tnxs* for thanks, *pls* for please, *evenn* for evening among others.

Numbering /alphanumeric homophony: this is when a whole word or part of the word is replaced with a number or to represent words phrases or clauses. When respondents are typing on social media for instance, they often partially eliminate the word, phrase or sentence with phonetically similar letters or numbers that sound almost the same as the substituted word or phrase. Examples include 2 for to, 4get for forget, 2morrow for tomorrow, L8 for late among others.

Graphones: graphones are letter homophones. Graphic means the written representation while the phone means sounds. This is when words are written based on how they are pronounced, that is, spoken like the written form (Barasa and Mous, 2013). Graphone is also when the actual spelling is written by how the word is pronounced. Some examples include: *Fone* for phone, *daaria* for diarrhea, *dem* for them.

Clipping: This is when a whole word of more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form. Yule (2010) also describes clipping as the process of shortening in which a word loses a syllable. Some of the notable clipped forms of words usually used by respondents are as follows: *Exam* for examination, *Lab* for laboratory, *chem* for chemistry.

Abbreviated forms: abbreviated forms are usually formed by combining initial letters of a set of other words (Ljung, 2003). For example In Jesus's Name (I J N), As Soon As Possible (ASAP), Laughing Out Loud (LOL).

2.3 Internet as a Means of Communication and its Role in Language Change

The evolution of the internet and social media ushered in a new form of language called netspeak. Netspeak is the language that is mostly used on social media sites. These sites include; Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram among others. Netspeak consists of emoticons, abbreviations, acronyms, shortening and clipping (Baron, 2001; Mann and Stewart, 2000). There are a lot of terminologies that can be used to refer to netspeak. These terminologies are technologically mediated language, internet slang, chattish, webslang, netlingual, digital English and textese (Barasa and Mous 2013; Dansieh 2011; Crystal 2001; Sutherland 2008; Thurlow 2007).

The introduction of the Internet and computer technology gave birth to several completely new words and expressions. According to Crystal, “the rate at which [Internet users] have been coming up with new terms has no parallel in contemporary language use” (Crystal, 2001: 67). Since the Internet has given birth to many new expressions, there is no surprise that these expressions will be found in other domains as well (Dent, 2007). Therefore, according to Dent, it would not be surprising to find slang that originated online in contexts outside the Internet. Coleman (2012) theorizes that slang in general is changing more quickly than ever before because of the widespread use of the Internet. When online, you are exposed to a large number of slang expressions, many of which one may not have encountered before. Internet users tend to use slang expressions before they are completely familiar with their meanings if they are exposed to them frequently enough. According to Coleman (2012), this could lead to a chain reaction between Internet users and a spike in the frequency with which an expression is used. When a word is used a lot, it automatically acquires a shorter lifespan because the high frequency, with which it is used, makes the expression lose some of its meaning (Coleman, 2012). According to

Coleman (2012), “because of the speed of play and the relatively limited range of likely topics in MUD“s, acronyms and abbreviations became commonplace among the users of these games” (Coleman, 2012, p. 270). Crystal (2001) claims that it will be increasingly difficult to continue typing only using initialisms, as was the norm in the early days of texting, since it allows for too much ambiguity. This type of language that only uses initialisms will probably die out, or at least become less common (Crystal, 2001, p. 230).

The norms and conventions applied when writing online is vastly different from both written and spoken language. The Internet offers completely new dimensions of stylistic variation (Crystal, 2004). Crystal is making the point that now people have various ways of writing on the internet. Dent describes the phenomenon of Internet language as a „blurring of boundaries between spoken and written language” (Dent, 2007, p. 4). For example, the grammar is characterized by highly colloquial constructions and non-standard use (Crystal, 2001).

Orthographic features have been affected, for example through the removal of capitalization and punctuation (Crystal, 2001). Most students who communicate on social media do not focus much on punctuation and capitalization because to them once their message gets to their intended target they become relieved. Netspeak “is better seen as written language that has been pulled some way in the direction of speech than as spoken language which has been written down” (Crystal, 2004, p. 79). Netspeak comes from two words. That is „net“ which means the internet and „speak“ meaning language. To put it simply, netspeak means internet language or language used on the internet.

A text may equally consist of a series of alphanumeric blending. Examples of such compositions include the following. “4 u” used for “for you”, “luv u” used for “love you”, “b 4” used for “before”, “love you with all my heart used for “luwamh”, “to whom it may concern in the place of “twimc”, “2d8” used for “to date” and “db8” used for “debate” (Essoh et al. 2014; Crystal 2008, Dansieh 2001). All these language techniques have caused the social media language to be considered a kind of independent written register which does not necessarily depend on the conventions of the standard written language.

Most students of Mount Mary College use this new language to communicate with their friends, family members and even with their tutors. This new language according to research has affected students both positively and others negatively.

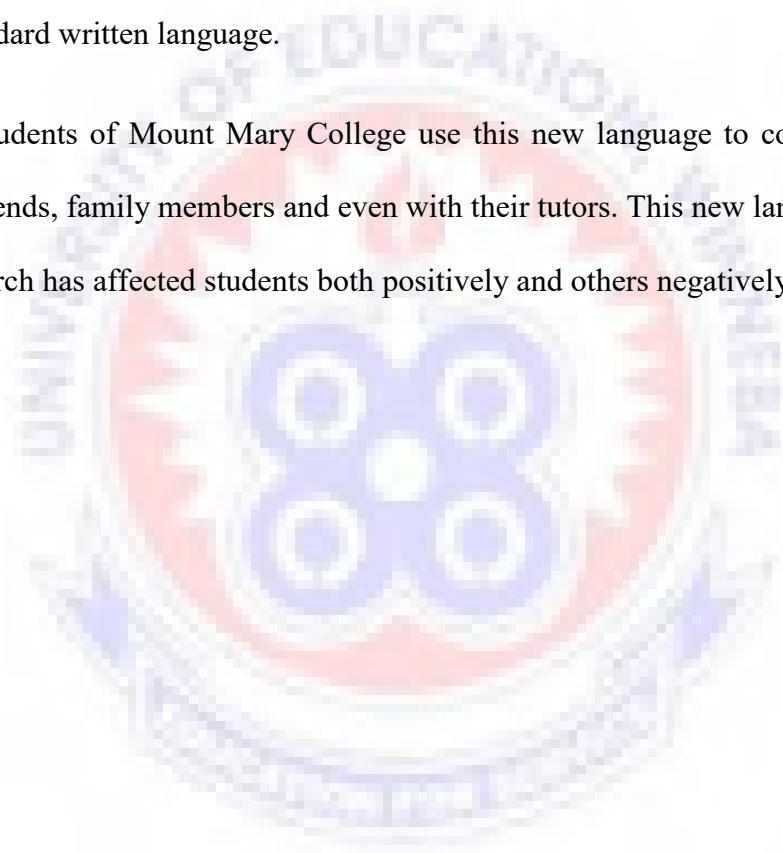


Table 2: List of some common netspeak

Abbreviations	Their meaning
IDK	I don't care
2morrow	Tomorrow
2nite	Tonight
AEAP	As early as possible
ASAP	As soon as possible
ASL	Age/sex/ location
B3	Blah blah blah
B4 YKI	Before you know it
BFF	Best friend forever
Bm&Y	Between me and you
BRB	Be right back
BRT	Be right there
BTAM	Be that as it may
C.P	Sleepy
CTN	Cannot talk now
CYS	See you soon
CWOT	Complete waste of time
CYT	See you tomorrow
E123	Easy as 123
EM	Excuse me?
F2F	Face to face
GR8	Great
FC	Finger crossed
FOF	Friend of friend
IDK	I don't know
ILU / ILY	I love you
IMU	I miss you
IRL	In real life
JK	Just kidding
JC	Just checking
JTLYK	Just to let you know

KFY	Kiss for you
KMN	Kill me now
KPC	Keeping parents clueless
L8R	Later

Adopted from (Marwa and Sabrina, 2016).

2.3.1 Previous studies

Varnhagen, McFall, Pugh, Routledge, Sumida-MacDonald, and Kwong (2009) carried out a study to find out whether there were any differences between how different types of informal language were used in social media conversations. This study found that the most common features of social language included typing completely in lower case, followed by abbreviations such as „omg“, and acronyms such as „lol“ (Varnhagen et al, 2009).

Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) studied language use in social conversations among Canadian teenagers. These scholars noticed that there were many abbreviations and acronyms in use, and that their test subjects were more prone to the use of both slang and lower case typing in their social media conversations. These authors further noted that „LOL“ was “used by the participants in the flow of conversation as a signal of interlocutor involvement, just as one might say mm-hm in the course of a conversation” (Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008: 11). „LOL“ was the most frequently occurring initialism, followed by „OMG“ and „BTW“ (Tagliamonte and Denis; 2008: 11). „LOL“ was most commonly used by younger teenagers, and the use of „LOL“ declined quickly as the teenagers got older (Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008: 13).

Similar to Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), Baron (2011) carried out a study on how „special language“ is used in Instant Messaging (IM) conversations. „Special

language“ refers to acronyms, abbreviations and emoticons (Baron, 2011). Baron found that the use of abbreviations and acronyms was generally low. This study excluded initialisms that were not specific to the Internet; furthermore, this study also excluded shortenings that were common in „offline writing“ such as „hrs“ for „hours“ and „cuz“ for „because“. Baron created an IM corpus, containing 11,718 words, and extracted all initialisms present in that particular corpus. In total, there were 121 initialisms such as „cya“ for „see you“, and „lol“ for „laughing out loud“ (Baron, 2011, p.120). Around one percent of all findings were netspeak items.

Kinsella (2010) studied how netspeak has affected spoken language. The study was carried out on campus at an Australian university. A questionnaire was sent out to 95 participants between the ages of 15 and 25. It showed that approximately 85% of the respondents used Internet slang in everyday spoken conversations (Kinsella, 2010). Furthermore, about 75% reported that they have accidentally used netspeak in spoken conversations (Kinsella, 2010). Kinsella concluded that netspeak appears to have found its way into spoken language, at least among this particular group of young people. To sum it up, the previous studies that this investigation is based on, have included abbreviations and acronyms in the larger concept of netspeak, and consequently have not observed this new kind of initialisms as a separate phenomenon. Several studies on netspeak, for example Baron (2011) and Varnhagen et al. (2009) have established that Internet users create and use this type of initialism online. Some studies, e.g. Kinsella (2010), have also looked at whether these initialisms are used in spoken language. Authors such as Coleman (2012) and Crystal (2001), whose works deal mainly with slang and the effects of the Internet on language, mention this new way of creating initialisms. Some works on general morphology, such as Ljung (2003) and Harley (2006) mention this kind of initialisms,

albeit very briefly. However, authors such as Bauer (1988) and Marchand (1969) do not mention this way of creating initialisms at all, which suggests that this may be a relatively new linguistic process. Previous studies that mentioned these initialisms, have only talked about them in relation to the Internet, and thus may have missed the view of them as a more general process and an indication of a change in how people create initialisms on a broader scale. If this way of creating initialisms is only found online, it might indicate that it is just a part of a particular group's jargon, and not a change in general and outside of that group. However, if these types of initialisms are found in contexts outside the Internet, then it might be that there has been a change in how people form and use initialisms. There is therefore a strong indication that there are a lot of scholars who have used the initialism theory to unpin their study on netspeak which also led them to identify various findings.

2.4 Positive Effects of Social Media on Students

A research conducted by Wheeler (2007); Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach and Ortia, (2009) indicated four (4) major advantages social media bring to students. These include; enhancing relationship, improving learning motivation, offering personalized course material and developing collaborative abilities. Social media enhance relationship because through social media a lot of former school mates have reunited. A lot of people nowadays communicate with their friends every now and then on Facebook, whatsapp, viber among others. Social media in recent times has improved learning motivation since most students nowadays learn using social media. Students through social media in recent times exchange course materials. Most of these students download materials on the internet and send them to their friends.

Researchers have found positive outcomes in online community engagement among students. Tienne (2000, p.89) proved that "Written communication on cyberspace

enables students to take part in discussions at a time convenient to them and articulate their ideas in more carefully, thorough and structured ways”. Deng and Tavares (2013) also posit that “Web-based discussions among students can contribute to the students” reflective ability and critical thinking skills. The authors added that with relative face-to-face communication, “students are more willing to voice their view”’s (agreement or disagreements) and more attuned to others opinions in online discussions.

Appeanti and Danso (2014) showed that students think that it is more fun for their teachers to use social Media. The authors also note that children think their academic performance would be better if they could contact their colleagues and teachers on social media. This gives an indication that most students see social media as helpful if they use it to collaborate with their friends and teachers.

Ito et al. (2009) showed that students use social media for positive activities, such as going into interest-driven communities and participating in various activities. Ahn (2011, p.237) adds that “Social Media provide a platform for the youth or students to participate in communities that help them to learn, and also practice skills within a particular knowledge area”. A similar research by Fishman et al. (2005) also indicated that students produce a great volume of writing through various social tools such as blogs, emails and other social media tools such as blogs, e-mails and other social media environments. This shows that through social media students are capable of carrying a task and take initiatives by themselves. Social media offer students the opportunity to communicate, get in touch, access information, research as well chat (Abdulahi et al., 2014, Ahn, 2011).

Of the reviewed literature on the positive effects of social media on students“, Appeanti and Danso“s study was the only study identified from Ghana. However, it was conducted at University level so it is likely that this work which is carried out at the College of Education level may generate new outcomes.

2.5 Negative Effects of Social Media on Students

A number of researchers and studies have found a negative impact that social media have on students. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), found a significant negative relationship between social media and students“ academic performance. According to the study, social media users recorded lower mean Grade Point Averages (GPAs) than social media non-users. Another research by Malaney (2005), also found that 8.9% of students in year 2000, and 4.4% in 2003, reported that their grades had suffered as a result of too much time spent on the internet as well as on social media networks. Banquil et al. (2009) found evidence of a continuing drop of grades among students because of using social media networks. These empirical studies give credence that social media affect students academically.

Amofah-Serwaa and Dadzie (2015) investigated social media use and its implications on some pupils in the basic schools. Their findings showed that all participants were aware of social media and used sites such as Facebook, whatsapp, twitter among others to communicate with friends. With regard to the effects on the students, 23.3% said that they could not concentrate on their studies. Parents, according to the study, conceded that their children were distracted from their learning due to the compulsive use of social media and most of these pupils used jargons or Pidgin English. Social media can lead to lack of concentration on the part of most students as the research by Amofa-Serwaa and Dadzie has shown.

Another indication of the negative effects of social media was conducted by Mingle and Adams (2015) on the effects of social media on academic performance of some selected Senior High Schools (St. Johns S.H.S, Action S.H.S, Tema S.H.S and Ideal College). The study revealed that majority of the students (57.4%) from these schools has been affected negatively in the use of English language during their discourse with their peers. Most of the students indicated that they found it difficult concentrating on their studies when they knew they could play games and chat with their friends.

Yeboah and Ewur (2014) conducted a study in Ghana on the impact of whatsapp messenger usage on students' performance in tertiary institutions in Ghana. The study showed that too much use of social media network such as whatsapp distracts students' academic lives and affect their concentration during classes.

A study conducted in Oman by Mehmood and Taswir (2013) on how social media participation affects the linguistics of students found out that many students indicated there was a change in their linguistics habits as a result of their constant communication on their social networks. This shows that social media can be devastating and could destroy student's way of speaking and communication.

Stollak et al. (2011) demonstrated that students' grades can be affected negatively by using social media sites. A questionnaire conducted in this study to verify this fact showed that 63% of students get high grades because they spend less time using the web. (Stollak et al, 2011). Thus, spending more time on social media appears to result in a lowering of student's grades.

Choney (2010), Miguel (2009) and Enriquez (2010) studies on student's use of social media sites revealed a negative effect of the use of social media sites on students'

academic performances. Miguel (2009) focused on the relationship between time spent on Facebook and the academic performance of students. The overall findings indicated “more time on Facebook equals slightly lower grades”. In his study, the average Facebook user had a GPA of 3.0 to 3.5, while the non-Facebook user had a GPA of 3.5 – 4.0. The study indicated that, the average Facebook user study for 1 – 5 hours per week, while the non-Facebook user would study 11 -15 hours per week. Enriquez (2010) revealed that students who multi-task between social networking sites and home work are likely to have 20% lower grades than students who do not have social networking sites. Choney (2010) in looking at the time spent on Facebook and its effects on students said, a user of Facebook has an average “GPA of 3.06, while non-users have an average GPA of 3.82”. This shows that students use of Facebook and for that matter social media have a negative effect on the student’s academic performance. Englander et al. (2010) sum up the whole discussion on the negative effects of social media when their study indicates said that social media is negatively associated with students’ performance and it is more momentous than its advantages.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Karpinski and Duberstien (2009), of Ohio Dominican University on college students who use social media have lower GPAs than those who do not. They mentioned Facebook as a major destruction of current generation. Khan (2009), finally, posits that social media users often time experience poor performance academically. These are some empirical studies to illustrate the point that social media can be negative on students.

Davies and Cranson (2008) highlighted some risks associated with social media which included criminal activities such as identity theft and fake contacts which have become common in today’s world, sexual abuse or harassment and unsuitable

advertising. O’Keeffe and Clake – Pearson, (2011) cited by Kolan and Dzandza, (2018) also mentioned cyber bullying, online harassment, and privacy concerns as some of the challenges associated with social media. These activities are usually done by some students from the Senior High Schools and universities in Ghana.

When one juxtaposes the negative and the positive effects of social media it seems the negative effects of social media out way the positive aspect. This gives the assertion that social media could be a good servant but a bad master.

2.6 Negative Effects of Social Media on Students’ Writing

Some scholars insist that texting (writing) has a negative influence on standard writing, spelling and grammar (Siraj and Ullah, 2007). Jovanovix (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the use of netspeak in the English language classroom. The research revealed that many teachers were privy to the existence of netspeak in the English language classroom. In addition to the existence of netspeak in the classroom, it was also revealed that netspeak had also changed students’ writing skills as most of the students use netspeak in their academic work.

Hussein and Lingwood (2012) had also argued that the effects of netspeak on the written aspect of the English language can be categorized into three folds. The first is that netspeak is a laid back attitude towards Standard English. They said that students who use netspeak in their writings make their English language sub standard. The second fold according to them is an increase use of symbols such as (@, %, &) ellipses, abbreviations with neglect of capital letters, and omission of punctuation in the writings of students which go a long way to affect students academically. Finally they believe that the new vocabulary which is netspeak finds its way into off-line writing of students.

Most schools fight the use of netlanguage and all other linguistic deviations from the English language in examination situations. They do this by seriously sanctioning such students with penalties notably; reduction of marks because such schools believe that net language in students' formal writing is a threat to the English language (Awoyemi 2013, Ugot 2010, Oluga and Babalola 2013).

Students who frequently use netspeak when writing online tend to practice the same method during formal writing in the classroom.(O'Connor, 2005). Netspeak also violates the rules of proper English in the aspect of capitalization, punctuation and sentence structure. Many students find it difficult to get the correct orthography of words as they are used to spelling incorrectly and using abbreviated forms of words on social media (Lee, 2002, O'Connor 2005, Oluga & Babalola, 2013).

In an article written by Ishmael Arhin, social media accounted for the failure of most students who took the 2014 Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in Ghana. It was found out that most of those students who failed in English language in both examinations used abbreviated words such as "bcus", for because, "u" for you, "dat" for that, "der" there for there and so forth. This is a view that social media can have an effect on students writing.

Mingle and Adams (2015) conducted a study on the negative effects of social media addiction on some selected Senior High Schools in Ghana. The studies revealed that majority of the students (57.4%) from these schools were affected negatively in the use of English Language during discourse with their peers. These included the usage of Pidgin English, construction of wrong sentences, shorthand writing and the lack of attention paid to grammar and spelling in their exams as a result of constant usage of

shorthand on social media. Consequently, this reflected in their performance as most of them failed in their English language examinations.

The chairman of the Kumasi Polytechnic Teachers Association (POTAG), in an interview with the Ghanaian Chronicle newspaper on the 6th December, 2013, appealed to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to step up education to the teeming Ghanaian Youth on the rate of usage of social media which had led to the falling standard of students' writing. The Chairman lamented that students were fond of using abbreviated words when writing examinations. The situation he noted had affected the spelling of students. This is supported by a study conducted by Horton, Alloway and Dawson (2012) which revealed that the use of social media had an effect on the spelling of some students. Wood et al. (2014), in another study noted that the use of texting and writing on social media has a negative effect on students.

A study in Oman by Mehmood and Taswir (2013) on how social network participation affects linguistics of students indicated that the patronage of social media by students is affecting their writing. The study revealed that majority of the respondents - 323 (62%) had their grammar and spellings affected negatively as a result of their participation on social networks. On how they had been affected, they stated addiction to short handwriting 343 (48.9%) respondents, and writing notes with shorthand 287 (40.9%).

According to Harris and Dilts (2014), social media are changing students writing. They noted that most errors that instructors are finding are not just found occasionally in a small number of students but are found frequently in most students' papers.

Another study conducted by Jackson city Patriot staff and Jamie Perkins in America (2013) came out with the findings that social media sites are not encouraging proper

grammar usage and writing. Twitter for example only allows people post tweets of 140 characters which doesn't always allow for complete sentences, and usually results in run-ons and fragments. Perkins believes that the short character count is leading to a shorter attention span when it comes to reading and writing and affecting the ability to write correct sentences. This also leads to poor word choice. Students tend to use shorthand of internet slang, and abbreviations to keep text short. This has led to some students using this form of writing in their formal writing.

There are clear indications that the style of writing by the use of short hand is affecting students both in Ghana and outside Ghana. These writing styles or shorthand and their effects even go beyond writing but affect students' spellings, grammar etc.

Apart from the work of Mingle and Adams and the article from Arhin, most of the studies on the negative effects of social media on students' writing were not conducted in Ghana. Arhins' article was not even a scholarly work based on any empirical study. Mingle and Adams study was done at the Senior High School level while this study is carried out at the College of Education so the findings could be different.

To sum it all, some scholars through their studies have revealed that netspeak has a negative influence on the writing of students and that the issue of netspeak is a threat and an affront to Standard English.

2.7 Positive Effects of Social Media on Students' Writing

There is a raging debate as to whether netspeak affect the writings of students or not. Scholars who believe that social media do not influence students' writing include Crystal, Baron, Russel and many others.

Crystal (2008) posits that netspeak is not harmful to students writing but it rather enhances it. Crystal further reiterates that the more students write, the more they make progress in their writing. Crystal made a strong argument against negative effects of netspeak on students' writing. He based his argument on six grounds.

His first reason was that when students are writing on social media, the netspeak used are around 10%. According to him almost 90% of the words are not abbreviated or are spelt right so this should not be anything serious people should worry about.

Secondly, Crystal argues that the use of netspeak is not a new thing that has been introduced into the world. He believes that netspeak has been in existence for a long time and it has never destroyed the way people write. This means that netspeak is not a threat to language use.

The third argument was that both children and adult use netlanguage. So Crystal's point was that the use of netspeak is not limited to only students but every section of society uses netspeak.

Again, Crystal argues that students do not habitually use abbreviations and netlanguage in their homework and assignments. He believes that those scholars who make such arguments do so based on assumption and not based on facts. This argument by Crystal is disputable since a lot of scholars through empirical studies have proven that some students use netspeak in their homework and assignments.

Crystal's fifth reason was that before people can send a message on social media, they might have had an idea about spellings. Crystal is making the point that those who chat on social media are literate who know how to spell words so even if they use

abbreviation it does not mean that they do not know the spelling of a particular word. Therefore, texting on social media sites cannot be a cause of bad spelling.

Finally, Crystal argued that texting provides people with the opportunity of engaging with the language through reading and writing. Crystal is of the view that the more people communicate through texting, the more they become abreast of the English language.

One of the scholars who also believe that netspeak does not have influence on students' writing is Russel. According to Russel (2010), netspeak is an independent and new language. He believes that students should be empowered to acquire the basics of the English language. It is only when students have acquired the basics of the language that they will be able to distinguish between grammatical uses and non-grammatical uses of the language. Russel further argues that since the learning of the new language does not affect students' ability to use English grammar, it would be fallacious to conclude that texting has the potential of affecting students' mastery of English grammar.

Baron (2011) also contends that the use of netspeak actually reflects creativity. She believes that due to the creative use of letters, punctuation and numbers, netspeak increases phonetic awareness in children. It is observed that texting styles differ from person to person. That is different messages use different patterns and style due to their different communication functions.

Clark (2009) cited in Wen and Huachuan (2015) conducted an extensive survey among 3,001 British primary and secondary school students about the role of social media technology in their writing. The findings suggested that young people who wrote on a blog and those who had a profile on social media site, compared to their

counterparts, were more likely to enjoy writing in general and writing for fun, display confidence in writing, and are creative in producing a variety of texts. This presupposes that through the use of social media, students become very confident in developing writing skills and also imbibe creativity.

According to Crystal (2008) creative potential of writing (texting) has been almost ignored. Research shows that texting or writing on social media does not eat into Children's ability to write. It rather improves students writing skills. The latest studies (from a team at Coventry University) have found great positive relations between the uses of writing (text) and the skills required for success in standard English. The more abbreviations in their messages, the higher were their scores on tests of their vocabulary. The students who are better at spellings and writing used the most textism and the younger they received their first phone, the higher their scores which implies that they could not be good at texting if they had not already developed significant literacy awareness.

Texting on social media can benefit weaker readers and spellers who would generally avoid books (Crystal, 2008). Before one can write and play with abbreviated forms, one needs to have a sense of how the sounds of a language are associated with the letters of that language. One needs to have know-how of the possibility of alternative spellings. If one is aware that one's texting behavior is different, one must have an idea that there is such a thing called abbreviations such as "LoL" (Laughing out Loud) and "brb" ("be right back"). One must have developed sensitivity to the communication of one's SMS language. One needs to have a good visual memory and good motor skills.

Baron (2008) argues that students writing suffer little impact from texting (writing) on social media. Baron refers to a recent study published by the British Journal of Developmental Psychology that found that regularly texting students displayed a wider range of vocabulary and this may lead to a positive impact on their reading development. According to Baron (2008), as soon as children can distinguish between formal and informal language, netspeak does not affect their writing.

Most experimental studies maintain that texting does not pose a threat to Standard English learning. These scholars point out that despite diffusing netspeak styles into „formal“ writing occasionally (e.g, school work), senders of messages almost always recognize that language is context specific (Durscheid 2002; Chiluya 2008). They however do not necessarily view computer – mediated communication as writing (Lenhart, 2007).

In sum, the argument of netspeak not posing a threat to the English language as advanced by Crystal, Baron and Russel seems very convincing. However, it could be because they conducted the research in the United Kingdom and the United States who are native speakers of the language that could be the reason why netspeak does not affect the writing of students but the impact of netspeak could affect Ghanaian students who use English as a second language.

2.8 Social Media Sites

There are so many social media sites such as Snapchat, Viber, Youtube, and Instagram among others. Social media sites that have caught the attention of students recently especially in Ghana are: Facebook and Whatsapp messenger.

2.8.1 Facebook

Facebook was created on 4th February, 2004 by former Harvard student Marc Zukerberg, Dustin Mosko, Edwardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum and Chris Hughes that is according to (Alsanie, 2015; Zeitel – Bank, 2014; Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012; Ahmed, 2011). Facebook originally was created for Harvard students on campus. Later, it was extended to cover university workers and eventually expanded to the public to be used by people above 13 years (Lare & Lewis, 2013). The name of Facebook came from the colloquial name for “face” and “book”. Facebook as a social media platform is patronized by people who want to stay in touch with their friends and family, and by organizations that want to market their services and products. Face means what you first see of the body in front of you. It is also the clearest part of the body that gives you an indication of what the person in front of you looks like which is related to the social field Ibrahim (2013). The word “book” is related to the academic field of learning or knowledge acquisition. So, the word “Face” has social roots and the word “book” has academic roots. Social media sites (Facebook) can be used for achieving academic purposes in improving learner’s writing (Rosen, 2011).

Facebook is one of the commonest social media sites often used by students of Mount Mary College of Education. Most of them use this site to connect to friends and family members. They also download their own pictures and that of their friends and families on this site. The researcher is aware of the students’ use of Facebook because the researcher is a „friend“ to some of them on this social media site.

2.8.2 Whatsapp messenger

Alsanie (2014) cited by Nutakoor (2015) defines Whatsapp messenger as an exclusive inter-platform instant messaging subscription service designed for smart phones and supported mobile phone devices. To add to the above definition of whatsapp

messenger, (Wikipedia, 2013) indicates that whatsapp messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging application for smart phones. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, videos, and audio-visual messaging. Whatsapp allows its users to use their internet connection to send messages to each other. Whatsapp is like a chat program for mobile phones. Smart phones are becoming increasingly popular and it is available for almost all smart phones. Whatsapp was founded in 2009 by former Yahoo engineers, Brian Acton and Jan Koum (Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia, 2016, Alsanie, 2015). Whatsapp is the second most admired and recognized messaging application next to Facebook (Calson, 2013). Whatsapp operates on client software and it is available for iOS, BlackBerry OS, Android, series 40, and Windows Phone. Whatsapp handles two billion messages per day as of April, 2012, growing from one billion in October 2011. According to the Financial Times, Whatsapp has done to SMS on mobile phones what skype did to international calling on landlines (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2018). This implies that whatsapp has almost replaced SMS text messaging same way Skype also replaced International calling.

Whatsapp Messenger is a site that students patronize a lot. According to a study conducted by Dau (2015) it revealed that majority of the participants use facebook and whatsapp. Most of these students use these sites to perform series of activities including chatting with their friends. Course Tutors in Mount Mary have formed whatsapp groups and share information on their course with their students. Sometimes, students themselves also share information they have access to on these group platforms. Tutors even share course outlines on these group platforms with students. In relation to research work, students form whatsapp groups with their tutors and discuss problems they encounter during their research.

To conclude, whatsapp is one of the most popular social media sites used by most students in Ghana. The people who use whatsapp have grown in number since its introduction in 2007. Students mostly activate whatsapp through their smart phones and use this site for sending messages, pictures among others.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews methodology for the study. The research approaches, research design, population of the study, study sample, instrument for data collection and collection of data have all been discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

3.1.1 Research design (Qualitative)

This study examines and explores the effects of social media on students' writing among students of Mount Mary College of Education, Somanya in the Eastern Region of Ghana. According to Creswell (2008), qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning of individual or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. That is to say, qualitative research is also based on meaning: It analyses how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structures of their world (Creswell, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.3) stated that a qualitative research is any type of research that produces findings not based on statistical procedures. According to Strauss and Corbin, qualitative research can be about "humans' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, feelings and also about organisational functioning, Social movements, cultural phenomenon and interactions between nations". This means qualitative research is not based on data or statistical analyses but includes different realities such as observation, people in their natural environment among others.

Flick (2014, p. 542) indicated that "Qualitative research is interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issue, events, or practices by collecting

non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than number and statistics. This definition talks about how humans think of something in the world. In effect, the qualitative research deals with so many aspects or multiple perspectives.

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 54) believed that “Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.” This view of the qualitative approach being multi-purpose was also supported by Maanen (1979) who claimed that qualitative approach is a term encompassing a lot of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and comes to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

All these definitions indicate that the qualitative research approach is multi-faced, naturalistic and interpretive in nature.

This study seeks to adopt the qualitative approach because qualitative research produces more in-depth, comprehensive information (Owu-Ewie, 2012). The qualitative research also offers some advantages.

The first advantage of the qualitative research approach is that “it provides a detailed description of participant’s feelings, views, and experiences, and interprets the meanings of their actions” (Denzin, 1989, p. 110). In relation to social media and its effects on students writing, the research will describe the student’s opinions and experiences into detail.

Secondly, there are some researchers who argue that the qualitative research approach understands the human experiences in specific settings. From the view of epistemological position, social media studies cannot be separated from context, culture and values. The effects of social media on students are built more on human

experiences (students). That is why the researcher finds it necessary and imperative to use the qualitative approach.

The next advantage of the Qualitative research approach is that the researcher identifies the participants' inner experience. For example when students are interviewed on whether social media affect their writing, the participants should be able to answer this question from their experience as to whether social media affect their writing or otherwise. This will alert the researcher about the feelings and experiences of the participants.

Furthermore, qualitative research methods such as participant-observation, unstructured interviews, direct observation describing records are most commonly used for collecting data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). When data is being collected from the participants, the researcher interacts with the participants directly so does it happen when data is collected through interviews. Consequently, data collection becomes subjective and detailed.

Finally, the qualitative research approach is flexible in nature because it can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent (Maxwell, 2012). The qualitative approach is the best approach for detailed and thorough analyses of an issue which gives the participants the independence to consider what is consistent for them.

3.1.2 Why the preference of the qualitative approach to the quantitative approach and mixed method

The researcher used the Qualitative approach for the study because of the following reasons:

Firstly, both the quantitative approach and the mixed methods require extensive data collection and resources (Owu-Ewie, 2011). One of the key data collection tool used

in the mixed method or the quantitative approach is the use of questionnaire. In most cases when the questionnaires are sent to respondents, the researcher cannot retrieve all of them. Some of the respondents may not even give accurate information pertaining to the questionnaires given them. One ought to also know about ANOVAs, Chi-square, and SPSS among others in order to convert data into variables. That is why the researcher opted for the qualitative approach so that interview will be conducted using students from the researcher's own college and class.

Qualitative data instruments such as observation, open-ended questions, and interview are used to collect data in participants' natural environment as compared to the quantitative method which data collection procedure like the administering of questionnaires may be artificial.

The way data are retrieved in qualitative research approach is very reliable. The dependant on the collection of non-numerical primary data such as audio and videos by the researcher makes qualitative approach more suitable than the quantitative and the mixed methods since it produces factual results (Johnson and Christenson, 2012).

The qualitative approach is preferred to the quantitative approach and the mixed methods because the qualitative approach saves time and it is not financially demanding. The qualitative approach could be suitable for a small sample size which does not involve a lot of spending.

3.1.3 Similar works on the study who have used the qualitative approach

With regard to the study "Effects of social media on students writing", there are researchers who have done similar study. Some of them are as follows:

Marwa and Sabrina (2017), they used the mixed method by using questionnaires and observation as data collection instruments. They came out with the finding that social media affect students' academic writing.

Nutakor (2015) used the qualitative approach noting that in qualitative research, one's interest is understanding a phenomenon and also examining words and pictures, using the qualitative approach similar to this topic, she established that the trends of writing on social media sites affect students' spellings in their school work.

Abdul-Fattah (2015) used the quantitative approach and came to the conclusion that social media (whatsapp) has a significant impact on students writing. Ghaleb (2013), Harns and Dilts (2014); Fishman et al. (2015) & Yunus et al. (2013) all used the quantitative approach. Apart from Nutakor whose study used the qualitative approach all others used either the mixed method or the quantitative approach. Nutakor's study was conducted among Senior High School Students. However, as this research is among colleges of Education Students there could be different findings because of the different Educational levels of the participants.

3.3 Population

According to Polit and Beck (2006, p. 258), a population is "the total number of people or elements that fit the specific set specifications of the study". It is also called the target population. This was supported by Best & Khan (2006), who indicated that a population is a group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common and of an interest to the researcher. Polit and Hungler (1999, p. 37) refer to the population as "an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. These definitions from these scholars suggest that population used for a particular research must be useful for the research.

3.3.1 Homogeneous and heterogeneous population

A homogenous population is when every element is similar to each other in all aspects. With the study, the researcher used the homogeneous population. This implies that, all the participants used for this research are College of Education students and they are in the same class. The homogenous population can also be seen as when every element has all the characteristics that meet the prescribed criteria of the target population (Alvi, 2004).

3.3.2 Heterogeneous population

A Heterogeneous population is when all elements are different to each other in all aspects. With heterogeneous population, one characteristic variable is not same among all the elements while they meet the rest of the criteria that deal with the target population (Alvi, 2004). The variables that can make a population heterogeneous are gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status etc.

The population for this study is students of Mount Mary College of Education which is made up of about one thousand (1000) students but all the population cannot be observed because of factors such as time limitation and financial constraints, a section of the population was selected as a sample from the entire population to represent the whole.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

According to Saravanne (1992), a sample consists of a fraction or part of the total number of elements or units in a defined population. This assertion was supported by Babbie (2004) who said that a sample is a small subset of a larger population whose selection is based on the knowledge of the elements of a population and the research purpose. Therefore, Merriam & Simpson (2000), Sapsford and Jupp, (2006) also

admonished that selection of the subset should be done strategically so that the units or persons that meet a specific criterion are identified and selected.

The researcher selected one hundred and fifty (150) level 100 students. This was made up of sixty (60) men and ninety (90) women who use social media. All the participants are students of French and English language. These participants were chosen because the researcher teaches them therefore access to information from their phones and conducting interview on them was easy. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The reason was that all the participants were users of social media so the respondents were selected for the purpose of the research.

3.4.1 Sampling technique

According to Alvi (2016), there are two broad categories of sampling techniques and these are probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods. According to Alvi, the probability sampling methods include simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling and multistage sampling. In this study, the researcher chose the simple random sampling technique because it prevents bias and ensures fairness. Additionally, each element of the population has an equal chance of being selected in the sample.

3.4.2 Probability sampling methods

According to Alvi (2016) non-probability sampling is also known as random sampling or representative sampling. With the probability sampling, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected to be part of the sample. For instance in dealing with 100 students in a class and the researcher wants to select 10 of these students; the researcher can write all the 100 names on a sheet of paper and

call students to pick at random the names. There is a probability of any of the students being selected.

3.5 Types of Random Sampling

3.5.1 A simple random sample

This is when elementary units are chosen in such a way that each unit in the population has an equal chance of being chosen.

3.5.2 Systematic random sample

This is obtained by selecting one unit on a random basis and choosing additional elementary units at evenly spaced intervals until the desired number is obtained. For example, when a researcher wants to sample 30 students from 120 students, the researcher may list the names of the respondents on piece of paper in alphabetical order. Since 30 respondents are to be selected from 120 respondents the researcher could divide 120 by 30, which will be 4. The researcher at this point could randomly select any number between 1 and 4. Supposing the researcher picks 3 that will be the starting number. So students' number 3 has been selected. From there, select every 4th name until you get the last student. Continue this till you will end up getting your 30 students.

3.5.3 Stratified sampling

A stratified sample is obtained by independently selecting a separate simple random sample from each population stratum. A population can be divided into different groups may be based on some characteristics or variables like educational background.

3.5.4 Cluster sampling

A cluster sample is obtained by selecting clusters from the population on the basis of simple random. For example a cluster may be something like a village, school, ethnic group etc. so all the 46 Colleges of Education in Ghana form a cluster. When a researcher wants to select four colleges from the cluster, the researcher could use simple or random sampling from each college.

3.5.5 Snowball or chain sampling

This sampling means identifying a particular case of interest from someone who know people and can lead you to other people. For example, when a researcher wants to carry out a research on smoking among students, the researcher may use snowball sampling by first identifying a smoker then the smoker may also identify other smokers.

3.6 Advantages of the Probability Sampling Methods

Firstly, the method minimizes the chance of sampling biases. These sampling methods are very fair and transparent which prevent the researcher from being bias.

Secondly, a better representative sample is produced using probability sampling techniques. This means that there is the avoidance of favouritism, nepotism, racial discrimination, ethnicity among others.

3.7 Non-Probability Sampling Methods

The non-probability sampling is also known as judgment or non-random sampling. With this type of sampling, every unit of the population does not get an equal chance of participation in the investigation.

3.7.1 Features of the non-probability sampling methods

- No random selection is made.
- Sample is made on the basis of subjective judgment of the investigator.
- This technique does not need population to be very precisely defined.
- This technique can be used for both general (broad) and specified (defined) population.
- Non-probability techniques make it possible to take a sample of population the elements of which are infinite in number.

In this study, the researcher used one of the non-probability sampling technique known as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on the purpose of the study (Owu-Ewie, 2011). The main reason for the selection of this sampling technique is that the participants possess the information the researcher needs. That is all the participants in the literature-English class have access to smart phones and therefore they can provide the necessary information pertaining to the research.

3.8 Instruments

The instruments for collecting data on this study are interviews and documents.

3.8.1 Interview

Qualitative researchers tend to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings, interviewing has usually been taught of as a key factor in research design (Weisis, 1994). In a similar vein, Kvale (1996, p.174) points out that an interview is a “conversation whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the (life-world) of the interviewee”. In a similar vein Schostak (2006, p. 152) adds that an interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having in-depth

information about a certain topic or subject and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it.

According to Gill et al. (2008) there are four kinds of interviews. These are structured interview, open-ended (unstructured) interview, semi-structured interview and focus group interview.

3.8.2 Structured interview

The kind of interview is not flexible but very rigid. Gill et al. (2008) saw this kind of interview as „verbally administered questionnaire without prompts which also does not pose much follow up questions. Structured interview, whose key feature is that it is mostly organized around a set of predetermined direct questions that require immediate, mostly „yes“ or „no“ type responses.

In such an interview, the interviewer and interviewees would have very little freedom (Berg, 2007). The structured interview strictly follows the questionnaire guide without probing or cross-examining the interviewee. Its advantage is that it is very fast and quick since the questions are straight forward without probing.

3.8.3 Unstructured interview

Legard et al. (2003) view an unstructured interview as „conversation with a purpose“ with the aim of allowing researchers to collect depth of information. This view was also shared by Morse and Corbin (2003) who describe the unstructured interview as a shared experience. They saw the unstructured interview as an interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee to create a friendly conversation. This kind of interview in the view of Legard et al. (2003) allows for flexibility. Gubrium and Holsten (2002) point out that, the unstructured interview is an open situation through which a greater flexibility and freedom is offered to both interviewers and

interviewees in terms of planning, implementing and organizing the interview content and questions. The researcher in this study opted for the unstructured interview so that in-depth information with regard to the research could be acquired.

3.8.4 Semi-structured interview

Gill et al. (2008) posit that it is a kind of interview with many questions which help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the researcher the flexibility to pursue an idea in a response in more detailed. This kind of interview is between structured and unstructured interview.

3.8.5 Focus group interview

Patton (1990, p. 115) defined a focus group interview as „an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic“. He added that groups are typically six to eight people who take part in the interview for one and half hours to two hours. Normally, the participants are homogeneous people who are asked to think critically about questions asked them by the interviewer. Krueger, (1994) also indicated that the focus group could be made up of seven to ten people per group. Krueger therefore agrees with Patton in the sense that the participants should have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic or group.

3.8.6 Reasons for using focus group

The focus group was chosen for this study because of the following advantages; Firstly, it allows the researcher to increase the size of the sample of qualitative studies. If the researcher should focus on one-on-one interview, a lot of people cannot be interviewed. It has been argued among researchers that the more the sample space the more accurate and valid the study becomes; that is why the focus group is preferred.

Secondly, there is a quick supply of results in terms of evidence of the meeting of the group and also it is fast and easy to conduct.

The researcher in conducting the interview put the participants into fifteen groups (15) with each group comprising ten (10) members. The groups were formed based on the names of the class list. Notwithstanding, there was gender balance. The groups were given numbers that is groups 1-15. The interview took two days with the first seven groups who had their session the first day and the second group made up of groups 8 to 15 appearing the second day. An average of twelve (12) minutes was spent on each group. The venue for the interview was the college small dining hall (cafeteria). All the other groups were quarantined and confined to the big dining hall which is closer to the small dining hall. The groups were called accordingly for the interview.

3.9 Documents

Tuckman (1999) indicated that documents are information about an event or phenomenon which people have prepared. The documents gathered and analyzed were the students' quiz papers, assignment and whatsapp chat shots. The researcher compared quiz papers of respondents in Literature-in-English and HIV/AIDS to ascertain whether respondents use social media language. The respondents' whatsapp screenshots were also examined to find out the trends of social media language respondents' use. Group assignments of respondents were also assessed to determine the extent of social media language usage.

3.10 Validation of Research Instruments

Credibility of this study was ensured through the use of triangulation. Denzin (1978, p. 291) indicated that "triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". The qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon

multiple (at least two) sources of evidence, that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods. These include documents, interviews, participants or non-participants observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). The instruments used in this study (interviews and documents) fit into Yin's definition of triangulation. By triangulating data, the researcher attempts to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Eisner, 1991). By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study. According to Patton (1990), triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias. This triangulation was achieved by comparing the whatsapp screenshots, group assignments, and respondents quiz papers to ascertain students' social media usage.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The integrity of a research depends on how the researcher designs his research. Integrity is about ethics and ethics (Norman and Lincoln, 2005) is about professional regulation and codes of conduct that guide the researcher in his dealings with the participants. According to Berg and Howard, (2012) researchers must „do no harm“ as they collect data from participants and report their findings to the public. Research studies involving humans can cause physical and psychological harm. In this situation, treatment of research participants is the most important and fundamental issue that researchers confront (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). With regard to this research, the researcher did not display or disclose the identity of respondents who were interviewed or those who sent their screenshot whatsapp messages to the

researcher to be used for this study. The same as the students quiz papers and group assignments from the respondents were kept confidential.

3.12 Data Analysis

An analytical framework chosen for a study depends on the philosophical ideas that inform that particular study, the goal of that study, the objective, the questions addressed and the methodology that was used (Kusi, 2012). This study used the qualitative approach and the interpretative paradigm was used. This paradigm means that knowledge is gained through communication between the researcher and the respondents.

The data analysis was based on interpreting and describing what respondents have actually said- audio recording during the focused- group interview. As a result of the process of reading and assessing the data to find connections or themes, it was organized into various themes to reflect the interviews that seek to answer the research questions used for this study. Students' quiz papers, group assignments and their whatsapp screenshots were analyzed thoroughly and checking their trend of writing as well as if those trends have impact on their writing.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is focused on presenting and analyzing the data. It will also present the study's findings and the findings will also be discussed. This study was carried out primarily to investigate the effects of Social Media on students' writing. In this case, the study seeks to assess students' usage of Social Media and how these Social Media sites impact on their writing.

The findings of this study are discussed based on the stated research questions, literature that was reviewed and the two theoretical frameworks which were used in the study. The theory in this context is the Theory of Initialism. The analysis for the study was done by the usage of the Research Questions (RQ) as subheads. The following are the research questions that were posed earlier to guide the study.

RQ1: What are the trends of writing used by Mount Mary College of Education students on social media?

RQ 2: What are the effects of those trends on the writing of Mount Mary College of Education Students?

The discussions were based on the reviewed literature and the framework used for this work.

4.1 Findings and Analysis/Discussion

What are the trends or systems of writing used by Mount Mary College of Education students on social media?

This research question sought to find out the trends and systems of writing on social media and the effects these trends impact on the spellings and writings of students' academic work. When students were asked the question "Do you use shorthand when you are chatting on social media?" Most of the respondents responded in the affirmative.

When respondents were asked to mention some of the netspeak that they use, they mentioned various forms which have been tabulated as follows:

Table 3: English words in chat forms

Word	Respondents' short form
Because	bcos
Please	pls
Between	btw
Pictures	pics
Tomorrow	2morrow
Tonight	2nite
For	4
To	2
Laughing out loud	lol
Thank God is Friday	tgif
Control	ctl

Delete	dlt
About	abt
From	frm
Phone	fon
School	skul
See	c
You	u
House	hse
This	diz
Love	luv
Father	fada
Good	gud

A closer look at the table indicates that respondents totally deviate from the normal English spellings of words. They therefore couch their own words to chat or interact with their friends and family members. This implies that students do not only communicate among themselves using netspeak but it is sometimes extended to the elderly. Although Baron (2011) argues that students seem to be able to distinguish between formal and informal language when communicating on social media, the results from this study indicated otherwise when respondents' quiz papers were analysed.

There are so many trends that can be realized based on the internet language that the respondents mentioned. Crystal (2008) categorized the trends in the texting or writing process as follows: shortening or reducing, clipping, numbering/alphanumeric

homophony, abbreviated forms, contraction/ vowel deletion, spelling in accordance with pronunciation / graphemes, using single letter method and letter repetition to achieve speech like quality or lay stress.

Some of the shortened or reduced words used by respondents on social media are shown in the table below:

Table 4: English words and in their reduced or shortened form

Word	shortened/ reduced word
Because	bcos
Please	pls
Between	btw
Government	govt

Table 5: Some English words and respondents' use of alphanumeric homophony

Word	Numbering/ alphanumeric homophony
Ate	8
To	2
For	4
Great	gr8t
Nice	9c
Tomorrow	2morrow
Tonight	2nite
Today	2day
Before	b4
Wait	w8
Forever	4ever

Table 6: Some English words and respondents' clipped forms

Word	clipped form
Information	info
Pictures	pics

Some of abbreviated forms that respondents mentioned when they were interviewed were as follows:

Table 7: Some English words and respondents' abbreviated forms

Words	Abbreviated form
Thank God is Friday	TGIF
Laughing out Loud	LoL
Good Morning	GM
Oh My God	OMG
As Soon As Possible	ASAP
I Miss You	IMU

Table 8: Some English words and respondents' use of graphones

Word	graphone
City	ct
See	c
You	u
Come	kam
The	d
Phone	fone
School	skul
Be	b
Done	dan

Contraction /vowel deletion: in contraction, the vowels are deleted from words. So these words are well described by the consonant rather than the vowel.

Examples of the contractions and vowel deletion mentioned by respondents include the following.

Table 9: Respondents' use of contraction / vowel deletion

Word	Contraction/vowel deletion
Text	txt
From	frm
Should	shld
Limited	ltd
Round	rnd

From the table 9, it could be seen that some vowels are deleted when respondents are chatting on social media. With the words text, from, should, limited and round, the vowels [ɛ], [ɔ], [u],[I] and [au] are deleted from the words respectively. Students in recent times have adopted these new ways of writing or spelling of words on social media which they have also used in their formal writing. Odey et al. (2014) indicated that students are influenced consciously or unconsciously by the way they text onto their classroom work. When respondents were asked as to the reasons they write these shorthand on social media they gave series of responses. Some of these responses include the following: *“please, it is very fast if I type using shorthand on social media.”* Another respondent also indicated that *“shorthand saves a lot of time when typing”*. One of the respondents also said *“I use shorthand because when I am chatting with people I don't want to write long words”*. According to a research conducted by Soomro and Kamran (2013) among some University of Pakistan

students, most of them had affirmed that they use shorthand, abbreviation, clipping, graphemes among others to send messages or chat on social media. In Soomro and Kamran study most of the respondents had also indicated that when they use shorthand it facilitates the process of texting and also saves time. This view agrees with this study being undertaken when respondents had indicated similar sentiments.

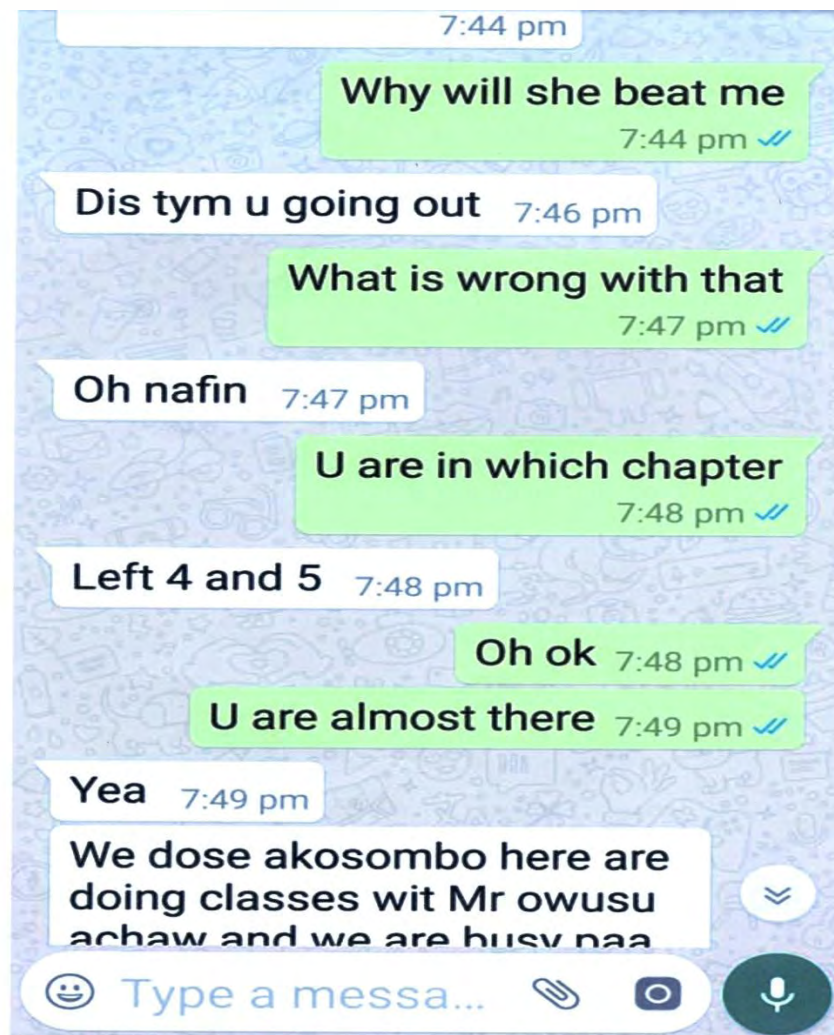


Figure 1: A document showing some trends of writing in a respondent's whatsapp screenshot



Figure 2: A document showing some trends of writing in a respondents' whatsapp screen shot

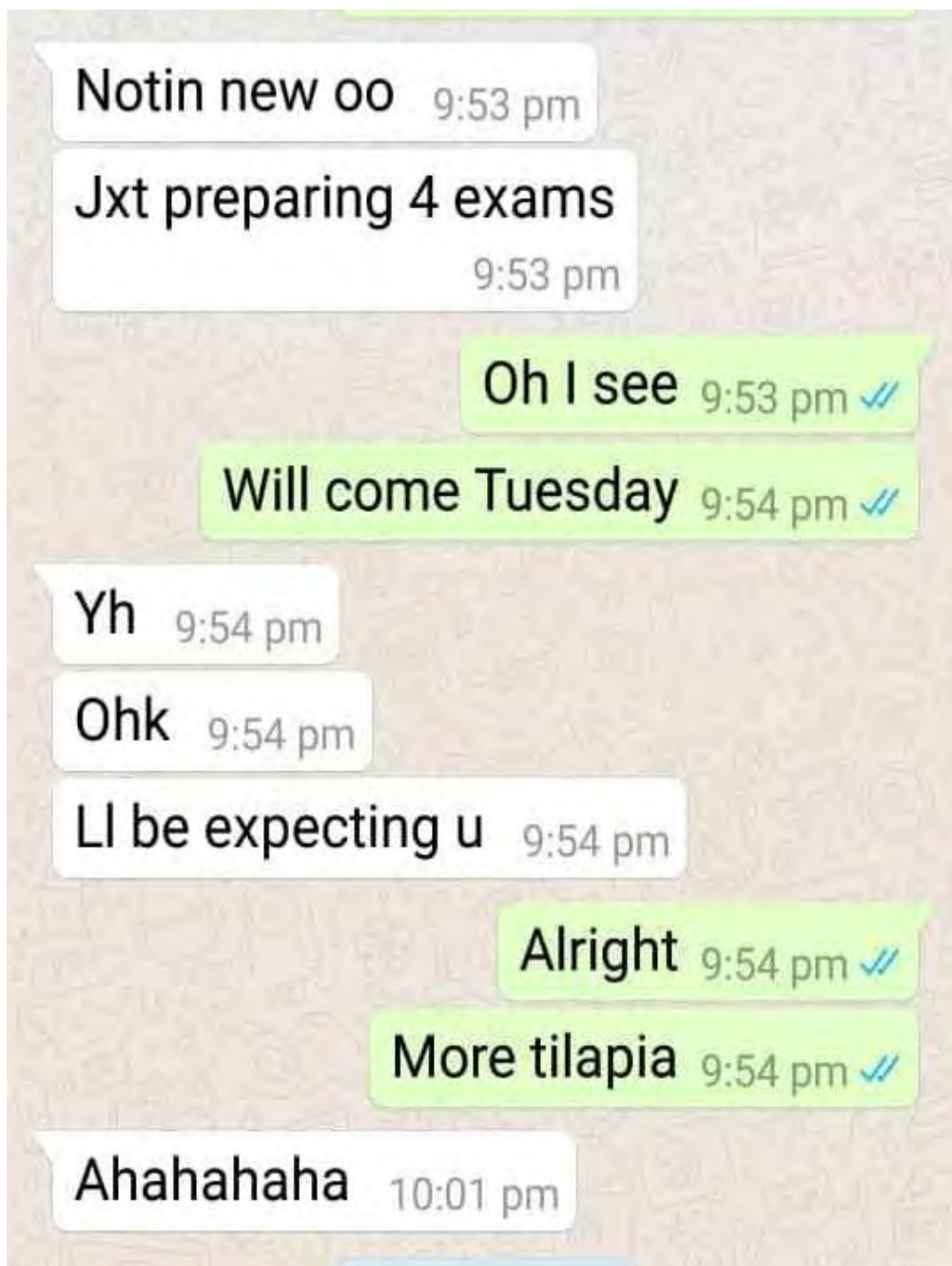


Figure 3: A document of a respondents' whatsapp screenshot

Figures 1, 2 and 3 are samples of 82 screenshots of respondents whatsapp chats. Some of the screenshots are displayed in appendix A. A careful look at the documents revealed that respondents use shorthand when typing. Some of the shorthand writings or net language that appeared in the respondents screenshot chats are *dis* for this, *tym* for time, *u* instead of you *nafin* for nothing, *yea* instead of yes, and *dose* for those. With the second respondent, the following shorthand were identified; *u*, *yhh*, *frnd*, *tg* representing you, yes, friend and thank God. The third respondent used short hand such as the following in her chats *notin*, *jxt*, *4*, *ohk*, *il*, *yh*, *u* instead of nothing, just, for, will, yes and you respectively.

Table 10: Respondents' whatsapp chat and the chatting processes used based on figures 1, 2 and 3

Text process	Examples	full word
Contraction/ vowel deletion	jxt, tym, yh, frnd	just, time, yes, friend
Alphanumeric	4	for
Abbreviated forms	Tg	thank God
Graphones	dis, dose, u, nafin,	this, those, you, nothing, oh okay
Shortening / reducing	il, wit	will, with
Letter repetition to achieve speech-like quality or lay stress	yhh, oo	yes
Clipping	exams	examination

Table 11: Tabulation of 82 whatsapp screenshots received from respondents

Trend	Number	Percentage (%)
Abbreviation	52	14
Graphone	88	23
Shortening	94	24
Letter repetition	32	08
Clipping	4	01
Alphanumeric homophony	51	13
Vowel deletion	66	17
Total	387	100

From table 11, the total netlanguage used by respondents in their whatsapp messages were three hundred and eighty four (384). Shortening represents the most dominant netspeak linguistic feature made of 24%. Examples drawn from the sampled respondents screenshot whatsapp messages include the following *il* for will, *wit* for with, *tnxs* for thanks *notin* for nothing and others.

The second most dominant netspeak feature was graphone which constituted 23% of the total netspeak linguistic feature identified from respondents' whatsapp screenshots. Some of the graphones identified are as follows: *sapa* for supper *dis* for this *dose* for those among others.

The next trend identified was vowel deletion which attracted 17% out of the total 387 netspeak. Some of the examples from the whatsapp screenshot of the respondents include *just* for *jxt*, *tym* for time, *frnd* for friend.

The fourth most dominant feature was alphanumeric homophony. Examples drawn from the respondents' whatsapp screenshots include the following; *4get*, for forget, *2morow* for tomorrow *4* for for, *2nite* for tonight, *2geda* for together.

The next most used linguistic feature was abbreviation which accounted for 14%. Some of the examples used in respondents screenshots included *ge* for good evening, *gm* for good morning, *lol* for laughing out loud, *tg* for thank God.

Letter repetition for stress and emphasis also attracted 32 netspeak which represented 08% out of the total 387 netspeak language. Some of the examples in the respondents' whatsapp screenshots are "plsssss", "ooooooo", yessss, *yoooo*, *haaahahaha* among others.

Finally, clipping was the least represented screenshot linguistic feature used. Clipping only had 4 netspeak language which represented 01%. Some examples used by the respondents are exam for examination, *maths* for mathematics, *chem.*, for chemistry, *lab* for laboratory.

From table 10, it could be deduced that respondents use various trends or netspeak when they are chatting on social media. Marchand (1969) theory of initialism focused more on abbreviations and acronyms. Before the advent of the internet in the 21st century, abbreviation usage was carefully used. In recent times, the use of netspeak or internet language is used anyhow. Some respondents even indicated that they use such language for fun. One respondent indicated that "I use abbreviation and shorthand when writing on social media for the fun of it". This is in line with starowicz (2007) study which revealed that some respondents write on social media because they want to impress their friends that they know how to write and use netspeak. Lee (2002)

averred that abbreviations and shorthand were created for brevity and also to save time and also speed up the typing process.

When respondents were asked why they use netspeak, the respondents gave the following responses; *“I use internet language because it enables me to communicate faster”*. Another respondent also mentioned that *“when I use shorthand it helps me to avoid the correct spellings of words so that my friends wouldn’t know that I do not know how to spell a particular word”*. The views from the respondents agree with Odey et al. (2014) study on effects of netspeak on students’ writing. In their study, they mentioned that students use netspeak in order to save time and facilitate the process of typing. It can also be seen that students also use netspeak when chatting on social media so that they will avoid the correct spellings of words. Sometimes, people are mocked at when they are unable to spell simple words. So to avoid mockery from their peers, they tend to use netspeak which has not got any specific way of spelling. Indeed, there are several ways by which words are spelt when one is using netspeak for example the word “school” could be spelt using netspeak as “skuu” or “skuul”.

From table 10, it could be realized that most of the respondents used vowel deletion and graphemes most when chatting on social media. The reason is that with graphemes one writes a word based on the sound. This is an easy way of writing without thinking about the actual orthography of the word. In the English language, quite a number of words are not spelt based on their sounds. Therefore, if respondents are spelling words based on their sounds then this poses a serious threat to English language spellings. According to Al Bereiki and Al – Mekhlafi (2016), they said that sound letter correspondent is not regular in English language. This means that one cannot depend on the English letter sounds to spell a word. The sounds and the orthography

in English do not always correspond. Starowicz (2007) posits that the more students use netspeak online, the more they tend to use it when they are offline. This gives the indication that these graphemes and shortening could be transferred online to respondents' quizzes, assignments and examinations among others.

Crystal (2004) stressed that the norms and conventions applied when writing online is different from both spoken and written language. Crystal makes the point that writing on the internet is quite different from when making a speech or written language. This was the reason why these respondents wrote on the internet using shorthand. Crystal further argues that the internet offers a new variation of stylistic writing. In this case, people adopt varied ways of writing on the internet. Crystal (2001) asserted that it will be nearly impossible for one to type using only initialisms, as it was in the early days of texting, since it will breed too much ambiguity. These initialisms or shorthand are mixed with proper spelling of words. The comparison of the respondents chats on social media reveal that they chat using internet language.

4.1.1 Summary of trends of respondents' social media use

Crystal's framework of texting processes was used to point out some texting processes used by students. Respondents' 82 whatsapp screenshot messages were assessed to ascertain whether they also follow the trends that David Crystal propounded. The screenshot messages revealed that respondents during sending messages on social media use various texting processes which follow what crystal proposed including clipping, abbreviation, graphemes, vowel deletion, alphanumeric homophony among others. When the respondents' chats were analysed it was revealed that the most used texting type was grapheme followed by vowel deletion. Conclusion is therefore drawn that the most used texting process used by respondents is grapheme and shortening based on table nine (9).

4.2 Research Question Two

What are the effects of the trends of social media writing on students?

This question is aimed at exploring whether the trends of writings identified earlier in research question one such as graphemes, vowel deletion, alphanumeric homophony among others affect students formal writing such as quizzes and assignments.

When students were asked the question “*Do you use shorthand or abbreviation when chatting or typing on Social Media?*” most of the students responded in the affirmative but went ahead to say that the abbreviations and shorthand are used based on formality. The respondents affirmed that they use abbreviations and shorthand when they are chatting with their friends but they do not use shorthand and abbreviations when they are chatting with older people or people in authority. Some of the responses from the respondents include the following:

“I use shorthand or the abbreviated words because the people you are chatting with already know the meaning of the shorthand but in terms of exams for instance, if I write “4” instead of “for” the examiner might not understand”. Another respondent also indicated that “I use shorthand or abbreviation for my friends but elderly people I type the right words for them, for example, teachers, pastors, I type the correct words but for friends I use the shorthand”. One respondent also reiterated that “I use the shorthand or abbreviated one for my friends but I use the proper one (formal writing) for elderly people. So when it comes to examination I do not make such mistakes because the typing is like different from the writing. Immediately I go there all that is written on the paper are the proper ones”.

One of the respondents also said *“When I am writing, I am fully aware of the formalities for example during examination I know I am writing for marks so I write with care and it is for an elderly person that person may not understand the shorthand that I have used and even if that person knows it, it is not the right thing to do”*. The responses from the respondents agree with Baron (2008) study which showed that when students can distinguish between formal and informal language, SMS language does not affect their writing. Baron (2011) concluded that teenagers and students in general seem to be able to distinguish between formal and informal writing and that netspeak or internet language seemingly does not influence teenagers’ literacy. Baron in his study made a proposition that most students are always conscious of their writing. He averred that students can distinguish between formal and informal writing. According to Baron, students know when to use internet language such as abbreviations and shorthand. With this study, when the respondents were interviewed on whether they use internet language or shorthand, they did admit that they use it but they posited that they know when to use those abbreviations and shorthand. In their view, they use the abbreviations and the shorthand when they are chatting on Social Media with their friends and peers, but then, when the people involved in the conversation are elderly people or in formal situations, they do not use the internet language (netspeak), abbreviation or shorthand. So the researcher collated and compared screenshot messages of respondents’ conversation on whatsapp, quiz papers in English literature and HIV AIDS subjects as well as respondents’ group assignment papers to ascertain if students writing on social media affected their writing.

The following are samples of respondents' quizzes and assignments.

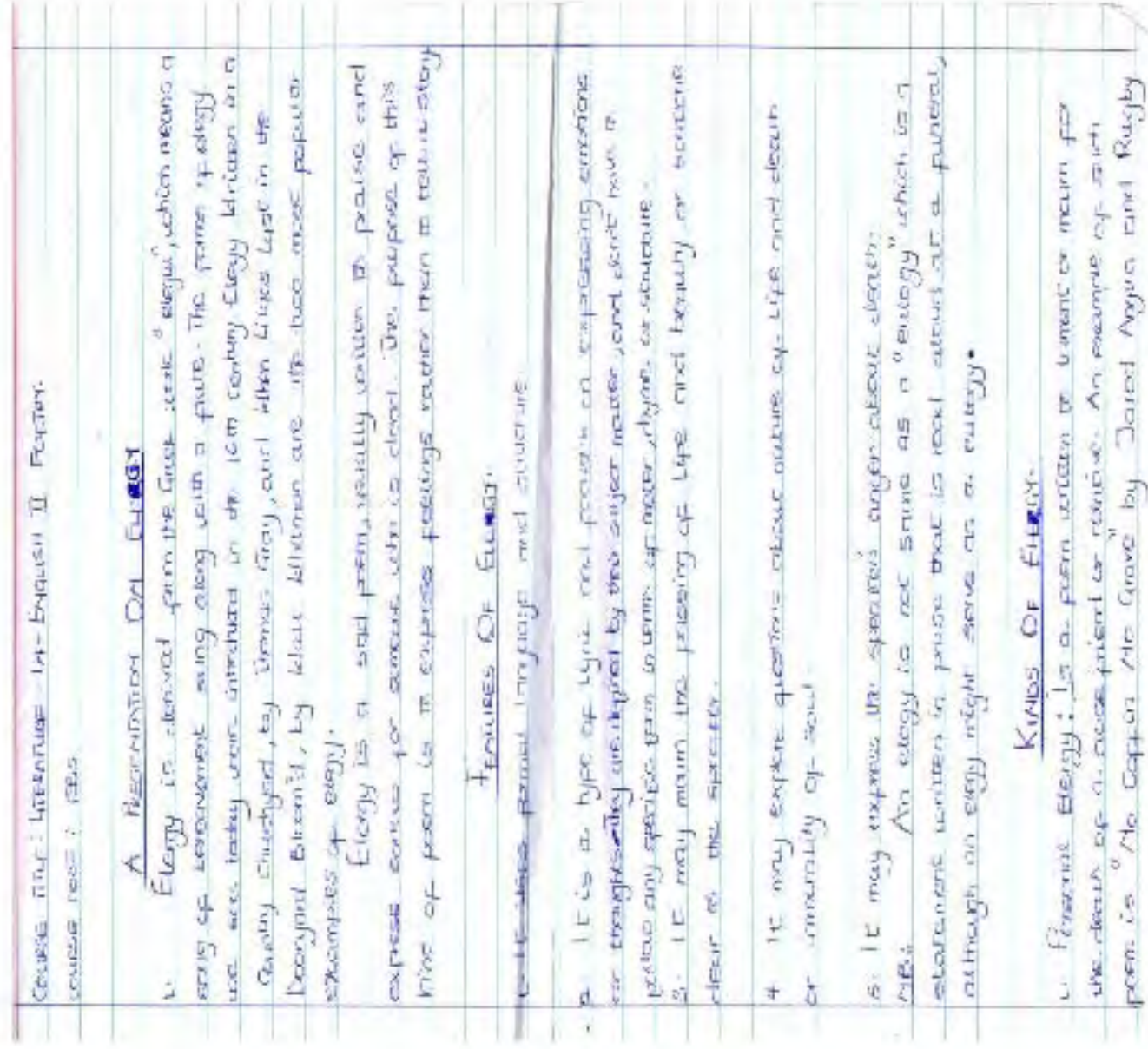


Figure 4: A document showing a sample of respondents' group assignment

VILLANELLE

ETYMOLOGY:

The word villanelle derives from the Italian Villanella, referring to a rustic song or dance, and which comes from Villano, meaning peasant or villen. Villano derives from the Medieval Latin Villanus meaning a "farmland". The etymology of the word relates to the fact that the form's initial distinguishing feature was the pastoral subject.

Definition: Villanelle is a poetic device that which requires a poet to have 19 lines and a fixed form. It has five tercets (first 15 lines), a quatrain (last four lines), and a couplet at the end of the quatrain. Lines may be of any length, but are often written in iambic pentameter and follow an ABA rhyme scheme. The villanelle also employs line repetition.

HISTORY:

The villanelle originated as a simple ballad-like song in imitation of peasant songs of an oral tradition with no fixed poetic form. These poems were often of a rustic or pastoral subject matter and contain refrains. Prior to the nineteenth century, the term would have simply meant country song, with no particular form implied a meaning it retains in the vocabulary of early music. According to Julie Kane, the refrain in each stanza "indicates" that the form descended from a "choral dance song" where a vocal soloist frequently female, semi-improvised the 'unique' lyrics of each stanza, while a ring of dancers, all female, or male and female mixed chimed in with the repetitive words of the refrain as they danced around her in a circle.

MAJOR FEATURES

- * There is no well-organised meter in a villanelle, but it has a set rhyme scheme.
- * It is a fixed verse form like sonnet. Its 19 lines are repetitive.
- * There are no fixed numbers of syllables.

PURPOSE OF VILLANELLE

Villanelle builds up the intensity and tone of a poem. It is most used in lyrical poems and songs with the objective of using repetitive lines to soften the typical repetition of traditional forms.

EXAMPLES OF VILLANELLE POEMS:

- 1) "Do not go gentle into that good night" by Dylan Thomas.
- 2) "The Waking" by Theodore Roethke
- 3) "Mad Girl's Love Song" by Sylvia Plath

RULES OF VILLANELLE

Villanelle has nineteen lines strict pattern of repetition and rhyme scheme.

Figure 5: A document showing respondents' group assignment

Looking closely at the group assignments in figure 4 and 5 closely, it is observed that the students did not use netspeak. This became possible because they collaborated or came together to do the assignment.

Collaborative learning is defined as “a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together” (Dillenbourg 1999, p. 113). This definition means that in collaborative learning the participants must be more than one who must come together to share ideas. Haring-Smith (1994) also averred that collaborative writing involves more than one person who contributes to the creation of a text so that “sharing responsibility” becomes essential. With this study, the Respondents” were given an assignment in literature- in- English for them to work in groups so as to ascertain whether the respondents use shorthand or abbreviations in the assignments or otherwise. When their documents or assignments were carefully analysed there were no traces of those abbreviations or shorthand (refer to figure 4 and 5). This confirms Blau and Caspi’s (2008) study which indicated that when students produce a document that was written collaboratively the document might have higher quality than a document written alone. When the group assignments were analysed, it was realized that there were no traces of shorthand or abbreviation. This was because all the respondents participated and contributed to produce the document. This means that collaborative revisions can improve language defects such as vocabulary which include the use of abbreviations and shorthand, organization and content (Blau and Caspi, 2008).

In this contemporary world, one outcome of the students learning process is the ability to engage in active learning as a member of a group (Dillenbourg, 1999; Baker, 2013). Dillenbourg and Baker were of the view that peer learning is the solution to effecting learning in modern times. During peer-support, students receive support or

benefit from each other (Ertmer et al., 2014). Peer-support promotes students learning and has been found beneficial for the learning process (Christiansen, 2009). Through peer support, students may help each other by providing constructive comments on an assignment.

During peer review of students work, both the person doing the review and the person whose work is being reviewed all attain some benefits. Sims (1989) had said that the student whose work is reviewed may benefit from external perspective on ways in which their work may be improved, thus stimulating their thinking. On the part of the student doing the review, that person also benefit as a result of having to process and analyse the work of a peer (Wessa and De Rycker, 2010) and the reviewer may also get ideas for improving their own work (Sims,1989).

Figures 6 to 13 are samples of respondents quiz papers in both literature-in-English and HIV/AIDS. Seven respondents quiz papers in both subjects (Literature-in-English and HIV/AIDS) were sampled and compared. Figures 6 and 7 refer to the same respondent, the same as figures 8 and 9 in that order. For more samples of students' quiz papers that were compared, refer to Appendix B.

Name: ↑

Index number: 0233

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?

Window period: ~~refer~~ ^{Period (b/w)} is the point of infection and when the body detected the presence of the virus but the antibodies are not enough to be detected

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

Vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS is mother to child ^{mode} transmission of HIV/AIDS

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

Persistent fever
Pers. diarrhoea more than 1 month
Loss of weight abt 10%

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment is ~~un~~ sexual advancement to some without the person's consent or which make the person feel victimized while sexual abuse is a forceful sexual intercourse with some

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

The conspiracy theory
The Hunter's Theory
The Colonialism

Figure 6: A document showing a respondent's quiz paper in HIV/AIDS

For items 1 to 9, write appropriate responses in the spaces provided.

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]

Sam is a ~~powerful~~ an autocratic leader while Chris is not.
Sam is greedy and mean while Chris is selfless. 2-1/2 1 1/2

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

It gives us vivid picture on what the writer wants to put across. 02

3. a. Which character could be described as "the protector of the future"? [1 mark]

Ikem 01

- b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

He seek the good of the pple. 00

04 1/2

Figure 7: A document showing a respondent's literature in English quiz paper


Name:

Index number: BMCE/HS/18/0169

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?
Window period is (e) period whereby an ~~individual~~ individual is infected by (e) HIV/AIDS disease but does not show any sign or symptoms. ✓ (2)
2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS
It's (e) mother - child transmission ✓ (2)
3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS
Persistent fever more than one month.
Persistent diarrhoea more than one month
Loss of weight ✓ (2)
4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.
Sexual harassment is (when) a young girl is threatened by someone's sexual advances but sexual abuse is when a young girl is abused by a (persistent) having of sex by an elder person she knows. ✓ (2)
5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS
Hunters theory
Colonialism theory
Conspiracy theory ✓ (2)

Figure 8: A document showing a respondent's quiz paper in HIV/AIDS

JULY 2019
EBS 158
PROSE FICTION
30 MINUTES

Candidate's Index Number
M NICE 1711161969
Signature: 

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

COLLEGES OF EDUCATION
FOUR-YEAR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (B. ED)
FIRST YEAR, SECOND SEMESTER QUIZ II, JULY 2019

JULY 2, 2019

PROSE FICTION

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Answer ALL the questions.
[20 Marks]

For items 1 to 9, write appropriate responses in the spaces provided.

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]

Sam is irresponsible

Chris is self-less

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

It helps the writer to reader to understand very well.

3. a. Which character could be described as "the protector of the future"? [1 mark]

IFEM

- b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

Always seek (e) views of his people

Page 1 of 2

1 1/2

Figure 9: A document showing a respondent's literature in English quiz

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?

It is the period between point of infection and the bodies detection of the virus (2)

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

It is transferring the virus vertically (2)

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

- i. Diarrhoea for one month
- ii. Persistence fever for one month or more
- iii. Rapid body weight loss more than 10% (2)

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment includes remarks, physical gestures, touches of the body while sexual abuse done by somebody usually done by somebody known by the victim (1)

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

- i. Hunter theory (2)
- ii. Contaminated needle theory
- iii. Colonialism theory

Figure 10: A sample of a respondent's quiz paper in HIV/AIDS

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]

Sam was a dictator while Chris was democratic

02

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

first and second person

2(1/2) 1 1/2

3. a. Which character could be described as "the protector of the future"? [1 mark]

Ikem

01

- b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

He saved a community by his publication in the "gazette" newspaper.

2(1/2) 1 1/2

Figure 11: A document showing a respondent's quiz paper in Literature in English

1. What does the term "Window.Period" of HIV infection explain?

Window period is the second stage of infection where the body doesn't show sign of the infection but infect others. (2)

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

Mother - to - Child transmission of HIV/AIDS (2)

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

- (i) Diarrhea more than one week.
- (ii) Continuous fever for more than one month
- (iii) Body weight loss 10% (2)

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

(Handwritten scribble)

(Handwritten scribble)

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

- (i) hunter theory
- (ii) conspiracy theory (2)

Figure 12: A document showing a respondent's quiz paper in HIV/AIDS

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]
Sam is autocratic leader while Chris was democratic

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

The writer employed all the narrative techniques that is both the first person and the third person narrative to make the story real.

3. a. Which character could be described as "the protector of the future"? [1 mark]

Sam

b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

He was intelligent.

02 $\frac{1}{2}$

Figure 13: A sample of a respondent's quiz paper in Literature in English

From the study of the documents, it was revealed that participants trend of writing on social media affected their writings. From the samples; the respondents produced various trends of writing in their quizzes.

In figure 6, the following netspeak were produced; *btw*, *ē*, *pers*, *1month*, *sm1*, *advancem't*. In figure 7, *pple* was produced. Figure 8 had *ē*, *wen*. Figure 9 had *ē*, *pple*. In figure 10, the respondent produce *dictesion*, *viktim*. In figure 11, *sekend* was produced. In 12, *bodi*, *bat*, *daaria*, *dan*, *feva*, *teori* and *consperasi*. In figure 13, *de* and *techniks* were produced in the respondents quiz paper. In appendix B also contained the following netspeak. *Thru*, *10%*, *1st*, *2nd*, *gov't*, *blad and 1*, *writa*, *kud*, *everybodi*, *lusing*, and *mani*. The trends identified in respondents' quizzes include alphanumeric homophony, shortening or contraction in both the literature-in- English and HIV/AIDS quiz papers.

Table 12: A tabulation of social media words and their English equivalents used by the respondents in their HIV/AIDS and Literature in English quiz papers

Netspeak	English Words	Texting process/trend
Btw	Between	shortening/reducing
Pers	Persistence	shortening/reducing
Advancem ^{nt}	Advancement	shortening/reducing
Some 1	Someone	alphanumeric
1 month	one month	alpha numeric /shortening
Pple	People	shortening/ reducing
ē/de	The	shortening/reducing
wen	When	shortening/reducing
persisten	Persistence	shortening/reducing
dictesion	Detection	graphone
viktim	Victim	graphone
thiorry/teory	Theory	graphone
sekend	Second	graphone
bodi	Body	graphone
bat	But	graphone
daaria	Diarrhoea	graphone
dan	Than	graphone
feva	Fever	graphone
consperasi	Conspiracy	graphone
techniks	Techniques	graphone

Thru	Through	shortening/ reducing
10%	ten percent	shortening/ reducing
Hanters	hunter's	graphone
1 st	First	shortening /reducing
2 nd	Second	shortening/ reducing
Gov't	Government	shortening/ reducing
Blad	Blood	graphone
1	One	shortening/ reducing
Writa	Writer	graphone
Kud	Could	shortening
Everybodi	Everybody	Graphone
Lusing	Losing	Graphone
Mani	Money	Graphone

From the above, it can be observed that some of the words used in the respondents' quizzes have undergone shortening, alphanumeric homophony and graphone. It is important to note that the most dominant texting process used by the respondents in their quizzes were shortening and graphones. These trends are in line with the analysis done on the first research question where students' screenshot messages were analysed and it was revealed that the dominant texting process adopted by students on social media are graphone and shortening. Flower and Hayes (1981) have the opinion that writing is a goal-driven activity and that the content of every text should be intelligible to the reader in this scenario to the teacher. However, analyzing the language used by students in their quizzes prove otherwise.

A critical look at the quiz papers in figures 6 to 19 give the indication that social media language reflected more in the HIV/AIDS quiz than the literature in English quiz. The reason is that respondents are conscious that when they use social media language in any subject other than English language they will not be penalized that accounted for more errors in respondents HIV/AIDS papers than the Literature in English. Most schools fight the case of netspeak and all linguistic deviations from the English language in examination situations. These schools through their teachers seriously apply sanctions and penalties notably, through reduction of marks (Awoyemi, 2013; Ugot, 2010; Ologa & Babalola, 2013). These researchers argue that students are penalized when they use social media language in English language subjects but same cannot be said of the non-English subjects. That is why the HIV/AIDS subject has more netlanguage than the Literature in English. This phenomenon is in line with concerns raised by Niedzielski and Preston (1999) and Cameron (1995) about threats to standard varieties and conventional communication practices and young people and modern technologies being responsible for these threats. Actually, students sometimes confuse the lines between formal English and the very informal internet language when they are writing formally. This is thought to be causing them to make a lot of spelling and grammatical errors in their assignments and tests, and makes it hard for teachers to distinguish what they are trying to say.

When the respondents' HIV/AIDS quizzes were marked, the examiner underlined the shorthand but did not deduct any marks. Examiners not deducting marks for wrong spellings and shorthand suggest that they mark only content and not errors committed by respondents. This act of examiners not penalizing students for netlanguage usage and grammatical errors conforms to what Crystal (2008) said that texting has added a new dimension to language use but its long-term impact is negligible. It is not a

disaster and it will not harm the standards of language. Crystal does not see anything wrong with shorthand and he believes that shorthand and abbreviations do have little impact on students writing. Crystal's view was also supported by Baron (2008) who also argues that students' writings suffer little impact from netspeak. Baron claims that netlanguage helps develop vocabulary and reading skills of students instead of damaging language. Thurlow (2011) opines that, the orthographic or typographic choices made by young people in their messages are socio-linguistically and communicatively intelligible. Thurlow in this scenario is suggesting that when people write using social media language one can read and understand or make meaning from that language. O'connor (2005) also adds that netspeak violates the use of proper English in the aspects of capitalization, punctuation and sentence structure. This means that netspeak affects every facet of the English language including spellings and other aspects as mention earlier by O'connor.

A critical look at the Literature- in- English quiz paper confirms that the examiner deducted marks whenever the respondent uses shorthand or commits a grammatical error these examiners penalized the respondents because they believe the errors or the social media language used is not proper or it distorts the meaning of the respondent's answers . It could be observed that the shorthand used in the respondents literature-in- English quiz were few as a result of penalties students suffer for using them. Oluga and Babalola (2013) critique the usage of social media language and presented it as a phenomenon which affects the spelling system of the texters, making it difficult for them to get the correct orthography of words as they are used to spelling incorrectly and using abbreviated forms of words in text messaging. According to them, in Nigeria, most schools combat the use of SMS language and all other linguistic deviations from the English language in examination situations. They do this partly by

seriously sanctioning such use with penalties, notably reduction of marks. O' Connor (2005) had mentioned that, Netspeak violates the rules of proper English in the aspects of capitalization, punctuation and sentence structure. The levels of written work produced in the classroom are at times not up to the formal standard of English due to the usage.

Starowicz (2007) mentioned that students do not realize that they are using Netspeak when they are writing on social media as they are only concerned about getting the message to the recipient and not getting the spelling right, so basically it is going to be applied in the classroom as well. Indeed, Students, in examination situations, are often reminded of the necessity to use language properly for an effective communication of their ideas and a grammatical formulation of their answers. Improper use of language is, in this respect, often sanctioned in various glaring ways, notably through reduction of marks. However, despite this linguistic and examination requisites, students -often advertently or inadvertently - violate language rules, sometimes with the influence of intensive use of particular communication technology notably social media language (Awoyemi 2013, Ugot 2010, Oluga and Babalola 2013). When the students' quizzes were analyzed even though there were traces of social media language, there were wrong spellings of words from the respondents. For example in figure 7, the respondent wrote *mean while* instead of *meanwhile* which is a wrong separation of a word.

In figure 10, wrong spellings such as *perioud*, *thiorry*, *gustures*, *touchs*, instead of *period*, *theory*, *gestures* and *touches* were produced by the respondents. In figure 17, a respondent wrote "storey" instead of "story" which is an error in homophone based on the context in which the word "storey" was used. In figure 18, wrong spellings such as *dihorea*, *cholonialism* instead of *diarrhoea* and *colonialism* were produced

respectively. According to a study by Rafi (2010) revealed that not all errors found in students' work could be attributed to social media. He, however, stated that the adoption, usage and addiction to social media have propelled the deterioration of English writing and appropriate spelling of words. This means that the more the students access social media the more their spellings are affected.

4.2.1 Summary of the effects of social media on the formal writings of Mount Mary students

The results of this study showed that respondents use abbreviations, alphanumeric homophony, shortening, clipping, graphone, vowel deletion and other texting processes when their whatsapp screenshot messages were analysed. It was also revealed that the common texting processes used by respondents were graphone and shortening. For example *sapa* for supper, *fon* for phone and *tanx* for thanks, *jxt* for just representing graphones and vowel deletion respectively.

It was also noted when respondents do collaborative work or group work they do not use shorthand or any of the texting processes. However, when they write individual quizzes, they use the shorthand. The use of the shorthand was more prevalent in the HIV/AIDS than the Literature- in- English subject.

Conclusion can be drawn that respondents use all the texting processes as proposed by Crystal such as graphones, shortening, vowel deletion, clipping, and alphanumeric homophony among others. Another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that social media affected the writing of students as they use social media language in their quizzes; on the other hand social media language did not manifest in respondents' collaborative work.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter introduction gives the summary of the thesis and comes out with conclusions from the findings of the research. This particular chapter summaries the methods and approaches used in the study and then highlights the key findings of the study. Then it will be followed by the findings and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Summary of Aims and Methods

The general aim of this thesis was to investigate into the effects of social media on students' writing using the case of Mount Mary Colleges of Education in the Eastern Region of Ghana. To address this issue, the study had to address its research questions. In the first place, the study was to identify the trends of writing on social media platforms and also examine the effects of the trends on the writing of students' formal writing. The study used the initialism theory by Marchand which was modified by David Crystal.

The initialism theory talks about the abbreviations or initials of words and new scientific discoveries. This theory was improved upon by Crystal when he enumerated some texting processes such as reduction, vowel deletion, alphanumeric homophony, clipping, grapheme among others.

The approach or the design this research used was the qualitative research design because of its descriptive and explorative nature. This approach aims at deriving meaning from texts, pictures, interview and observable behaviours.

The data used in this study was one Hundred and Fifty (150) first year French and English language class. The researcher chose this class because he teaches in that class. In addition to that getting access to information from these respondents became easy.

The data analysis of this research was done based on the research questions. The first research question which was on the trends of students social media use by respondents was analyzed first and followed by the second research question which was based on the effect of social media on students writing.

The researcher grouped the social media language students professed they use when communicating with their friends. Those words were mentioned when the researcher was interviewing the respondents. Whatsapp screenshot messages by respondents were also analyzed and grouped. Respondents' group assignments and individual quiz papers in literature in English and HIV/AIDS were also analyzed to ascertain the effects of social media language on respondents.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The first aim of this study was to find out the trends of writing by Mount Mary College of Education students on social media sites.

When respondents' eighty two (82) whatsapp screenshot messages were examined, it was realized that most of the respondents use graphemes and shortening most when they are communicating on social media platforms. It was also revealed that the respondents also do use other texting processes such as clipping, alphanumeric, homophony, contraction or shortening, abbreviations vowel deletion among others.

The study was also aimed at investigating how the trends of students' social media writing affect respondents writing such as group assignments and quizzes. The study

showed that some of the students use social media language in their quizzes but social media language did not reflect in students group work.

5.3 Findings of the Study

The main findings of this research are stated below;

The first finding is that the students use abbreviation, clipping, graphone, vowel deletion, alphanumeric homophony and shortening processes on social media. The two most common trends used are shortening and graphone. These trends are used by the respondents to save their time while communicating on social media platforms.

The second finding is that students face the problem of memorizing the difficult spelling of words. So that is why they go for shortening, clipping, abbreviation and numbering processes to avoid memorizing the longer and difficult spellings.

Social media language does not manifest in students' group assignment. This is because when students work in groups or they peer reviewed each other's work errors in students work if not totally removed become minimized.

Social media language or netspeak is used in students' quizzes in both English language and HIV/AIDS. Students were penalized by losing marks in Literature in English quiz for using social media language. However, they were not penalized in the HIV/AIDS subject.

5.4 Conclusion of the Research Results

This study concludes that students adopt different trends of writing on social media platforms and these trends are clear departure from the conventional spelling in English language. This research work concludes that the use of social media language has both negative and positive impacts on the writings of students. The impact is

positive when students work in groups. However, the impact is negative when respondents write individually.

5.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This research work was limited to some extent. The reason is that this study focused on only the effects of social media on students' writing thereby leaving other areas of language learning or language skills such as listening, speaking and reading.

However, the results from this study could generate some interesting developments in relation to language and social media. This research will propel researchers who are interested in social media language to further look into this emerging vocabulary on the internet.

5.6 Recommendations/Pedagogical Implications

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study which may be useful to parents, teachers and students concerning the effects of social media language on students' writing which are stated below:

The students should use the mobile phone dictionary while writing on social media so that they can easily communicate with each other through correct spelling. It can be controlled through parents, teachers and the elderly by encouraging students to use mobile phone dictionary while chatting with each other.

Parents, teachers and the elderly should give the awareness of using the proper and correct language to the students while communicating with each other and tell them the differences between non-standard and standard language so they can avoid using these social media language in formal writings such as quizzes and assignments.

The teacher should not encourage and appreciate students who use social media language in their writings. In fact, they have to take to an immediate action to stop, and tell them that it is not correct language to use. Through this, the students will be aware and it will prevent them from using this non-standard language.

Teachers should concentrate and focus more on the differences between formal and informal writing systems and increase the students' awareness about their correct spellings.

Punitive measures should be carried out by teachers and examiners against students who use internet language in all formal writings such as examinations, quizzes, assignments among others.

Teachers should frequently encourage group assignments so as to minimize the errors committed by students. Teachers should not only ring or circle students wrong spellings or grammatical errors but they must provide reasons for the rings or the errors.

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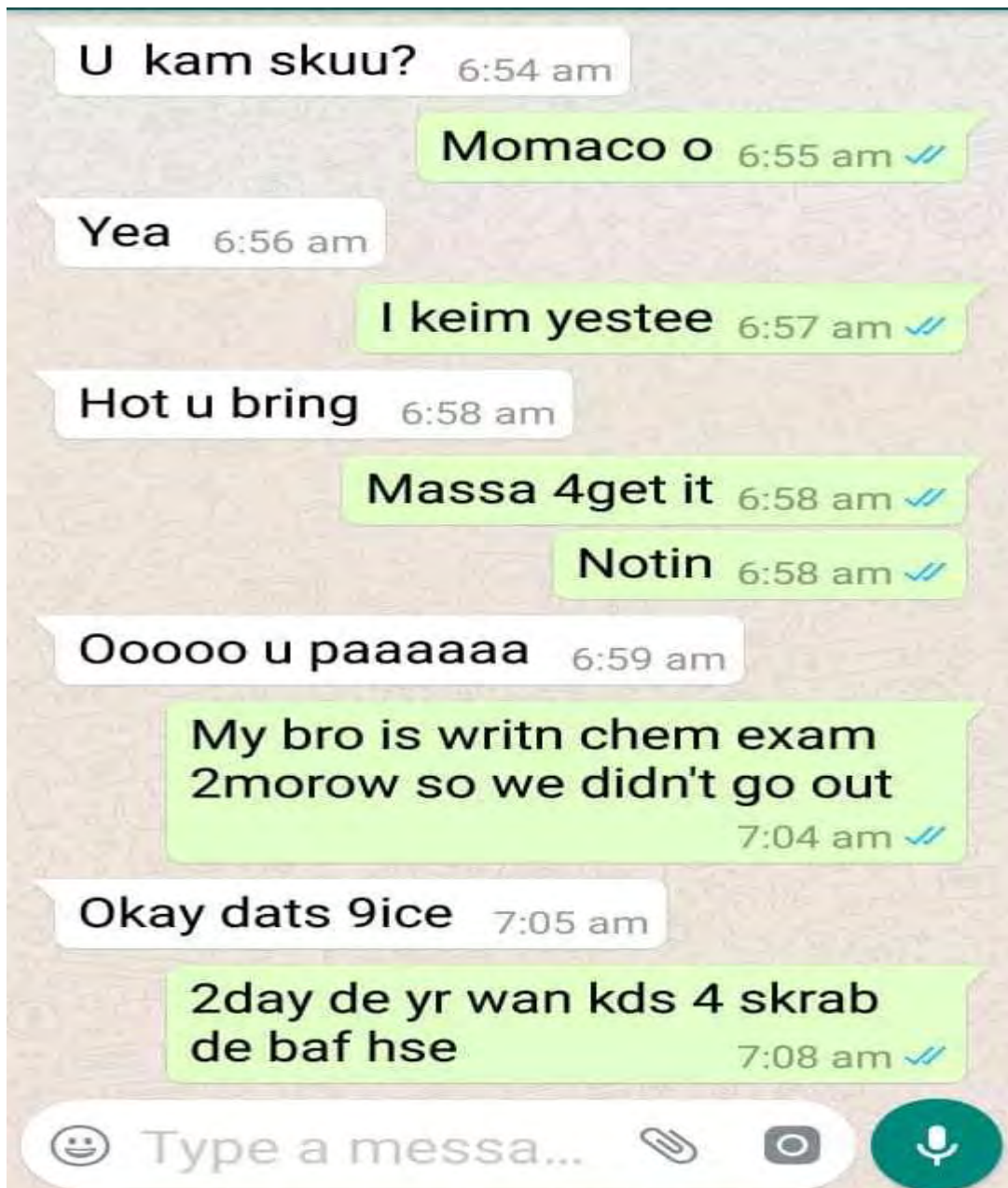
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student's chat forms

CHAT 1



CHAT 2



CHAT 3



CHAT 4



CHAT 5



CHAT 6



CHAT 7



CHAT 8



CHAT 9



CHAT 10



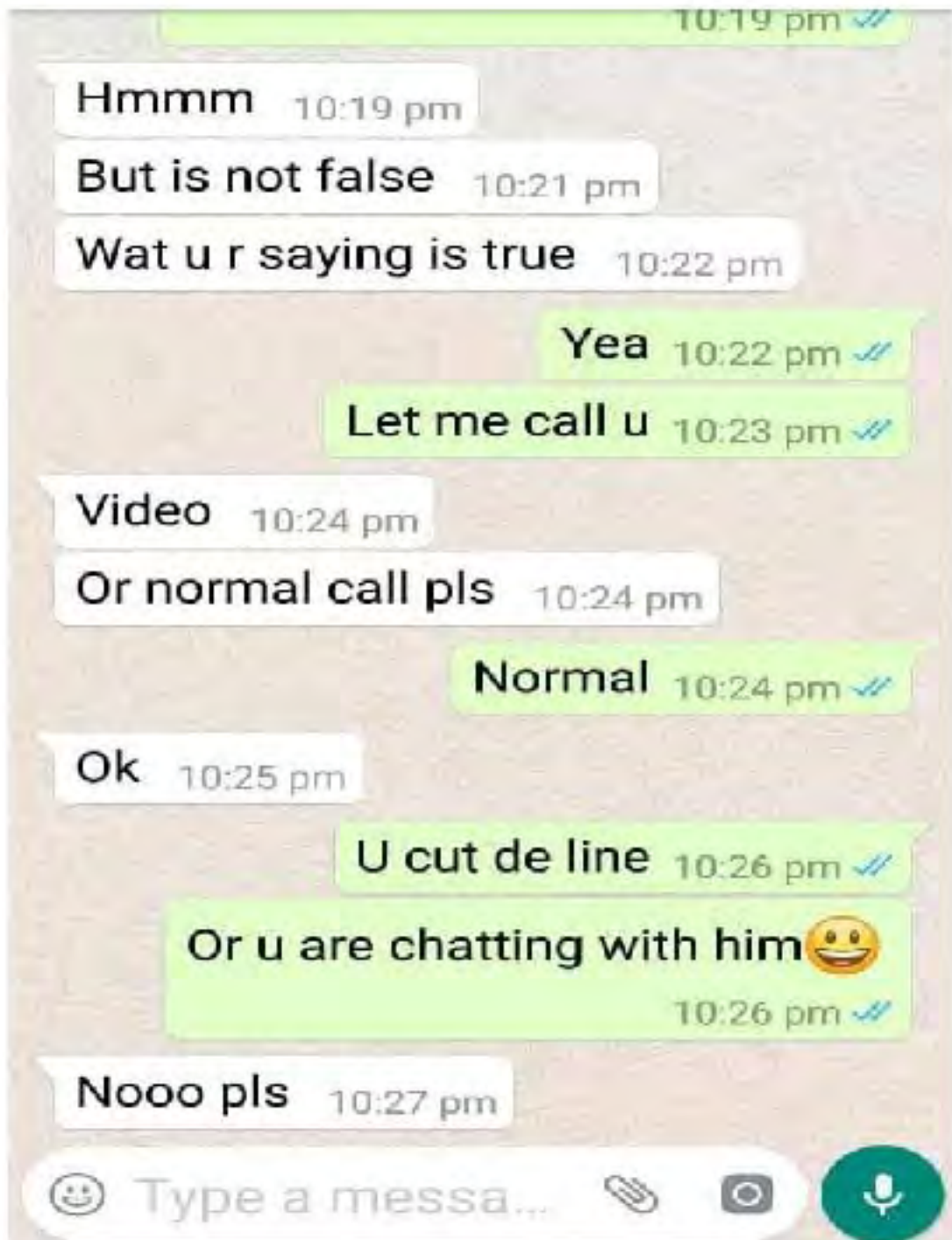
CHAT 11



CHAT 12



CHAT 13



CHAT 14



CHAT 15



CHAT 16



CHAT 17



Appendix B: Samples of students' quizzes

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?

Window Period is the period between point of infection and the body's detection of the virus.

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

The various means thru which ~~word~~ ^{blood} is transmitted with the virus to the babies

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

Rapid body weight loss more than
10% Continuous fever
Continuous diarrhoea

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment is

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

Hanters theory
Contaminated needle theory
Oral polio Vacin theory

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]

Sam was a dictator while Chris was democratic. 02

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

The writer employed both 1st and 2nd person narrative.

3. a. Which character could be described as "the protector of the future"? [1 mark] 00

Ikem

- b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

He was exposing the gov't ~~the~~ using his newspaper. 2(1/2) 1 1/2

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?

Is the period between infection and the detection of the virus. ✓ (2)

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

This is when blood is carried with the virus to the baby. ✓ (2)

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

Body weight loss for more than 10%
Fever for more than 1 month
Diarrhoea for 1 month or more ✓ (2)

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

✓ (2)

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

Conspiracy theory
Hunter's theory ✓ (2)
Oral polio vaccine theory

1. In two sentences, state the most striking difference between Sam and Chris in *Anthills of the Savanna*. [2 marks]

Sam is selfish while Chris is selfless. ✓ 02

2. What benefit is derived from the narrative technique(s) the writer employs in *Anthills of the Savanna*? [2 marks]

The writer employed first and second person narrative to make the story genuine. 2-1/2 1/2

3. a. Which character could be described as “the protector of the future”? [1 mark]

Sam. ✗ 00

- b. Give a reason to justify your answer for question 3a. [2 marks]

He was a wicked person who could kill all the people. ✗ 00

1. What does the term "Window Period" of HIV infection explain?

It is the period where everybody can get the virus.

2. What is vertical transmission in HIV/AIDS

When blood is shared from with the virus to the baby.

3. State all the major signs of HIV/AIDS

Lossing weight for more than 10%
Chronic fever
continuous diarrhoea for one month or more

4. Differentiate between sexual harassment and sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment

5. Give three theories of HIV/AIDS

Colonialism theory
Oral Polio vaccine theory
Hunter theory

Appendix C: Interview guide

This survey is part of a research work in sociolinguistics. You are assured that the information provided would not be used for purposes other than what is stated in this interview. Your identity and answers will remain confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section A: Personal Data

Tick [] where appropriate.

1. Gender: MALE [] FEMALE []
2. Age : a. 16-19 [] b. 20-23 [] c. 24 -27 [] d. over 28 years

Section B: Social media exposure

3. Do you use social media in your daily life?
Yes [] No []
4. If yes, how often do you visit social media sites?
Everyday [] occasionally [] sometimes []
5. Which social media site do you prefer most?
Facebook [] Whatsapp [] Twitter []
Skype [] Viber [] Instagram []
Any reason? _____
6. How many friends do you have on these social media sites?
a. 1 – 50 [] b. 50 -100 [] c. 100 – 150 [] d. 150 and above []
7. Why do you use social media sites?
Entertainment [] communication []
Learning [] seeking information []

8. Do you use abbreviation while texting, like (LoL: laughing out loud / OMG: Oh My God)? Yes [] No []

9. Why do you use abbreviation?

- Gain time []
- Facilitate the process of texting []
- It is fashionable []

10. What do you prefer when communicating on social media?

Speaking [] Writing [] Both []

11. Does texting on social media affect your formal writing

Yes [] No []

12. If yes, how does texting impact on your formal writing?

.....
.....
.....

13. What are the languages (abbreviations...) that you use in formal writing?

E.g.b4 – before , 1c – I see

14. Does the way you write (spell words) on social media affect your writing (spelling) in school work?

15. a. Yes [] b. No []

16. Do social media have any positive effect on you?

Yes [] No []

If yes, state reason(s)

.....
.....

.....
.....

17. Do social media have any negative effect on you?

Yes []

No []

If yes, state reason(s)

.....
.....
.....

Adapted from (Marwa and Sabrina, 2016)



Appendix D: Sample of respondents' group assignment

GROUP 1 PRESENTATION

LYRIC POETRY

Introduction

Lyric poetry refers to a poem with only one speaker [not necessarily the poet], who expresses strong thoughts and feelings. Lyric poem for the most part is short and written in first person point-of-view. There is always some specific mood or emotions being expressed. Often, that mood is about the extreme in life, mostly love, death or some other theme.

Origin of Lyric Poetry

The term derives from Ancient Greek literature, the lyric, which was defined by its musical accompaniment, usually on a stringed instrument known as a lyre. The term owes its importance in literary theory to the division developed by Aristotle between three broad categories of poetry: lyrical, dramatic, and epic.

Nature of Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry is a broadly inclusive category, including **Sonnets**, ballads, songs, odes, elegies, and villanelles, among others, but three features that might distinguish it are emotional intensity, brevity and musical quality.

Features of Lyric Poetry

The many types of lyric poems come with their own format and purpose. One type of lyric poetry is the **Sonnet**. Overall, sonnets have 14 lines usually written in iambic pentameter, which is five pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables. This overall structure of predetermined syllables and rhyme makes sonnets flow off your tongue in similar way that a song on the radio does. An example is **Shakespearean "Sonnet 106"**.

Another type is the **Elegy**. The elegy originally had a strict structure dealing with meter alternating between six-foot and five-foot lines. Nowadays, elegies don't follow a specific format, but always have the same mood. Elegy always uses **apostrophe** as a literary technique. An example is "**When Lilacs Last In The Dooryard Bloom'd**" written by Walt Whitman.

A third example is the **Ode**. Like the elegy, there is no strict structure or format for an ode. It is common for many odes to have refrains, or repeated lines or stanzas, but that is not a requirement. Also, odes are often longer than other types of lyric poems. An example is "**Ode to Aphrodite**" by Sapho.