

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LITERACY  
DEVELOPMENT AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS IN  
THE ASANTE-AKIM SOUTH DISTRICT**



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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LITERACY DEVELOPMENT  
AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE ASANTE-AKIM SOUTH  
DISTRICT**



**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION, FACULTY OF  
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## DECLARATION

### STUDENTS' DECLARATION

I, EDMOND AMOAKO AGYEMAN, declare that this dissertation, 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 Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: ASONABA KOFI ADDISON (PhD)

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

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## DEDICATION

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

**UPS:** Urban Public School participants

**1UPS:** 1<sup>st</sup> participant

**2UPS:** 2<sup>nd</sup> participant

**3UPS:** 3<sup>rd</sup> participant

**RPS:** Rural Public School participants

**1RPS:** 1<sup>st</sup> participant

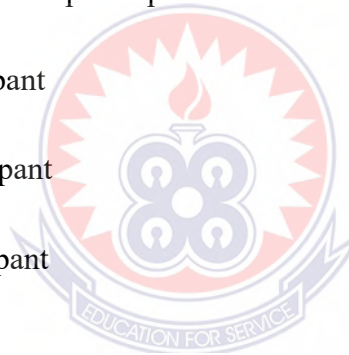
**2RPS:** 2<sup>nd</sup> participant

**PS:** Private School participants

**1PS:** 1<sup>st</sup> participant

**2PS:** 2<sup>nd</sup> participant

**3PS:** 3<sup>rd</sup> participant



## ABSTRACT

The study looked to investigate the effects of social media on literacy development among pupils in junior high schools. The study was aimed at finding pupils' perception about the nature of literacy, identifying major social media network sites and their mass usage among pupils as well as the effects of social media and social networking sites on pupils' language learning and literacy development within the context of sociocultural and social learning theories. To achieve the objectives of this study, a case study design was used which comprised the use of interviews to solicit pupils' responses on the effects of social media on literacy development. The population of the study consisted of all JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District in the Ashanti region of Ghana. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 25 pupils (14 females, 11 males) from three junior high schools. The study revealed that majority of participants perceived the nature of literacy to be the ability to read, write and speak a language. The findings also showed participants' exposure to major social media tools and social networking sites such as Facebook, Short Message Services (SMS), Whatsapp, Twitter and You Tube likewise online practices such as chatting, blogging, watching movies, listening to audios, image sharing, and so on. The study in addition revealed that social media tools and online practices influence participants' reading skills and habits, writing skills, speaking, listening and critical thinking skills in everyway. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (qualitative content and document analyses), table with description and data triangulation. This research recommends the strict application of Ghana Education Service rules and parental guidance on electronic devices usage in schools, homes and the promotion of social media networks for educational purposes.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Every successful academic life begins with an early exposure to some forms of literacy. Earlier, literacy was basically thought of or assumed to be the ability to read and write (Van Daal & Sandvik, 2012). However, this notion changed when other studies in relation to language emerged. Phonology, for instance, transformed the conception of the term literacy to include the ability to use or express a body of knowledge in terms of speech.

Literacy has been defined and explained in numerous ways and from differing angles depending on the transformation language studies have gone through. Moll (1994; p. 201) as cited in Kasper (2000), defines literacy as “a particular way of using language for a variety of purposes, as a sociocultural practice with intellectual significance.” Nevertheless, studies conducted on literacy instruction have emphasized the recognition and enhancement of the thought processes as well as ways to read printed texts (Hull & Moje, 2011). UNESCO (2006) explains that literacy in the late nineteenth century has been perceived as being the skill to recognize text in reading and writing whereas its general meaning of being an expert or elite in a specific line of study is maintained. It basically refers to a set of observable skills especially relating to one’s intellectual ability to read and write (UNESCO, 2006).

Our educational experiences are largely composed of our abilities to read, write, speak and decipher information. For this reason, reading and writing instruction undoubtedly becomes the vital means through which young children acquire literacy (Antilla, 2013). In light of these, one can say that literacy

development is very crucial in the academic lives of students. This is to say that literacy, which is synonymous with education and wealth, can influence the course of a person's life (Bond, 2011). It is therefore arguably true that the rate at which students can read and write highly determines their acceptability in the educational society. Parents, countries, individuals, stakeholders are all striving harder to get access to the available literacy as early and fast as possible for their wards, citizens, themselves and for other people simply because of the benefits that come with it. One's ability to read, write and process information informs his or her communication skills. Likewise, a country's tranquillity virtually depends on the literacy rate of her citizens (UNESCO, 2006). Literacy is so vital that a significant decline in literary reading for teenagers and adults can jeopardize their abilities to take part in classrooms, workplaces and civic institutions (NEA Report, 2004 as cited in Bond, 2011).

Literacy, just like education, is perceived from Social Reconstructionism as an instrument and means for societal change. It creates effects on human life. Moreover, it is the spring board on which civilization in the human society is assured. Literacy gears towards career progression, builds character and helps in nation progress, and the extent which it imparts knowledge cannot be overemphasized (Freire, 1993 as cited in Coiro, 2003).

In the same way, one cannot adequately speak on literacy issues without making reference to both socio-cultural and socio-economic background of those we wish to train. The socio-cultural definition of literacy as proposed by some language and literacy scholars centres on Discourses (Gee, 1996 as cited in Lankshear & Knoebel, 2007). Discourses refers to the socially accepted ways of using a language, gestures and other semiotics as well as the manner in which one exhibits his or her



character or attitude towards people and things in order to get endorsed into a socially recognized group (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knoebel, 2007). This assertion is affirmed when Hull and Moje (2011; p.12) state that “Historically, sociocultural studies of literacy have highlighted how differences in cultural practices between home and school shape students’ success in learning and shape teachers’ perceptions of whether and how well students can learn.” This implies that formation of literacy walks and works hand-in-hand with all the experiences learners go through both at home and in the society (Knoebel, 2007).

In an environment where there are enough prints and texts, it is anticipated that the rate of literacy will increase. Likewise, Bond (2011) asserts that a student from a family of high socio-economic background is likely to attain a reasonable level of literacy comparatively. Again, diverse cultures among learners determine the success of literacy instruction and its development alike. The interrelationship between these factors and the rate at which these relationships keep strengthening demand that literacy, literacy instruction and literacy development become the centre of attraction as far as the learners and their society are concerned. This means that any societal transformation relating to the cultural, social and economic backgrounds of students automatically affects their literacy development in one way or the other.

For centuries, scholars have confined the conception of literacy and viewed it to mean the ability to read and write as well as the ability to use language in a particular way. However, the notion to this assumption has been reconsidered as societies passed through changing times. The advent of technology for instance has redefined the concept in many ways (Buschman, 2009). It has given birth to other forms of literacies (Livingstone, 2004) shaping and transcending literacy skills beyond reading and writing abilities to include one’s ability to understand, manipulate

and make meaning from a particular text (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). The influence of technology on the society as well as the socio-cultural and socio-economic lives of people demanded that educationists recommended for their use in future classrooms. This has therefore led to a paradigm shift in literacy instruction.

Among the major areas of studies that have emerged since the age of technology is the New Literacies Studies. In the view of Rowse and Walsh (2011), the word 'literacies' in new literacies indicated a swing in perception about the means whereby people draw meaning with language. According to them, making literacy plural implies that there is no single model of literacy; however, there are countless varied literacies which tend to move away with text, context and the personality of literacy users. Streets (1984; p.1) as cited in Lankshear & Knoebel (2007) also affirms that "there are rather as many literacies as there are social practices and conception of reading and writing."

'New literacies' according to Kendrick, Rowse and Collier (2013; p.15) is "the rapid and continuous changes in the ways in which we read, write, view, listen, compose and communicate information." Lankshear and Knoebel (2007) also view new literacies as the new forms of literacy made possible by digital developments, although new literacies do not necessarily have to involve use of digital technologies to be recognized as such. According to them, the concept is argued from two major viewpoints. One school of thought believes that literacy is deictic, and foresees it as being subjected to changes as new technologies emerge and new social practices for literacy evolve (Leu, 2000; Lankshear & Knoebel, 2007). To them, this direction to new literacies is naturally psycholinguistic. On the contrary, other groups of scholars view literacies from a more socio-cultural orientation that directs literacy as a social

practice which focuses on the function of literacy with a variety of socially tailored and goal-oriented approaches towards achievement.

In support of this, in either way the concept is viewed, one cannot deviate from the fact that the advent of new literacies studies has also given birth and rise to other forms of literacies. Different researchers use Digital literacies, 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies, internet literacies, new media literacies, multiliteracies, information literacy, ICT literacies, Emergent literacies and computer literacy to refer to the differing conceptualization of new literacies and other forms of literacies which have emerged as well (Gee, 2003; Knoebel & Lankshear, 2015).

The influence of these new ways of acquiring literacy is great and inevitable. It drains from every corner of the society right down to our classrooms today. The impact grows stronger and gets faster as individuals constantly mingle with the society. Today, technology has found its roots in the lives of mankind, and no matter what, it has come to stay. It is no longer an issue for the scientists or the engineers to address but rather, for everyone who experiences its influence in one unique way or the other. The introduction of technology has made life very comfortable for the world and people thereof. Things are done in a more efficient and faster manner. Workloads are minimized; burdens are lessened; and manual computations are all taken care of as a result of technology.

In the same way, these new ways of learning have transformed our traditional ways of becoming literates (Gee, 2000). Literacy instruction is no longer a classroom-based sort of affair only but also a socially oriented phenomenon. This implies that reading and writing have been made available and easily accessible almost everywhere. Students do not have to wait until they go to the classrooms for reading and writing lessons. The use of mobile phones and other related electronic

communication gadgets have made such literacy activities possible even as they walk around and outside the classroom. Some obvious examples of new literacies come in the form of practices such as these: instant messaging, blogging, emailing, participating in online social networking spaces, using online chats, digital storytelling, creating and sharing music videos, images and photo sharing (Coiro, 2003; Gee, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Bruce (2002) maintains that students are immersed into new ways of acquiring knowledge. Hence, students of today are not just mere passive recipients of these new approaches but rather active partakers in all these changes. They exhibit their adaptations to these new ways of acquiring literacy in a number of ways. The presence of digital appliances and other related electronic communication devices such as smart mobile phones for instance, has caused both a paradigm shift and adverse effects in literacy instruction and literacy development among teachers and students alike. These impacts are evidenced mostly in vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary building.

Secondly, students' reading and writing skills are also highly affected in one way or the other as a result of their active participation in some aspects of these new literacies. Young people's literacy has taken new shapes as a result of their constant involvement in technology, to be precise, the internet. The internet has also presented its own sets of practices and has turned people of today specifically the youth into a community of practitioners through social networking services (SNS) and social media platforms. Research indicates that social networking sites (SNS) have boosted confidence level in student literacy (Cooper, Doonan & Fawcett, 2012). In the same way, Ahn (2011; p.1435) opines that "undoubtedly, social media platforms such as social networking sites (SNS) alter how communication happens". Boyd and Ellison

(2007) as cited in Collins, Rahilly, Richardson and Third (2011) define Social Network Services (SNS) as “web-based packages that grant individuals access to (1) build a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”

However, social media is usually adopted to describe collaborative media creation and sharing on a fairly larger scale, and other activities that often go beyond SNS such as blogs/vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and game modding (Collins, Rahilly, Richardson and Third, 2011). This implies that book technology does not entirely constitute one’s literacy in this 21<sup>st</sup> century but rather one’s ability to understand and manipulate technology such as social media and social networking sites should as well define literacy in modern times.

Today, technology has given the 21<sup>st</sup> century child varying opportunities to communicate in new and innovative ways (Kathleen & Anuhea, 2010; Cooper, Doonan & Fawcett, 2012). These new technological avenues to communication include the various Instant Messaging applications (IMs) that have emerged by virtue of the internet. Sewe (2014) as cited in Vural (2015) reveals that the social media also known as Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace, YouTube, WeChat and IMO have all famously gained roots in the daily lives and practices of the students we have in our classrooms today. Getting access to the internet is no longer as rare and expensive as it used to be. Now, mobile phones, modems, internet wireless connection devices have offered young people of today unlimited access to internet use most specifically staying connected with one another online (The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, 2011). These

internet gadgets have made the use of social media and participating in Social Networking Sites (SNS) very popular.

According to Collins, Rahilly, Richardson and Third (2011; p.7), “the importance of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in young people’s daily lives is indisputable.” It is quite evidential that the benefits of social media are not primarily all about enhancing communication. Social media and Social Networking Sites (SNS) have indeed promoted creativity among the younger generation and sharing of various forms of contents (Neilson, 2010 as cited in Collins, Rahilly, Richardson & Third, 2011). The relevance of their use has manifested in delivering educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; and promoting a sense of belongingness and self-esteem (Collins, Rahilly, Richardson & Third, 2011; Al-Sharqi, Hashim & Kutbi, 2015).

As young people actively participate in social media activities such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp, their literacy are either polished (National Literacy Trust, 2011 as cited in Cooper, Doonan & Fawcett, 2012) or threatened (Fox News, 2007 as cited in Cooper, Doonan & Fawcett, 2012). The advent of these electronic communication devices and communication software applications as well as their mass usage by the younger generation have indeed created an impact on the various literacy skills children already possess likewise those ones that need to be nurtured.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

There have been series of arguments on various platforms and media as to the influence social media have on society and specifically, its effects on major literacy skills. Some studies have revealed a fall in standard language use and inadequate time for literacy instruction and acquisition as a result of the mass usage of social

media and social networks (Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, 2011; Sani & Bature, 2014; Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh & Nath, 2015). Research of the same kind have also shown that social media foster human interact which is also a perfect requisite for language learning and literacy acquisition (Sharma & Mahavidhalaya, 2015). In as much as series of studies are showing the relationship between social media and literacy development, other studies on the other hand have also indicated that social media and social networks have no bearing as far as literacy development and language learning are concerned (Ahn, 2011; Bouhnik & Deshen 2014).

It is important to note that nurturing reading and writing abilities in individuals is a matter of time just as Neilsen (1989; p.4) as cited in Kasper (2000) posits that “indeed, the development of literacy is ‘a dynamic and ongoing process of perpetual transformation’ whose evolution is determined by a person’s interests, cultures and experiences.” There have been countless efforts by stakeholders, governments, teachers and parents to improve literacy among JHS pupils in Ghana. Regardless of these attempts to develop literacy, pupils are still faced with some manner of literacies as they constantly associate themselves with the activities and practices in the society.

The younger generation is tagged as being potential and future writers. This is because many of them demonstrate series of writing qualities and skills especially when it comes to narratives and other forms of essay writing. However, these promising and emerging writers find their writing skills and qualities in jeopardy as a result of their constant encounter with social media and other social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace and many other related sites. As pupils also come across words everyday on screens, they tend to familiarize them thereby increasing their vocabulary acquisition rate. Learning has become more

participatory as a result of technology (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). It has rather made teaching and learning a community of practitioners.

Has the emergence of social media and other social networking services by virtue of technology become a mixed blessing for JHS pupils in terms of their literacy development? This has been the “multimillion-dollar” question which the advent of social media and social networks leaves in the minds of many. Answer(s) to this is/are still unknown. We do not know therefore how such processing of messages and texts is affecting literacy among pupils we have in our junior high schools today. Again, it is difficult to tell if the processes involved in activities such as texting, blogging, or communicating online are developing different more cognitive skills than those required for reading and writing traditional print-based texts among JHS pupils. This debate has gone on for sometime now, and it is therefore seen to be a big issue that needs to be researched.

Very little research has been conducted on the influence of social media on literacy development among students in Ghana. These studies have focused on social media use in second cycle schools and tertiary institutions (Mingle & Adams, 2015). Moreover, these few studies have looked primarily at the state of academic performance of students. However, there seems not to be any existing literature on social media and their influence on literacy development among JHS pupils in Ghana. Since these research works have been done in senior high schools and tertiary levels, it has become crucial that the researcher conducts this study on the influence of social media on literacy development among JHS pupils. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the influence of social media on literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante Akim South District.



### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of social media on literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante Akim District.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study**

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research objectives were proposed to guide the study:

1. to examine the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District.
2. to investigate the forms of social media activities and practices pertaining to JHS pupils' literacy in the Asante-Akim District.
3. to find out the influence of social media on literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How is the nature of literacy perceived among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District?
2. What forms of social media activities and practices pertain to JHS pupils' literacy in the Asante-Akim District?
3. To what extent do social media influence literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The reason for conducting this research emanated from the fact that modern avenues to literacy have emerged to heighten the standard of literacy development likewise its instruction for academic, social and economic growth in the country. In spite of the efforts put in by governments, there are continuous criticisms from

various stakeholders about pupils' literacy development at the Junior High School (JHS) level, which is a link between primary and higher stages of learning.

The outcome and recommendations that emerged from the study could generate interest for further research into other aspects of literacy development in Ghana and the world at large by universities and other research institutions.

Again, the findings of the study could contribute to existing knowledge and literature on 'the effects of social media on literacy development'. The findings from the study can also be put at the disposal of pupils and other researchers in development work for reference purposes, hence it will add to knowledge.

The research, in a broader sense, was geared towards alerting government, political parties, policy makers, parents and stakeholders on the apparent relationship between social media and pupils' literacy development.

The remedy to the problem in question will help Ghana especially The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to have a relatively strict structured long term educational development plan, a published document that will be put into practice to ensure better literacy development avenues among pupils and a recommendable educational output.

## **1.7 Study Area**

The study was carried out in the Asante-Akim South District in the Ashanti region of Ghana. It covered two public Junior High Schools (JHS) and one private JHS. These are Wankyi Presby JHS (Urban Public School), Muronaim Methodist JHS (Rural Public School), and King David Preparatory School (Private School).

## **1.8 Delimitation**

The study should have covered the whole of the Ashanti region or perhaps beyond. However, due to time constraint, it was delimited to only junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District of the Ashanti region. Furthermore, the study was delimited to only public and private junior high schools in Asante-Akim South District and the outcome might be not be same if any other districts should have been included.

## **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis has been organized into five chapters. Chapter 1, constitute the background, statement of the problem, purpose and research questions. Chapter 2 presents relevant literature review. The literature review is based on the subheadings related to the study. The research design and methodology are discussed in Chapter 3. Results and discussion of data have been presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5, which is the final chapter, discusses the summary of findings, discussions, recommendations and suggestions.

## **1.10 Definition of Terms**

Literacy: this basically refers to pupils' ability to read, write, speak a language and comfortably use technology.

Literacy development: this refers to the way of enhancing pupils' ability to use language and technology.

Social media: These refer to the new ways of communicating with people via the internet. They may as well be seen as websites and applications that give users the opportunity to build and share contents or to participate in social networking sites.

Social networking sites (SNS)/Social networks: Social networks refer to the

packages or the platforms that make internet communication or social media use possible. They include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube and Short Message Services (SMS).

JHS: Junior High School

JHS pupils: School-going children (students) at the junior high school level



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter is designated to review and discuss the factors from the literature that are related to social media and literacy development. Sub-headings along which literature was reviewed are:

- Socio-cultural theory and literacy development
- Nature of literacy
- Effects of literacy
- Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - New literacies
  - Multiliteracies
  - multimodalities
- The advent of social media
  - Social media tools and social networking services (SNS)
- Effects of social media practices on literacy development
  - Writing
  - Reading
  - Speaking
  - Listening
  - Analytical thinking



#### 2.1 Sociocultural Theory and Literacy Development

From time immemorial, theories of many kinds have advanced to aid diverse learning styles. Nonetheless, the theory underpinning this research operates within

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of language learning as well as Bandura's (1971) theory of social learning. A number of scholars have proposed series of theories which they believe form the basis for all behavioural changes. Scholars and psychologists such as Watson and B.F. Skinner (1904–1990), likewise their fellow behaviourists are adamant in their belief that there is an explanation to every form or sign of human behaviour (Boeree, 2006; Microsoft Student, 2009). Advocates operating within the boundaries of such philosophy argue that people's thought processes, state of emotion and mental states have no bearing on their changes in behaviour. In the view of these theorists, they contend that even the most complex form of human learning could be explained based on the basic principles of conditioning (Microsoft Student Encarta, 2009). Nevertheless, Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (1971) proved otherwise in their assertion which described the relationship between learners' environment and their abilities to learn.

Lev Vygotsky is well known for his enormous contributions to the field of psychology. He was a social constructivist who in the 1920s and 1930s originally championed the sociocultural theory of language learning – a theory that puts the social context at the forefront of the learning and communication process (Barnard & Campbell, 2005). According to Barnard and Campbell (2005), Vygotsky believed “that human learning cannot be understood independently from the social and cultural forces that influence individuals, and that sociocultural interactions are critical to learning.” To them, Vygotsky was confident that there seemed to be an apparent relationship between individuals and their environment. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) confirm this when they perceive the sociocultural theory as “approaches that focus on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge.” Even though the theory was stifled for 20 years and became difficult to

get to until the late 1950s and early 1960s (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996) the multidimensional nature of the theory made it gain dominance in many parts of the world. Some schools of thought assert that the key influence to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory lies within his justification of the active relationship between social and individual processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Barnard and Campbell (2005) opine that conceptual and cultural learning takes place through conversation in a manner termed as Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD refers to the difference between what a child can do independently without the help of an experienced member and the level of development the same child can attain with the help of an adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory was aimed at making the learner autonomous in the learning environment. This autonomy is expected to come into view as the learner goes through the mentorship of the experienced. The learner eventually progresses to a relatively different level of maturity independently as a result of the platform (scaffold) created for him/her by the experienced adult. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) outline and describe various social sources (Scott & Palincsar, 2013) of development in the sociocultural theory as far as literacy acquisition is concerned. They claim that language acquisition is by far one of the greatest tools that provide examples of social sources of development. Scholars affirm to the sociocultural supposition that the connection between individuals set up the foundation for cognitive and linguistic mastery (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Rogoff (1990) also confirms that the constant supportive engagement of adults with relatively young ones also describes an instance of the nonverbal guidance experienced members especially parents and adults give to their wards and young ones respectively (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Similarly, Bandura (1971) confirms in his social learning theory that human beings construct knowledge through their relationship and encounter with others in the social milieu (Smith & Berge, 2009). Even though the theory was Robert Sears' attempt to explain human behaviour psychoanalytically (Grusec, 1992), Bandura however positions the theory to move beyond both constructivism and behaviourism. He merges these two concepts to explain human behaviour (Smith & Berge, 2009). He opines that novel forms of behaviour are assimilated in the social learning system, via direct experience or watching the behaviours of other people. Bandura believes that these learned behaviours are mainly regulated or governed by series of motivational effects that accompany any given action.

Bandura (1971) opines that the learners' surroundings play a crucial role in the learning process when he states that, "environments are loaded with potentially lethal consequences that befall those who are unfortunate enough to perform dangerous errors". According to him, learning can occur through modelling. He confirms this by saying that most of the behaviours people exhibit are either learned intentionally or involuntarily through the sway of examples. Basically, some of the key concepts in Bandura's social learning theory is based on the idea of 'Observational Learning' (Bandura, 1971; Smith & Berge, 2009), which contends that human beings often cannot learn for themselves (Smith & Berge, 2009). Learners watch and study the behaviours of others and eventually begin to construct knowledge for themselves based on what has been observed.

Learners or observers are to pay attention at this stage if they want to gather information to guide their behaviour (Grusec, 1992). Subsequently, they move to the other vital component of the theory which is termed 'imitation'. Over here, the learner assimilates and replicates the observed behaviours either vividly or relatively



modified based on the rewards attached to those behaviours (Smith & Berge, 2009). Finally, the learner demonstrates what is called ‘behaviour modelling’. Here he takes all the positive aspects of the observed and mimicked behaviours and starts to model or reproduce them in relation to the experiences (Smith & Berge, 2009). Notwithstanding, Bandura presents a theory that gives the learner the mandate to control every single piece of experience as presented in and by the environment. Smith and Berge (2009) support this claim by stating that, “The learner has the power to influence their own learning in new situations by controlling the environment around them - whether that environment is imposed, selected or constructed.” Apparently, Bandura’s theory as suggested by Grusec (1992) focuses primarily on the way young ones and adults work cognitively on their social experiences and the manner through which these cognitive processes tally to effect both their behaviour and development.

The influence of these theories when appropriately applied can be evidenced in every facet of language learning and literacy development. For example, how literacy is perceived and taught has the tendency to influence how learners acquire literacy skills. Scott and Palincsar (2013) are of the view that the sociocultural theory enables instructors to comprehend the current trends of literacy practice. By this, they argue further that when literacy instruction is viewed from the angle of sociocultural theory, educators would acknowledge literacy as the required instrument needed to operate within a particular situation.

John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) confirm that when teachers fail to recognize suitable environment (cultural experiences) which offers literacy activities such as letter writing, for greenhorn learners of reading and writing, it will be very difficult for them to comprehend the efforts put in by their students in understanding how

literacy works mentally. Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller (2003) assert that Vygotsky's theory strongly believed in the intimate connection between learning and development and in the sociocultural kind of the two. They explain that when learning is well structured, it is seen in the sociocultural theory as an agent of development instead of learning experiences.

Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller (2003; p.5) state that, "Vygotsky perceived intellectual development in terms intellectual tools such as language, that we amass as we mature in a society and that arbitrate the sort of awareness or understanding we can create or construct." They argue that successive language and literacy development depends largely on the language one uses in the environment.

In addition, John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) conclude that the sociocultural theory advocates developing the concept of zone of proximal development to conceptualize language learning per se as circulated, collaborating, related and learner participatory consequences. They back the conclusions drawn by Brown and her collaborators in their education program on the concept. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) put forward that the working instruments within the zone of proximal development may as well be composed of both experienced individuals and artifacts such as books, videos, computers, posters, environmental prints and other digital technologies (Scott & Palincsar, 2005) intended to buttress intentional learning.

Arguing from these points of view, all these factors contribute immensely to learning hence literacy development. Barnard and Campbell (2005) for instance state categorically that "the concepts of the ZPD and scaffolding can be relevant to the instruction of writing as a process." In the same way, Barnard and Campbell (2005) demonstrate Leo Van Lier's six principles of scaffolding in relation to language learning. According to them, the principles of scaffolding with specific regards to

language learning are contextual support, continuity, intersubjectivity, flow, contingency and handover. These principles generally explain how learners are faced with challenging but safe environment likewise how well they (learners), by themselves can handle those challenges as posed by the environment. Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) add that advocates of the sociocultural theory believe that people develop the skill to read specific kind of text in a certain manner as a result of apprenticeship to social practices.

In order to build a conducive learning atmosphere for literacy acquisition, Vygotsky suggested that teaching ought to be structured, in that reading and writing are essential for something, and that expected approaches to teaching reading and writing contain the suitable operations in the child's surroundings (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) again view literacy acquisition using genetic analysis in the sociocultural theory. They explain that the theory thoroughly examines the source of reading and writing. Early literacy socialization in the form of parent-child material reading emphasizes on the roles of language usage (Panofsky, 1994 as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Considering the functions of scaffolding and the ZPD, this theory alters the functional use of language from the control of adult initiations to a predominance of child initiations (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). When children are read to they begin to develop impulsive ideas about the procedure involved in literacy activities such as telling stories and taking parts in imaginative plays. Furthermore, scholars believe that the sociocultural theory can serve as a platform for literacy instruction for non-native speakers since it acknowledges the cultural, cognitive and behavioural passages between learners' new environment and second language (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Scott and Palincsar (2015) maintain that media such as video games, word processors and other related electronic communication technologies generate innovative skills and cognitive practices, in addition to moving the emphasis from reading and writing the printed text to multimodal literacy. Again, they argue that many online community learning programmes have been established and run successfully as a result of this theory.

The principles embodied in Bandura's social learning theory offer learners varying learning opportunities most especially in literacy acquisition. Young people construct their own knowledge simply by observing the behaviours of others (Bandura, 1971). Students often learn all forms of language either textual, gestural, written or oral as they carefully monitor how their teachers, peers and other adults use such language. Students' reading and writing skills are therefore highly informed by other people's literacy skills as they observe and mimic those abilities. Similarly, young people watch and copy the way others manipulate electronic communication devices such as cell phones and other related technologies in the society. Various forms of literacies emanating from the proliferation of information and communication technologies (Scott & Palincsar, 2005) all lie within the boundaries of Bandura's social learning theory.

Furthermore, much can still be said about Bandura's principle of reinforcement. Bandura (1971) believes that people are frequently rewarded for exhibiting the attitudes of others. He indicates that modelling is also reinforced by the environment. This implies that people only imitate and reproduce positive behaviours because of the kind of reinforcements that accompany such behaviours (Smith & Berge, 2009). Comparably, young people's literacy depends largely on series of motivators to develop. Their literacies skills are more or less successfully nurtured

based on the consequences of motivation they encounter in their corresponding environments. In the same way, students' reading and writing skills are inspired by materials available both in the classroom and at home. The available materials could be artifacts such books, videos, computers, posters, environmental prints and other digital technologies (Scott & Palincsar, 2005) that are geared towards intended learning (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Bandura (1989) proposes self-regulatory capacities to explain learner autonomy. He believes that learners eventually develop the required instincts that control their behaviours. They are able to guide their thoughts and actions independently without suffering any interferences from adults. Young ones in the same way are able to construct their own knowledge confidently. Cooper, Doonan and Fawcett (2012) confirm by stating why the current trends of technology that students are presented with have impacted positively on the confident level in student literacy. When literacy development is viewed from the lenses of self-regulatory capacities or techniques, it becomes clear that students are offered helpful approaches to enhancing their language learning behaviours.

## **2.2 Nature of Literacy**

Leu, Kinzer, Coiro and Cammack (2004) state that, "historically, the social forces affecting the nature of literacy have had diverse origins." Bormuth (1973) sees literacy as having the skill to react suitably to written language. Being literate therefore is a term used to describe a wide range of different learning behaviours, ranging from the skill to act on reading and writing to the knowledge of some related body of literature (Bormuth, 1973). Early scholars maintained this assertion for so long a time until other avenues to acquiring literacy emerged. However, the advent of technology for instance has reconceptualised literacy to shift focus from merely

reading and writing abilities to capture “ability to communicate through multimedia as well.” (Van Daal & Sandvik, 2012).

Coiro (2003; p.460) confirms that “the nature of literacy is rapidly changing as new technologies emerge.” Street and Street (1995) maintain that the meanings and uses of literacy are now intensely and firmly implanted in societal ethics and customs. They claim that contemporary methods of literacy have emerged to examine the diverse social and cultural meanings of the concept likewise its function in today’s community. In support of this claim, Harste (2003) asserts that young ones are taken through literacy orientations in diverse modes by different cultural members. For this reason, literacy per se may vary in meaning across diverse cultures.

Literacy goes beyond ushering people into a set of technical skills needed to operate within a scale of educational competencies (Street & Street, 1995). Similarly, in view of Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) literacy is not only about having the knowledge to encrypt and decipher a specific type of text but possessing also the skill to apply this knowledge anytime, anywhere when necessary. Perry (2012; p.54) confirms that “literacy, as one form of language use, therefore reflects all of this ‘other stuff’ (Gee, 1996): social relations, cultural models, power politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes likewise things and places in the world.” For example, literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century according to Shor (1997) can be viewed as “social action through language use that develops us as agents inside a larger culture.” In his view, learning to acquire reading and writing skills cannot entirely constitute literacy; however, he termed such attempt as critical literacy. Janks (2001) cited in Harste (2003) says that “critical literacy is about language and power, language and access, diversity, and redesign.” This denotes therefore that being literate transcends one’s ability to manipulate book technology to include one’s ability

to confidently handle electronic communications devices and other related modern technologies. Literacy and language study is no longer limited to merely reading, and spelling and grammar emanating from the field of writing because they are not sufficient enough to define and prepare the 21<sup>st</sup> century literate beings (Harste, 2003). Harste (2003) emphatically confirms that “literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not a spectator sport.”

Perry (2012) claims that literacy can also be understood when it is seen as a social practice. Lankshear and Knobel (2008) state emphatically that “From a sociocultural perspective literacy is a matter of social practices.” Street (2003) as quoted in Lankshear and Knobel (2008) argues that literacy “is best understood as a shorthand for the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing.” Furthermore, Harste (2003) is of the opinion that when the idea of multiliteracies is fused, literacy can be assumed to be an exact set of social practices that a certain group of members regard highly. Essentially, literacy as social practice deals with the many ways in which people apply reading and writing in their daily lives for a variety of purposes (Perry, 2012). Perry (2012) views literacy as a social practice from the perspective of “Street’s theory which compared autonomous and ideological models of literacy”. According to him, the autonomous model of literacy hypothesizes literacy in exactly practical term and presumes literacy to be a collection of neutral (Street & Street, 1995), related abilities that can be useful under any circumstance. Literacy as social practice here is perceived therefore as an entity which an individual either possesses or does not (Harste, 2003) by virtue of his cognition and the society which exhibits the inherent features that literacy is supposed to own (Perry, 2012). On the contrary, Perry (2012) distinguishes ideological model of literacy from the autonomous model when he posits that ideological model identifies literacy as a set of

practices rather skills or abilities that are built in particular situations and intimately glued to societal values, beliefs, customs and prerogative organizations.

Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) opine that advocates of sociocultural theory believe that people learn the skill to read certain kind of texts in a certain manner as a result of apprenticeship to social practices. They believe that the kind of treatment people living in a society give to various forms of texts influence how others acquire literacy skills. Perry (2012) also maintains that followers of literacy as a social practice hypothesize literacy as “what people do with reading, writing, and text in real world context and why they do it.” This in addition suggests that, a good knowledge of literacy demands thorough reports of genuine practice in dissimilar cultural backgrounds. Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) believe that texts are now inevitable in the today’s society. They confirm, stating that “Texts are parts of lived, talked, enacted, value-and-belief-laden practices carried out in specific places and at specific times”.

Some group of writers use new trends of tradition to define the nature of literacy. Authors working within the domains of these new traditions adopt the term ‘New Literacy Studies’ to equally explain literacy as a social practice (Perry, 2012). Viewing literacy from the perspective of New Literacy Studies, there is less emphasis on acquisition of skills as in prevailing methods; nonetheless, the focus is on one’s understanding towards literacy as a social practice (Street & Street, 1995). Similarly, Perry (2012) outlines Barton and Hamilton’s six propositions about the nature of literacy as:

1. Literacy is highly known to be a collection of social practices; these can be deduced from proceedings which are arbitrated by written texts.



2. There is no single way to literacy. Diverse aspects of life are connected to other forms of literacies and vice versa.
3. Institutions within the society likewise relationships shape literacy practices. There are some domineering literacies which are more obvious and powerful unlike others.
4. Literacy practices are focus-oriented activities driven in broader social goals and cultural practices
5. Literacy is positioned with history. In other words, literacy is historically placed.
6. There are transformations in literacy practices, and as such, contemporary ones are commonly learned via the development of everyday learning and meaning making. (p. 8).

According to Perry (2012) Barton and Hamilton show distinctions between literacy events and literacy practices. They believe that literacy as a social practice should see literacy events as something visible; that is, the manner in which people manipulate texts within the society. On the other hand, literacy practices should be recognised as all the unrecognizable beliefs, values, attitudes and power structures deduced from literacy events (Perry, 2012). However, he claims that scholars are finding it difficult to accept the notion that literacy practices are inferred from literacy events. As a result of focus on literacy events, scholars working within the structures of literacy as social practice are more concerned about written texts and prints. Perry (2012) assert that the theory of literacy as social practice may not adequately show how people acquire reading and writing skills, but it can at least demonstrate the type of knowledge and skill required so one can efficiently involve in certain literacy

activities. In simple term, literacy as a social practice has to do with the variety of reasons and purposes for which one undergoes literacy activities (Perry, 2012).

The social nature of literacy has now come to change our idea about what it adequately means when we say literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In support of this, Shor (1997) also defines literacy in the social context from Dewey's point of view as "increasing the ability to perceive and act on meaning in one's society". Nevertheless, the emergence of new technologies (Coiro, 2003) as well as the current trends of their usability in the society has influenced how literacy is perceived on a whole.

Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell (2014) state that the internet by virtue of technology is changing and reshaping the nature of literacy and nature of literacy education as well. Other forms of literacies have come into existence as a result of technology. Paul Gilster was the first to carry a study on literacies emerging from technological development, and he termed such literacy as digital literacy (Bawden, 2008). He popularly defined digital literacy as "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (Bawden, 2008), and that, a digital literate is the one who possesses the skills and abilities and can apply them at any point in time in life.

Bawden (2008) believes that digital literacy has currently replaced the conventional notions of literacy as such. He sees the new concept as "the ability to read, write and otherwise deal with information using the technologies and formats of the time - and an essential life skill" (Bawden, 2008). Technology has indeed given rise to countless literacy studies in modern times and as a matter of fact informed such works as well. Some writers use different terms to refer to literacy emerging from technology. Among the terms are 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy, computer literacy and internet

literacies (Livingstone, 2004), new media literacies, multiliteracies, information literacy, and ICT literacies (Livingstone, 2004).

Livingstone (2004) posits that literacy must be seen “as medium-dependent, a co-production of the interactive engagement between technology and user”. Literacy today is no longer defined as merely reading and writing as the traditional ideology may maintain (Vosloo, 2009); however, it has been positioned to include the “ability to learn, understand and interact with technology in a significant manner” (Coiro, 2003). Fox (2014) classifies students with such literacy as digital natives; others refer to them as ‘digital divides’, ‘General Z’ and ‘Generation Alpha’, digital immigrants.

### **2.3 Effects of Literacy Development**

There has been series of tireless efforts to make literacy available to each and every individual globally. Ghana for instance through a number of measures is still thriving to lift its citizens to attain a certain level of literacy development. Due to the countless benefits that accompany literacy development among people, parents, stakeholders and government are doing everything possible to make literacy activities accessible in many folds. Learning to read and write is significant in the lives of individuals. Different factors matter when it comes to literacy development. However, the rate at which people acquire reading and writing skills as well as their impact may vary from one individual to the other and from society to society. Antilla (2013) argues that children coming from low income earning families and low socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to acquire literacy skills as opposed to those living in rich environments. Nevertheless, on a broader spectrum, the relevance of being literate becomes apparent in every facet of life even though they may differ from person to person and background to background. Antilla (2013) opines that future job success depends on early exposure to reading. She believes that students

who have reading challenges at the lower primary stage may not fit into certain line of work “if the educational system they are part of does not include curriculum to accelerate reading potential and learning.” (Antilla, 2013).

Similarly, research conducted by Every Child a Chance Trust (2009) into long term costs of literacy difficulties revealed that literacy difficulties lead to expensive special educational needs provision, absenteeism, school dropout, limited job opportunities, intensified health dangers and high crime rate. Okoji and Ladeji (2014) also confirm from their descriptive survey project that literacy development in remote areas brings about economic empowerment. They believe that developing literacy in such areas also promotes hygienic practices among rural women which consequently may lead to a decrease in mortality rates. Sticht (2011) likewise confess that women who undergo literacy activities such as learning to read and write develop self-confidence, are independent and make decisions that reflect their own lives and communal life. In third world countries, educated women prioritizes their wards’ education than uneducated women (Sticht, 2011).

Comparably, Literacy Foundation (2016) outlines the consequences illiteracy may have on individuals and the society at large. According to the website, illiterates are likely to cause an intergenerational transmission of illiteracy since they place less or no value to education and reading within the family. Furthermore, literacy development deficit can bring about difficulty in comprehending societal values, norms and belief. When things of such nature happen commitment and dedication in community participation and civic interest stifle (Literacy Foundation, 2016).

Presently, technology has taken over the world likewise all forms of literacy activities and practices. Students living in such world whiles showing signs of reading and writing difficulties may have limited chance of attaining post-secondary

education and career options if their literacy challenges are not addressed (Antilla, 2013). Leif and Collin (2010) support that when there are literates in a world of media one gets the edge of developing into the type of individual they wish to become without encountering stressful and harmful experiences. In the same the way, Shor (1997) insists that our manner of approach to various forms of texts defines our identity in the society. He believes that through utterances and behaviour, we construct our own self-images in an environment that is raising us.

UNESCO (2006) reports that when comprehensive rights and structures are ready and balanced and functioning efficiently, the benefits of literacy undoubtedly follow. The report categorizes literacy benefits into human, political, cultural, social and economic. The individual per se is likely to attain a relatively new level of literacy success only when written materials and other language learning supporting tools are available to the newly literate person (UNESCO, 2006). Possessing literacy skills is crucial if today's society wishes to eliminate poverty in every corner, build up infant mortality rates, set gender issues on a balanced scale and create sustainable development (Sticht, 2011). Paynter (2008) stresses that, "literacy development is a vital process in an individual's life," and should be seen as "a right" (UNESCO, 2005).

#### **2.4 Literacy Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Regardless of the many mismatches concerning the definition and scope of literacy, Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) maintain that, "whatever literacy is, it has something to do with reading." They strongly opine that literacy no matter how or where is deeply rooted in some practices primarily reading and writing. Nevertheless, literacy building, literacy instruction and literacy acquisition in modern times have gone beyond the traditional notion of reading and writing to occupy abilities to

manipulate multimedia (Van Daal & Sandvik, 2012) and understand technology. Plester, Wood and Joshi (2009; p.1109) cited in Vosloo (2009) perceive literacy today as the “ability to decode information in various orthographic formats, including digital media, to make meaning from it, and to encode information into those formats to communicate ideas to others.” Livingstone (2004) confirms that the domineering media which changed print-based to audiovisual media made communication experts modify their theoretical language from reading and literacy to audience reception and understanding.

New forms of literacies have popped up today due to the ever increasing emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) (Livingstone, 2004). Different forms of technology have engulfed the younger generation of today (Fox, 2014). Students are now consumed by practices emanating from these technologies. Fox (2014) claims that students cannot do without electronic communication technologies such as cell phones, video games, computer games, I-pads, and other related gadgets.

Currently, students are residing in a digital era (Fox, 2014) where technology seems to form the bases of all human practices. Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell (2014) firmly state that, “the Internet is this generation’s defining technology for literacy and learning within our global community.” This denotes therefore that the 21<sup>st</sup> century literate is seen as one having the skill to manipulate technology and other forms of multimedia likewise the ability to apply those skills when needed. Even though, Chin-His, Warschaue and Blake (2016) argue otherwise that being literate in today’s world requires one’s proficiency in academic disciplines. Notwithstanding, Jewitt (2005) emphatically states that, “what it means to be literate in the digital era of the 21st century is different than what was needed previously.”

Plester and Wood (2009) also insist that acquiring reading and writing skills in a contemporary world of multiple text styles calls for extensive collection of skills than past generation needed.

Technology has informed the way people learn to read and write. More specifically, young people now acquire or lose great deal of literacy skills through available technologies. Fox (2014) asserts that students are challenged to read more when reading instructions are tailored along existing technologies. Students in our classrooms today are believed to be reading more on-screen texts than texts on chalkboards. Scholars believe that incorporating familiar technologies into reading lessons can boost students' interests to read hence improving their abilities to read (Fox, 2014). Today, there are a number of electronic communication technologies that support basic reading fluency. The presence of automatic speech-recognition technologies built in mobile phones and computers has somewhat replaced and supported reading instruction and transformed reading skills among users as well (Adams, 2011). This suggests that reading activities such as spelling, pronunciation and poetry recitals are not only classroom-bound activities. Adams (2011) confirms that students monitor the progress of their readings through these software and applications.

Students go through literacy activities almost everyday outside the classroom. Connor, Gold and Fishman (2014) state that "Literacy does not develop spontaneously nor in isolation, but rather in the broader contexts where learners interact with others and with materials, especially at home and in the dynamic learning environment of the school classroom." Students tend to develop their reading skills either consciously or unconsciously as a result of their active involvement in many online reading programmes. Coiro (2003) believes that texts emanating from

the internet present different intentions for reading and another way of dealing with information that is likely to baffle people perceived to derive understanding from merely traditional text or print. According to her, there is a clear cut dichotomy between web text reading and print text reading.

Today, reading comprehension on the internet is parallel to reading comprehension of traditional, standard prints. Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell (2014) show that online reading poses a challenge to students' critical evaluation skills in that students lack the skill to trace information when reading online. Students may end up believing and applying whatever content they read on the internet; however, this may not be obvious in linear print text environments (Coiro, 2003). Reading experts believe that technology is likely to inform reading in the next twenty years because the modern society is going through a pool of unconventional texts (Coiro, 2003).

By virtue of technology, literacy today has primarily been defined by practices stemming from the internet. Technology is improving tremendously and becoming rampant in our educational system as societies move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fox, 2014). The internet has presented its modes of transmitting literacy skills. Mujallid (2010) claims that people now have the opportunity to access the internet for a variety of purposes. In terms of language learning and literacy acquisition, the internet has become a very useful tool that improves literacy skills such as “ability to read, write, speak and understand English” (Mujallid, 2010). Young ones learn to read and write not only in the classroom but outside the school environment as well.

Currently, literacy activities are common to students on many digital and internet platforms. Students are now exposed to the digital and online practices that come along with these internet platforms. These practices undoubtedly contribute



massively to their literacy abilities in one way or the other. According to Fox (2014) students are already perceived to be ‘digital natives’ who are well versed in digital language. Social media tools and social networking sites are by far among the major contributors to literacy development among the young generation in today’s society. Al-Sharqi, Hashim and Kutbi (2015; p.128) state that “social media has revolutionized the way we communicate, interact and socialize.” They argue further that students tend to make use of social media tools because of the multifaceted nature of their usability. Social media tools make learning easy for students in a number ways (Al-Sharqi, Hashim and Kutbi, 2015). Students are able to access information, establish relationships, generate ideas and have fun through social media tools (Al-Sharqi, Hashim & Kutbi, 2015; Collin, Rahilly, Richardson & Third, 2011).

Students are manipulating texts like never before. Students are filling their ‘linguistic bags’ with new vocabularies through online reading. Social media and social networking sites are still working on young people’s creativity and craftiness. Whereas some group of young people are losing out their spelling abilities and good writing mechanisms to social media through instant messaging and text messaging, others seem to be enhancing their spelling through spell checkers. Vosloo (2009) asserts that children’s reading and writing can positively be influenced through frequent texting because of the abbreviations and shorthand words used. Students’ responses to all forms of texts have nullified the conventional idea of literacy as held by early language experts. Literacy in today’s society therefore can be as an ability to confidently communicate with technology in a meaningful way (Coiro, 2003).

#### **2.4.1 New literacies**

The existence of literacy was perceived as an event which took place only in the human mind. Reading, writing and numeracy became the major points of interest

under this phenomenon (Ahmadpour, 2014). The myriad conservative meanings of literacy were however challenged by a number of scholars. For example, Streets (2003) sees literacy as a social practice rather than a set of observable skills whereas Freire (1993) as cited in Coiro (2003) on the other hand visualizes the concept as a way of ‘reading the world’ other than ‘reading the word’. Considering the divergent views of these authors towards the conceptualization of literacy, there was therefore a need to reconsider the conventional meaning of the term by expanding it to embrace “not only a set of cognitive skills but also socio-political or socio-cultural practices” (Ahmadpour, 2014).

Irrespective of all these modifications which literacy study seemed to have gone through, the advent of technology likewise its fast development also ushered literacy into a completely new paradigm. New theoretical viewpoints about the concept emerged as well to hypothesize literacy in the modern age. Ahmadpour (2014) asserts that the concept of ‘new literacies’ is among the theoretical perspectives that has faltered the conventional meaning of literacy in today’s language and literacy studies. Leu (2000) defines new literacies as the new forms of literacy made possible by digital developments, although new literacies do not necessarily have to involve the use of digital technologies to be recognized as such. Terms such as 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy, multiliteracies, internet literacy, digital literacy, new media literacy and computer literacy are often used by different authors to refer to this new trend of literacy (Bawden, 2008; Livingstone, 2004).

However, Rowsell and Walsh (2011) write that the term ‘literacies’ in new literacies indicated a change in perception regarding how meaningful people render language. They further insist that the nature of literacy today deserves to merit plurality because literacy now comes in many models. They believe that there are a lot of distinct

literacies that move with “context, texts, and the identities of people using literacy” (Rowse & Walsh, 2011).

The concept of new literacy is argued differently, particularly between two groups of language and literacy experts. One school of thought adamantly professes that literacy is deictic, and predicts its influence to lie within the emergence of and changes in new technologies and as new social practices for literacy evolve (Leu, 2000). They argue that this path to new literacies is naturally psycholinguistic. In contrast, other group of scholars conceptualizes new literacies from a more socio-cultural orientation. They position literacy as a social practice which focuses on the function of literacy with a variety of socially tailored and goal-oriented approaches towards achievement. Regardless of these different perspectives among scholars, there seems to be an established fact that literacy has gone and is currently still going through a paradigm shift due to the constant proliferation of electronic communication technologies and other related technologies. Rowse and Walsh (2011) identified the four features of new literacies research as:

1. New technologies present the means to envisage new literacy practices.
2. New literacies are multimodal and multi-layered (Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell, 2014).
3. Changes in technology alter, reshape and converge new literacies as well.
4. New literacies are necessary for economic, civic and personal participation in a world community.

Studies have pointed out the functions of new literacies in online conversations, digital writing fan fiction and video gaming among young people and adults alike (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). They confirm that students and teachers are using a variety of online writing technologies, blogs and other interactive programmes

to adequately comprehend the events of the digital world. They are using these new avenues to equip their literacy skills because of the numerous collaborative learning opportunities inherent in these technologies. Likewise, Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell (2014) confirm that the internet is not only altering the nature of literacy but also generating New Literacies that call for further abilities and techniques. Technology users, especially young adults, are exposed to all kinds of language texts either in school or at home. However, Lewis and Fabos (2005) as cited in Rowsell and Walsh (2011) argue that students use and play with language rules, grammar and digital lettering (typography) in “complicated new ways”.

In a nutshell, the concept of new literacies is comparatively new; it focuses on the idea of newness, and it's influenced by the frequent transformation of new technologies (Ahmadpour, 2014). Meanwhile, in view of Leu, Zawilinski, Forzani and Timbrell (2014) new literacies in a digital age “means that literacy is not just ‘new’ today; it becomes ‘new’ every day of our lives.”

#### **2.4.2 Multiliteracies**

In an attempt to address and place literacy in a much proper frame, the New London Group (NLG) in the mid-1990s came up with the term multiliteracies to tackle the constant changing communication technology (Sandretto & Tilson, 2013), power matters as well as the significance of cultural and linguistic diversity in a universalized globe (Gebhard & Ives, 2016; Jewitt, 2008). Similarly, Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al (1996) saw the concept as a means of showing emphasis on global relationship and the actual state of rising local diversity. Newfield (2008) defines multiliteracies as “The changed media landscape with its ‘burgeoning variety of text forms’ including multimedia forms (a strong technological motive) as well as an acknowledgement of the plurality of cultures and subcultures in literacy

classrooms around the world, a condition supported and extended by the proliferation of communication channels and media.”

According to New London Group (2000) the concept was chosen to describe two vital cases: multiplicity of communication channels and media and cumulative relevance of cultural and linguistic diversity. They believe that the idea contained in the concept adds to conventional literacy education by dealing with these two connected features of textual array. It is arguably true that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is quite demanding, and it is an era which needs complex and multiple literacies (O'Rourke, 2005). At the moment, technology has found its way in the daily lives of people living in the society. Not only has it come to stay, but also expanded broadly in size and usability among the younger generation. It has presented its own sets of countless practices such as recording, storing and sending moving images, sounds, text messaging (O'Rourke, 2005), instant messaging and participating in online conversions. These practices will continue to alter our system of communication and confront the meaning we construct from various forms of communication.

The modern society demands that individuals possess a relatively more or less complex literacy skills in order to operate effectively. According to O'Rourke (2005), “Globalisation in its broad sense (i.e. not just the economic but also the social, political, cultural and geographical, and our increased capacity to transcend borders in a wired-up world with increasing people flows have also created a need for more complex ‘readings’ and processing of information.” She believes it is important that individuals acquire the necessary cognitive skills in addition to other critical and analytic abilities, acknowledging also that the context and subjects of messages and information are likely to be influenced by some elements.

The concept of multiliteracies apparently challenges the traditional meaning of literacy and literacy pedagogy. In view of Gebhard and Ives (2016), they argue that it is impossible to teach reading and writing firmly as a way of learning a standard print-based language system. They however claim that the manner in which texts are construed and created are more and more becoming multimodal processes in that people employ multiple language, pattern, pictures, and sounds to interact using digitally-assisted measures whiles using their resources as recognized people among different societies. Rowsell and Walsh (2011) confirm that multiliteracies as a pedagogy concurrently explains linguistic variations and the use of multimodalities in communication.

Although the concept of multiliteracies preceded the use of social networking and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, it correctly foretold the idea that language and literacy instruction should not be conventionally carried out when technology rapidly changes and new ones also emerge (Gebhard & Ives, 2016). Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al (1996) believe that new electronic communication media is reshaping and changing the manner in which we use language in the society. They argue further that when meaningful technologies are fast moving, literacy learning cannot be composed of merely particular sets of standards or skills. In support of this, Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al (1996) state that, “a pedagogy of multiliteracies, by contrast, focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone.” Similarly, O’Rourke (2005) opines that the concept of multiliteracies expands literacy widely from a focus on ‘reading the word’ to reading multi-modal text. Moreover, being literate in the process according to the concept deals with developing the skill and capacity to realize the effects of socio-cultural and socio-political contexts (O’Rourke, 2005).

Students in our classrooms today differ in both cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Many of them have been taken through literacy activities at home even before they enter school for formal instructions. This means students are already literates before teachers attempt to tutor them in literacy activities. However, quite a number of factors are still affecting how students acquire literacy per se. Factors such as technology and the internet are calling for a blend of students' cultural and social experiences and reading and writing skills at the same time. Sandretto and Tilson (2013) confirm that, from a viewpoint of multiliteracies, it is crucial to connect the literacies students are familiar with outside the school environment to the literacies students use in school. Ahmadpour (2014) maintains also that multiliteracies concept puts forward that individuals ought to possess more than a single literacy to decipher message and information from complex modalities such as text, videos, pictures, maps and sounds.

As such, multiliteracies recognise the different forms of literacy practice expected for task and during free time, citizenship and communal involvement, self-development and self-identity (O'Rourke, 2005). The emphasis of the concept on multiplicity of discourses (Ahmadpour, 2014) makes it distinct from other forms of literacies that have emerged by virtue of technology. Nevertheless, O'Rourke (2005) claims that one way of understanding multiliteracies is to acknowledge the four aspects of literacy that appropriate despite the style of communication: the human, foundational, critical and creative aspects.

Since students construct knowledge from a multiple of sources through multiple language it is therefore appropriate to develop a language and literate pedagogy which can highlight all their innate learning abilities. Gebhard & Ives (2016) support that through multiliteracies approach to pedagogy, students could be

offered access and significant learning skills to using new literacies that will enable them to perform accordingly in upcoming days in a rapidly changing society.

### 2.4.3 Multimodalities

Communication in today's society becomes possible and meaningful through different modes. These modes include gestures and speech, items in writing, pictures, posture, gaze and actions which often transcend words (Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers, 2012). According to Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers (2012), every single one of these modes provides certain "affordances, that is, potentials for communication". This implies that texts alone can never be sufficient for meaning-making in today's literacy world.

Scholars believe that it is therefore possible to rethink literacy and literacy development in modern times as a way of being able to assign meaning to various socially organized resources into a single narrative and logical domain (Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers, 2012). Jones (2006) states that "the reconceptualization of literacy has driven research into multimodal texts in educational settings." Elting (2002) sees multimodalities as the many ways in which information and messages are conveyed between humans and machines through certain channels. The concept appeared as an antidote to the moving social and semiotic situation (Jewitt, 2008). According to Jewitt (2008), the basic principle underlying the concept of multimodality is that meanings are made via different representational and communicational means. Gestures and speech (Elting, 2002), gaze, body posture, writing, sound, music, speech and modes such as images, actions and more are all crucial in meaning-making because those are the elements the concept of multimodality looks to address (Jewitt, 2008; Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress & Mavers, 2012).



Although multimodality has always been in existence in several forms for quite sometime now, however, the concept has been persistent in this information age (Paziuk, 2013). Today, technology has exposed the 21<sup>st</sup> century student to a number of communication modes. Jewitt (2005) asserts that print- and screen-based technologies provide several other modes and semiotic resources which tend to influence the development of meaning making. Many of these modes come in the form of images, audios, videos, gestures and so forth. They are met either in isolation or sometimes accompanied by some forms of texts. However, these students have their own ways of interpreting such modes as presented to suit their social standings regardless of standard language rules. Paziuk (2013) confirms that multiliteracies “shifts from conceptions of grammar and language conventions to semiotic resources.” Students use series of visuals, sounds, pictures, and digital postures in many online communications especially on social networking sites (SNS) and social media platforms to convey meaning to the fellow audience. They in turn depend on such modes in meaning-making in many literacy activities that happen both inside and outside the classroom. This denotes that our cognitive skills change consistently with our literacy in a “digital, globalized context” (Paziuk, 2013).

Technology is continuously linking up different students from different socio-cultural backgrounds through a variety of modes. For example, The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrist (2011) reports that social media can build relationship between people coming from different cultures through international connections, offering a considerable knowledge of global issues. Leopold (2012) as cited in Paziuk (2014) claims that multimodality recognizes and facilitates inter-cultural conversation, and as such recommends that teachers adopt literacy instructional strategies that acknowledges student diversity. Similarly, Jewitt (2005)

concludes that students use different semiotic systems; therefore, it is expected that literacy needs required for formal education be expanded to cover these semiotic systems.

#### **2.4.4 Advent of social media**

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010; p.18) as cited in Van Dijck (2014) state that “social media, roughly defined is a group of internet-based application that builds on the ideological and technological of Web 2.0, and allows that the creation and exchange of user-generated content form a new online layer through which people organise their lives.” However, there exists a number of notions regarding how social media came into being. Carson (2009) as cited in Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour (2011) state that “throughout much of human history, we have developed technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other.” According to them, the emergence of social media dates back to 1792 when telegraphs were used to convey and receive messages over long distances.

Tonnies, a German sociologist whom many scholars believe is among the pioneers of social networks during the late 1800s, believed that there was a possibility for social groups to occur since people shared and communicated their beliefs, values and conflicts (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011). In 1876, Show Bell invented the first ever telephone transmitter otherwise known as the ‘microphone’ (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org>). Meanwhile, other electronic avenues such as radio was as well invented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to take care of social interactions.

Scholars agree that social media has changed over time to the present-time multiplicity which makes use of digital media; nevertheless, they maintain that this social ‘phenomenon’ has been in the system for quite long time and as such is not

anything new (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011; Van Dijck, 2013). They report that the popular phrase ‘phone phreaking’ erupted in the 1950s to characterise scoundrel looking for telephone network when homemade electronic telephones revolutionised communication. Borders (2009) assert that digital communication somewhere in the 1960s took a relatively new dimension when the face of email emerged. Before the advent of public internet (World Wide Web) in 1991 (Van Dijck, 2013), emails were initially used to carry messages across from one computer to the other without the help of the internet. Subsequently, many “early network of time-sharing computers” which broke grounds for internet use began to show up; however, they came at a very high cost for their patronage (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011; Rimskii, 2011; Ritholz, 2010).

Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour (2011) opine that in the 1970s, social media was gradually expanding when MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) and BBS (Bulletin Board System) were created in 1978 to read news, exchange messages, access and participate in online chats, play games and manage software. However, these internet innovations especially the BBS (Bulletin Board System) which is famously acclaimed as being the forerunner of World Wide Web (WWW) was highly criticised for not having graphics (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011).

Year after year, series of attempts were being made to make social media more effective, efficient and easily accessible to the public. This paved way in the 1980s for computer technologies such as WELL, GENIE (General Electric Network for Information Exchange), Usenet, Listserv, etc. Some of these programmes were text-based which demanded subscribers to use natural language for commands whiles

others such as GENie used ASCII language. IRC (Internet Relay Chat) otherwise called ‘internet text messaging’ or ‘synchronous conferencing’ (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011) became one of the first ever technologies to have transformed group communication in a manner that made private messages, chats and data sharing among members possible (Ritholz, 2010; Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011).

The tireless efforts to make the web more social (Van Dijck, 2013) saw many social networking sites emerge in the 1990s (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011). Many of these sites include Six Degree (Viral, 2015), BlackPlanet, ThirdVoice which later was banned when its opponents accused them of having inappropriate comments. These sites were created for music file sharing, peer interaction, blogging, reading and creation of products (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011)

Van Dijck (2013) assert that the initial period of the fresh millennium comparatively witnessed a remarkable paradigm shift in Web 2.0 technology. He argues that the happening of the so-called social media as assembled by Web 2.0 reignited the passions of many platforms to make the Web ‘more social’. Thus, people desired to create an online connection between themselves and their counterparts elsewhere. Social media therefore welcomed countless expansions. The rapid growth of social media (Van Dijck, 2013) saw lot of social networking sites being sprung up across the internet world in the year 2000 (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011). This obviously affected almost every facet of human live and profession – from communication, education, relationships, entertainment, and many more. Many information companies both new and surviving

ones began to develop interest in commercializing this major ‘breakthrough’ (Van Dijck, 2013).

In the prime of the second millennium, various social networking sites and other social media platforms including LunarStorm and Wikipedia were created. LunarStorm was the first digital online community in Europe. Though created in 1996 it was officially unveiled in 2000 (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011). Between 2001 and 2003, other famous online community platforms such as MySpace, Hi.5 and LinkedIn also emerged.

In 2004, the most popular social networking site, Facebook was mounted as Facebook Harvard by Mark Zuckerberg (Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012; Tham & Ahmed, 2011; Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011). It was created basically to digitally connect students and staff on the Harvard University campuses online. Network access to the platform was eventually broadened to cover other universities and companies (Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012). The year 2005 witnessed the introduction of yet another famous social networking sites and social media platforms in the names of YouTube and Yahoo!360 (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011).

Former engineers of Yahoo, Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 founded the WhatsApp Inc. that developed Whatsapp Messenger the second most admired messaging application next to Facebook (Carlson, 2013). WhatsApp Messenger which currently has been acquired by Facebook is an American proprietary cross-platform instant messaging client for smartphones. It makes use of the internet to send messages, files and other related online documents to other users operating on supported mobile phone numbers.

As at February, 2016, subscribers to the application had shot up to one billion (Carlson, 2013). Hitherto, the application was arguably the most renowned instant messaging application to have ever hit digital online community. Several other digital online community applications and social media platforms have shown up recently. Among these are imo, WeChat, Instagram, and so forth. Van Dijck (2013) concludes by stating that “media have historically coevolved with the public that uses them, as well as the larger economy of inscription.”

## **2.5 Social Media Tools and Social Networking Sites**

According to Swist, Collin, McCormack and Third (2015) social media is “a set of web applications that (a) rely on the participation of mass groups 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 individuals link up to show and share common interest (Bagget & Williams, 2012 cited in Al-Sharqi, Harshim & Kutbi, 2015).

Social media, in view of Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014), comes in many folds which include internet forums, social blogs, music, videos, microblogging, podcasts, wikis, weblogs and many others. However, there exists a plethora of platforms and mobile devices through which these can be logged on today. Unlike back in the days when staying connected online was rare, expensive and limited to some particular programmed computers, currently, social media platforms and social networking sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and so on can be accessed through smartphones, laptops, modems, and other related mobile devices (Swist, Collin, McCormack & Third, 2015).

Swist, Collin, McCormack and Third (2015) argue further that the rate at which social media and social networking sites are being combined with traditional media cannot be overemphasized. According to them, televisions, especially digital televisions can now access social media as well; radio and newspaper can also be made available online. It is therefore no surprise that students in our classrooms today are fond of participating in these practices since they are surrounded with these media. For instance, in Ghana, young people owning smartphones contributes 35% (Spring, 2014 as cited in Mingle & Adams, 2015), and the number keeps rising year after year. Boyd (2014) cited in Swist, Collin, McCormack and Third (2015) confirms that social media is now a ‘cultural notion’ which aims at different construction, practice and intentions of online communications.

Over the years, a lot of social media tools and social network sites have been developed to serve many purposes. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a remarkable improvement in digital online communities.

A number of popular social networking sites and social media have spread across the globe. Ghana has also experienced this digital revolution. Their presence are felt in every corner of the country. The Ghanaian youth are among the 16% of Africans who have access to the internet and are also believed to be the core consumers of these famous social media and social networking sites (Ahn, 2011; Zeitel-Bank & Tat, 2014). Most of these young people are the very same students we meet everyday in our classrooms. Among the many popular social media tools and social networking sites that have caught the attention of students in Ghana today are:

### 2.5.1 Facebook

This is a communication revolution which emerged in 2004. It was founded on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2004 by former Harvard students, Marc Zuckerberg, Dustin Mosko, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum and Chris Hughes (Alsanie, 2015; Zeitel-Bank, 2014; Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012; Ahmed, 2011; Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011; Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008). It was created for students on the campuses of Harvard but later extended to cover university workers and eventually expanded to the public to be used by people above 13 years (Lane & Lewis, 2013; Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008). Facebook statistics revealed that the number of monthly active users is more above 1.01 billion where 584 million are estimated to be active users (Olanoff, 2012 cited in Lane & Lewis, 2013).

According to Fact Sheet (2012) cited in Lane and Lewis (2013), “Facebook is a social media platform utilized by people who want to stay in touch with friends and family, and by organizations (companies, political groups, religious organizations, universities, etc.) that want to market and advertise their products, services, and viewpoints.” The platform is user-friendly for it offers members a variety of formats (Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008) and options that best suit them. It allows users to create a personal profile which includes uploading pictures and entering personal information (Lane & Lewis, 2013; Ahn, 2011; Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008). Upon completion of the profile column, users then get the chance to request and invite friends who are already members of the community in order to have access to their status updates (Lane & Lewis, 2013; Valenzuela, Parl & Kee, 2008). Valenzuela, Parl and Kee (2008) state that there is a complete disclosure of personal information between two users once a friend request has been accepted between the two members.



Moreover, Facebook presents two modes of messaging system; they are the private system and the public system which is also known as the ‘Wall’ (Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008). They write that the public mode of messaging is visible to friends and often consists of comments and messages reflecting feelings and shared interest. According to Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, (2008) the platform also comes with two unique feature called the ‘News Feed’ and ‘Mini Feed’. They assert that ‘News Feed’ always shows up on the homepage of every member and updates users on a number of events once they log on. Meanwhile, member’s profile is characterised by ‘Mini-Feed’, and it tells the user what has been happen going on in their friends’ profiles (Valenzuela, Parl & Kee, 2008).

Again, Facebook allows users to create a joint platform through its feature “Facebook Group” (Valenzuela, Parl and Kee, 2008). Users come together based on common interests and activities. According to Valenzuela, Parl and Kee (2008), the “Group” feature shows every user’s groups as well as the various groups their friends are joining.

### **2.5.2 Twitter**

Alsanie (2015) describes Twitter as an online digital community service that allows members to read and convey short messages across the platform using not more than 140 characters. Twitter was established and launched in July, 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass (Alsanie, 2015; Tur & Marin, 2015), and it is by far the most popular and well patronised micro blogging service that WEB 2.0 technology has ever produced (Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012). Rogers (2014) as cited in Alsanie (2015) mentions Twitter as an instrument digitally designed for friends living in relatively urban areas to give updates of their everyday way of

life practices. Likewise, Queen Library (2014) also asserts that Twitter is frequently utilized as a destination where people interact and share their views concerning certain topics of interest. These topics may vary depending on the users' interest (s). They may be local or international political discussions, education, sports, health, entertainment, wars and disasters, and many more.

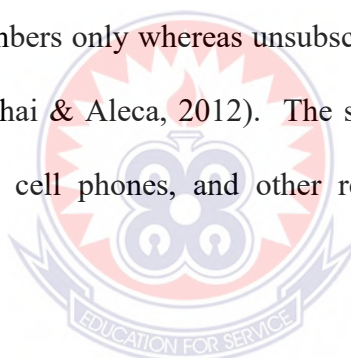
Studies show that the site has increasingly acquired global recognition among other digital online communities with over 500 million users of which 271 million are active members (Alsanie, 2015). Stanciu, Mihai and Aleca (2012) write that giving users the access to make their works and ideas known to the public via personal Twitter accounts and also having the access to other users' notes on the site has always been the original idea of Twitter. Scholars working in this field refer to Twitter as the "SMS of the internet" (Alsanie, 2015).

Twitter comes with relatively unique and attractive features that make its use easy and interesting. On Twitter, short messages composed from the 140-characters are referred to as "tweets" (Alsanie, 2015) and members "tweeters" (Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012). Again, Queen Library (2014) outlines some of the terminologies and Twitter vocabularies that make the platform different, attractive and interesting for users:

- Tweet: The short message carried across by registered members.
- Twit/Tweeple/Tweeps: The label or tag given to users on the platform.
- Retweet: A way to share other member's tweets with your own followers.
- @ Message: A way to include or publicly send information to a different Twitter individual.
- DM/Direct Message: The private way to send a tweet to different Twitter user.

- Hashtags (#s): This is often when a user want to join a particular discussion on the platform.
- Unfollow: This is actually when decides to delete a Twitter contact.
- Favourite: This is always done when a subscribers develops an interest for a particular message (tweet).
- Lists/Listed: This has to do with the way to arrange the accounts a member is following into groups.
- Microblogging: The way of publicizing short and readied textual messages sent through online communities such as Twitter.

This social network platform is designed in a way that, tweets can be read and posted by registered members only whereas unsubscribed users are limited to reading tweets only (Stanciu, Mihai & Aleca, 2012). The site can now be accessed through website interface, SMS, cell phones, and other related electronic communication devices (Alsanie, 2015).



### **2.5.3 Whatsapp**

Alsanie (2015) defines Whatsapp as an exclusive, inter-platform instant messaging subscription service designed for smartphones and supported mobile phone devices. Though was founded in 2009 by former Yahoo engineers, Brian Acton and Jan Koum (Wikipedia, Free Encylopedia, 2016; Alsanie, 2015), today, the application has gained grounds in the lives of people, most especially young ones. According to Carlson (2013), Whatsapp is the second most admired and recognized messaging application next to Facebook, and the most globally famous instant messaging app (Alsanie, 2015). Studies confirm that the platform has increased its membership to 600 million users as of October, 2014.

WhatsApp Messenger which currently has been acquired by Facebook is an American proprietary cross-platform instant messaging client for smartphones. It makes use of the internet to send messages, files and other related online documents to other users operating on supported mobile phone numbers.

#### **2.5.4 You Tube**

You Tube, as some writers may suggest, is mostly self-made video excerpts unlike professional video filming or television (Prensky, 2009). It was created by Hurley, Chen and Karim and launched in 2005 (Prensky, 2009; Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng, 2009) but was bought by Google in 2006 (Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng, 2009). In 2008, one-third of video clips posted was shared in the United States while in 2009, the network in order to increase viewers mounted the You Tube EDU page (Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng, 2009).

Many have criticised the site for being time consuming, yet its patronage keeps increasing tremendously. According to Rainie (2008) as cited in Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng (2009) the video watching growth across genders and age groups revealed that between 2006 and 2007, women visit to the site had grown from 8% to 11%; 7% to 14% for age range of 30 to 49; and 5% to 13% for high school graduates. In short, visits to the platform increased from 33% to 48% in 2006 and 2007. However, You Tube growth in April, 2008 was estimated 2 million viewers whereas 7.5million viewers for October, 2008 and 9.5million viewers in April, 2009 (Yen, 2008 as cited in Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng, 2009). Meanwhile, research reveals that more than 79million viewers watched above 3 billion videos posted on YouTube by subscribers (Yen, 2008 as cited in Lin, Michko, Bonk, Bonk & Teng, 2009). Comparatively, Prensky (2009) writes that close to 150,000 videos are posted

on the site everyday which increases the amount of video posted yearly on the site to almost 5 million.

You Tube is also a form of human communication in every way despite for the fact that it does pave way for chat rooms and synchronous dialogues (Prensky, 2009). Prensky (2009) argues that the platform paves way for complex, multimedia interaction between individuals with online computers and mobile phone devices. With the motto, “Broadcast Yourself”, the platform shows how people are expressing their feelings and sharing their beliefs either for the first time in front of the camera.

## **2.6 Effects of Social Media on Literacy Development**

Relatively, a huge number of factors has influenced literacy development over the years. Even before the advent of technology various skills and abilities needed or acquired to read and write were highly still manipulated either by external or internal factors. Nevertheless, as individuals and societies pass through changing times (digital age/technological era), their conventional way of viewing literacy is modified hence their literacy skills. For instance, the mass usage of the internet especially with social networking sites (SNS) and social media practices such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype and many others have gained grounds in the everyday literacy lives and skills of young ones (Sewe, 2014 as cited in Vural, 2015).

Their impacts are evidential almost throughout all literacy skills. Ahn (2011) asserts that it is impossible to detect the impact of technology without recognizing the communication behaviours inherent within the system. Le Baron-Earle (2014) states “Indeed, the emergence and easy access of social networking sites (SNS) have dramatically changed the way we communicate and interact with each other.” Similarly, Tu, Blocher and Roberts (2008) as cited in Tham and Ahmed (2011) assert

that Web 2.0 technology which includes social media is redefining human communication and is influencing the way people relate and present themselves in their interaction with others.

Cohn (2016) opines that adults are able to cope with vocabularies emanating from the internet. However, for young people the impact that social media language has on their literacy skills can be sensitive. Watt (2010) supports Cohn by stating emphatically that, “If children are increasingly communicating in an alternative language form, this may have implications for their communication and literacy skills, as it may be encouraging the development of new skills or leading to the loss of others.” Similarly, Aydin (2012) as cited in Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong (2015) suggested that when social media such as Facebook is used as a medium for formal language and literacy instruction, students’ language and literacy skills are likely to get better. Thurairaj et al., (2012) as cited in Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy and Fong (2015) also confirm that social media especially Twitter and Facebook can yield desirable language learning behaviours because activities on these platforms appear attractive and interesting to students, and do enhance communication among students as well.

Several research however indicate that media tool per se do not influence learning in any way when matched with the same instructional technique used in the teaching and learning environment (Ahn, 2011). Bouhnik & Deshen (2014) confirm that there is no apparent evidence that shows that the use of social networking sites, social media tools and communication technology is influencing conversational language rules (Watt, 2010) and accuracy. However, the question is not necessarily about the technological tool nor the media instruments but rather the learning behaviours and literacy skills that transpire “within the software application and educational programme” (Ahn, 2011).

### 2.6.1 Writing

Sani and Bature (2014; p.2) state that “one of the most vital and complex skills of language is writing and that the power of literacy is determined through writing,” and as such, there is a need for writers to recognize “graphic features such as punctuation, segmentation, and capitalization” (Norton, 1989). Writing is undoubtedly among the many literacy skills which by virtue of technology has changed over time.

Purcell, Buchanan and Friedrich (2013) conclude that teachers perceive the internet and other related digital online communication technologies such as social networking sites, social media, electronic communication devices such as mobile phones, texting and instant messaging, usually captivating young people’s articulation and ingenuity. Digital technologies widen the intended audience for materials produced by young ones; therefore, they are motivated to write a lot in countless formats (Purcell, Buchanan & Friedrich, 2013). Even though students are enthused to write more, the fact still remains that writing readiness include language maturity (Norton, 1989). However, according to Purcell, Buchanan and Friedrich (2013) students find themselves “creeping” informal styles into formal styles of writing projects. Watt (2010) supports that students who often use “emoticons” and “smileys” (symbols and images) in online communications are likely to transfer them in written English. This limits their understanding of issues thereby making them treat matters relating to plagiarism with less seriousness (Purcell, Buchanan & Friedrich, 2013).

Eisenstein (2011) posits that “there is abundant non-standard of spelling on the internet.” Language use on the internet is inaccurate and lacks precision unlike other forms of language use (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Vural (2015) supports that spelling mistakes occur when people develop the notion that social media platforms are sort of informal environment for communication and learning. Similarly, writing mistakes

such as wrong spellings, illegitimate forms of abbreviations and wrong grammar are often rampant in students' writing because students see social media platforms as digital communities where standard English use is irrelevant (Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh & Nath, 2015; Sani & Bature, 2014). Eisenstein (2011) attributes the cause of some of these literacy deficits to some particular social networking sites specifically Twitter. He believes that the limit of 140 characters (Sherman, 2010; Tur and Marin, 2015) for each message as permitted by Twitter makes users opt for short hands such as *u* instead of *you*; *ur* for *your/you're*; *ve* for *have*; *bt* for *but*; etc.

Meanwhile, Sherman (2010) insists that people who are interacting through social media tools or Short Message Services (SMS) are unavoidably not misspelling words but rather, "they are effectively speaking a new language entirely" (para. 5). Likewise, studies conducted into technology and literacy skills improvement put forward that social networking, text messaging and social media tools have the potential to positively influence spelling and literacy in general (Cooper, Doonan & Fawcett, 2012). They however opine that the ways in which these digital online platforms inform literacy is still debatable. Tur and Marin (2015), in the same way, argue from the perspective that Twitter offers activities that emphasize and promote joint creative writing such as storytelling.

Similarly, Ananiadou, McNaught and Thompson (2012) believe that some applications such as the 'spelling checker' as preloaded in many digital keyboards including the ones on smart phones facilitate spelling consciousness. They further argue that not only does 'spelling checker' improve students' writing mechanics (Norton, 1989) but it as well familiarizes them with search engines. They conclude that such applications are language checking devices which serve as language technology that support English language. On the contrary, Crystal (2006) as cited in



Watt (2010) argues that “spell-checking devices are de-skilling for children, and that the speed of some electronic communication encourages spelling and typing mistakes to be overlooked.”

Research indicates that students are able to produce a great amount of writing through tools such as SNS, blogs, emails and other related social media surroundings (Ahn, 2011). Kasper (2000) is of the view that developing literacy skill in an individual is not time bound but rather it is a continuous process. This, according to him, depicts that it takes quite an amount of time in order to have literacy abilities which include writing skills well developed in an individual. However, the available ample time needed to tutor students and nurture their writing skills are wasted away by language teachers and students alike as they apportion all these time on the internet and social networking sites such as the Facebook (Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, 2011).

According to Rouis, Limayem and Salehi-Sangari (2011), “students spend an average of 30–35 minutes per day surfing Facebook. Others acknowledge spending up to 8 hours a day on the website.” The long hours spent on Facebook (Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, 2011) likewise the time consuming nature of many social networking sites and social media is not a very good call for writing let alone academic performance. Watt (2010) on the contrary argues that participating in communication technologies may appear time wasting even though Sharma (2015) argues otherwise, yet it fosters human interaction which is a perfect requisite for language learning and literacy acquisition.

Norton (1989) sums Donoghue’s six pre-requisite skill areas for handwriting as writing readiness. She is of the opinion that student’s readiness towards writing reflects in his or her interest to write. Writing according to her should be considered

as an activity which requires uninterrupted attention and focus. Nevertheless, social media more specifically Facebook derails many students' attention (Watt, 2010) from tasks involving writing. Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, (2011) assert that student users do not focus appropriately on writing tasks because they are engaged in constant interaction and online socialization. This is as a result of the upsurge intensity of data management required of student users (Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, 2011). In addition, they also hold the notion that social media especially Facebook is a task distractor when they posit that "this split attention paid to multiple tasks cause distraction" (Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari, 2011).

In as much as "social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus are facilitating communication, collaboration and information sharing," as Ananiadou, McNaught and Thompson (2012) posit, the fact still remains that their presence are adversely influencing writing mechanisms (Norton, 1989) of the English language (Cohn, 2016). By this, Cohn (2016) states that "The use of acronyms has gone through the roof. Acronyms are not only used in personal communications but are also used in online business interactions." Vural (2015) also maintains that people's language use on social networks are jeopardized by the series of abbreviations often used in texting and other form of online conversations. Sani and Bature (2014) claim also that students use series of abbreviations and phonetic replacement games (Craig, 2003) such as numbers to represent particular sounds on social media: "4" standing in for "for", "2" in place of "to", "everyone" becoming "every1". They believe that such abbreviations are unconventional and interfering, and affect students' writing to audience in formal context. People especially young ones are often fond of using smileys and emoticons to proof points in formal writings

(Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh & Nath (2015). Such instances are very common in students' written assignments.

Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy and Fong (2015) otherwise conclude that abbreviations and short forms do not have any impact on English competence. They agree that students are mindful of their choice of language and are very much aware of all the penalizations that accompany such internet slangs and so-called social media language in formal contexts. Meanwhile, studies reveal that students who use abbreviations demonstrate improved phonological processing skills (Plester, Wood, & Joshi, 2006 as cited in Watt, 2010; Plester & Wood, 2009).

Thurairaj et al., (2012) also note that Facebook and Twitter do offer encouraging literacy development. They argue that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter tremendously improves students' writing skills since they (students) are able to choose from preferred activities on such digital online communication platforms. Blattner and Lomicka (2012) add that Facebook offers students the opportunity to freely and comfortably rehearse their written skills outside the classroom. In addition, Craig (2003) asserts that instant messaging applications like Whatsapp, is crucial as far as literacy development among young people is concerned. This is because, according to him, it exposes young users to words everyday and encourages the use of written mode for interaction.

Concerning writing skills, Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong (2015) believe that through different online activities emanating from social media platforms and social networking sites, students begin to recognize and develop understanding for a variety of communication modes. Integrating social networking services into writing instruction helps broaden students' knowledge and boost their literacy confidence (Cooper, Dooner & Fawcett, 2012; Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong, 2015) as well

(Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong, 2015). However, Craig (2003) suggests that online communication practices such as instant messaging is endangering literacy among students because such practices give rise to unwanted reading and writing habits. According to him, such writing skill deficits occur among student users because the choice of language used on such digital platforms are too ordinary and unwanted. Such language does not only impede writing skills alone but also “damages students’ abilities to employ regular, formal literary skills” (Craig, 2003). Meanwhile, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) argues that social media tools, such as Facebook specifically, is a perfect instrument for developing writing skills among students since users acquire writing experience as they are allowed to compose and write their own messages.

### **2.6.2 Analytical and critical thinking**

The human mind is one capacity which influences every aspect of human skill. Our capacity to read, write and speak well and use language efficiently depends largely on how well our cognition is developed or underdeveloped. The way we think goes through a lot of transformation as we encounter technology and social media in this digital age. Therefore, it is crucial to consider that the relationship between students’ constant encounter with social media and social networking sites and their mental abilities.

For instance, Kassens-Noor (2012) as cited in Tur and Marin (2015) opine that “also, the limitation of characters that can make self-reflection and critical thinking more difficult to achieve have also been highlighted.” They believe social networking sites such as Twitter have the tendency of influencing cognition because users have to logically present their thoughts with 140 characters only. Similarly, Watt (2010) reveals in a study that online and internet assisted computer use may foster the growth

of overall mental abilities which eventually should sustain the expansion of higher order language and literacy skills. According to him, parents preferred that their wards spent time using electronic communication technologies to watching television. According to Watt (2010), users of communication technologies often demonstrate increased level of cognitive awareness because they are able to categorize and define their target audience by their choice of language.

Even though young people's participation in social networking sites and social media practices may be time consuming (Vural, 2015), students on the other hand seize this opportunity as a way of using their energy to construct meanings from complex concepts and acquiring new skills (Ahn, 2011). In the same way, Roius, Limayem and Saheli-Sangari (2011) hold that as cognitive engagement in social media increases among students, student users begin to experiment new experiences hence expanding their mental abilities. They again confirm that students who constantly interact and participate in online and digital communication on social media platforms and social networking sites are noted for being intellectually active, "broad minded, sensitive to art" Roius, Limayem and Saheli-Sangari (2011) and creative.

Today's students spend too much time playing video games and participating in online video games; however, contemporary language and literacy scholars see these events as digital game-based learning (European Commission Report, 2014). Yi-hui et al. (2012) as cited in European Commission Report (2014) reports that, "Games-based learning develops problem solving and critical thinking skills through engagement and iterative feedback that are crucial to the learning process and are generally effective for achieving learning outcomes." Studies show that some digital games are attractive and significant that they present students countless learning

avenues and ways of interacting and constructing meaning (Yi-hui et al. 2012 as cited in European Commission, 2014).

Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong (2015) reveal in a study that when teaching and learning strategies are electronically and digitally designed to acknowledge the role of social media tools and social networking sites, students' knowledge and understanding increase. You Tube as a social media tool for instance promotes the cognitive domains of students during language and literacy learning (European Commission, 2014). Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy & Fong (2015) believe that this kind of literacy achievement is highly common among students learning to write in English language.

Scholars strongly argue that students develop strong metacognitive skills in computer-assisted and internet-bound environments (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Watt (2010) also agrees and concludes that computer use enhances more useful thinking and improves analytical skills. Zeitel-Bank and Tat (2014) supports that social media positively affects one's ability to perform mental activities independently. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) on the other hand opine that social media tools such as Whatsapp can as well demoralize student learning autonomy. According to them, frequent use of Whatsapp does not encourage students to independently tackle and accomplish tasks. Students who often are active users of such social media tools frequently depend on teachers for solutions to problem-solving activities (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Active participation in social media can affect students' imaginative skills alongside their ability to handle other forms of abstract concepts (Zeitel-Bank & Tat, 2014).

### **2.6.3 Reading**

Macmillan English Dictionary (2007) defines reading as the process of recognizing written or printed words and understanding their meaning as well.

Norton (1989) views reading from the literature-based perspective as a comprehension of, approval of, and pleasure of all kinds of literature. She argues from the literature-based view that reading should not be seen as the skill to undertake a set of exceptional abilities. However, developing the interest to read and read more depends on quite a number of environmental factors (Adams, 2011). This implies that the availability of reading materials whether in digital text form or traditional text print influences one's interest to read hence developing reading skills among such learners.

The contemporary student is exposed to different forms of text prints from which they are obliged to read. By virtue of technology, students' reading has moved away from the classroom to the outside society. Students' everyday participation in online communication platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp and other related instant messaging platforms is high and has greatly impacted reading abilities among student users. Craig (2003) emphatically states that, "instant messaging, according to many, threatens youth literacy because it creates and compounds undesirable reading and.....habits and because its particular lowbrow vernacular damages students' abilities to employ regular, formal literary skills." These social media tools come with unique features which include automatic speech-recognition (Adams, 2011) applications which more or less support users' reading and fluency.

According to Adams (2011), speech recognition based reading technology helps young readers to be linguistically sensitive, which is also a good foundation for advanced fluency. He argues that such technology scaffolds students' metacognitive skill and improves their content-area reading. Lasagabaster (2008) as cited in The European Commission (2014) also reports that CLIL (Content and Integrated

Language Learning) and computer assisted language learning programmes can enhance learners' reading abilities even before they reach tertiary levels.

Research indicates that reading improves creativity, education, reflection and analytical thinking, and vocabulary building (Greenfield [n.d.]. as cited in Wolpert, 2009). Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) for example support that Twitter, You Tube and Facebook as social media platforms assist users to enhance their reading skills. They opine that members have the chance to read more topics via a variety of short and long messages. Users also experience expansions in their vocabularies through their exposure to the limited number of characters required of users to use, the constant facing turns of phrases, language terminologies and array of new words (Pearson et al. 2005 cited in O'Hara & Pritchard, 2014).

Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) believe that You Tube enables users to read comments attached below each video. In most cases where there are subtitles accompanying music videos or other visual representations, users have the opportunity to read them hence improving their reading skills. They attribute such literacy development to the fact that technology has given students unlimited access to language and literacy activities ranging from word pronunciation, word meanings and contextual information. According to them, such exposures are meant to control students' reading.

Furthermore, studies show that online reading contents and materials can be hyperlinked or traced to other related sources or media (Coiro, 2003; Zhao, 2005 as cited in O'Hara & Pritchard, 2014). Students can select from such links for further reading and comprehension. Coiro (2003) believes that texts on the internet, unlike texts on a page, are contextually interactive because such texts are accompanied by series of multiple media and are as well represented in different formats. According



to her, texts in such formats and media representations require of readers to develop new set of cognitive skills regarding information access and retrieval. She argues that these skills also help learners to differentiate texts existing in different contexts.

However, the relatively new features such as hyperlink and hypermedia that are embedded in these electronic and online texts pose quite a number of challenges for readers because, readers may require additional or different comprehension processing skills in order to understand online contents (Coiro, 2003). In spite of the challenging nature of some web texts, Coiro (2010) still maintains that some websites, for example, offer diverse forms of interactive and attractive texts built to supplement learners' and readers' attempt to acquire further reading comprehension abilities.

Coiro (2010) concludes that teachers also have a part to play as far as literacy development among students is concerned. He argues that it about time teachers learned to blend reading instruction with technology that endorse reading comprehension if only they want to build reading comprehension skills among students.

#### **2.6.4 Speaking**

This basically has to do with the ability to use particular language (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, 2009). One's fluency in a spoken language must reflect in every aspect of their utterance. Ananiadou, McNaught and Thompson (2012) state that "speech interaction is one of the many application areas that depend on speech technology, i.e., technologies for processing spoken language." They continue that speech interaction technologies help users to relate in spoken language.

In order to enhance speech interaction among users, many social media tools have been developed with features such as voice user interfaces (VUI) and automatic

speech recognition (Ananiadou, McNaught and Thompson, 2012; European Commission, 2014). European Commission (2014) reports that speech supporting devices such as the automatic speech recognition programmes and applications as preloaded in many social media tools and social networking sites can assist in the development of pronunciation skills among students. They offer students the opportunity to confidently try their pronunciation and utterances individually in the presence of colleagues and teachers without being nervous (Casado & García, 2000 as cited in European Commission, 2014).

Studies show that there is a considerable amount of influence of social media on oral proficiency among students learning English language as a second language (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Research indicates that text-based chats and communications improve speaking proficiency and fluency as well as language precision (European Commission, 2014). However, there is quite a number of assertions as to how online chats and instant messaging applications such as Whatsapp could result in inappropriate use of language (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014) and speech proficiency disorder (Tur & Marin, 2015). Lee (2006) cited in Chin-His, Warschauer and Blake (2016).

Many social media platforms and social networking sites provide activities that help non-native speakers to build their oral language fluency (Mujallid, 2010). In view of Mujallid (2010), some of the websites present language translation applications and software that encourage students learning a particular language to read and pronounce words. He argues that students may be familiar with the correct spellings of words; however, the correct pronunciation of such words becomes a challenge but through digital online practices, students are presented with the opportunity to learn the way those words are correctly read or pronounced. Again,

social media according to Wang, Cheng and Liang (2011) have encouraged students to speak more during online discussions even though some still argue that it has made users more asocial (Vural, 2015). Although research shows that students are reportedly noted for participating in various forms of online communications while classes are session (Jacobsen & Forste as cited in Wang, Cheng & Liang, 2011), there is still a strong belief however that students who are also unwilling to speak up in class as a result of timidity or shyness eventually develop literacy confidence (Chin-His, Warshauer & Blake, 2016) as they constantly engage themselves in online communities (Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh & Nath, 2015; Wang, Cheng & Liang, 2011).

### **2.6.5 Listening**

Scholars argue that listening is an active and complex process (Norton, 1989). Reynolds (2016) on the other hand believes that listening goes beyond an action. In his view, listening is a skill which does not only require one to listen and hear sounds and messages of other people but also to place value and appreciation on whatever they hear. Listening skills can be enhanced through literacy instructions and literacy activities. Norton (1989) confirms that young people do not unconsciously acquire the heterogeneous skills essential for complete listening. However, auditory correction devices are recommended for students with severe hearing impairments and listening disorders (Norton, 1989).

The modern society is characterized by the proliferation of information and communication technology. Young people are exposed to all types of electronic communication technologies, and their participation in these practices are often high. According to Norton (1989), “in a society where children are bombarded by the mass media, instruction in critical listening is vital to minimize misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes.” Scholars maintain therefore that participation in online communities

can inform listening skills in every way (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) indicate in a study that the oral activities which users are exposed to on social networking sites and social media tools positively impact listening and speaking.

Norton (1989) writes that games such as “telephone games” strengthen students’ ability to speak clearly and to listen attentively to directions. Today, online and social media games such as “Talking Tom”, “Talking Angela”, and other related Text-To-Speech (TTS) games have been developed to assess the rate at which people relate to audios. In addition, audio music has also been made available online. Young people, particularly students are fond of listening to music (Boyd, 2007) and watching video clips on a number of social networking sites and social media platforms. They sometimes share these audio music with their friends depending on the kind of value they place on such audios. Norton (1989) recommends that audio music and sounds promote appreciative listening skills among students. In the same way, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) support that listening skills can be improved through constant interaction with certain social media tools. They argue that digital platforms such as You Tube can do best for students’ listening. They propose that since the site involves music videos and other forms of visual representations, users can listen to sounds accompanying the visuals thereby improving their listening potentials.

## **2.7 Summary**

The review covered broadly the nature of literacy and literacy development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century likewise current trends of literacy practices and other forms of literacies that have emerged by virtue of technology. There are also both empirical

and theoretical proofs of how people's literacy development shapes their course of life.

This notwithstanding, a number of literature have also disclosed the influence social media have on literacy development. The review indicated that the impact of social media on young people's ability to read and write is not invisible or one-sided but rather a two-edged sword. This shows that research on the subject of literacy development vis-à-vis social media influence, is not conclusive. This is therefore a notification enough for further research into the subject.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the methodology used for the study. It considered the research design, demographic information of participants, the population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments used in gathering the data, and description of the instrument, validity and reliability. It also covered the pilot study, administration of instruments and procedure for data analysis.

#### 3.2 Research Design

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a case study design was adopted for it. The qualitative approach was employed because interviews, observation and documentation were used. Case study is a form of research that studies characteristics of individual units such as clique, class, school or community (The Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development, 2007). The study shows the influence of social media on literacy development.

It is a comprehensive analysis of a single or multiple events, settings, programs, groups, or one or more individuals (Owu-Ewie, 2011). Case study is conducted to find out ‘how’ and ‘why’ the complexities of real life affect decision making. This means that case study, as one type of scientific research, demands that the researcher practices their knowledge application and thinking skills in real situations.

The purpose of case study is to delve deeply and to examine fully complicated events that constitute the life of the unit with the aim of drawing conclusions on the larger population in which the unit forms part of (The Commonwealth Diploma in

Youth Development, 2007). Case study appears to be suitable for both qualitative and quantitative research approaches because “it is not limited to a single source of data” (Yin, n.d.). It is used in many contexts; however, its applicability in series of attempts to finding answers to complex phenomena in real situations makes it unique from other research designs. Even though case study design may be applicable in many situations, nevertheless, Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest that researchers must work within the six main types of case study designs – explanatory, descriptive, multiple-case studies, intrinsic, instrumental and collective, if only they wish to use the design for their study. The purpose of case study is to obtain information via observation, focus groups and interviews regarding natural phenomena.

### **3.3 Demographic Information of Participants**

Twenty-five (25) participants were chosen from three (3) participating schools in the district for the study. The three participating schools were made up of two public schools and one private school. The two public schools were further divided into two main categories in respect to their locations. They were categorised as urban public schools and rural public schools. The rationale behind such selection was because public schools outnumbered private schools in the district.

The total number of participants was composed of fourteen (14) females and eleven (11) males of which eight (8) females were sampled from urban public schools, two (2) from the rural public school and four (4) from private schools respectively. Meanwhile, six (6) males were chosen from urban public schools, three (3) from the rural public school and two (2) sampled from the private schools respectively.

The ages of all the twenty-five (25) participants ranged between thirteen (13)

and twenty (20) years. Participants' ages were relevant in order to establish a conformity between the proposed age for junior high school by the Ghana Education Service and that of respondents used for the study. Again, participants ranging between the disclosed ages were selected because they were observed or seen as having regular encounter with a number of major social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, SMSs (Short Message Services) and electronic and digital communication devices such as mobile phones and computers. The demography of participants confirm that nearly half of children within the ages of eight (8) and seventeen (17) years have access to the internet and social media platforms exactly as maintain by Dowdall (2009) as cited in Cooper, Doonan and Fawcett (2012).

### **3.4 Population of the Study**

The target population for the study comprised all Junior high school pupils in the Ashanti region whereas the accessible population involved all junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. The researcher chose the population from the Asante-Akim District, because he has been teaching in the district for quite some time now. Besides, he understands the language and literacy needs of pupils in the district, and is very familiar with their language learning and literacy habits. The district has 14 circuits and 81 junior high schools out of which 69 are public and 12 private schools (Asante-Akim South District Educational Directorate, 2014). According to the Asante-Akim South District Educational Directorate report (2014), the total enrolment for junior high schools in the district is 8,055 (public = 6950 [boys = 3804, girls = 3146]; private = 1105 [boys = 510, girls = 595]).



### 3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample was chosen from the Asante Akim South District in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Quota sampling technique was used to select five (5) circuits for the study; however, simple random sampling technique was adopted to further choose the two (2) main participating circuits because the Asante Akim South District is already composed of both public and private schools. Quota sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique whereby the researcher selects while structuring the study how many people with which characteristics are to form the sample (Family Health International, 2012). The technique helped the researcher to focus on participants he thought would be most likely to experience, know about, or have insights into the research topic.

Three (3) schools (public schools = 2 [1 urban public school; 1 rural public school]; private school = 1) were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique from the two (2) circuits in the district because the researcher wanted every school to have an equal chance of getting selected. Simple random sampling technique is a probability sampling technique which offers a fair way to select a sample making generalization easy and flexible (Owu-Ewie, 2011).

Fifty (50) pupils were further selected using the same simple random sampling technique; however, twenty-five (25) pupils of which fourteen (14) were females (urban public school = 8 females; rural public school = 2 females; private school = 4 females) and eleven (11) males (urban public school = 6 males; rural public school = 3 males; private school = 2) were purposively selected from the total number for the study. The researcher used purposive sampling technique for the final selection because time available was limited, new data failed to bring additional information to the research questions, and he also needed to amass as many comprehensive evidence

and information as possible. In purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2008).

In all, a total of twenty-five (25) pupils from junior high schools were selected from the three (3) schools in the district. This comprised fourteen (14) females and eleven (11) males. The pupils chosen from the sampled schools were all in junior high school. At this stage, majority of them must have been exposed to social media where pupils practiced their various literacy skills.

### **3.6 Instrumentation**

The instruments adopted for the study were interview guide (semi-structured), close participant observation guide and documentation. Creswell (2008) categorizes documents that can be used in qualitative research into two; namely, public and private documents. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher relied on both public and private document from the District Education Office, heads of the selected schools and English teachers in the sampled schools. Moreover, the researcher used unstructured interview guide to gather data from respondents because of its flexibility. The instrument gave participants the opportunity to come out with their own decisions. The items in the interview and observation guides were constructed to find out social media effects on pupils' literacy development. Each item on the guide was constructed to reflect the various literacy skills which pupils are required to acquire as specified in the English language syllabus for junior high schools. The interview and observation guides development were driven by the framework as proposed by ECAR Research Study 8 (2008).

### 3.7 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness of Instrument

Validity, in the opinion of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) is very necessary as far as research is concerned, and it is grounded in the assertion that a particular instrument measures what it claims to measure. They claimed that, with the increasing adoption of qualitative studies, however, the emphasis of checking validity is no longer bound to figures since qualitative data emphasize trustworthiness, truthfulness, honesty and scope of the data. Unlike quantitative researchers, who adopt statistical approaches for ascertaining validity and reliability of research findings and instruments, qualitative researchers aspire to develop and integrate procedural strategies to guarantee the ‘trustworthiness’ of research findings and instruments (Noble & Smith, 2015). In ensuring trustworthiness of the instruments, experts, supervisors, English language teachers, colleagues and pupils (participants) were consulted for suggestions, before they were carried out as proposed by Anderson and Morgan (2008). Data triangulation was also done to check for validity of the instruments.

Reliability simply implies that scores from an instrument are constant and consistent (Cohen & Morrison, 2003; Suen & McClellan, 2003). Scores should nearly be the same when a researcher administers an instrument on a number of occasions. However, ensuring reliability of instrument in a qualitative research like this, the researcher used the same semi-structured interview guide, observational guides and documents for all participants. The same questions in the interview guide were posed to Junior High School pupils as recommended by some writers (Anderson & Morgan, 2008; MOE, 2011). Reliability was ascertained when the interview and observational guides were piloted before they were carried out on pupils who participated in the research. Similarly, reliability was again analyzed through detailed notes, good

quality tape recording, fairness in note taking, “member checkers, peer debriefing and inter-rater reliability” (Vural, 2015; p.1150).

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) as cited in Impraim (2014) see pilot study as a study that involves small scale testing of procedures planned for the main study and consequent revision of the procedures recommended for many qualitative and quantitative studies. In a pilot study, no sample is insufficient except for just one sample. This denotes that either two or more participants are enough to make such study possible. Conducting a pilot study can enable a researcher to ascertain reliability, practicability and trustworthiness of a research instrument. This is because it has the tendency to ensure clarity of questions contained in interview guides, give feedback on validity of instruments and also to make sure that the data required will answer research questions.

The pilot study was carried out among junior high school pupils of two schools from the district who were excluded from the main study. JHS pupils were selected and used for the pilot study because they appeared to be familiar with the concept of social media. Moreover, pupils using and owning cell phones, computers, and other related electronic communication technologies were many at the junior high level, who in turn, displayed similar characteristics, and showed relatively fair idea about the questions asked during the interview regarding social media participation.

The interview guides, observation guides and documentation used for the pilot study offered the researcher a considerable chance to alter and reshape some of the items where possible. The researcher realized that pupils’ responses to some of the interview questions were reflecting in many of their writings as a result of early exposure and active participation in social media tools. The pilot interview,

observation and documentation helped the researcher to check for the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the items in the research instruments.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Ethical considerations are very crucial when one is undertaking a study involving human beings (Goddard & Melville, 2001). It is vital for the researcher to come out with a study which also demonstrates principles of integrity, respect for persons and justices. The researcher believes that research contributes greatly to existing scientific knowledge and that human and technological developments are embedded in this sort of knowledge. It is acknowledged that educational research should show positive impact on teaching instruction and the development of the learner.

In order to deal with ethical problems in research, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003), write that the researcher must establish clearly, the purpose of the research to the participants. The researcher must as well inform participants of dangers if any, making sure that they are in the position of making their own decision, if not, have someone consent to their participation. Nevertheless, participants must be given the mandate to decide whether or not they wish to be part of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007 as cited in Impraim, 2014). In tackling the above concerns and suggestions raised, the researcher embarked on the following in order to deal with any ethical concerns that may arise.

#### **3.8.1 Permission**

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Basic Education, of the University of Education, Winneba which enabled him to seek permission and approval from the head teachers and English language teachers of the

various schools to conduct the interview, perform document analysis, and carry out observation. The researcher also established a cordial relationship with the English language teachers in the various schools, thereby acquiring the essential assistance and support needed to carry out the research.

### **3.8.2 Confidentiality**

All respondents were promised confidentiality both in written and verbal forms. As a sign of safety measure, participants were required not to disclose their names during the interview session. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their answers and the information they provided for the research.

### **3.8.3 Consent**

Written consent issued to head teachers of the participating schools to sign. The consent was obtained voluntarily without compulsion, intimidation or enticement. The aims, methods and duration of the research were explained to the participants. Participants were also issued with consent forms to willingly sign. See Appendix for the consent form.

## **3.9 Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher visited the schools with official letters of instruction from University of Education, Winneba, seeking permission from school authorities for respondent to answer questions. The researcher also established a rapport between himself and English language teachers as well as the class teachers in the various schools, thereby amassing the relevant assistance and support needed to carry out the research. The semi-structured interview guide designed to find out the impact of social media on literacy development was used to interview all pupils who participated in the research. Series of conversations between pupils and peers, pupils

and teachers and pupils and parents were also closely observed. Again, the researcher had the opportunity to examine pupils' marked scripts, work books, continuous assessment and social media contents on their mobile phones as well.

Pupils' responses during the interview helped the researcher to gather information on their literacy behaviours and their frequent participation in social media activities. More so, the outcome of pupils' conversations assisted the researcher in obtaining some data regarding the study. Lastly, pupils' documents proved helpful to the researcher since he was also able to gather information relating to pupils' literacy development and social media use. The researcher also showed up to communicate and explain the purpose and uses of the research to the participants and assured them of feedback about the result, and promised to maintain confidentiality among them. This was crucial in the sense that participants were anticipated to give reasonable and honest responses.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

The research sought to find out effects of social media on literacy development among junior high school pupils. In this study the researcher went through pupils' (participants') responses, and particular set of behaviours were closely observed and recorded. Participants were coded whereas their responses to interview questions and behaviours recorded were all subjected to thematic analysis which mainly comprised both qualitative content and document analyses. Data gathered from the documents were presented using table with descriptions to be in line with the themes already established. Moreover, the researcher triangulated data using responses from pupils.

The researcher personally did all data entries. In order to avoid any form of data contamination, the researcher cleaned every data before starting any analysis. This enabled the researcher to avoid any form of error that could show as a result of coding, recording, missing information, influential cases or outliers. Qualitative analysis was employed to demonstrate the kind of effects social media have on pupils' literacy development. The analysis also showed the manner of help stakeholders ought to provide pupils in the study English language and literacy acquisition for that matter and to devise means of enriching pupil's literacy skills at the junior high school level.

Thematic analysis (qualitative document and content analyses), data triangulation and tables with descriptions were used for the data analysis. Again, recordings from interviews were played back and carefully listened to severally, and afterwards transcribed. There were also verbatim representations of pupils' view which the researcher carefully and patiently took notes of. Thematic analysis was used to illustrate the kind of literacy behaviours that have emanated among pupils by virtue of social media as well as the level of social media practices pertaining to their literacy. Data triangulation was used to find out pupils' perception about the nature of literacy likewise the extent to which pupils applied various literacy skills acquired through social media in different contexts. Table with descriptions was used to show the impact of social media on the development of individual literacy skills among pupils in junior high schools.

### **3.11 Thematic Analysis**

This is a form of qualitative analysis which comprises recording or identifying passages of text or images that are connected by a common theme or idea allowing one to index the text into categories and therefore establish a "framework of thematic



ideas about it” (Gibbs, 2007 as cited in Mountain, 2014). This procedure focuses on pinpointing, examining and recording patterns or themes within data (Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia, 2016). In view of Mountain (2014), thematic analysis is easy, simple and flexible since it does not limit researchers’ choice of theoretical framework. Thematic analysis was adopted to show the kind of literacy behaviours that have risen among pupils by virtue of social media.

### **3.12 Data Triangulation**

Triangulation simply implies employing multiple techniques to obtain information on the same topic. This is basically a way of ensuring the validity of research via the execution of different approaches to gather data on the same topic, which involve different types of samples as well as methods of data collection (Kulkarni, 2013 as cited in Mountain, 2014). He argues that, primarily, triangulation is not meant to endorse and cross-validate data gathered but rather to describe other aspects of the same phenomenon. In order to find out whether pupils used the literacies skills acquired through social media interaction in different situations, the researcher used data triangulation. That is, tape recordings and careful transcriptions helped the researcher to triangulate all data produced and gathered through documentation and observation.

### **3.13 Table with Description**

The researcher transferred final concepts and categories into a data table. He listed the major categories, then explained them after the table. Table of descriptions was used to show the impact of social media on the development of individual literacy skills among pupils in relation to gender and demographics.

### 3.14 Summary

The study was carried out to investigate the effects of social media on literacy development among junior high school pupils in the Asante Akim South District. The data obtained from pupils were analysed using thematic and qualitative procedures. Thematic analysis, data triangulation and table with descriptions were used to find out the effects of social media on JHS pupils' literacy development in relation to gender and demographics. Asante Akim South District was selected as a location for the study because the researcher has been teaching in the district for quite a time now and understands the literacy and language learning needs and capacities of those living in the district.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data gathered for the research study as well as the discussions of the major findings. The researcher used interview, participant observation and documentation for the data collection. However, data collected were organised, presented and analysed using thematic analysis, both document and content analysis, table with description and data triangulation. The results of the findings are outlined under the following themes:

1. Observations made
2. Interviews conducted
3. Social media activities and online practices
4. Pupils and social media exposure
5. Adults and social media
6. Negative effects of social media on literacy development
7. Positive effects of social media on literacy development
8. Summary and conclusion

#### 4.1 Observations made in Schools

##### **Research question one (1): How is the nature of literacy perceived among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District?**

In relation to research question one, series of close participant observations were made to find out pupils' perception about literacy. Firstly, observations made in the urban public school revealed that pupils were adamant in the belief that ability to read and write alone do not entirely constitute one's literacy. Series of dialogues among participants in the urban public school were observed and tape recorded. The

outcome of the observed dialogues revealed that participants' use of certain expressions make them perceive literacy from a different point of view. Below are such expressions:

1. "Your reading will not take you anywhere if you don't appreciate the efforts of the internet."
2. "I have to visit the net."

The above expressions were noted in a conversation between two participants in the urban public school. The conversation was originally done in the local dialect, Twi to be precise but was recorded, transcribed and literally translated as seen below:

Dialogue 1:

1UPS: Have you read the passage yet?

2UPS: What passage?

1UPS: Ahh? You paa...!! The passage given to us to try and read at home of course!

2UPS: Oohh..! I will but I will have to visit the net to check 'what's up', you know?

1UPS: You are leaving the passage behind to attend to your own 'silly' thing on the net?

2UPS: Sure, I am! And you also better learn to use it too...

1UPS: Never! My father won't even allow that. He makes me read books all the time, assigning to me books after books each week.

2UPS: My friend, you may know all the books in the world but if you fail to acknowledge the supporting role of the internet in today's learning, I'm afraid you are lost!

A similar dialogue was observed when the researcher went to the rural public school to obtain some information regarding the study. Observations made in the

rural public school also revealed that participants saw literacy as an ability that goes beyond merely reading and writing. Participants used expressions such as these to show that reading and writing are not the sole embodiments of literacy:

3. “You better learn how to operate your own cell phone!”
4. “Watch closely because this is also another form of learning!”

The conversation below triggered my observation:

Dialogue 2:

1RPS: Could you unlock my phone for me?

2RPS: You want me unlock your own phone for you? This is somehow strange, you know?

1RPS: Just help me out, and stop this your long talk!

2RPS: And you call yourself a modern student in this new era?

1RPS: Should I get someone else to do it for me?

2RPS: That won't be necessary! I will unlock it for you but you also have to watch closely and learn how it is done, and you should know that your learning must go beyond merely reading and writing, my friend!

Another close participant observation was carried out in the private school. It was realised that pupils' literacy transcended the abilities to read and write. This observation was done during my visit to the school's computer laboratory where some participants were in an active ICT lesson. It was observed that participants were exhibiting behaviours that showed that they had quite a considerable understanding of how many electronic communication devices worked. See Appendix D for photos of participants sitting in an ICT class likewise the series of behaviours and abilities they exhibited during the session.

#### 4.1.1 Internet café observation

The study led me to an internet café in one of the neighbourhoods of my participants schooling in the urban public and private schools. Fortunately, the researcher had the opportunity to meet four of the participants who also obliged to share with me whatever they were doing behind their computers. Only one among them was from the urban public school whilst the rest were from the private school. As the researcher watched on, he began to take detailed note of almost everything his participants were doing. Expressions used by participants in conversations showed that their notion about literacy was not exactly about reading and writing abilities alone because participants seemed to have been exposed to other forms of literacy which fell outside these skills. Among the expressions used by participants were:

5. "...pass me your *mouse*!"
6. "Have you checked his *profile photo*?"
7. "My *cursor* is not *responding*!"

The observations made at the internet café showed that participants possessed other forms of literacy skills besides reading and writing. These behaviours became apparent in participants' conversations and activities. Sample of participants' conversation is captured below:

Dialogue 3:

- 3UPS: Bro, pass me your *mouse*!
- 1PS: My *cursor* will stop showing if I give mine to.
- 3UPS: Please, mine is not *responding*!
- 2PS: Alert the man to get you a *wireless mouse* then!
- 3PS: Better still you can use the *external board* as *mouse*.
- 3UPS: I don't know how it is done ooh...
- 3PS: Come on, let me show you!

The outcome of the observation showed that participants were already literates. In other words, it was observed that participants possessed other skills which also were relevant as far as their literacy development was concerned. This is because it was seen that participants portrayed series of literacy abilities which one way or other were different from or supplementary to their abilities to read and write. See Appendix E for photos of participants sitting in an internet café.

Secondly, it was noticed that all the four participants owned their own cell phones which they comfortably could operate without any interference, intervention or tutorials from any experienced person(s). They moved the activities from the computers to their various mobile phones. Their interactions with their mobile phones showed that reading and writing were not the only skills known to them.

As the researcher closely observed participants alongside their interactions with their mobile phones, expressions such as these were jotted down from their conversations:

8. "...I have received the notification code on my phone...."
9. "My network is really poor."
10. ".....the data bundle is finished on my phone."

The above expressions were captured from a sample of recorded conversation that took place among the participants. Below is the sample conversation as recorded and translated:

Dialogue 4:

3PS: I am not getting any *signal*. My *network* is really poor.

3UPS: That's strange, for I have received the *notification code* on my phone right now.

1PS: I tried to check but the *data bundle* is finished on my phone.

2PS: I have *blocked all incoming notifications* unless I do not the *settings* before I can receive the *notification code*.

The dialogue revealed that participants were already skilled not only in reading and writing but also in other literacy aspects emanating from technology. It was realised from the observation that participants have already had exposure to some forms of literacy which in one way or the other went beyond reading and writing.

The outcome of the observation therefore confirmed Fox's (2014) assertion that students of today are now perceived as 'digital natives' who are well versed in digital language. The result, furthermore, confirmed the views of Plester, Wood and Joshi (2009) as cited in Vosloo (2009) who perceive literacy today as the "ability to decode information in various orthographic formats, including digital media, to make meaning from it, and to encode information into those formats to communicate ideas to others.

Furthermore, the conversations as well as the collaborative activities as witnessed among the participants attested to Bandura's (1971) social learning theory which states that young people construct their own knowledge simply by observing the behaviours of peers and the experienced. This means that the strong relationship among pupils, people and the environment make them (pupils) perceive literacy as a social practice which include one's ability to understand and manipulate technology.

#### **4.1.2 Observation made at church**

The researcher observed two different church services; however, the observations were done on two separate occasions. The first observation was done in the rural area, and the second in the urban dwelling. He observed this in the rural area:



## 1. Church observation 1

Venue: Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Amantia, Asante-Akim South.

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2016

Participants: Children and Junior Youth members of the Emmanuel Presbyterian Church.

Background of the case: It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent, and the week was dedicated to celebrate children and the Junior Youth in the church. Young people in the church were called upon to lead the service. Since the week was dedicated purposely to celebrate them, they were therefore given roles to play during the service. These roles included Bible reading, and that was precisely where the researcher's interest actually laid. The readings were divided into three major parts mainly first, second and third readings respectively.

The first reader was a young boy from the Junior Youth. He greeted the congregation and began with his reading like this:

Young boy: (Greeting): Peace be unto you!

Congregation: (Response): Be unto you also!

Young boy: Our first Bible reading is taken from Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18, and

I read:

“After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great.....”

The first reader concluded the first Bible reading by saying: “Here ends the first reading!”

Congregation: (Response): Thanks be to God!

The second reader, a little girl from the children's service walked on and mounted the

pulpit. She also greeted the congregation and began with her reading as well in such way:

Girl: (Greeting): Peace be unto you all!

Congregation: (Response): Be unto you too!

Girl: Our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter written to the church of Philippians, Philippians 3:17, and I read:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ....”

She ended her section of the reading by saying: “This is the word of God!”

Congregation: (Response): Thanks be to God!

Another young girl walked from among the Junior Youth members to do the third reading. She greeted the congregation and proceeded with her reading like this:

Young girl: (Greeting): Peace be unto you!

Congregation (response): Be unto you too!

Young girl: Our last Bible reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke. Luke 13:31-35. Let's hear the word of God:

“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herold will kill....”

She also concluded the reading by saying: “Here ends the word of God!”

Congregation: (Choral response): Thanks be unto God!

[After all the readings had been done, all the readers took their seats among the elders who were seated on the platform. They waited until the closure of the service where all of them joined in the procession. As a matter of fact, the way the readings were done accurately and fluently by these young readers took everybody present by storm for some time.]

Considering the context of the setting, it is somehow uncommon to see young people exhibiting such strong literacy skills like fluent and accurate reading. Therefore, witnessing such literacy qualities among young people living in a setting like that could easily surprise everybody. However, participants' readings did not only show their exposure to some form of literacy but certain appraisal expressions such as these were also used to express how literate participants were:

11. "This little girl is really fluent."
12. "I really admire her accent."
13. "She has read the passage very well!"
14. "The first reader took his time and patiently read the passage word by word"
15. "He has proven that he had time to learn the quotation."

It was realised from the various expressions used that certain sets of skills are apparent in the learning behaviours of young people. It was observed that participants' reading skills defined their literacy. From the expressions, it could be deduced that young people either possess or have already attained a certain level of literacy either by their solo effort or through the mentorship of other experienced persons.

Drawing from the outcome of the observation, it becomes clear that young people are already familiar with certain literacy skills like reading. The researcher found out that these skills emanate or develop as participants observe various literacy activities undertaken by others.

The second observation as earlier reported took place in the urban dwelling comparatively. This is what the researcher observed on the other faithful Sunday:

## 2. Church observation 2

Venue: Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Wenkyi, Asante-Akim South.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.

Participants: All students and the youth of the church

Background of the case: It was the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, and the week was dedicated to celebrate all youth and students of the church. The youth in the church who mainly comprised students were called upon to lead the service. Since the week was specially assigned to celebrate them, they were therefore given roles to play during the service. The roles given them included Bible reading which actually was the researcher's focus as far as the study was concerned. The readings were put into three main parts which were the first, second and third reading respectively.

A young girl showed up to do the first bible reading. She greeted the congregation and began her reading as captured below:

Young girl: (Greeting): Peace be unto!

Congregation: (Response): Peace be unto you too!

Young girl: (Reads from the mounted projector): Our first bible is taken from Isaiah 43:16-21. This is the word of God:

“Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty....”

The young girl concluded the first reading by saying: “This ends our first Bible reading!”

Congregation: (Choral response): Thanks be to God!

The second Bible reading was read by a fellow young boy. He greeted the congregation as usual and began his reading as seen below:

Young boy: (Reads from his tablet): The second reading will be taken from

Philippians 3:2-14. Let's listen to the word of our God:

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship....”

The second reader ended the second reading by as usual saying: “Here ends the word of God!”

Congregation: (Response): Thanks be to God!

The final and third reading was also done by a relatively young man. He greeted the congregation as always and began with his reading as seen below:

Young man: Our third and final Bible reading is taken from the Gospel according to John 12:1-8, and I read.

“Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Betany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the.....”

The final reader drew the curtains on the third and final reading as always by saying: “This is the word of God!”

Congregation: (Response): Thanks be to God!

[After all the readings had been done, all the readers took their seats among the elders who were seated on the platform. They were to wait until the closure of the service where they would join in the procession. The readers read the passages accurately and fluently; however, the reading materials used by some of the readers appeared new and somehow unfamiliar in terms of use to some portion of the congregation].

It is highly anticipated that young people living in urban settings should display strong literacy abilities such as reading and writing unlike those in rural locations. Therefore, witnessing such literacy qualities among young people living in a setting

like this should not be surprising. Surprisingly, participants did not only exhibit these reading abilities to prove their exposure in certain forms of literacy but also through the reading materials used, they displayed other unique literacy skills that testified that they have indeed had special encounter with other forms of literacy. Expressions such as these were used to express how literate participants were:

16. “He is reading from his phone?”

17. “He has the Bible on his tablet?”

18. “She did well by reading from the projector because we the aged cannot do that.”

19. “I really like her accent and fluency.”

20. “He did not miss a single word. That’s awesome!”

The expressions as observed clearly indicate that there are certain sets of skills that are apparent in the learning behaviours of young people. From the expressions, it could be deduced that literacy among participants should not be confined to reading and writing alone but rather it should be seen as a social practice. This is because the strong command participants have on certain reading materials prove how literate they are. It was found out that participants reached this level of literacy either through their solo effort or through the guidance of other experienced people.

Again, the expressions above also indicate that participants are not only familiar with certain literacy skills such as reading but are also well versed in using communication technologies.

Church observations 1 and 2 revealed that participants’ literacy comprises their ability to use certain sets of skills. Nevertheless, it was realised that literacy among participants is not limited or confined to single set of skills but rather multiple abilities. Even though the observations agree with Lankshear and Knoebel (2008)

that, “whatever literacy is, it has something to do with reading,” they also support the theories and positions of Vygotsky (1978), Bandura (1971), Livingstone (2004) and Perry (2014) who otherwise posit that literacy today should be seen as a social practice which includes the ability to embrace new media.

This means that it takes more than reading and writing skills to define the nature of literacy among young people of today’s society.

#### **4.1.3 Observation made at homes**

The study led me to the homes of participants living in both rural and urban locations. As the researcher watched closely, series of conversations between participants and other people especially parents and other house folks were recorded. The primary focus of the observation was to find out whether participants’ activities at home and the home per se have exposed them to some form of literacy.

The rural location was the researcher’s first point of observation where he visited the homes of some participants. As he keenly observed, the conversations below emerged between some participants and their parents:

Dialogue 5:

Parent 1: (Laments): When are you resetting the things on my phone for me?

2RPS: Just search for the menu and go to settings! It is there!

Parent 1: Where is the menu? I don’t see any menu much less what you are referring to as settings! When you are done, find out for me what this is. I think I’m seeing message alert on the phone. I mean open and read it for me.

2RPS: Let me have a look! There you go! The message is from your mother network. Ignore it, it is not that important!

Dialogue 6:

Parent 2: Somebody has sent me a text message. Can you read it aloud to me?

3RPS: Very well! The message is from your brother, and he wants to be sure if you have actually received the money?

Parent 2: Please, reply and tell him that I have received it.

3RPS: Is that all you want me to type? Or there is more?

The researcher realised from dialogues 5 and 6 that participants have acquired certain literacy skills outside the classroom. The researcher saw that participants' access to their parents' mobile phones at home were serving as reading and writing materials for them, which eventually were giving them the exposure to certain forms of literacy. The outcome of the observation showed that participants developed reading and writing skills not in the classroom alone but in the home as well.

The researcher's second point of observation was in the urban centre where he also visited the homes of participants living in that setting. Series of conversations and activities were observed in the homes of these participants. Expressions such as these were noted in conversations that transpired among participants, their parents and other house folks:

21. "I have to change my profile picture!"
22. "Do you have a modem?"
23. "My wireless network is unavailable."
24. "Install the Whatsapp application for me, please!"
25. "There is a news feed on my Facebook wall."



These expressions as seen above were recorded from sample conversations that took place among participants, parents and other house folks. The dialogues below are sample conversations:

Dialogue 7:

2UPS: Show me how to install the Whatsapp application!

Parent 3: Ask me nicely! Install the Whatsapp application for me, please!

2UPS: Okay, dad! Install the Whatsapp application for me, please!

Parent 3: Let me have your phone! There you go; it's done! I hope you observed carefully how it is done.

2UPS: Yes I did.

Dialogue 8:

Relative 1: There is news feed on my wall but I can't access it because my wireless network is not working.

3UPS: Do you have a modem?

Relative 1: What do you need a modem for?

3UPS: Because the wireless networking is not working, and I want to access the internet. I really have to change my profile picture on Facebook.

Relative 1: There you are! I hope you know how to use it.

3UPS: Thanks! Of course I really do.

It was observed from dialogues 7 and 8 that literacy acquisition among participants goes beyond the reading and writing instructional activities that participants go through in the classroom. The outcome of the observation also showed that participants' understanding and skill in certain electronic communication devices confirm that the classroom is not the only place where reading and writing skills can be acquired. The researcher realised that participants' access to their own electronic

communication devices such as mobile phones, computers and tablets and that of their parents' are giving them the exposure to other forms of literacy. This is because these digital gadgets serve as reading materials for them. In the same way, participants learned a great deal of literacy skills as a result of their frequent interaction with these technologies and the people they lived with as well.

The outcome of observations 7 and 8 showed that participants develop reading and writing skills alongside other aspects of literacy abilities not only in the classroom but also in the home. This attests to Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (1971) who propose that learning and knowledge construction occur through modelling and interaction between individuals and their environment (Smith & Berge, 2009). This means that there is a relationship between learners' environment and their abilities to learn.

Furthermore, considering the settings (rural and urban) where the observatory activities took place, it was seen that participants' settings more or less defined their literacy. This is because the kind of reading and writing materials available for use influenced the kind of literacy activities hence literacy skills acquisition among participants. This further confirmed the notion of Scott and Palincsar (2005), John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) and Bandura (1971) who believe that the surroundings of learners play crucial role in the learning process, and that working tools such as computers, books and other digital materials are all meant to support intentional learning.

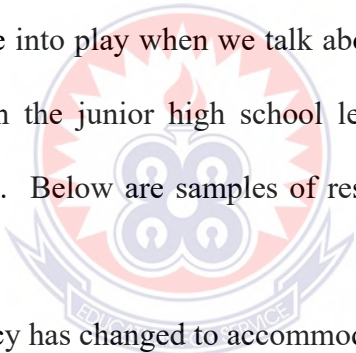
Conclusion was made based on the findings that the nature of literacy may vary among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District depending on their sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, literacy should not be limited to certain type of skills only but rather should be seen as a social practice.

## 4.2 Interview

This aspect focuses on interviews conducted with some language and literacy scholars, parents and pupils soliciting their knowledge and views on how the nature of literacy is perceived among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. Their views primarily stressed on the nature of literacy and whether or not the concept per se has gone through transformation among junior high school pupils in the District.

### 4.2.1 Interview with language and literacy scholars

In the course of the interview with these scholars, majority of them claimed that literacy has changed over time, and literacy as such is no longer about having the skill to read or write alone or to do both. They maintain that certain skills other than reading and writing come into play when we talk about literacy among young people of today where pupils in the junior high school levels in the Asante-Akim South district are not exempted. Below are samples of responses given by scholars in the interview:

- 
26. "Of course, literacy has changed to accommodate other sets of skills!"
  27. "Literacy now is no longer about having the power to read or write or to do both."
  28. "Literacy among contemporary JHS pupils covers abilities to manipulate technology."
  29. "Reading and writing skills do not entirely constitute pupils' literacy; however, the concept of literacy should also include ability to understand multimedia. That is what we are witnessing in our junior high schools today."
  30. "Pupils in junior high schools now believe that they require other literacy skills which go beyond the ones they are learning in the classroom which is reading and writing skills."

31. “The nature of literacy among pupils is no longer same as compared to early years. It now encompasses their abilities to communicate with multimedia and other forms of technology.”

From the responses given, it can be deduced that majority of the participants believe that the nature of literacy among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District is no longer same but rather is defined by other sets of skills. These responses confirm the assertions of Coiro (2003) and Perry (2012) who posit that the nature of literacy is rapidly changing as new technologies emerge because there is now no single way to literacy. This means that young people’s ability to read and write do not entirely make them literates but rather their abilities to handle and understand technology also defines their literacy.

However, only few scholars responded that reading and writing among pupils have always been same. According to them, so-called literacy skills emanating from technology are not relevant as far as literacy development is concerned. Below are samples of responses these participants gave:

32. “Having the ability to use or understand multimedia doesn’t necessarily show how literate pupils are!”
33. “Literacy among junior high school pupils will always be reading and writing skills irrespective of their abilities to manipulate electronic communication technologies.”

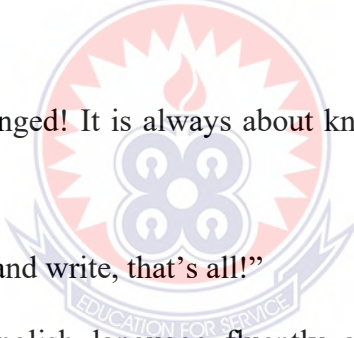
The responses given show that participants’ are adamant in the belief that the nature of literacy among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District has always remained the same. These responses on the other hand agreed with Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) who write that regardless which angle literacy is perceived or argued, it has got something to do with reading. This means that literacy

is still all about people's ability to read and write. All other literacy skills emanating from technology are surplus.

It was concluded from the findings that nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District goes beyond reading and writing because pupils come to the classrooms with different sets of literacy skills.

#### **4.2.2 Interview with parents**

Parents of participants living in both settings (rural and urban locations) were also interviewed during the study. Majority of parents interviewed maintained that the nature of literacy among young people has not altered even though young people seemed to interact more with new technology these days. Parents interviewed gave the following responses:

- 
34. "Nothing has changed! It is always about knowing how to read and to write. Just like before!"
  35. "If they can read and write, that's all!"
  36. "Speaking the English language fluently also defines literacy among my children."
  37. "I see it as having the ability to read, write and speak the English language fluently."
  38. "Being able to use electronic communication devices does not compose reading and writing skills as evidenced in my child. Those digital abilities are just by the way!"

From the responses given, the researcher realized that majority of parents interviewed maintained that the nature of literacy among their children and junior high school pupils per se has always been same. They therefore see the nature of

literacy as being able to read and write only. According to them, they see other skills emanating from technology use irrelevant as far as the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District is concerned.

These responses seem to agree with Lankshear and Knoebel (2008) and Van Daal and Sandvik (2012) who support that literacy has to do with the ability to read and write, and literacy as such, no matter what, has something to do with reading and writing.

Nonetheless, a small number of parents interviewed argued otherwise that there has been a paradigm shift in the nature of literacy among children and junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. They maintained in their responses that the nature of reading, writing and speaking skills has changed over time among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District as a result of their early exposure to electronic communication devices. Samples of parents' responses are given below:

39. "Reading and writing skills are no longer same among my children, and I'm sure it's same among children of their age everywhere."
40. "No, I disagree when people say literacy among 'school children' today is all about reading and writing! This is because JHS pupils are acquiring other skills outside reading and writing."
41. "I can tell you that other abilities such as having the skill to understand how multimedia works come into play as well in today's literacy among JHS pupils."

These responses according to participants indicate that the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District has gone through paradigm shifts because of pupils' early exposure to technology. In their view, they argue that the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District is not

entirely about reading and writing skills. However, several skills emanating from technology use formed part of it as well.

These responses confirm the suggestions of Vosloo (2009) and Coiro (2003) who strongly argue that literacy today is no longer perceived as the ability to read and write as traditional ideology may maintain, but it must rather be seen as the ability to learn, understand and interact with technology in a meaningful way. These responses clearly indicate that multimedia and technology have changed the way young people read, write and speak.

Conclusion was drawn from the findings that most parents strongly believe that the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District consists of reading and writing skills only.

#### **4.2.3 Interview with pupils**

In all, twenty-five (25) participants were sampled and interviewed from both rural and urban schools. Out of the total number of participants interviewed, majority of them said that the nature of literacy has been always been same among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. These were some of the responses given in the course of the interview with these participants:

42. "I can read very well."

43. "Since I know reading and can write also, I think that's all I need."

44. "I am here to learn to read and write, and nothing else!"

45. "All I need is a little bit of reading and writing skills, and I'm done!"

46. "Nothing has really changed! No matter what, we still have to learn to read, write and speak good English!"

47. “Being able to communicate online is only a sign of letting others know that you are also civilized but being able to speak and write well tops it all. That’s is the dream of every pupil!”

48. “Reading is reading, and writing is writing. Computers and others stuffs have not added anything special to these skills!

Looking at the responses given, it could be seen that majority of the participants interviewed claimed that the nature of literacy among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District has not changed. They said that the nature of literacy therefore is about being able to read, write and speak only. In their view, they regarded other skills emanating from technology use irrelevant as far as the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District is concerned.

These responses also confirm the studies of Bormuth (1973), Lankshear and Knoebel (2008), and Van Daal and Sandvik (2012) who maintain that literacy deals with the ability to read and write, and literacy per se, regardless of everything, has something to do with reading and writing. This suggests that literacy has not changed in every way. Thus, it should be seen as the ability to read, write and use language orally (speak).

On the contrary, a few participants argue that the nature of literacy among pupils in junior high schools in the Asante-Akim South District has rather taken a turn. They believe that the emergence of technology and other electronic communication devices has brought about such shift. They claim that the nature of literacy has changed because of their (participants’) constant interaction with these technologies and communication devices. These are sample responses participants gave:



49. “I can read and write but I think I will still need more skills than these in the years to come!
50. “Computers and other electronic communication devices such as mobile phones have also taught us a lot aside learning to read and write.”
51. “Many will think that reading, writing and speaking good English are the most important things but I think learning to communicate online is also crucial.

The responses given show that participants strongly suggest that the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District has changed as a result of pupils’ frequent interaction with technology and other electronic communication devices. According to them, the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District is not all about reading and writing skills alone. However, several other skills developing from technology use come into play as well.

When we examine the responses given, it is clear that these participants agree with Livingstone (2004) and Perry (2014) who stressed that literacy has been extended to embrace new media, and that there are transformations in literacy practices where new ones are commonly learned through the development of everyday learning and meaning making. The nature of literacy can be seen here as comprising the ability to understand all forms of digitally formatted media. This means that literacy today has indeed changed.

In all, majority of participants saw the nature of literacy as being static rather than a social practice. It was therefore concluded from the major findings that reading, writing and speaking skills primarily constitute the nature of literacy among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District.

## **Research question 2: What forms of social media activities and practices pertain to JHS pupils' literacy in the Asante-Akim District?**

Social media practices and activities come in many folds; however, almost all are embraced by JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. Only few social media practices and online activities are unknown to them.

In relation to research question two, series of questions were asked in the interview to find out participants' knowledge in social media and their true relationship with their activities and practices. Participants' responses were put under themes of these:

1. Social media activities and online practices
2. Pupils and social media exposure
3. Adults and social media

### **4.3 Social Media Activities and Online Practices**

Participants were asked to mention some social media activities and online practices known to them. In the course of the interview these were some of the responses given when they were asked to mention some social media and online activities and practices known to them:

52. "I know of Facebook only."
53. "We have Twitter."
54. "There is Whatsapp also."
55. "Youtube and MySpace are also interesting."
56. "Instagram and Imo are quite interactive too."
57. "SMS (Short Message Service) is online too."

Arguably, the responses given proved that social media activities and practices were enormous but due to time factor, the researcher decided to focus on the ones that were very popular among the participants. The researcher therefore categorised those popular social media activities and practices under the following sub-headings:

- a. Facebook
- b. Whatsapp
- c. Twitter
- d. Youtube
- e. SMS (Short Message Services)

#### **4.4 Pupils and Social Media Exposure**

At this stage, the researcher sought to find out how participants got exposed to these popular social media platforms as outlined above. When participants were asked how they got introduced to these social media platforms likewise their activities and practices, many of them claimed they were introduced to these social media platforms by their friends and other people like internet café attendants. Meanwhile, only few participants pointed at their parents for giving them that exposure. One set of participants however maintained that they got to know social media platforms out of their own curiosity. Below are sample of responses given when participants were asked how they got exposed to social media platforms:

58. “My friend opened my Facebook account for me.”
59. “The man at the café helped me out when I needed to chat on Facebook.”
60. “I gave my details to my I.C.T. teacher, and he did it for.”
61. “My cousin got me a Twitter account and taught me how it works.”
62. “I asked my dad, and he got me one account on Facebook and Whatsapp.”

63. “Nobody opened my Facebook account for me. I did it all by myself, and I have been helping other people too.”

The responses given show that a lot of factors account for participants’ exposure in social media platforms as well as online activities and practices thereof. These responses confirm the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (1971) who proposed that there is an active relationship between learners’ environment and their abilities to learn, and that, young people construct their own knowledge through their constant interactions with experienced adults living in the society.

In a nutshell, when one looks at the responses given, one can conclude that junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are exposed to social media activities and practices through the help of others.

#### **4.5 Facebook**

Indeed, majority of participants interviewed disclosed that they hold Facebook accounts. Meanwhile, some section of participants claimed that they have heard about the platform but they do not have an account there. Participants gave the following responses when they were asked to describe Facebook:

64. “Facebook is ‘chat’ site where one gets the opportunity to meet all friends.”

65. “Facebook is a news reading website.”

66. “Facebook is a way of communicating with loved ones.”

67. “Facebook is where one gets connected to people in and outside the world.”

68. “Facebook is a form of social media where people interact and share information with one another.”

The various responses given clearly show that Facebook is a type of social media where all sort of online activities such as interacting and sharing of information

with other people are possible. The given responses also indicate that participants are familiar with Facebook. These responses as given attest to the assertion of Fact Sheet (2012) as cited in Lane and Lewis (2013) that Facebook is a social media platform utilized by people and organizations who want to stay in touch with friends, family and customers.

#### **4.5.1 Facebook activities and practices**

The responses given again show how differently each participant utilizes the Facebook platform. In other words, how Facebook is used varies from one participant to the other. Some group of participants choose to chat with friends only; others prefer to read news whereas others opt to share information such as audios, videos and other related digitally formatted information. When participants were asked how they utilized the social media platform Facebook, these were the responses they gave as shown in the themes below:

69. Chatting

70. Reading news and receiving updates

71. Information sharing

72. Advertisement

##### **4.5.1.1 Chat**

Majority of participants interviewed disclosed that the purpose for joining Facebook to them is to interact or chat with friends, relatives and other people. They claimed that they could not desist from chatting on Facebook because the platform is very interesting due to its interactive nature. Some of them also revealed in the interview that since they could not do away with Facebook and the chats thereof, they have installed on their mobile phones “Facebook Chat” applications to make their chats on the platform very easy and accessible. This application according to them

have made their chats on the platform very mobile because the application gives them instant notifications and allows them to instantly chat with people online regardless the location.

Participants again unveiled that they spend quite amount of productive time chatting with friends, relatives and other people on Facebook. These were some of the responses given by participants when asked how they utilized the platform and how often they visited to chat with people on it:

73. “Honestly. I can’t count the number of times I go on Facebook.”

74. “Anytime I’m free!”

75. “All the time except when I’m in the classroom.”

76. “The only time I don’t chat is when my phone is off or when there is no network on the phone.”

77. “I really like chatting on Facebook but I don’t spend much time there chatting.”

78. “I go there whenever I’m bored so I could chat with anybody online.”

The responses given testify that participants are very much obsessed with Facebook and the chats thereof even though not all of them show such signs. The given responses further suggest that participants spend a lot of time chatting on Facebook at the expense of other productive things. The responses given therefore conform to Rouis, Limayem and Salehi-Sangari (2011) who maintain that students spend too much productive time surfing social media platforms like Facebook.

It was concluded based on the responses given that chatting on Facebook is among the many social media activities and practices junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District use their time for.

#### 4.5.1.2 Reading news and receiving updates

Some participants however answered that they hardly spent time to chat on Facebook, and even when they did, they did not spend much time on the chat alone. They however said that they only joined Facebook because of “News Feeds” and recent updates on issues trending over the globe, about their friends and other self-related issues. Nevertheless, they also exhibited some signs of obsession as far as Facebook as a social media platform was concerned. These participants gave the following responses to how they utilized Facebook:

79. “I normally visit Facebook just to read what others are saying or have said.”

80. “Reading people’s posts is something I really like, and that is what I go to Facebook to do.”

81. “I get a lot of news there.”

82. “Some piece of news appear authentic when it’s on Facebook which is why I visit the site.”

83. “To read news and people’s comments, and if possible, give my comments when and where necessary.”

These responses suggest that participants are not only into Facebook because of its interactive nature but rather the kind of information they are likely to obtain from the platform. The responses given further show that participants have their way of reacting to the things they read on the platform. The given responses support Valenzuela, Parl and Kee (2008) who maintain that users like Facebook platform because it presents two unique features called the ‘News Feed’ and ‘Mini Feed’. This means that young people are into Facebook because they get the chance to read news and check for recent news updates.

Based on these responses, it was concluded that reading news and checking for recent updates on Facebook are also among the activities and practices social media platforms present junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District.

#### **4.5.1.3 Information sharing**

Participants again disclosed that sending, receiving and sharing information is their main reason for joining Facebook. They revealed that the kind of information they always share are often digitally formatted ones which means they are mostly videos, audios and other documents. They claimed that they are very much into downloading music and video files and sending such files afterwards to friends, relatives and other people by publicly sharing them on their Facebook Walls. Participants gave these responses to show how they utilize Facebook:

84. “I always visit Facebook to check if people have posted any video.”

85. “The only way to send music to a couple of friends is by sharing it on Facebook for them to download. That is also the reason why I’m always here – just to download.”

86. “It is much easier to sharing video and music files on Facebook than any other site I believe. So I try to get audio files available to my Facebook friends by simply posting them on their various ‘Walls’ and ‘Timelines’.”

These responses indicate that participants also show interest in Facebook simply because of how safe and easy digitally formatted documents such as video and audio files could be sent and shared with other people on the platform.

It was concluded based on the responses that JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District download, send and share digitally formatted information such as music and video files through Facebook.



#### 4.5.1.4 Advertisement

Participants further revealed that the best way and the suitable platform to run an advert is via Facebook. Some group of participants claimed that they are always on Facebook just to advertise their parents' products. Moreover, others maintained that they give people especially their customers updates on new and existing products. They said they are able to campaign for their goods and services simply by writing or posting something about them on their Facebook walls and sharing such posts to everybody. These responses were given when participants were asked how they used Facebook during the interview:

87. "To tell people about my mum's bread and the varieties available."

88. "I like fried rice a lot so Facebook is where I tell 'fried rice' lovers where to get nice fried rice."

89. "Facebook is where I talk about my football club."

The responses above indicate that participants are only obsessed with the platform because of the advertising avenues it presents them. It was concluded from the responses that JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District use Facebook for advertisement.

However, taking a cursory look at the responses given, it is clear that participants have existing knowledge about Facebook and its activities as well. Participants show that chatting, reading news and recent updates, information sharing and advertisement are the main social media activities and online practices known to them as far as Facebook is concerned. However, the responses also show that participants have their unique ways of using Facebook. That is, the kind of practices and activities that glue them to Facebook. Nonetheless, participants, in their

responses show that chatting with people on the platform tops all the activities and practices they use the Facebook platform for.

Some section of the participants on the other hand disclosed in the interview that they have heard of Facebook but lacked the access to the platform. They said they have limited idea as to how the platform, its practices and activities work. These participants gave these responses when were asked how they utilized Facebook:

90. “I have heard a lot about Facebook but I do not know how it works.”

91. “People from cities say Facebook is nice because one can chat with friends and send photos to people as well but it’s very unfortunate that we have no idea as to how to use it.”

92. “We don’t have any network here; only few people own computers and phones which are compatible with the internet so learning to use Facebook is out of the question.”

The responses given show that participants have indeed heard about the social media platform Facebook likewise the practices and activities it offers but lacked access due to their socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. These responses attest to Bond (2011) who claims that socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds have a reasonable influence on students’ level of literacy development.

Considering the sets of responses given, it is clear that pupils’ exposure to social media platforms and other related online activities and practices such as Facebook is highly defined by their surroundings. One can therefore conclude from these sets of responses that the respective environment of JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District characterize their relationship with the social media platform Facebook.

In a nutshell, it was concluded that from the findings that junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are familiar with Facebook, its practices and activities and use the platform for chatting, information sharing, reading news and checking for recent updates and advertisement purposes.

#### **4.6 Whatsapp**

In the interview, participants disclosed that they have Whatsapp applications installed on their mobile phones while others also showed that they have got the application on their various computers. A sample of participants' responses are captured below:

93. "Yes, I have Whatsapp on my phone."
94. "I'm on Whatsapp."
95. "I have Whatsapp on my computer because I use 'Blue Stack'."
96. "I'm on Whatsapp web."
97. "Of course I do have Whatsapp!"
98. "I have Whatsapp on both my tablet and laptop."
99. "Sure, I'm on Whatsapp!"

The responses given show that participants are already exposed to the social media platform Whatsapp on a number of electronic communication devices. The researcher realised from the responses that participants were already familiar with the social media application as well. See Appendix F for photos of Whatsapp application versions.

Meanwhile other participants claimed they did not have Whatsapp because the application was not compatible with their communication devices. They gave the following responses in relation to their inability to install the application:

100. "I'm not on Whatsapp because my phone doesn't support the application."

101. “My networking is too poor for Whatsapp installation. That’s why I cannot be Whatsapp.”
102. “I don’t have Whatsapp on my phone because the memory size of my phone is too small for the application.”

The responses given indicated that participants are unable to install and access Whatsapp due to factors like electronic communication device versions. These responses confirm that Whatsapp is an application for smartphones and other relatively compatible electronic communication devices just exactly as Alsanie (2015) posits.

From the given responses, one can therefore say that without supported and compatible mobile phones, one cannot install and access the social media platform Whatsapp. However, looking at the sets of responses given there is a clear indication that Whatsapp is still known among the participants. This therefore suggests that junior high school pupils in Asante-Akim South District are familiar with Whatsapp and are active users of the platform as well.

Participants gave the following responses when they were asked to describe the application and social media platform Whatsapp:

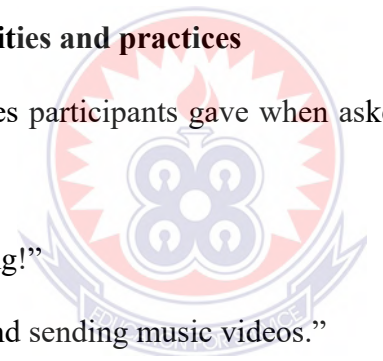
103. “Whatsapp is a place where people get to chat others online.”
104. “Whatsapp is an interactive online platform for certain types of phones.”
105. “Whatsapp is an application for particular mobile phones that allows such mobile phone users to chat with others who also use the same application.”
106. “Whatsapp is a modern way of interacting with people via cell phones.”
107. “Whatsapp is a programme for smartphones that enables users of such cell phones to interact with people using same supported smartphones.”

The responses given show that participants are familiar with Whatsapp and see the platform as an interactive or a chat application designed for certain brands of mobile phones where users of such phones get the access to chat with people using such same supported cell phones. These responses confirm the view of Alsanie (2015) who perceives Whatsapp as an exclusive, inter-platform instant messaging subscription service designed for smartphones and supported mobile phone devices.

From the responses given, one can therefore say that Whatsapp is an on-spot chat application and social media platform developed for certain kinds of mobile phones. This means that Whatsapp is a chat platform for specific electronic communication users.

#### **4.6.1 Whatsapp activities and practices**

These were the responses participants gave when asked what they used the Whatapp for:

- 
108. “Just chatting!”
  109. “Chatting and sending music videos.”
  110. “Chatting, sending and receiving audio and videos.”
  111. “I sometimes share links through Whatsapp.”
  112. “Although the chat is interesting, I’m addicted to reading shared information on the platform.”
  113. “I like to read jokes and share them.”
  114. “I chat and sometimes make my own advertisement on Whatsapp.”

The responses given indicate that participants prioritize certain online activities above others. Nevertheless, majority of them show that they use Whatsapp entirely for chatting even though others prefer to use it differently or combine it with other forms of activities on the same platform. Participants disclosed that regardless

of how differently they used the application, they still could not desist from using the chat feature of Whatsapp.

However, other participants showed that they enjoy making phone calls with the application than using their local mobile operator networks because call cost is relatively cheaper on the platform than when using the local mobile operator networks. Below were the responses given by these participants:

115. “I use Whatsapp to make majority of my phone calls.”

116. “Making international calls is quite expensive so I use Whatsapp to make such phone calls.”

117. “Talking on Whatsapp is virtually free, and that is what I used my Whatsapp for!”

These responses mean that participants are not only much into the chat features in Whatsapp and do not prioritize such features as such. However, they show that the affordability in making phone calls on Whatsapp platforms defines participants’ obsession over the platform.

Notwithstanding, the sets of responses given show that participants use the social media platform Whatsapp for various purposes even though the chat features stand out in terms of usage among the activities participants engage in. It was inferred from the responses that JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District predominantly use Whatsapp platforms for chatting among other online activities and practices.

#### **4.7 Twitter**

Out of the total number of participants interviewed only a few claimed to be active users of Twitter. They gave the following responses when asked to describe the social media platform Twitter:

118. “Twitter is a site for chatting.”
119. “Twitter is where we use short messages to communicate.”
120. “Twitter is a platform where one can make comments using not many words.”
121. “Twitter is a site where one can follow other users.”
122. “Twitter is a social networking site where people use ‘short hand’ to communicate.”

The responses indicate that participants have fair idea about Twitter. Participants see Twitter as a social networking site that allow limited amount of words to be carried as messages. These responses and views agree with Alsanie (2015) who describes Twitter as an online digital community service that allows members to read and convey short messages across the platform using not more than 140 characters. This implies that Twitter is a chat platform where many words cannot be composed and used as message at a time. Conclusion was drawn from the responses that junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are familiar with Twitter as a social media platform.

#### **4.7.1 Twitter activities and practices**

Participants gave the following responses when asked how they utilize Twitter and their reason(s) for being on the platform:

123. “I’m on Twitter to follow celebrities!”
124. “To find out what others are saying about my favourite football club.”
125. “I want to comment on other users’ tweets.”
126. “Following friends and to find out what they also are following is why I’m still on Twitter.”
127. “I follow movie series and other movie discussions.”

The responses given show that participants react to Twitter in diverse ways. That is, the online activities participants perform on the platform differ among themselves. Nevertheless, majority of the participants show that their reason for being on the Twitter platform is to ‘follow’ people and events only. From the responses given, it was realised that the major activity on Twitter is to follow series of activities, events and people.

#### **4.8 YouTube activities and practices**

During the interview, participants were asked what they do on the YouTube platforms. They disclosed that the activities they do on the platform are not anyhow different from others do on the same platform even though some users’ intentions may vary. Participants gave these responses:

128. “I only watch new music videos.”

129. “Just to watch new movie trailers.”

130. “Watching football highlights.”

131. “Watching live concerts.”

132. “Watch and listening to old music videos and leave comments as well.”

133. “Watch videos and movies, and share the links to such videos and movies as well.”

134. “To post videos and watch other videos as well.”

These responses show that participants use YouTube in different ways. Participants indicate in their responses that they do not only watch music videos and other related audio visuals on the platform but they also give comments and share such audio visuals as well. However, watching audio visuals on the platform seem to be the major online activity participants engaged in on the You Tube platform.



#### 4.9 Short Message Services (SMSs)

Out of the total participants interviewed, almost all of them confessed that they are active user of SMS. They disclosed in their responses that they have been using SMS all the time because it is easy, convenient and reliable unlike other sources of text messaging which require internet service. Participants gave the following responses when asked whether they have been using SMS:

135. "I use text messages a lot."
136. "Yes, I like to use text messages all the time."
137. "Of course, I do prefer using SMS because it is simple and convenient!"
138. "Sure! I always use text messages because it requires no internet."
139. "I use SMS more often."
140. "I have no choice than to use SMS because my phone doesn't support those popular instant messages."
141. "I'm limited to SMS use because there is no internet connection here."
142. "I send text messages to people everyday."
143. "I use SMS especially when my internet bundle

The responses given show that participants have been using short message services (SMSs) all the time. The responses also indicated that participants prefer using SMS to other forms of text messaging especially internet-bound text messages because they believe that SMS are more reliable easy and convenient. Furthermore, participants' responses show that they (participants) have been frequent users of short message services (SMSs). They disclosed that using SMS is the only available text messaging option when internet access is absent.

However, very few participants disclosed that they hardly use short message services (SMSs). They claimed that they are not active users of SMS. They gave the following responses when asked whether they used SMS:

144. “I hardly use SMS because its service charge.”
145. “I prefer using Whatsapp platform for my messages to using SMS.”
146. “I don’t often use SMS because I find it quite challenging.”
147. “I do not use SMS at all because it is time consuming and unreliable

The given responses indicate that these participants rather prefer other text messaging options such as the internet-assisted instant messaging ones to SMS. They attribute their lack of interest in using SMS to the service charge these activities attract. Others also claimed that SMS use is very challenging, time consuming and unreliable. It was realised from the responses that these participants did not find SMS attractive enough.

Looking at the responses, one can say that JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are not into SMS use due to certain unfavourable factors that come along with their use. It was concluded from the major findings that junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are active users of short message services (SMSs).

#### **4.10 Adults and social media use**

Parents were as well interviewed to find out the kind of social media platforms, social networking sites and online practices known to them, and how they used these platforms. Some of them said in the interview that they are active users of major social media platforms and social networking sites. Below are sample of their responses:

148. “I’m on Facebook.”

149. "I chat a lot with people on Whatsapp."
150. "I love watch videos and movies on You Tube too."
151. "I like to check for news updates on both my Facebook wall and Whatsapp."
152. "I am only used to SMS."

The responses given show that these set of participants are familiar with some of the popular social media platforms such as Whatsapp, You Tube, Facebook and SMS (Short Message Services). Again, they disclosed how they used or interacted with these social media and networking platforms. Participants claimed that chatting, watching audio visuals and readings news were the main activities they used the platforms for. Inference was made from the responses that adults are also familiar with social media tools as well as other forms of online practices and activities.

However, other participants responded that they have heard about many of these platforms and have seen people use them. However, they claimed they are not familiar with them in anyway in terms of how they work or are used. Below are sample of their responses:

153. "I have heard about Whatsapp and seen people using it. Honestly, I have no idea as to how it works."
154. "Everywhere you go, you hear a lot of people talk about Facebook. I don't know how to use it."
155. "I know of text message (SMS) only."

The responses given show that social media platforms and social networking sites such as Whatsapp, Facebook and SMS (Short message services) are known to participants only by their names but their use or how they work is unfamiliar to them.

This implies that social media platforms and online activities pertaining to adults rest on the fact that they have been hearing and seeing people use them.

#### **4.11 Adults' and children's role in social media use**

In the interview, these responses were given when participants were asked whether they tutor their children on how to use social media platforms:

156. "Actually, it's the other way round with me! It's my children who teach me how to use Facebook."

157. "There is no way I can possibly help my kids when it comes to Whatsapp and Facebook use. They rather do me the honour by teaching me how to send Whatsapp messages and even SMS."

158. "My children retrieve and send all my messages for me because I have no idea how it is done."

The responses given show that participants are tutored by their young ones on how to use social media platforms. The given responses agree with Fox (2014) when she describes children of today as 'digital natives' living in technology era. This means that children understand and manipulate social media better than adults do.

However, other participants disclosed that they are in charge when it comes to tutoring children on the use of social media platforms. They gave the following responses:

159. "I taught my son how to chat on Whatsapp and how twitter works too."

160. "I opened a Facebook account for my two children and taught them how to use its features."

The given responses show that participants do more work when it comes to tutoring children on the use of social media. These responses confirm to Barnard and

Campbell (2005), Barnard and Lucy (2005) and Vygotsky (1978) who maintain that young children learn from experienced adults and as a result construct their own knowledge as their relationship with adult members intensifies. This implies that children depend on adults to better understand and manipulate social media platforms.

These sets of responses attest to the social learning and sociocultural learning theories of Bandura (1971) and Vygotsky (1978) respectively who see literacy as a social practice where the interaction between learners and their environment defines learning. This means that the kind of relationship existing between the child and the experienced people around determines how well they can understand and manipulate social media tools.

Participants were asked whether they engage in social media activities or use social networking sites in the presence of their children. Some participants disclosed that they use social media platforms and participate in other online activities in the presence of their children. Below are sample of the responses they gave in the interview:

161. “Yes, I *whatsapp* all the time whether my children are around or not.”
162. “The presence of my kids don’t really bother me much whenever I’m chatting online.”
163. “I have to let them help me out with some Facebook features so I always go online anytime they are around.”

The responses given show that participants indeed participate in social media activities and social networking sites such as Whatsapp and Facebook in the presence of their children. This means that many social media activities and other related online practices register in the brains of children as they observe adults do them. These responses confirm Bandura’s (1971) social learning theory which stipulates that

young people construct their own knowledge simply by observing the behaviours of others. This implies that literacy behaviours among young children vis-à-vis social media activities and practices are influenced by adults' behaviour as observed.

However, other participants said they hardly engage in social media activities and online practices in front of their children. They gave the following responses:

164. "I don't do any of these whenever my children are around: chat, blog, Facebook, Whatsapp, watch videos or listen to audios. I'm scared they may play with my phone and tamper with some 'items' on it."

165. "I stop my kids from reading or seeing my Whatsapp messages because I don't want them to come across any naughty stuffs on my phone."

The responses given show that participants indeed keep their social media activities and other related online practices such Facebook and Whatsapp chats away from their children due to certain factors such as media content suitability. It was concluded from the findings that parents are also responsible for exposing children to social media activities and other related online practices.

During the interview, participants were asked whether their children engage in social media activities and any other related online practices. Some of the participants disclosed in the interview that they have on many occasions seen their children participate in many social media activities and other online practices. Sample of their responses can be seen below:

166. "I always watch them play games and chat on their mobiles everyday."

167. "They are so glued to their cell phones because of Facebook and Whatsapp, even when we are taking supper, they will be chatting."

168. “I also learn a lot from my son so I allow him to go online anytime with or without my phone or computer because I want to learn how some features work in some particular platforms.”

The given responses show that participants have observed and noted the obsessions their children have developed for online practices and social media activities such video gaming, Whatsapp and ‘*Facebooking*’. These responses agree with Rouis, Limayem and Salehi-Sangari (2011) and Sewe (2014) as cited in Vural (2015) who maintain that social media and social networking sites have gained roots in the daily lives and practices of students. This means that adults, more especially parents have apparently been watching their children as they participate in social media activities.

Some section of the participants responded that they scarcely see their children use social media platforms or engage in any form of social networking sites or any other related online practices. These are the responses they gave:

169. “Even though they talk about Facebook, Whatsapp and other stuffs, yet, I have not seen them use or chat on any of these platforms in my house.”
170. “Perhaps, they may have been using it outside! However, as we speak, I have not come across them chatting online or using Facebook, Whatsapp and the rest.”

The given responses show that these participants rarely observe their children participate in social media activities even though they claim to have heard their children talk about them or presume they have may have been using it outside their homes. It was concluded that young people’s knowledge in social media use is apparent to adults in everyday.

Based on these findings, it was concluded that the level of social media activities and practices pertaining to the literacy of JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are online chats, blogging, watching videos, listening to audios, video gaming, image sharing, news reading and online advertisement via platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, You Tube, Twitter and SMS (Short Message Services).

**Research question 3: To what extent do social media influence literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim District?**

In relation to research question three, responses given by participants during the interview were tabulated in a table with descriptions. The researcher also documented some observed behaviours as evidenced in pupils' official documents. The obtained findings were collected under the themes of negative effects and positive effects of social media on literacy development.

**4.12 Negative Effects of Social Media on Literacy Development**

Participants were asked in the interview to describe some negative effects of using social media and social networking sites in relation to their literacy development. The results of the interview were used to create operational definitions for coding categories in table one (1). The theme of the negative effects of using or participating in social media and social networking sites is explained in detail in the Table 2:



**Table 4.1: Operational definitions for coding categories**

Negative effects	Definitions
<b>1. Writing mistakes</b>	
<b>a. Grammatical errors</b>	People use a lot of incorrect tenses and wrong sentence construction on social media and other related social networking sites.
<b>b. Wrong spelling</b>	Wrong spelling and incorrect wordings are engulfing the internet. Individuals are also responding to these spelling and wording patterns by copying and using them in many social media platforms and social networking sites.
<b>c. Wrong punctuation</b>	Individuals do not give much regards to accurate and correct forms of punctuation. Incorrect abbreviations, formulated acronyms, unnecessary commas, semi-colon, colon, etc. are all forms of wrong punctuations social media users are using on social media and social networking site platforms.
<b>d. Symbols/Emoticons/Short-hands</b>	Social media and social networking site users often use a lot of symbols, icons and emoticons in their chats. They also stick to many short-hand texts in their online write ups on many social media platforms.
<b>2. Reading barriers</b>	
<b>a. Lack of evaluation skill</b>	Individuals lack the judgemental skill when it comes to online information and their sources. Social media users do not attach any seriousness to the things they read on the internet. Those who do, see whatever information surfing social media platforms as true and reliable without cross checking.
<b>b. Meaningless reading</b>	Social media and social networking users often do not read online contents for meaning. Individuals on social media platforms read online contents for reading sake only leaving out the purpose of such contents.
<b>c. Fluency</b>	Social media activities do not encourage users' reading fluency skills due to the unique nature of some of the texts and features inherent in them.
<b>3. Speaking/speech challenges</b>	
<b>a. Less speech</b>	Social media and social networking sites users often do not engage in oral conversation or interaction with people. Social media platforms have minimised human physical speech interaction.
<b>b. Speech jargons</b>	People are accommodating and integrating words emanating from social media platforms and other social networking sites in their everyday utterances.

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	Individuals are gradually getting accustomed to informal words and terminologies as part of their speech making.
<b>4. Limited analytic/critical thinking skill</b>	Social media and social networking site users often are limited to the ideas, beliefs and the knowledge of other group. They lack intuitive skill. They are more often than not limited to the creativity and ingenuity of other people.
<b>5. Poor listening skill</b>	Social media and social networking sites come with many distracting features that hinder good and attentive listening. Features such as notification tones are all auditory distractors.
<b>6. Waste of time</b>	Individuals spend quite an amount of productive time on social media platforms and social networking sites at the expense of meaningful literacy instruction. That is young people spend too much time on social media today.
<b>1. Positive aspects (Benefits to the users)</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>a. Communication</b>	Social media enhances communication skills among young people. This is because, through social media, young people also get the opportunity to meet and interact with people and other groups on the platform.
<b>b. Motivation</b>	Individuals are motivated to write and read more on social media platforms since it is the only avenue through their views can be heard.
<b>c. Vocabulary development</b>	Social media has added a lot in terms of addition of new words among users. People are now learning new words through social media platforms and other social networking sites.
<b>d. Creativity</b>	Social media has touched creativity and imagination skills among users. People now create their own stories and others have got their own way of inventing writing styles.
<b>e. Self- and peer evaluation</b>	Social media has enabled users to measure their level of reading and writing skills.
<b>f. Resources</b>	People have now become more resourceful because social media now provides array of language learning platforms where users can build their reading and writing skills.

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**Table 4.2: Categories, frequencies and sample expressions related to the theme of negative effects**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sample expressions</b>
<b>1. Writing mistakes</b>		
<b>a. Grammatical errors</b>	M	Pupils who use social media and social networking sites often overlook grammatical constructions and as such use inappropriate sentence constructions.
<b>b. Wrong spelling</b>	M	Pupils on social media use too many wrong spellings and incorrect wordings on social media platforms. Since these errors are overlooked, they transfer them into official write ups.
<b>c. Wrong punctuation</b>	M	Incorrect punctuations such as incorrect abbreviations, formulated acronyms, unnecessary commas, semi-colon, colon, etc. have taken over social media platforms thereby affecting literacy skills among pupils in the classroom.
<b>d. Symbols/Emoticons/Short-hands</b>	M	Pupils on social media platforms often exhibit certain text styles such as short hands, symbols and emoticons in their essays.
<b>2. Reading barriers</b>		
<b>a. Lack of evaluation skill</b>	M	Information read on the internet and on other social media platforms properly evaluated. Pupils often fail to think through or verify information sources. They either trust information source or refute it without cross checking.
<b>b. Meaningless reading</b>	M	Online contents and materials are often meaningless. Social media and social networking users often do not get any meaning from reading online. Pupils on social media platforms often read online contents for reading sake only.
<b>c. Fluency</b>	M	Reading online challenges readers' fluency and accuracy skills. This is because social media platforms contain unique characters that are quite challenging and difficult to understand.
<b>3. Speaking/speech challenges</b>		
<b>a. Less speech</b>	M	Social media and social networking sites have minimised oral interactions and speech dialogues among pupils and other groups. Pupils are no longer interested to have physical conversations with others because they see social media platforms as their agent of socialization.

<b>b. Speech jargons</b>	M	Pupils are now using new sets of informal language and other terms in their everyday utterances. Social media is increasingly promoting alien words among pupils today.
<b>4. Limited analytic/critical thinking skills</b>	M	Pupils lack the space to create and critique because they are confined to the ideas of other groups. They see ideas surfing on social media platforms and social networking site as genuine and reliable.
<b>5. Poor listening skills</b>	M	Pupils no longer listen attentively due to the distracting features embedded in many social media platforms. Notification tones for instance sway pupils' chance of becoming good listeners.
<b>6. Waste of time</b>	M	Pupils spend too much time social media platforms and social networking sites at the expense of serious literacy instructions.

Note: N shows the number of participants; M means majority.

### 1. Writing mistakes

It was concluded that pupils' constant engagement in social media activities and social network sites pose adverse effects on their writing skills. The researcher identified grammar, spelling, punctuations and text styles as the possible areas where social media is adversely influencing:

#### a. Grammatical errors

The findings showed that grammatical errors are enormous on social media platforms. Conclusion was drawn that pupils on social media use a lot of grammatical errors such as incorrect sentence constructions. The researcher also realised that tenses used across such platforms are really poor. These grammatical errors are often either unchecked or overlooked in many social media and social network platforms.

Majority of participants interviewed said that they do make many grammatical mistakes and other construction errors on social media platforms. However, they disclosed that they do not show greater concerns about the correctness of tenses and sentences when chatting on social media. They said that as long as there is meaning

in whatever they want write, language errors become irrelevant to them. Sample of participants' responses are captured below:

171. "I make a lot of writing mistakes in my online chats with people."
172. "Sometimes I use 'have' for 'she', 'he' and 'it' in many of the chats."
173. "I also often choose 'has' for 'they'."
174. "In many cases, the chat automatically selects wrong options for us. For example, 'him' can be chosen to replace a female."
175. "Grammatical mistakes are inevitable on Facebook, Whatsapp and SMS platforms but as long as there is meaning in whatever has been written, these mistakes become less influential."
176. "I make too many mistakes because I'm always in hurry to put my message across."

The responses given prove that participants make a lot of grammatical mistakes on social media platforms. These writing mistakes according to the respondents occur due to oversight, haste or the nature of some mobile devices. The responses participants gave confirm that writing mistakes such as wrong grammar are often rampant in pupils' writing because pupils see social media platforms as digital communities where standard English use is irrelevant as suggested by Sani and Bature (2014) and Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh and Nath (2015). This means that social media platforms are promoting grammatical mistakes among pupils in our schools.

Sources adding up to participants' responses during the interview also attested to the fact that pupils are truly using wrong grammar and constructing erroneous tenses on social media platforms and social networking sites.

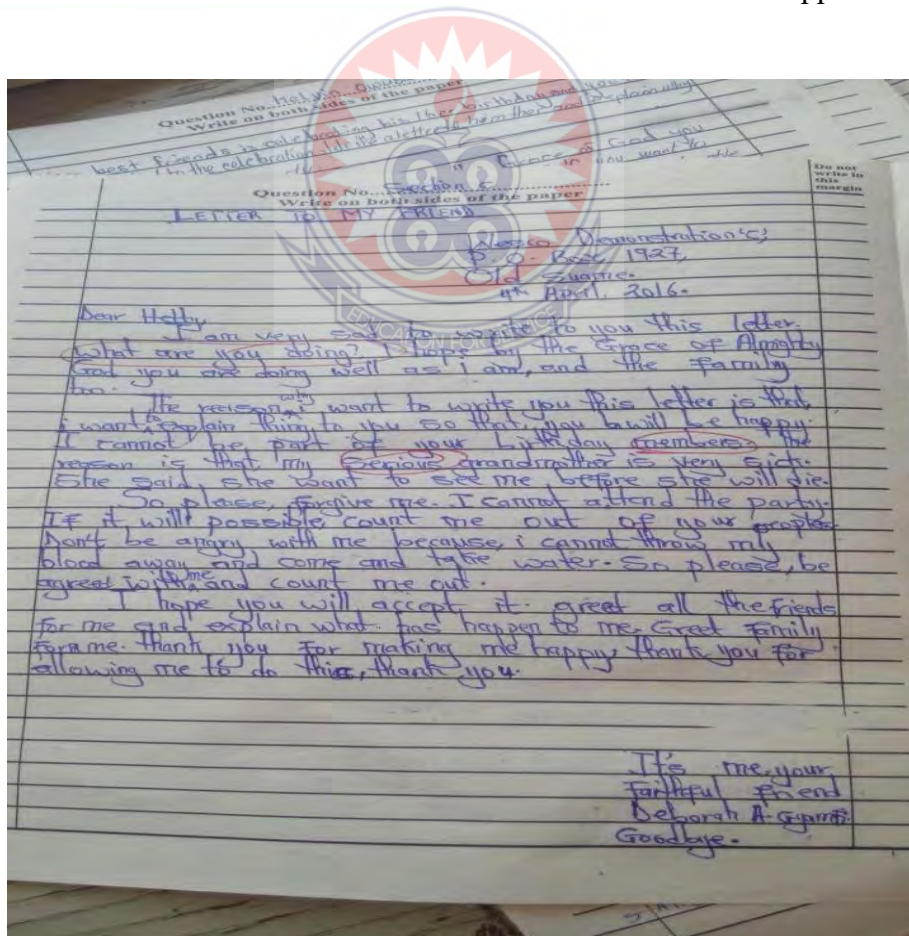
Figure 1: Erroneous tenses across social media platforms



Source: Twitter



Whatsapp



Exams script

All the pictures and texts in Figure 1 depict poor grammatical constructions. The text or the statement made in the first picture for example literally means “*No condition is ever permanent*”. Instead, the writer wrote this “*Sometimes ego Gud! Sometimes, ego bad!! Sometimes ego west*”. Similarly, the statement in the second picture should have been written and read as “*In God we trust*” and not “*In trust we God*”. Lastly, the circled phrase in the last picture is “*birthday members*” instead of “*birthday wishers*”

A Conclusion was drawn from the findings that pupils’ engagement in social media expose them to grammatical errors and make incorrect sentence constructions inevitable.

#### **b. Wrong spelling**

Findings from the study showed that wrong spelling and incorrect wording are rampant on social media platforms. Majority of participants said that they do commit a lot of spelling mistakes. They also accepted that their mode of wording on social media platforms often lack quality. The researcher saw that such writing errors occur because participants sometimes have no knowledge as to the correct spellings of such words. So they pick any close spelling of such words up from digital platforms.

Others also said that the spell-checkers as preloaded in some digital keywords cause these wrong spellings and incorrect wordings. Meanwhile, some said oversight and haste during typing account for such writing errors. Sample of participants’ responses are shown below:

177. “I make many spelling mistakes in my Facebook chat.”

178. “I don’t get all words correctly spelled when chatting.”

179. “You can’t resist wrong spellings on Whatsapp.”

180. “Sometimes, the spelling options can even spell words wrongly and suggest them for use.”
181. “Many of us depend on spell-checkers because some words are difficult to spell. So wrong spellings are bound to happen when chatting on Whatsapp and Facebook.”
182. “We all make spelling errors when texting. They are inevitable because the hand sometimes might be faster than the mind.

The responses given show that participants commit a lot of spelling mistakes and incorrect wordings on social media platforms. These responses align with the results of Eisenstein (2011), Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) and Vural (2015) who maintain that the internet comes with abundant non-standard spelling; language use lacks precision because people see social media platforms as informal environment for communication and learning.

This means that habitual use of wrong spelling and incorrect wording among pupils are all as a result of their active participation in social media platforms and social networking sites.

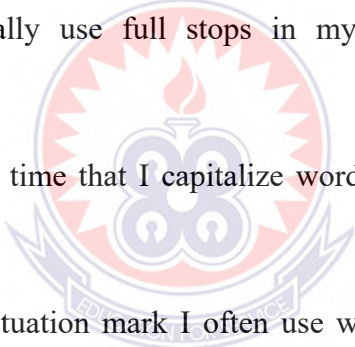
Other findings also showed that pupils on social media mimic bad spelling and incorrect wordings from many social media platforms and networking sites. See Appendix G for samples of social media images showing faulty spellings and incorrect wordings.

Inference was made based on the findings that social media platforms and social networking sites subject users, more especially pupils on such platforms to wrong spelling and incorrect wording habits.



### c. Wrong punctuations

It was concluded that users use many punctuation errors on social media platforms and social networking sites. Majority of participants said they use a lot of inappropriate punctuation marks on digital online platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter. They disclosed that the use of wrong punctuations such as illegitimate forms of abbreviations, ‘invented’ acronyms and others are either intentional or unintentional. However, they claimed that wrong punctuations are hard to prevent due to haste and forgetfulness on the part of the user. They also said that the nature of some social media platforms call for intended wrongful punctuations in order to get one’s message across. Below are sample of responses given by participants:

- 
183. “I don’t normally use full stops in my chats but I do use a lot of abbreviations.”
184. “It’s not all the time that I capitalize words when chatting with people on Whatsapp.”
185. “The only punctuation mark I often use when chatting on any platform is question mark.”
186. “Punctuation marks consume text space so I avoid them on platforms such as Twitter where users are given limited amount of words or characters.”
187. “Honestly, I sometimes misuse commas, colons and semicolons and marks.”
188. “I have no idea how some of the punctuation marks are used in sentences.”

The responses given show that participants use many wrong punctuation marks across social media platforms. Participants’ responses confirm the assertions of Sani and Bature (2014) and Vural (2015) who maintain that students use all manner of punctuations such as unconventional abbreviations on social media platforms but these illegitimate abbreviations jeopardize their language use. This means that social

media platforms are inculcating in pupils the habit of using all sort of punctuation marks.

The researcher realized that pupils' wrong punctuations are as a result of their active involvement in social media and social networking sites. Samples of images and texts containing wrong punctuations can be found in Appendix H: It was concluded from the findings that social media platforms and other social networking sites expose pupils to all manner of illegitimate punctuation use.

#### **d. Symbols/Emoticons and short-hand text styles**

It was concluded from the findings that users on social media platforms and other related social networking sites use a lot of symbols, emoticons and short hand text styles to carry their messages across on such platforms. Symbols and emoticons used on social media platforms carry meanings and explain the mood of users. In the same way, users stick to short hand text styles on digital platforms in order to shorten their message and thoughts.

Majority of participants said in the interview that they use different kinds of symbols, emoticons and short hands text styles to make their conversation on digital platforms easy and also to prove a point. They also disclosed that it is crucial to stick to social media characters (symbol, emoticons and short hands) in order to make a chat simple, lively and boredom free during chatting. Others said that the nature of some platforms demands that users used short hand text styles. These are samples of their responses:

189. "I use short hand and symbols all the time because Twitter allows few words."

190. "Sometimes emoticons do all the talking."

191. "I stick to symbols and emoticons because they make chats interesting."
192. "We are use short hands on Facebook and Whatsapp because they are simple to use and makes the chat very quick."
193. "I don't remember the last time I wrote words or sentence in full. I always use short hands and symbols because it makes the chat lively."
194. "Too much words makes the chat boring. That's why I use symbols and short hands."

The responses given show that participants use a lot of symbols, emoticons and short hand text styles on social media platforms and social networking sites for numerous reasons. These responses confirm that young ones are often fond of using smileys, emoticons, phonetic replacement games learned from and used on social media platforms to proof points in formal writings (Craig, 2003; Sani & Bature, 2014; Sarkar, Agarwal, Gosh & Nath, 2015). This means that social media platforms and social networking sites are promoting among pupils the use of illegitimate text styles such as short hands and other forms of inappropriate graphic features such as the emoticons and symbols.

The researcher saw that pupils' constant use of emoticons, symbols and short hand text styles were as a result of the kinds of materials they come across daily on social media platforms. See Appendix I for sample images containing emoticons, symbols and short hands text styles.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the habitual use of short hand text styles, symbols, emoticons and smileys among pupils is as a result of their active involvement in social media activities and social networking sites.

In brief, the responses as given by majority of participants likewise other findings inferred that social media and social network are adversely affecting writing habits and writing skills among JHS pupils.

## **2. Reading barriers**

It was concluded that social media platforms and social networking sites do have negative effects on pupils' reading skills and reading habits. The researcher identified lack of evaluation skills, meaningless reading and fluency as the possible side of effects of social media and social networking sites as far as users' reading skills are concerned.

### **a. Lack of evaluation skills**

The findings showed that users on social media platforms and social networking sites do not exhibit adequate judgmental skills. It was realised that contents read across social media platforms and other related social networking sites such as Whatsapp, Twitter, SMS and Facebook are not properly decoded by readers or users. Users mostly rely much on contents read across digital online platforms in that sources of and to information are often not challenged or cross checked.

In the interview, majority of participants said that Facebook and Whatsapp are their only source of information. They disclosed that they rarely refute information often read on these platforms unless such information are widely disregarded by the heavy public. Participants also said that they stick to contents read across social media platforms because access to other sources of information for verification is also quite expensive. These are sample of participants' responses:

195. "Facebook is my source of information. People give me updates on current trends of issues."

196. "Information sent across Whatsapp and Facebook are always genuine."
197. "I depend a lot on news surfing Facebook and Whatsapp because I don't have the money to buy any national newspaper."
198. "Information will be always information no matter where the source."
199. "Facebook and Whatsapp have made access to information easier and less expensive."

The response participants gave suggest that they do not or have not been adequately evaluating contents and materials read on social media platforms. These responses agree with Coiro (2003) who opines that internet reading are mentally challenging because online texts contain certain features and hyperlinks which may require additional processing of comprehension skills on the part of the reader. This means contents and materials read on digital online platforms hinder users' evaluation skills.

However, certain section of the participants said in the interview that information and contents read online are often always not reliable. These participants in their responses gave instances where untrue rumours have gone through the roofs of many social media platforms. Below are sample of their responses:

200. "I don't rely much on information sent via Whatsapp and Facebook. A lot of them are complete hoax."
201. "We all know that not everything posted on Facebook is true. For instance, news goes around about peoples being dead whilst they live."

These responses are an indication that participants are very much aware that online contents have the tendency to influencing readers' skill in making sound judgments. Participants' responses here align with the suggestion of Coiro (2003) who maintain that online and internet reading can bring about undesirable reading

habits. This implies that reading contents and materials online can adversely affect one's skill to evaluate.

Adding up to participants responses, the researcher also realised from other findings that participants' active involvement in social media platforms and social networking sites resulted in their inability to evaluate online contents and materials. Samples of news and information social media users come across entirely all the time can be found in Appendix J.

Conclusion was drawn from the findings that pupils may lack the skill to evaluate contents and materials read online as a result of their active involvement in social media platforms and social networking sites.

#### **b. Meaningless reading**

It was concluded from the findings that social media and social networking sites meaningful reading. This is because a lot of contents and information read on these platforms are often not sensible or comprehensible enough to readers or users. Users end up committing themselves reading series of complicated stories and other things which sometimes are very difficult to understand. These digital online events or situations take away users' total interest in reading contents online whether such contents are meaningful or not.

During the interview, majority of participants said that people post a lot of irrelevant materials and information on social media platforms. According to them, these contents are later seen to be unnecessary after one commits him or herself to read them. They also said some posts do not deserve to be attended to. They disclosed that people intentionally post, send or forward contents that are boring, annoying and sometimes often abusive. Participants also added that excessive use of

short hands, symbols, smileys, emoticons and punctuations on social media platforms sometimes do not make reading meaningful. Samples of participants' responses are as follow:

202. "A lot of things on Whatsapp do not make sense to me."

203. "Some people consciously post things that have no meaning."

204. "I don't waste my time reading forwarded messages."

205. "Many stories on Facebook are completely useless and just waste of time."

206. "When people use too many short hands and smileys in chats, they become very difficult to understand the kind of message they want to put across."

207. "A lot of post on Facebook and Whatsapp do not make sense because they are not grammatically properly constructed."

The responses given show that participants commit themselves reading series of online contents that are often not meaningful on social media platforms and social networking sites. This means that many of the contents and materials that surf across Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and other related digital online platforms are not meaningful enough to get readers' attention. More so these online situations or events may discourage users' reading habits and interests thereby affecting their reading skills as well.

The researcher realized that certain social media contents and materials such as these do not carry any or enough message to readers. See Appendix K for content and materials samples. Inference was made based on the findings that social media platforms and social networking sites often show contents and materials that render reading meaningless.

### c. Fluency

The findings revealed that social media and social network activities have negative bearings on users' reading fluency and accuracy. Social media platforms and social networking sites come with so many different text features and other forms of writing styles which encourage reading slips, errors and mistakes. These text styles stand in the way of users' reading fluency skills.

Majority of participants said in the interview that they are sometimes unable to read the way they want to. They disclosed that certain text features and symbols such as emoticons, smileys and other forms of lettering often used in social media platforms make reading very difficult to flow. They also confirmed that some users intentionally mingle letters, invert words and sentences on digital platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter only to confuse readers and to slow or pin fast and fluent readers down. Participants revealed that excessive short hand text styles, wrong grammar, punctuation errors and improper sentence constructions as used in many social media platforms also sometimes prevent them from enjoying their reading. Below are samples of participants' responses:

208. "Some emoticons are tricky and difficult to read."

209. "Short hand writers sometimes make reading Whatsapp chat very trouble."

210. "No matter how fast or fluent one's reading is, you definitely have to slow down when you come across some symbols, emoticons and short hands for the first time in your chat."

211. "People often use mixed-up sentences and words on Whatsapp and Facebook only to try good readers."

212. "Reading becomes quite challenging when there are too many poor incorrect sentences and unnecessary punctuations."



The responses given indicate that participants indeed encounter reading challenges on social media platforms and social networking sites. These responses attest to Adams (2011) and Craig (2003) who maintain that instant messaging and certain social media features more or less threaten reading and fluency skills among young people. This means that social media and social networking sites in general can act negatively on pupils' reading fluency skills.

In all, it was concluded from the findings that social media and social networking sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, SMS, and YouTube adversely influence reading skills and reading habits among pupils.

### **3. Speaking/speech challenge**

It was concluded from the findings that the presence of social media and social networking sites has badly affected oral interactions and other forms of verbal utterances. It was revealed that these platforms do not encourage eloquence and speech fluency. It was realised that digital online platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and others have all resulted in 'less speech' and frequent 'speech jargons'.

#### **a. Less speech**

The findings revealed that the advent of social media platforms have discouraged all forms of human physical interactions, ranging from face-to-face interactions to other forms of oral dialogues. Literacy acquisition and development largely depends on the physical interaction between learners' learning abilities and their environment. Unfortunately, however, social media platforms such Facebook and Whatsapp are making people more asocial.

Majority of participants in the interview said they hardly speak face-to-face with their parents and relatives. They said that they do a lot of their talking via Whatsapp

and any other available platform. They disclosed that they feel much better discussing issues with their close relatives and other people through social media platforms. They said that these platforms make their talking easier because they save them from shyness and all sort of timidity which are likely to show up in oral conversations with people. These are samples of their responses:

213. "I'm a bit shy of my dad so I often text him anytime I need something."

214. "We chat one another on Whatsapp when you come to my house."

215. "My brother and I hardly talk in person. We do a lot of our talking on Whatsapp and Facebook chat."

216. "My parents only sit us down when it comes to critical issues. The rest of our talking is done via text messaging."

217. "I'm only confident to speak when I'm online. But facing someone in person will be very difficult for me."

The responses given indicate that participants are not much into any form of human interaction, conversation, dialogue or whatsoever because of digital online platforms like Facebook chats, SMS and Whatsapp. These responses confirm that social media platforms and social networking sites have made users more asocial exactly as Vural (2015) maintains. This implies that social media engagement discourages human physical interaction among young people.

However, other set of participants said that they do not prioritize social media platforms over their social lives. They said that they do not make their online mode of socializing override their actual or physical mode of socializing with the people they have around. They gave these responses:

218. "I prefer telling my parents my problem face-to-face than to chat them online."

219. “With or without Facebook, I still have conversation with my family anytime I want to.”

These responses, even though show participants’ choice of socializing, they still prove that social media have got influence on users’ physical interaction with people. This means that social media and social networking sites move along with users’ ability to engage in oral conversation with people.

It was concluded based on the findings that active engagement in social media and social networking sites can damage human physical interactions like dialogues, face-to-face interactions and other forms of conversations among pupils and other people.

#### **b. Speech jargons**

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites have increased the use of jargons and non-standard words in utterances. Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp have all introduced certain types of words in users’ everyday utterances. These platforms are as well promoting Pidgin English among pupils.

Majority of participants said they have been using names of some popular social media and social networking sites to qualify certain statements made in their utterances. The researcher realized that participants have been using in their everyday speech names of these platforms as adjectives, nouns and verbs. Again, participants disclosed that they learn a lot of Pidgin English on certain platforms. Below are samples of participants’ utterances and responses:

220. “We send *Whatsapp* messages all the time.” (Adjective)

221. “We all *Whatsapp* one another almost everyday.” (Verb)

222. “All my friends are all on *Whatsapp*.” (Noun)

223. “You can learn any language on You Tube. That where I learn my Pidgin English”

224. “I *tweet* a lot!”

225. “It’s all about *Facebooking*.”

The responses and utterances as seen above clearly show that participants are truly inculcating the habit of fusing certain online languages into their speech and making them seem normal or appropriate. These responses and utterances agree with Bouhnik and Deshen (2014), Tur and Marin (2015) and Lee (2006) as cited in Warschauer and Blake (2016) that social media and various forms of instant messages as a matter of fact can affect grammar, speech proficiency and increase the use of non-standard language form among students. This means that social media and social networking sites determine the pace of users’ speech proficiency and accuracy.

Adding up to participants’ responses and utterances, the researcher also identified series of online contents and materials that proved that users’ frequent use of jargons and non-standard English are as a result of their activeness in social media platforms. See Appendix L for images containing jargons and non-standard English.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that social media and social networking sites have transformed users’ speech and utterances by adding series of non-standard language such as jargons and Pidgin English to the language already known to them.

In sum, it was concluded that social media and social networking sites affect speaking habits and speaking skill among pupils because the amount of non-standard language on these platform discourage speech fluency and accuracy.

#### 4. Limited analytical/critical thinking skills

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites threaten users' analytical and critical skills. Users of social media and social networking sites often operate under the thoughts and ideas of people or group. Members on various digital online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, etc. often are unable to subject issues trending on social media and social networking sites to critical thinking. They lack the skill to analyse online contents thereby falling for the ideas, notions and beliefs of other people. Sometimes, people intentionally post contents and materials on social media platforms just to sway other people's conscience.

Majority of participants confirmed in the interview that they always find themselves under the influence of people's thoughts. They said they live under all kinds of orientation including political, social and economic. They disclosed that they always are tempted in believing whichever content or material posted across Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. Participants admitted that platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, SMS, You Tube and Twitter allow people to share posts that may wrongfully or forcefully be indoctrinating readers into all sort of thinking. Among the responses participants' gave are:

226. "People post and forward a lot of stuff about political parties and other groups on Facebook which sometimes are very difficult to ignore."
227. "Sometimes, it becomes very difficult to doubt a message put across on Facebook and Whatsapp."
228. "We often argue on series of issues read on Whatsapp platforms."
229. "We tend to trust in the ideas of public figures including pastors, celebrities and the people we follow on Twitter and Facebook."

230. “I don’t take it likely especially when allegations are raised against my favourite celebrities, tribe, political party and favourite football club on Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. I react fiercely.”

231. “I read a lot of health tips on Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter, and I practice them all the time.”

The responses given show that participants are oriented in the ideas and beliefs of other people. These responses confirm the arguments put in by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) and Zeitel-Bank (2014) that social media discourage students’ independent thinking, imaginative skills and hinder their ability to handle other forms of abstract concepts as well. This means that social media subject users to all kinds of mental torture.

The researcher also realized that certain online contents and materials do threaten users’ analytical and critical skills. Sample of these contents can be found in Appendix M. It was concluded based on the findings that social media and social networking sites have the edge on the analytical and critical thinking skills of pupils because they subject pupil users to the ideas and thoughts of other people.

##### **5. Poor listening skill**

It was concluded from the findings that social media and social networking sites come with many distracting features that disturb users’ listening skills. Features such as message notification tones, pop-ups, events and news feed alert tones distract individual’s listening attentiveness. These distracting tones do not enhance good listening. People sometimes miss out vital points in discussions and conversations due to these distracting features.

Majority of participants in the interview said that they often get distracted by notification tones like incoming message tones, updates and pop-up alerts. Some even reiterated that notification tones deviate their attention in many dialogues because they will have to check time-to-time to see whether they have received any incoming message alert. Others also claimed that they sometimes skip or miss out crucial aspects in conversations and even forget where they left off due to message tones and other forms of incoming alerts. Below are samples of responses participants gave in the interview:

232. “Whatsapp tones can make you start a conversation all over again.”
233. “Not matter what someone is telling you or where you are, when you hear incoming message tones, you will definitely attend to them.”
234. “Message tones are very disturbing no matter the mode they are, whether or not they are switched on silent, vibration or ring.”
235. “There is no way you can pay proper attention again in class when you begin to receive incoming messages and notifications tones.”
236. “Message and notification tones on Whatsapp and Facebook interfere in our conversations a lot. They show up when conversations are getting more and more interesting.”

The given responses show that participants are encountering distracting social media features that inhibit their listening qualities. These responses confirm the assertions of Watt (2010), Rouis, Limayem and Salehi-Sangari (2011) and Vural (2015) that there are task distracting features on social media that derail students’ attention. This means that pupils are faced with listening challenges as result of their involvement in social media and social networking sites.

From the findings, it was concluded that distracting social media features such as notification and incoming message tones render pupils' listening skills such as listening attentiveness and good listening abilities poor.

## **6. Waste of time**

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites are made up of time consuming activities. Users spend their leisure time using Facebook, Whatsapp and other related social media platforms. Amazingly, although most users often log in some platforms for a short time, they unwittingly use their entire moments there.

Majority of participants said that certain activities on Facebook require users' time and attention. They mentioned activities such as downloading music and video files, chatting or instant messaging and watching pictures consume quite an amount of time. Others also disclosed that the time people anticipate to use in checking people's statuses and other notifications may also go beyond than expected because series of other alerts may also show up which are very hard to ignore. Participants explained that every single feature, activity or practice has interestingly and attractively been designed to captivate users' attention and time. Below are samples of participants' responses:

237. "Before you can watch video on Facebook, you patiently have to wait for it to download first."

238. "Sometimes, the chat gets so interesting that you forget about time."

239. "I spend a lot of time reading statuses of my online friends."

240. "Going through people's pictures consume time especially when the photos are many."

241. "Everything about Facebook and Whatsapp is so tempting I hardly stay away."



The responses given indicate that participants spend much time on social media platforms and social networking sites. These responses conform to the suppositions of Rouis, Limayem & Salehi-Sangari (2011) who maintain that students spend long hours on social media. This means that pupils don't use their leisure time to improve their literacy but rather they opt to use it on social media and social networking sites. Conclusion was drawn based on the findings that social media and social networking sites consume the precious time pupils need to develop their literacy skills.

The negative impact of social media and social networks as far as literacy development among junior high school pupils are many. These threats are progressively felt in every aspect of pupils' effort to acquire to major literacy skills. However, their presence may still continue to hunt the various literacy skills pupils possess or the ones language and literacy instructors, parents and stake holders wish to impart if pupils' exposure in them are not properly controlled.

#### **4.13 Positive Effects of Social Media on Literacy Development**

Participants were asked to describe the positive effects of social media in relation to literacy development. The outcome of the interview were used to generate operational definitions for coding categories in Table 1. However, Table 3 explains in detail the theme of the positive effects of social media. Again, every single category has been generated from these dialogs as found out in the study.

**Table 4.3: Categories, frequencies and sample expressions related to the theme of positive effects**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sample expressions</b>
<b>1. Communication</b>	M	Pupils have their communication skills improved because they are able to meet new set of people and freely communicate with them on platforms like Twitter and Whatsapp.
<b>2. Vocabulary building</b>	M	Social media and social networking sites offer users greater chance to learn or acquire new words. Platforms such as Facebook have filled the linguistic bags of pupils with new words.
<b>3. Motivation</b>		
<b>a. Reading</b>	M	Platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter encourage pupils to read more since they are always eager and curious to reading what others have written on major platforms.
<b>b. Writing</b>	M	Social media and social networking sites have instilled in users the habit of writing. Pupils are always willing to write more in response to issues and other messages. Users always want to put their thoughts across in writing regardless the sentence constructions.
<b>c. Speaking</b>	M	Users on social media have the opportunity to orally express themselves in video and audio recordings
<b>4. Creativity</b>	M	Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp promotes creativity and ingenuity among users. Users get the chance to showcase all sorts of skill they possess. These skills may include various writing styles, story composition and cognitive exercise.
<b>5. Self-and-peer evaluation</b>	M	Pupils are able to monitor the progress of their literacy skills on social media platforms through the comments and corrections of their own devices and other people.
<b>6. Resources</b>	M	Social media platforms and social networking sites provide users avenues to language learning by linking them to all sort of learning centres. Pupils can suitably choose from the array of learning platforms to build their literacy skills.

Note: N shows the number of participants; M means majority; F means few; NN means none

## 1. Communication

It was concluded from the findings that social media and social networking sites have enhanced communication hence communication skills among users. Young people prefer using social media platforms and sites like Facebook and Whatsapp as their communication tools. This is because the platforms offer them the chance of meeting and reaching people immediately. Users always have the opportunity to decide the very people they wish to communicate with.

Majority of participants responded that social media platforms and social networking sites have exposed them to a lot of people. They said that they are not only exposed to the world or the world exposed to them but they also can select the people they want to interact with. They disclosed that social media platforms such as Facebook gives them the chance to interact with more than one person at a time. They also said that major social media platforms and sites have made communication easy for them because they have the power to decide which mode of communication they want to use. Below are samples of responses given by participants:

242. "I can chat with many people on Facebook."
243. "My friends are more on Facebook but I choose to chat with only few."
244. "I'm on several group platforms on Whatsapp but I'm only active in the interesting chat groups."
245. "On Facebook, Twitter or Whatsapp, we can send and forward multiple messages to every individual or group immediately at the same time."
246. "I use audio recordings a lot on Whatsapp platforms because they save typing stress."

247. “Sometimes I chat through audio and video recordings but I like to type, for it saves a lot of memory space.

The responses given clearly show how participants are using social media platforms and social networking sites to enhance their various communication skills. These responses confirm that social media have altered communication as Ahn (2011) posits. This means the exposure and the communication avenues that social media and social networking sites give users influence their communication skills. See Appendix N for the different communication skills users employ in social media platforms.

In all, it was concluded from the findings that social media platforms and other social networking sites have enhanced communication and communication skills among pupil users.

## **2. Vocabulary building**

It was concluded from the findings that social media and other related social networking sites have exposed users to variety of words both new and existing. Online digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp have come with their own sets of vocabularies. Certain terminologies are hard to ignore if users want to establish their membership. These platforms have registered certain words and terminologies in the memory of users that they become very difficult to skip, substitute or forget them in communication.

In the interview, majority of participants confirmed that they learn a lot of words on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and Whatsapp. They said they are now used to using certain words and terminologies that often are associated with some major online platforms. They mentioned words and

terminologies such as “profile”, “tweet”, “comment”, “post”, “poke”, “update”, “share”, “like”, “request”, “confirm”, “timeline”, “search”, “privacy”, “tag”, “forward”, “delete”, “icon”, “status”, “settings”, “account”, “data”, “bundle”, “download”, “themes”, “follow”, “hashtag”, and “link”. They also disclosed that it is through certain online platforms where they come across certain words for the first time and how they are spelled and pronounced. Below are sample of responses participants gave in the interview:

248. “Facebook has taught me more words.”

249. “I see new words everyday on Whatsapp.”

250. “We have all come to learn and use certain ‘terms’ like poke, share, request, timeline, accept, ignore and others words because these words are always with us anytime we log on to our various Facebook pages.”

251. “I didn’t know what hashtag meant but I do now because of Twitter.”

252. “People post a lot of new words on Whatsapp and Facebook including the correct spelling of certain words.”

253. “We have all gotten accustomed to words and terms we see everyday on Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. For instance, we now know what ‘profile’, ‘poke’ and ‘tweet’ mean.”

The responses given indicate that participants have been acquiring all manner of words and terminologies from certain major social media platforms. These responses attest to the position of Pearson et al (2005) as cited in O’Hara and Pritchard (2014) who maintain that digital tools such as social media features expand students’ vocabulary. This means that pupils’ vocabulary building depends heavily on their interaction with social media platforms.

Adding up to participants' responses, the researcher also realised that participants' daily encounter with their various homepages, online contents and materials expose them to all sort of vocabularies. See Appendix O for social media homepages showing multiple vocabularies.

Based on these findings, conclusion was made that social media and social networking sites improve pupils' vocabulary acquisition skills.

### **3. Motivation**

It was concluded that social media activities and social networking sites encourage users to acquire and use major literacy skills. The researcher identified reading, writing and speaking as the major skills that digital online platforms require users to possess.

#### **a. Writing**

It was concluded that social media platforms and other related social networking sites like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, SMS and YouTube have encouraged users to write more. These platforms in effect are positively influencing writing skills and writing habits among users. Individuals on Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter are always willing and eager to reply to messages and chats, change statuses, post and forward other forms of online contents. These users perform all these online activities in writing which technically is referred to as typing.

In the interview, majority of participants said platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp have exposed them to various writing styles and certain text formats. They said digital online platforms have increased their typing skills because every activity on these platforms is virtually typed. Some also disclosed that they are able to

express themselves freely in writing on certain platforms. Among participants' responses are:

254. "I write whatever I want to say on Facebook."
255. "I use a lot of emoticons and short hands in my chats a lot."
256. "Except for Twitter, Whatsapp allows me to write as many words as I want."
257. "Whatsapp and Facebook chat have improved my typing because everything about them is typing."
258. "Since Twitter doesn't support voice notes, members like ourselves have to express our views in writing."
259. "We all want to express our views on Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. However, the things is, you will have to type all that."

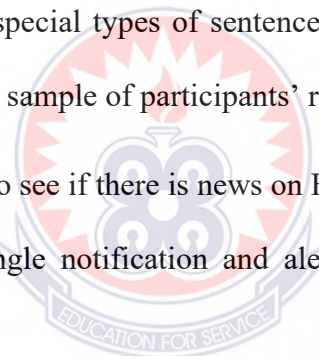
The responses given show that participants are using social media platforms to improve their writing skills and writing habits as well. These responses confirm the claims of Blattner and Lomicka (2012), Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) that social media tools such as Facebook is a perfect tool for developing writing skills among students because it gives them the opportunity to freely practice their writing skills outside the classroom. This means that pupils experience a great deal of improvement in their writing skills and writing habits as they engage in social media activities.

In sum, conclusion was drawn from the findings that pupils' engagement in social media platforms and social networking sites positively influence their writing skills and writing habits.

## **b. Reading**

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites are encouraging users to read more. These platforms in effect are positively influencing reading skills and reading habits among users. Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter present a lot of contents among which users are always willing and eager to read. These include messages, chats, statuses, posts and other forms of notifications.

Participants said in the interview that they always check for news updates on various social media platforms. Some said they read every notification that shows up on their various platforms. Others also disclosed that certain writing styles and social media text features make reading interesting, faster and better. Aspects of the participants reported that special types of sentence constructions make their reading easy and quick. Below are sample of participants' responses:

- 
260. "I always check to see if there is news on Facebook."
  261. "I read every single notification and alert. That means, I never skip my chats."
  262. "At least, I check my Whatsapp and Facebook pages to see and read what others have written."
  263. "Reading on Facebook and Whatsapp is easy and quick because there no long sentences."
  264. "Smileys and emoticons make reading very interesting."
  265. "The short hand texts make reading simple and faster."

The responses given show that participants are using major social media platforms to enrich their reading skills and reading habits. These responses attest to the position of Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2013) who write emphatically that social media platforms assist users to enhance their reading skills. This implies



that pupils' experience with digital online platforms goes a long to improving their reading skills and reading habits as well.

In all, conclusion was drawn based on the findings that social media platforms and social networking sites are convincingly influencing pupils' reading skills and reading habits.

### **c. Speaking**

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites are offering users the chance to speak more. Certain major social media platforms and social networking sites like Facebook, Whatsapp and YouTube give users the mandate to create and send audio and video recorded messages. These platforms have Text-To-Speech applications which give users the opportunity to express their views verbally in these recordings.

Majority of the participants said in the interview that they use a lot of audio recording in their chats especially when they want to prove a point. Some disclosed that they combine both audio and video recordings in their chats all the time. These participants attested that using audio recordings are the surest way to get people to understand your message. Others said that they are active users in certain major platforms simply because they audio recording features for their chats. They showed that they are able to improve their pronunciations on these platforms too. Below are sample of responses given by participants:

266. "The best way to get my message across is to record it."

267. "I'm able to send audio and video messages on Facebook."

268. "We use the recording more often especially when you want to explain yourself further."

269. “On Whatsapp, people can say whatever they want to say in an audio or video recording.”
270. “I’m obsessed with Facebook, Whatsapp and YouTube because I can record myself and say anything I want to.”
271. “Everybody is free and okay with Whatsapp because they can also chat through recordings.”
272. “The recordings in Whatsapp help me to try out how so words are pronounced.”

These responses indicate that participants are using social media platforms and social networking sites to improve upon their speaking skills. The responses given align with Mujallid (2010) and European Commission (2014) who argue that many social media platforms and social networking sites provide activities that help non-native speakers to build their oral language fluency. This means that as pupils interact on digital online platforms, they get the chance to develop their speaking skills.

It was concluded from the findings that pupils’ relationship with social media and social networking sites has positive impact on their speaking skills and speaking habit.

In all, inference was made based on the major findings that social media platforms and social networking sites are encouraging writing, reading and speaking skills among pupils.

#### **4. Creativity**

It was concluded that social media and social networking sites are promoting creativity and ingenuity among users. Platforms and sites such as Facebook and Whatsapp often present users with series of mind boggling activities. These activities

strengthen users' analytical and critical thinking skills, making individuals able to generate their own ideas intuitively.

In the interview, participants said that they always have been coming across on certain major social media platforms series of puzzles that require deeper thinking. They said that many of these activities demand thorough thinking on the part of readers. They claimed that these activities come in the form of games and stories. Others also said they are able to create their own stories on certain platforms. Below are sample of participants' responses:

273. "People always post mixed-up words that need to be re-arranged."

274. "Sometimes, people ask you to find missing words and numbers."

275. "People send and forward puzzle games all the time on Whatsapp and Facebook."

276. "It is not easy solving word games on Whatsapp."

277. "At times, some picture stories and jokes need deeper thinking before one can understand them."

278. "I always try to come up with something new almost everyday on Facebook and Whatsapp. For instance, I create my own jokes all the time."

The given responses show that social media platforms and social networking sites are equipping participants' creativity. These responses site with Roius, Limayem and Saheli-Sangari (2011) who posit that social media platforms and social networking sites make students intellectually active. This means that pupils' constant engagement in digital online platforms positively inform their cognition. See Appendix P for samples of puzzle games and stories.

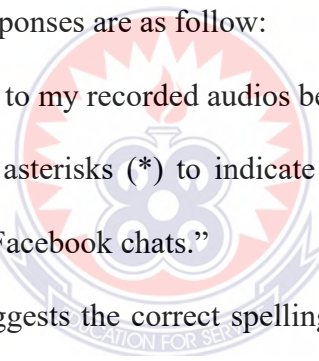
In sum, from the major findings, it was concluded that social media platforms and social networking sites are promoting creativity and ingenuity among pupils.

## 5. Self- and –peer evaluation

It was concluded that social media platforms and social networks offer users the chance to assess the progress of their literacy development. Users can either conduct self-assessment or be subjected to peer-assessment. Spell-checkers are spelling accuracy mechanism software designed to help users check and evaluate incorrect spelling and wrong wording when typing.

Participants disclosed in the interview that they often play back recorded messages before they are sent out. Others also said they use certain symbols to show words or statements omitted in their online chats. They said that their colleagues often alert them through several means anytime they make mistakes on certain platforms.

Sample of participants' responses are as follow:

- 
279. "I always listen to my recorded audios before sending them as message."
280. "We often use asterisks (\*) to indicate missing words when chatting on Whatsapp and Facebook chats."
281. "My device suggests the correct spelling and wording for me whenever I incorrectly spell or type certain words."
282. "My friends on Facebook correct me through my comment box when my status is grammatically incorrect."
283. "When there are sentence errors in my chats, my colleagues on the platform rewrite the correct ones with asterisks (\*) against them."

The responses given show that participants are using social media platforms and social networks to monitor the progress of their literacy. This means that digital online platforms provide the appropriate language and literacy learning conditions for pupils. Conclusion was made based on the findings that social media and social

networks give pupils the opportunity to track the progress of their reading, writing and speaking skills.

## 6. Resources

It was concluded from the findings that users in social networks and social media have been exposed to differing language and literacy learning centres. Members on Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter are able to develop their literacy skills through variety of digital online platforms because these platforms are rich in content as far as users' literacy acquisition skills are concerned.

Participants said in the interview that certain social media platforms and social networks provide links to other platforms where they can learn to upgrade their reading, writing, speaking and other related language and literacy skills. Some disclosed that certain platforms even suggest for members to join groups where they are likely to meet people and discuss subjects of their interest. According to these participants, such groups include literacy clubs, reading elites, book lovers, and many more. Below are sample of responses given by participants:

284. "Facebook and Whatsapp share links to sites where users can learn to speak certain languages in few days."
285. "We join a lot of chat groups on Whatsapp and Facebook."
286. "I learn certain writing techniques on Twitter."
287. "I get a lot of information from the groups I join on Facebook and Whatsapp."
288. "People sometimes share or redirect us to links and sites where we are likely to get what we look for."
289. "The Literacy Club group page on Facebook teaches me certain reading and writing techniques."

The responses given indicate that participants are exposed to varied contents and materials which are crucial to the development of their literacy. This suggests that social media and social networks offer pupils the necessary avenues to language and literacy acquisition.

From the findings, it was concluded that digital online platforms open pupils to varied language learning and literacy acquisition centres where they can learn to improve their major literacy skills.

Social media and social networks as far as literacy among pupils are concerned have greater promising impact. Today's societies cannot do away with the supporting role certain major digital online platforms offer. This is so because these platforms provide array of opportunities that promote literacy acquisition among pupils.

In all, it was concluded that social media and social networks as far as literacy development among JHS pupils in Asante-Akim South District is concerned could prove useful or detrimental or both depending on the intensity of relationship that exists between them.

#### **4.14 Summary and Conclusion**

The findings revealed how the nature of literacy is perceived among pupils. It further showed the forms of social media activities and practices pertaining to their literacy and subsequently delved into the effects of social media on literacy development among pupils.

The nature of literacy according to the findings has always been same even though others argue that it should reflect current practices in today's societies. Again, pupils' understanding in social media, social networks and certain online practices

and activities defined their literacy. Lastly, the findings showed that social media as far as literacy development among pupils is concerned could prove useful or harmful or even both depending on the intensity of relationship that exists between them.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of findings

The following are the lay findings of the study:

1. It was realised in the study that reading, writing and speaking define the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. The study also revealed that the nature of literacy is a social practice where all forms of multimedia such as social media and social network use are embraced. Scholars and some sections of pupils revealed in the study that there are other sets of literacy skills such as technology manipulation that go beyond reading, writing and speaking skills, and those skills should also be considered if we want to establish the nature of literacy among pupils.
2. The study revealed that the nature of literacy has remained same among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. The participants expressed different views about the state of the nature of literacy among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. Small sections of scholars, pupils and parents argued that the nature of literacy has changed. They believe that the advent of social media and social networks have brought such change. Meanwhile, majority of these participants maintained that literacy among pupils has remained the same, and that, skills acquired through social media use are irrelevant. They insisted that literacy, no matter what, has to do with the skill to read, write and speak.
3. It was found out that JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are familiar with major social media platforms and social networking sites like



Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Short Message Service (SMS) and YouTube. The study revealed that pupils engage in online practices and activities such as chatting, blogging, watching videos, listening to audios, video gaming, image sharing, news reading and online advertisement. It was seen that these platforms and practices are familiar to parents and adults as well.

4. It was realised in the study that participation in social media and social networks could prove useful or detrimental or even both to literacy development among JHS pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. It was seen that social media and social networks have greater impact on major literacy skills like reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking among pupils who participate in them. The study revealed also that the impact of these platforms is as a result of how intensified the relationship between pupils and social media is.

## **5.2 Implications**

The effects of social media and social networks are inevitable on the literacy skills of pupils who engage in them. However, it is the sole desire of many to see these platforms equipping major literacy skills like reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking and listening among JHS pupils for the better and not the other way round. In order to see and feel the better impact of these digital online platforms on pupils' literacy skills, it is better that pupils' exposure in them is controlled in everyway.

At home, parents who are familiar with social media use must do well to monitor the kind of language their children use across certain major social media platforms and social networking sites. Again, parents, relatives and adults alike should help young users to desist from using social media writing features but rather

encourage them to apply standard language across every platform. They can help do this by using standard language when chatting with these young ones on these platforms. Last but not least, parents must encourage their children to enrol in e-learning and other related online learning activities.

The schools also have a huge role to play in pupils' literacy development. Obviously, when schools provide pupils with the necessary literacy instructions, materials and activities, pupils' literacy is enhanced. In the same way, schools must give pupils the necessary exposure to social media and social networks. They can do this by helping pupils create accounts on major platforms so they can monitor their language use there. Furthermore, schools should help pupils identify some educational advantages these platforms bring. For example, schools should encourage pupils to see these platforms as reading and writing materials that promote standard language.

The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should help promote the use of social media for educational purposes. They can help do this by making reading and writing materials available to pupils online as well. Curriculum materials like class readers and syllabuses could be uploaded online for pupils to access. Since such materials come with standard language, they can help promote pupils' language use on online platforms also. Furthermore, The Ghana Education Service under the Ministry of Education should introduce media literacy studies as a course in the national syllabus for junior high schools.

Last but not least, pupils should be educated on the effects of social media on their language and literacy development. Parents, teachers and the entire society should educate pupils on the impending effects of social media on their language and literacy development.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Generally, literacy is perceived as being able to read and write. However, the concept appears limited due to the advent of social media by virtue of technology. Literacy now is seen as a social practice where all forms of multimedia are welcomed. Even though literacy has got everything to do with the skill to read, write and speak, other skills still come in to play when we want to cement who today's literate is. Since today's society is constantly changing due to technology, people's literacy is no longer confined to reading and writing skills only but rather their ability to understand and manipulate technology defines it as well.

Social media and social networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and YouTube by virtue of technology is shaping and reshaping literacy among their users especially young people. Particularly, young people in today's society are surrounded by series of social media platforms and all forms of online activities and practices. These practices and activities are embedded not only in the daily lives of these young ones but in adults as well. However, participating in any of these practices and activities requires users to apply certain level of literacy skills. These literacy skills when used on these social media platforms and social networks are either shaped or threatened for good.

Junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are of the view that literacy is all about being able to read, write and speak even though some section of them argue otherwise that there are additional skills to that. Yet, they maintain that their exposure in certain online practices and activities on major social media platforms and social networks like Facebook, Whatsapp and Short Message Service (SMS) is influencing their abilities to read, write, speak, think and listen.

To conclude, junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District are very much familiar with social media and social networks. They likewise are familiar with the possible impacts of these on the major literacy skills they possess or wish to acquire.

#### **5.4 Future Research**

Arguably, the researcher did his best by identifying series of effects social media may have on literacy development among junior high school pupils in the Asante-Akim South District. Surprisingly, since it appears that technology is not making social media and social networks leave mankind anytime soon, their impact are still going to be felt in every aspect of our lives. Most especially, pupils in our junior high schools are likely to feel such impact the more as far as their literacy and academic performance are concerned. It is against this that the researcher entreats scholars, fellow researchers and stakeholders to also pick up the mantle and research into related areas such as social media and academic performance or social media use and study habits among junior high school pupils in Ghana. This will help pupils in our schools to regulate and control the kind of relationship they have with social media and social networks.

Again, the researcher did not control for such variables as sex and socioeconomic backgrounds of respondents. Further research could be also be carried out in these areas. Notwithstanding, future research could also be conducted using more pupils since this research was carried out on twenty-five (25) pupils only.

Considering the roles parents and adults in general played in terms of literacy acquisition among young people in this study, it is important that future research

increases the number of parents with technology against parents with in-depth understanding in technology.

Furthermore, in this study, views of few English language teachers who used social media were captured to find out the bearings their social media skills have on pupils' literacy. Future research should therefore include a larger number of teachers who use social media irrespective of their teaching subjects to find out the impacts their skills in social media may have on pupils' literacy development.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The Ghana Education Service and Curriculum Research Development Division (CRDD) should restructure the ICT syllabus to officially embrace social media instruction. More so, media literacy studies should be introduced as a course across all the teaching syllabus to control pupils' active involvement in social media and other related online practices. Again, the Ministry of Education can design policies that will aim at helping pupils use social media for educational purpose(s).
2. The study revealed that parents and adults have a part to play in pupils' exposure in social media. It is recommended that parents should avail themselves to the current of trends of technology so they can manipulate any form of relationship that will develop between their wards and social media.
3. The study revealed that the use of certain social media platforms like Twitter can harm writing accuracy among pupils user. It is thus recommended that

experts in ICT use such as ICT teachers and other relatively experienced adults should offer suitable IT and media advice on the right and safe online platforms for pupils.

4. Language and literacy experts such as English teachers should embrace the fact social media have informed language and literacy acquisition, development and instruction. It is therefore recommended that English teachers and other language teachers blend technology with reading and writing instruction.
5. The study revealed that social media influence literacy development among JHS pupils positively or negatively. It is thus recommended that educational stakeholders and other related NGOs who are into literacy development such as the Literacy Club should do well and educate young users on how well they can use social media to benefit their literacy skills.

## **5.6 The role of social media in literacy development**

The role of social media in literacy development according to this study are enormous. Among them are:

1. Series of certain major social media features have contributed a lot to vocabulary building among pupil users. For example, the homepages of platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook come with both new and existing words. Users are exposed to these words all the time, and as a result get accustomed to them.
2. Social media have informed speaking skills among pupil users in a number of ways. The 'audio and video recording' features that accompany some of these platforms encourage speech fluency and accuracy to certain extent. Moreover,

these features build literacy confidence (Cooper, Doonan and Fawcett, 2012) in pupils since they have the opportunity to express themselves freely through such means.

3. Writing can also be enhanced through social media use. Writing precisions such as correct spelling and appropriate sentence construction can be improved with the help of social media. Features like spell-checkers, word and sentence predictions as preloaded in some of the platforms help pupil users to acquire the right spelling and appropriate sentence construction habits. Even though, spelling mistakes are abundant across the internet and pupils are prone to them because of their (pupils') encounter with them, a lot can also be done with these social media features to shape the writing skills of pupils.
4. Social media have contributed massively to the critical thinking skills of pupil users. Pupils have become creative as a result of social media which is a very good call so far as literacy development is concerned. Social media platforms have given these young users the opportunity to hypothesize their thoughts in everyway. Even though, they (social media) may also confine users' ability to reason beyond, the platforms still offer users the chance put their literacy skills into practice.
5. Social media may come with so many auditory distractors though. However, the platforms come with certain features that build listening skills among users. Users pay attention to sounds which to some extent is a perfect requisite for appreciative listening skill development. Platforms like YouTube helps users to appreciate sound through their audio-visual features.

6. Reading habits have practically been enhanced as a results of social media. Online platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook have inculcated in pupils the habit of reading regularly because they (pupil users) are always eager to find out what others have said and other related notifications. Certain social media features and texts such as the smileys, short hands, emoticons and inappropriate sentences could also inhibit reading fluency. Nonetheless, the habit of reading by virtue of social media have improved reading fluency among pupil users.

### **5.7 Limitations**

Internet access was among the many major limitations as far as this study was concerned. In order to participate in online practices and several other major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and YouTube, participants needed to have internet. To some sections of participants, getting internet was problematic due to limited or absence of network reception. As a result of this, relying on internet accessibility and connection for the study could have increased pupils' reluctance to participate, and stopped some pupils from participating in the study. The researcher was unsure as to the number of pupils who would take part in the study throughout the research period.

Secondly, the researcher could not meet all junior high school pupils in the district due to long distance and the limited time of the short academic terms. Because of this, the researcher had to use a sample of the participants to represent all pupils in the district. Due to this, the generalizability of this study becomes very difficult when one considers the mass population of JHS pupils in the district and the country at large.



In addition, during the data collection process, the researcher encountered sudden technology problem. Participants' recorded voice notes and captured images were not responding. The study appeared quite challenging for the researcher and the participants even though the researcher made sure that participants were set. Consequently, resting on technology that a person does not have a full command on is another limitation because there is always a possibility of losing data or experiencing unforeseen problem.

Finally, during the data collection process, some parents and pupils alike felt shy to disclose their literacy status in social media use. Others were also reluctant to respond to some interview questions. These attitudes made the researcher question himself as to the authenticity of the data gathered from these participants.



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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questions

#### Questions for pupils

##### Background/Demographic Information of students

1. Student information: age, gender, level/class
2. Can you read, write and speak English?
3. How well can you read, write and speak English?
4. Do you own any of these electronic communication devices:
  - a. Mobile phone
  - b. Computer
5. Can it access the internet? Do you use it to access the internet?

##### Social media and social networking sites

6. Have you heard of social media and social networking sites? Do you have any knowledge about them? Which ones are you familiar with?
7. Are you an active user of any of these social media and social networking sites:
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Whatsapp
  - c. Twitter
  - d. You Tube
  - e. SMS (Short Message Services)
8. Who introduced you to these platforms?
9. How skilled are you in using these platforms?
10. How often do you use these websites and platforms?
11. How much time do you spend on these social media platforms?

12. Why do you use these platforms?

13. How do you use them?

14. What sort of activities do you engage in on these platforms?

#### Literacy skills and social media use

##### Reading skills

15. Has your participation in social media affected your skill and habit in reading?

If yes, how? Has it made you a good and fluent reader or the other way round?

16. Has it boosted your interest in reading?

17. Are you always enthused to read more?

##### Writing skills

18. Have your frequent online activities and practices such as chatting affected your writing skills and writing habits? If yes, how?

19. Have they made you a good writer or the other way round?

20. Have they improved or declined your grammatical constructions?

21. Do you now write with more errors or less?

22. Are you always motivated to write more?

23. Do you often mistakenly transfer some social media features in your official works such as class exercises, essay writing and other related documents? If yes, what kind of social media writing features often show up in these documents?

##### Speaking skills

24. Can you say that your participation in social media activities and social networking sites has boosted your speaking skills and speaking habit? If yes, how?

25. Have they made you a good and fluent speaker?

Analytic/ Critical thinking skills

26. How do you react to information read or obtained from major social media platforms and other social networking sites like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, SMS and You Tube?

27. Do you trust all social media platforms and networking sites on all information or otherwise?

28. Have social media and social networks improved your creative skills?

Listening skills

29. Has your participation in social media and social networking sites improved your listening or the other way round?

30. Are you able to listen attentively to people and conversations?

Future

31. What advice would you give to your fellow colleagues who are obsessed with social networking sites and engage in social media activities and online practices when you consider their impact on literacy development?

32. Would you say that social media and social networking sites have better shaped your literacy skills (reading, writing and speaking) for the better or vice versa?



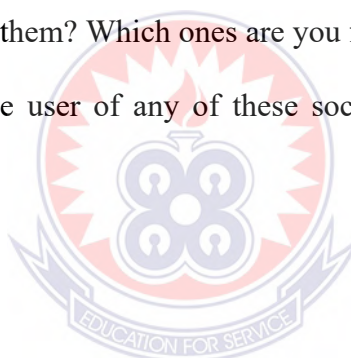
## APPENDIX B

### Interview questions for parents and teachers

1. Can you read, write and speak English?
2. How well can you read, write and speak English?
3. Do you own any of these electronic communication devices:
  - c. Mobile phone
  - d. Computer
4. Can it access the internet? Do you use it to access the internet?

### Social media and social networking sites

5. Have you heard of social media and social networking sites? Do you have any knowledge about them? Which ones are you familiar with?
6. Are you an active user of any of these social media and social networking sites:
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Whatsapp
  - c. Twitter
  - d. You Tube
  - e. SMS (Short Message Services)
7. Who introduced you to these platforms?
8. Have you introduced or tutored your children/pupils in any of these online platforms?
9. How skilled are you in using these platforms?
10. How often do you use these websites and platforms? How much time do you spend on these social media platforms?
11. Why do you use these platforms? How do you use them?



12. What sort of activities do you engage in on these platforms?
13. Do you engage in online activities such as chatting in the presence of your children/pupils?
14. Do your children/pupils have access to your electronic communication devices such as your computers or phones?
15. Do you see your children/pupils engage in any form of social media activity?
16. Do you participate in social media activities with your children/pupils? If yes, what sort of online activities?

#### Literacy skill and use of social media

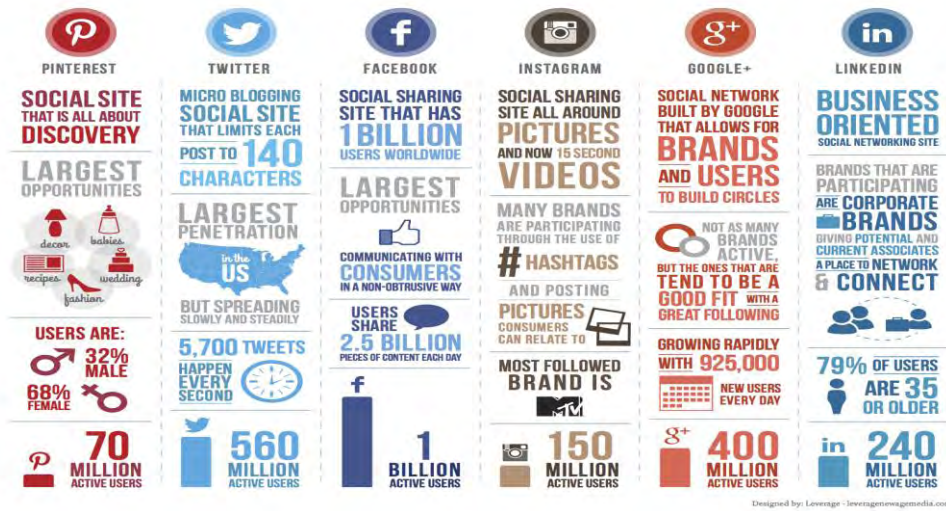
17. Do you often use social media features such as short hand texts and smileys in your chats with your children/pupils?
18. Do you see your children/pupils use these features often?
19. Has your participation in social media and social networks affected the way you speak, write, read, think and listen? If Yes, how?
20. Do you notice any changes in the writing, speaking, reading, thinking and listening skills and habits among your children/pupils?

#### Future

21. Do you suppose that social media and social networks are crucial

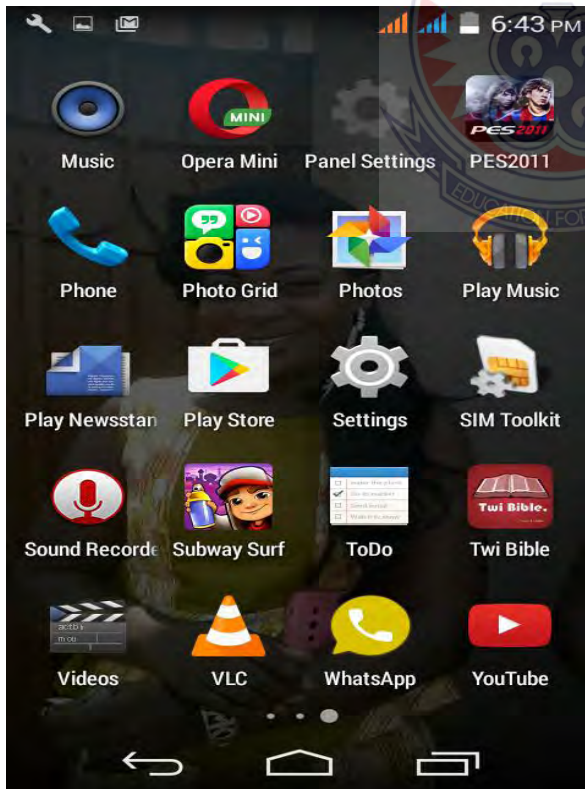
## APPENDIX C

### Major social media platforms and social networking sites

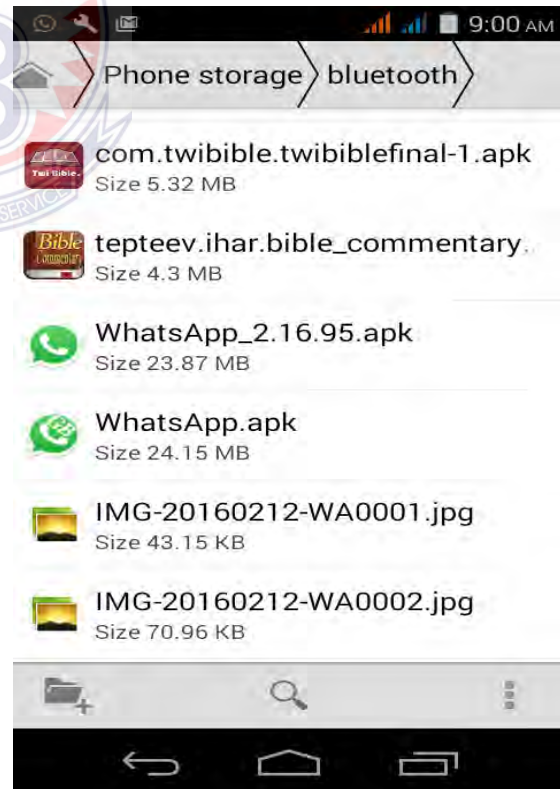


Pincrest, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google Plus and LinkedIn

Source: 2015, IJARCSMS All Rights Reserved



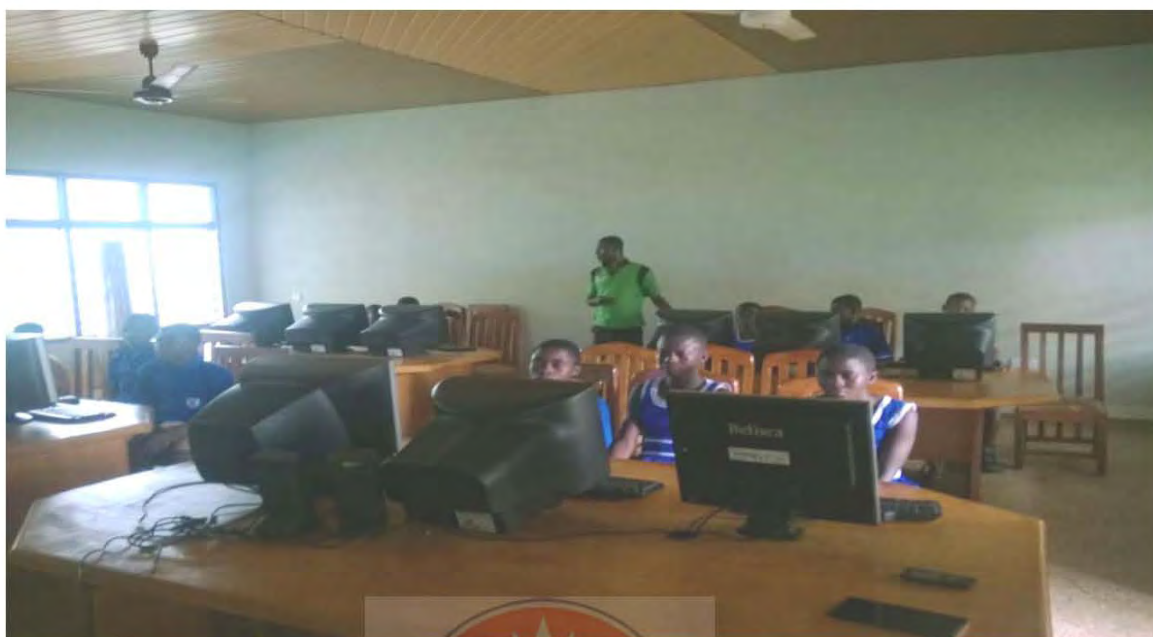
Whatsapp icon



Whatsapp.apk setup

## APPENDIX D

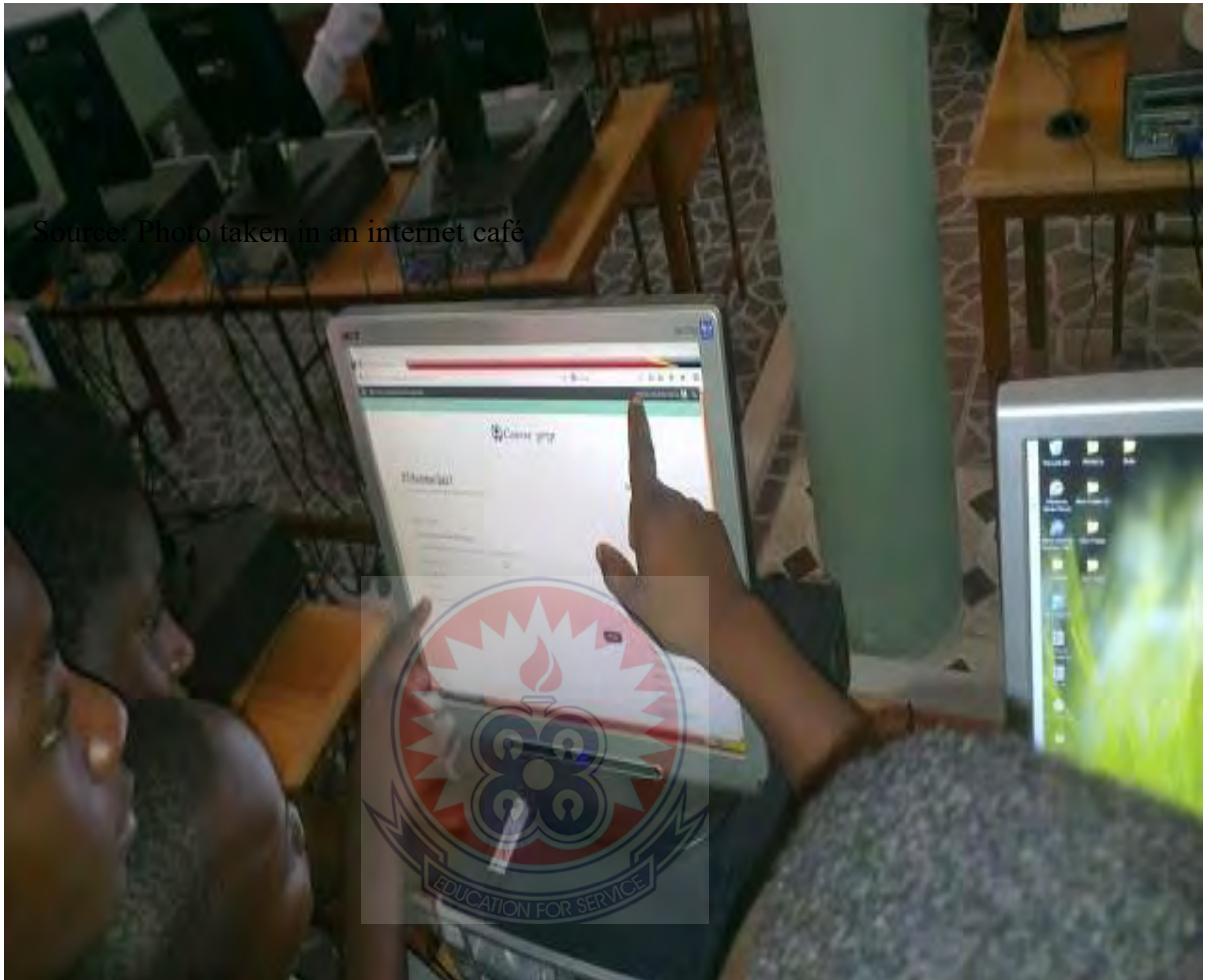
### Participants in an ICT class



Source: Photos taken in one of the participating schools

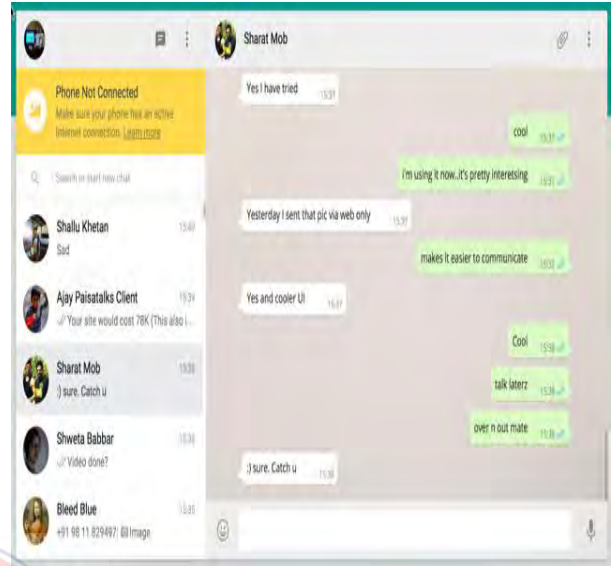
## APPENDIX E

### Participants in an internet café



## APPENDIX F

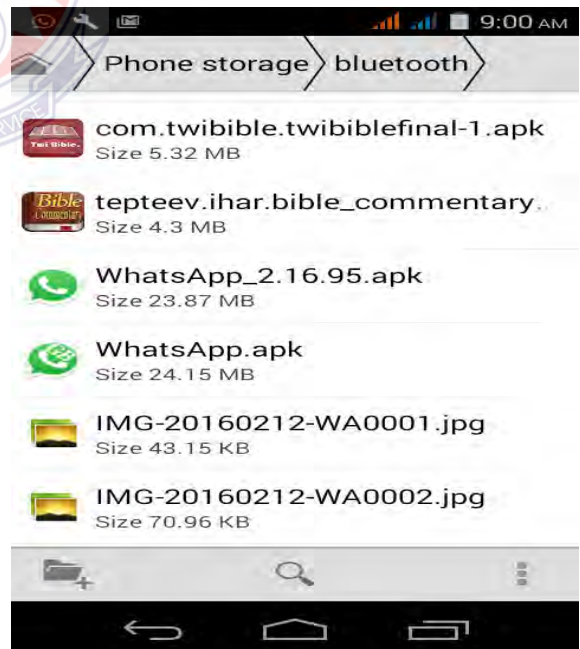
### Versions of the Whatsapp application



Whatsapp web (Desktop version/users)



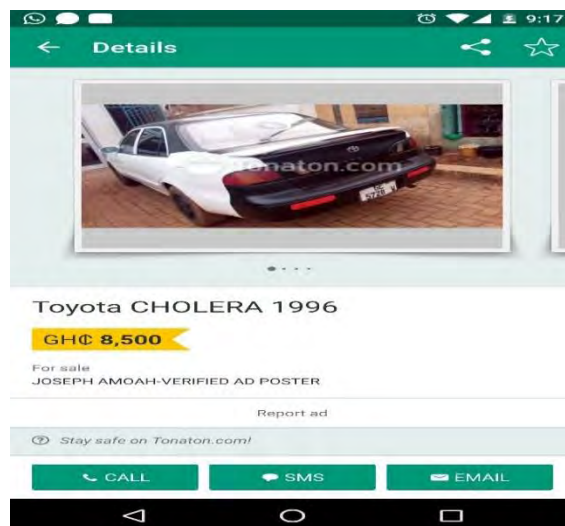
Whatsapp for Bluestack (Laptop version/users)



Whatsapp for mobile phones

## APPENDIX G

### Faulty spelling and incorrect wordings



Whatsapp



Whatsapp

Picture 1: *'Electrition'* instead of *'Electrician'*, and *'Battle'* instead of *'Battery'*

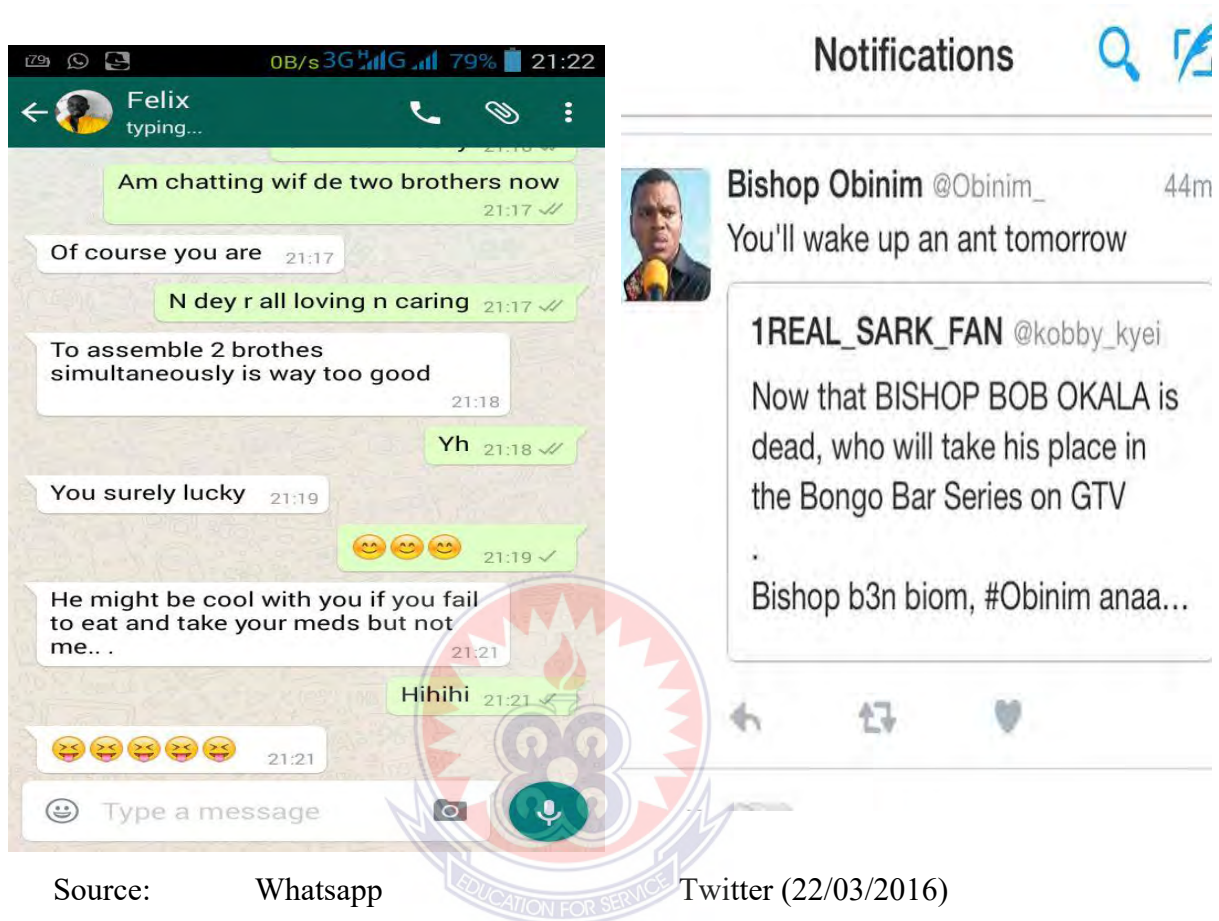
Picture 2: Toyota *'Cholera'* instead of Toyota *'Corolla'*;

Picture 3: *'Plate'* instead of *'Plait'*, and *'Head'* instead of *'Hair'*;

Picture 4: *'Telebell'* instead of *'Teddy Bear'*.

## APPENDIX H

### Wrong punctuations

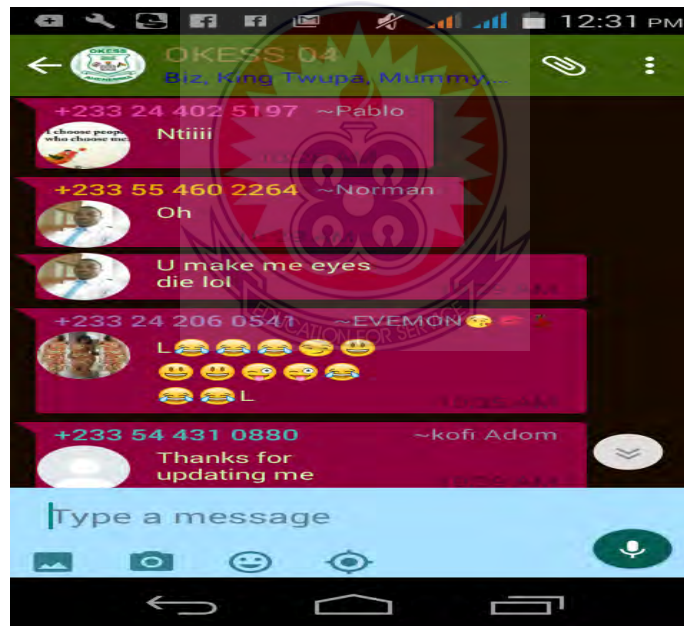
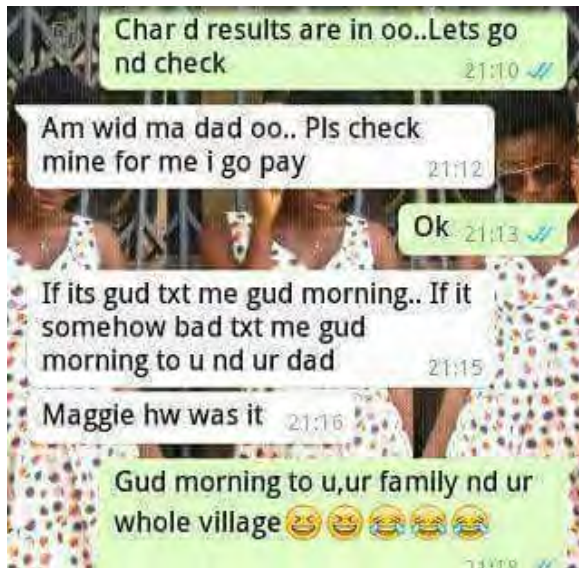


The two chat log images (Whatsapp and Twitter) show punctuation errors. The first picture displays a chat where many punctuations marks are omitted. For instance, there is no punctuation in the statement “*Am chatting wif de two brothers now*” as seen in the first line of the first chat log image (Whatsapp background image). The second image also shows absence of punctuation marks in the statement: “*Now that BISHOP BOB OKALA is dead, who will take his place in the Bongo Bar Series on GTV*” as seen in the Twitter image.



## APPENDIX I

### Emoticons, smileys, symbols and short hand texts

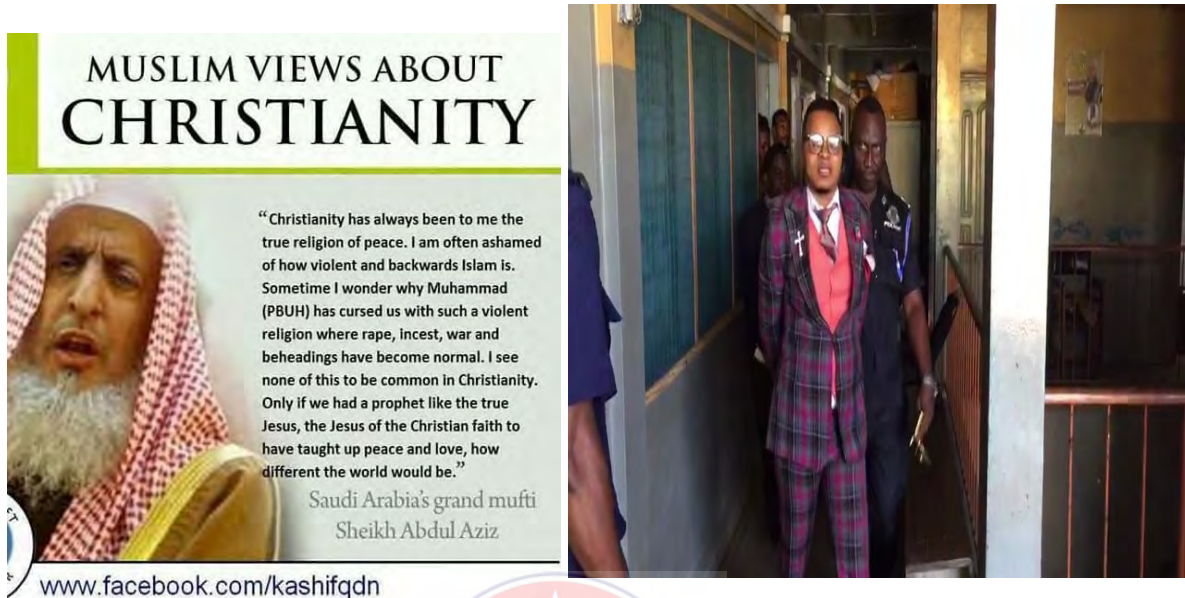


Whatsapp

All pictures portray series of short hand text styles, emoticons and symbols. The first picture shows emoticons and these shorthand text styles: '*nd*', '*am*', '*wid*', '*pls*', '*gud*', '*txt*', '*u*', '*ur*'. Meanwhile, their correct forms should have been these: '*and*', '*I'm*', '*with*', '*please*', '*good*', '*text*', '*you*' and '*your*' respectively. The second picture also shows '*dis*' instead of '*this*', and the third chat log shows emoticons and symbols.

## APPENDIX J

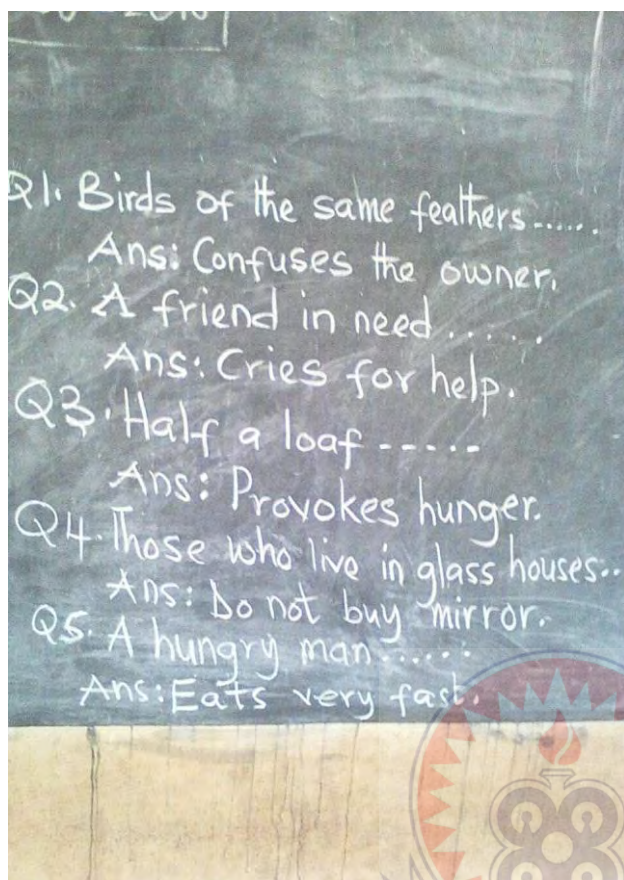
### News and information



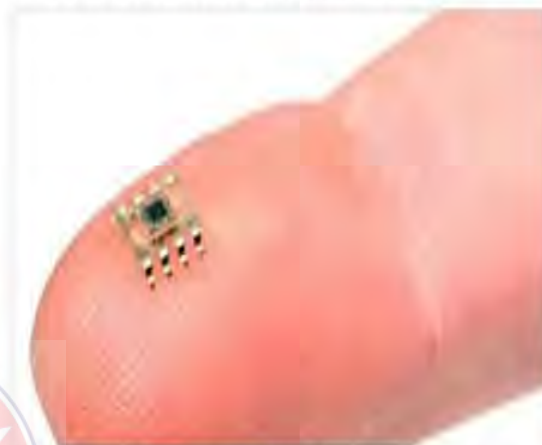
Source: Whatsapp

The pictures show series of mind blowing news and information social media users read across many social media platforms and social networking sites. The first picture talks about “Muslims’ view on Christianity.” Meanwhile, the second image shows a famous pastor in the grip of the police whereas the third picture captions a celebrity’s political view. All these pictures pose a major challenge to readers’ judgmental skills.

## APPENDIX K



Commit-Tech is a tiny chip that will be implanted at the tip of the penis on the man and the vulva of the woman. These two microchips will be synced together with an app that is installed on your cell phone. If at any time, one of these chips is involved in any sexual activity without the other chip, it will alert the partners cell phone that the other has been cheating.



New Penis Implant Will Alert Your Cell Phone When Your Man Is Cheating -

Source:

Whatsapp

The pictures show the kinds of posts that social media users paste across various digital online platforms. The first picture contains series of proverbs that have been twisted from their original form. The second image also talks about technology designed to track unfaithful partners. These sets of images likewise the kind of messages they carry across are irrelevant as far as literacy development among young people are concerned.

## APPENDIX L

### Speech jargons and non-standard English



Source: Whatsapp (6<sup>th</sup> March, 2016)



Whatsapp (27<sup>th</sup> March, 2016)

The images show the kind of language and jargons that surf across major social media platforms. The first image shows sentences that have been constructed in Pidgin English whereas the second picture displays one of the most popular jargons “PASCOLITY” which simply means archaic.

## APPENDIX M

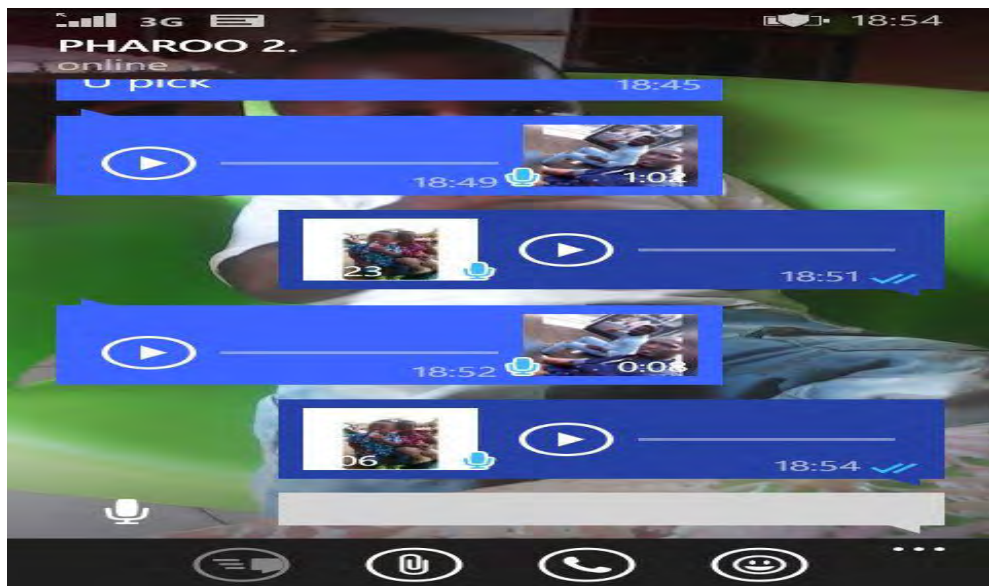


Source: Facebook

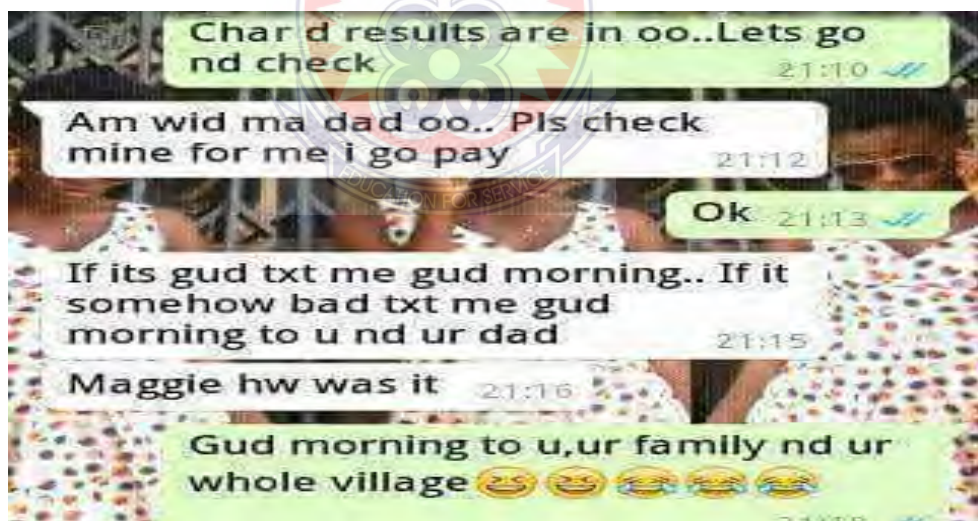
These pictures express peoples' ideas and philosophies posted across various social media platforms. The first picture talks about a pastor's view on churches that prioritize their standards over members' welfare. The second picture is about health tips whereas a politician's message is expressed in picture three. These images likewise the messages they carry across disturb users' ability to analyse and critically decode the content of such messages.

## APPENDIX N

### Communication skills used on social media



Audio recorded chat

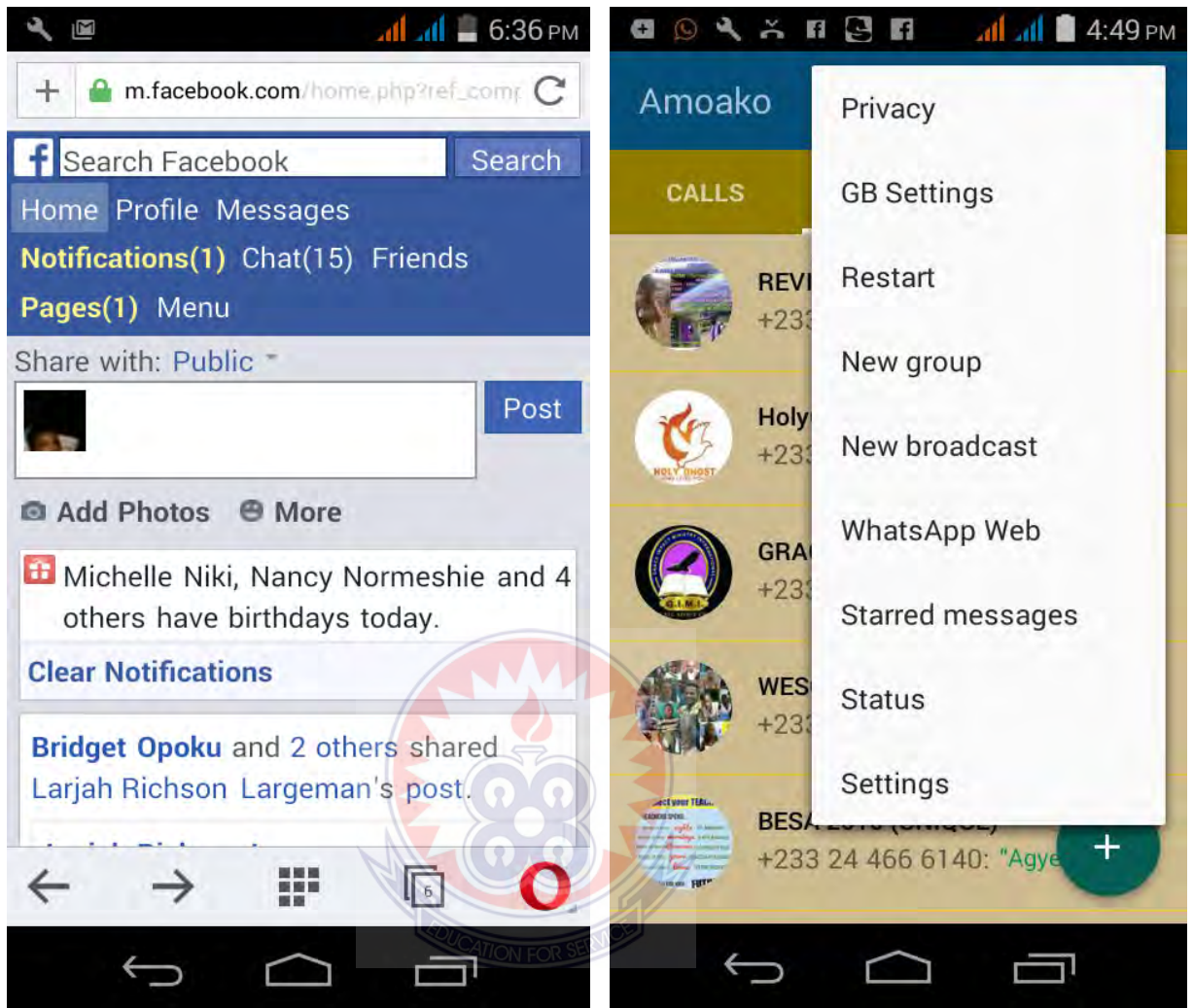


Typed chat

Source: Whatsap

The first picture shows chats in audio recorded formatted whereas the second chat log shows chats in typed format.

## APPENDIX O



Social media homepages

Facebook homepage

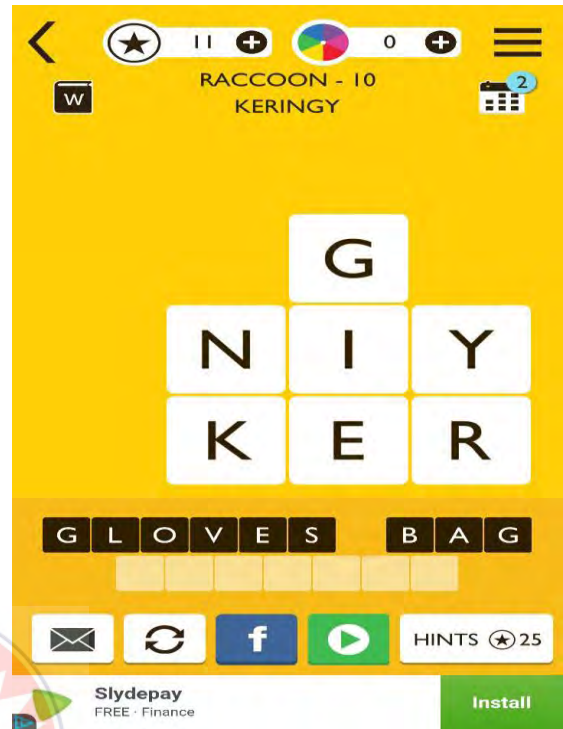
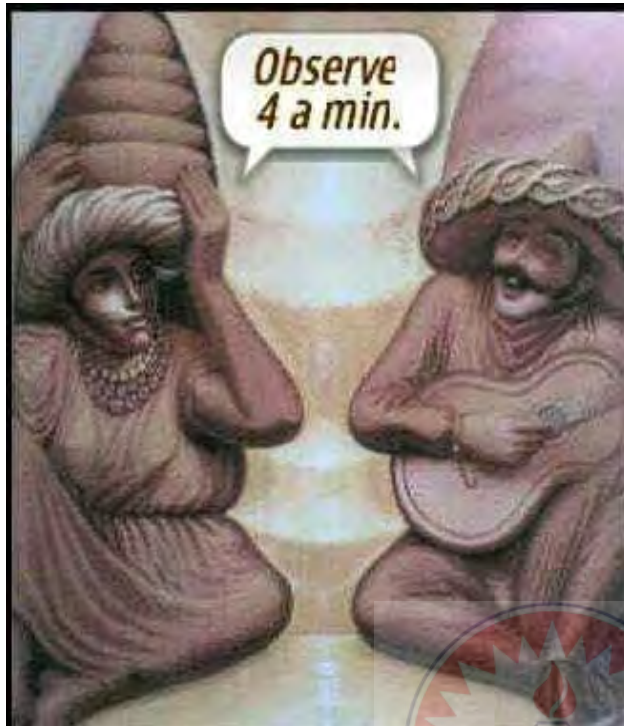
Whatsapp homepage

Source: Facebook & Whatsapp

The pictures show the homepages of some major social media. Series of words surf across these homepages. In the Facebook homepage are vocabularies like *search*, *notifications*, *menu*, *share*, *public*, *post*, etc. whilst the Whatsapp homepage shows words like *settings*, *status*, *starred messages*, *privacy*, *call*, *contact*, *restart*, *broadcast* and others.

## APPENDIX P

### Puzzles, games and stories



**The puzzle**

Imagine that four prisoners have been buried up to their necks in desert sand, as in the drawing. Each man can see only what is in front of him, and the wall completely blocks his view of the other side. Their captors place hats on their heads. They are told that there are two hats with black bands and two with white, but none of them is allowed to see the colour of his own, and the brim hides it from view. The buried men are given two minutes, in which time one of them must correctly call out the colour of his own hat-band. If the first one to speak gets it right, inside the time limit, they will all be freed. If not, they will all be left there to die. No communication is allowed, and an incorrect call means they all lose. In short, one of them has to make a life-and-death decision for all of them.

After about one minute, one of the prisoners calls out the colour of his hat-band correctly. He doesn't guess, and there is no trick to the question. He works it out purely by reasoning.

**Activity**

So this is *your* question:  
Which one of the prisoners answers, and how does he know he is right?

Picture 1 shows picture puzzle; Picture 2 word game; and Picture 3 demonstrates a story puzzle.



## APPENDIX Q

### CONSENT FORM

#### Letter for consent and consent form

14<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

Dear Head teacher,

**Subject: Seeking Approval for research in your schools.**

I am Edmond Amoako Agyeman, from University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting a case study on effects of social media on literacy development among junior high school pupils as part of my study in Master of Philosophy in Basic Education (English).

The rationale for the case study is to investigate the effects of social media on literacy development among pupils. The outcome of this research would be used to correct the deficiencies in literacy acquisition, literacy instructions and language learning alike at the basic school level.

Briefly, the data collection methods will include interviews, documentations and close pupils' observations. The interviews, documentations and the observations will be conducted at a time of your own convenience.

If you agree on me using your school (i.e. pupils) in this research, please fill in the consent form attached.

I await your response. If you require further information I can be contacted through Email [february1402@gmail.com](mailto:february1402@gmail.com) or cell phone number 0201239555/0246414525.

Thank you for your consideration.

Edmond Amoako Agyeman

### Participant's consent form

I \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_ give consent for EDMOND AMOAKO AGYEMAN, to carry out his case study research. I understand the study will involve responding to sets of interview questions, documentations and close pupils' observations. I understand that all information including my name, the name of the school, and the name of the municipality, will be kept confidential. I understand that these activities will not disrupt our programme.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

