



SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE ENCODING ON STUDENTS' INTEREST AND PERFORMANCE IN UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of social media language encoding on students' interest and performance in essay writing at the University of Port Harcourt. With the rise of platforms like Twitter and Instagram, this form of communication has become increasingly common, especially among youth and students. The population of the study comprised English Studies students of the Faculty of Humanities which totaled 350 students. The sample size consists of 187 students. The purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Two instruments were used for data collection, social media language interest inventory (SMLII) and essay writing performance test (EWPT). The instruments were validated by experts. The reliability of the instruments was done using Cronbach alpha and inter-scorer reliability and the coefficient values of 0.74 and 0.75 were obtained. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, Hypotheses were tested using dependent/paired samples t-test and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 significant level. The results indicated that increased use of social media language encoding impacted students' interest and academic performance. Based on these findings, the study concluded that university campaigns could increase awareness of the impacts of social media. Training students in code-switching may also prove beneficial. The study recommended amongst others that students, parents and teachers should harness social media as a tool for strengthening the fluency of English among themselves, their wards and students by patronizing software that fosters the learning of English rather than just chatting away with informal expressions.

KEYWORDS: Social media, Interest, Academic performance, Code-switching, University student trends

INTRODUCTION

Social media use is commonplace worldwide these days. It has altered the personal, political, educational, and financial lives of millions of people (Jahromi, 2020). According to Iwamoto and Chun (2020), 3 billion people utilize social media worldwide at the time. The majority of social media users are young people (18 to 29 years old), with 90% claiming to use it frequently (Bennett et al., 2019). Lutkevich (2022) defines social media as a broad category of websites and applications that provide feedback, collaboration, content sharing, and community-based communication. Social media is mostly used to help friends, family, and other communities communicate with each other. Social media platforms are used by businesses to promote content and market their products. Remembering that social media is a well-known medium that has received a lot of attention and is generally available to all users is crucial (Lutkevich, 2022). However, in the broadcast era, when a single entity controlled almost all facets of the media, the only avenues for information distribution were radio, newspapers, as well as TV networks. As a result, comments were frequently given to media outlets indirectly and after a delay (Nguyen et al., 2015). Generally, communication took place over the phone, through secret letters, telegrams, and other extremely restricted forms of mediation.

University students see social media as a vital part of life since it helps them form social ties (Jwain, 2020). More importantly, social media has changed the way that teaching and learning are done in higher education by offering substitute educational approaches (Ngamassi, 2020). More research on the various aspects of social media that are pertinent to students has been published as a result of this influence (Feldman, 2015). However, the vast majority of them concentrate on the impact of social media on students' academic performance (Santovena-Casal, 2019). Numerous studies conducted worldwide looked at how social media affected undergraduate English language learners. Among the benefits were improvements in speaking, writing, reading, and language learning (Baytekin & Su-bergil,



2021). Nevertheless, adverse consequences have also been reported, including an increase in superfluous data and grammatical and spelling mistakes (BaniAbdel-Rahman et al., 2020). Social networking service use has had a big impact on people's communication habits (SNSs). It has always provided a space for users to exchange pictures, talk about interests and viewpoints, and build personal connections. Actually, they have ushered in a fresh phase of unrest for the industry as a whole. Human contact patterns, communication preferences, and cognitive processes have all undergone significant modifications (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010). The emergence of social networking sites has given users access to novel and fascinating ways to communicate and engage, as well as a potentially game-changing opportunity to change the way students learn (Prensky, 2011). Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and MySpace are a few popular SNSs. On the participatory web, which includes social networking sites like Flickr and YouTube, users can construct their social networks, interact with others, and generate content in the form of podcasts, videos, tweets, wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, and more. McCarthy (2010) stated. The primary goal of this project is to monitor undergraduates' written communications on the social media platform Facebook. Interest is a critical factor that affects students' cognitive and affective processes and is a substantial predictor of their academic success, according to Bandura (1997). Teachers and instructors in Nigeria must give special consideration to the interests of their pupils because they are an essential part of the educational system.

Writing essays is a common academic assignment that allows students to voice their thoughts and opinions about a variety of topics. It's a systematic process that entails obtaining data, arranging ideas, and distilling claims or thoughts into a concise, understandable manner. It is likely that students will be required to produce a range of essays, each with a different goal and format. Essays that provide a detailed account of a topic, environment, or object are known as descriptive essays. They use taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight, among other senses, to provide the reader with a clear image. According to Matthews (2019), descriptive essays are widely used to establish the tone and bring a scene to life. Essays that educate or clarify the reader on a certain subject are known as explanatory essays. They provide data, statistics, and instances to support their assertions. Mlaibah and Al-Marouf (2019) state that expository essays are used in academic and professional settings to communicate ideas concisely and effectively.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Nigerian institutions, undergraduates occupy a prominent place in the educational hierarchy. These are the next graduates who are anticipated to significantly impact their nation's growth and development. Nigeria places a lot of emphasis on English because it is the official language of the country. This subject is required of undergraduates in universities. In actuality, it's one of the requirements for admission to the nation's institutions. It is depressing to learn that the present drop in academic performance and educational standards across Nigeria has primarily been attributed to undergraduates' poor English language ability on formal tests (Tanko, Yushau, & Arhyel, 2022). The multilingualism and absence of an official language in the nation both add to the intricate linguistic environment that occurs at college campuses. Consequently, English and pidgin have become the main languages of communication among students to establish a common vernacular. Not surprisingly, considering the enormous number of young people enrolled at the university, the introduction of social media languages on Facebook has recently had an extra impact on undergraduates' means of communication within the institution (Ngonso & Egielewa, 2018). Undergraduate university students are also affected by this, and it might affect how well they perform on English language tests. This may have a significant impact on students' formal writing style and overall learning mentality in terms of their academic performance. Academic papers and textbooks run the risk of being misplaced in our libraries due to undergraduates' continual usage of social media, and more authors are choosing to publish their works only online. The majority of undergraduate students speak an English dialect that is not included in either the Popular Nigerian English (PNE) or Standard English matrices, according to a 2018 study by Omoera, Aiwuyo, Edemode, and Anyanwu. More specifically, the study found that phrases like "u" for "you," "gr8t" for "great," and "ur/urs" for "your/yours" have slipped into their writing consciousness in addition to other odd patterns in class and on exams. The goal of the current study is to ascertain how social media language encoding affects University of Port Harcourt undergraduates' essay writing ability and interest.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research study aimed to examine the role of social media language encoding on students' interest and performance in essay writing in University of Port Harcourt; hence the specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the impact of social media language encoding on students' interest in essay writing
2. Ascertain the impact of social media language encoding on students' performance in essay writing
3. Investigate the impact of social media language encoding on male and female interest in essay writing



- Determine the impact of social media language encoding on male and female performance in essay writing

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

- To what extent is the impact of social media language encoding on students’ interest in essay writing?
- To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing?
- To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on male and female interest in essay writing?
- To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on male and female performance in essay writing?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and were tested at 0.05 significant level:

- There is no significant impact of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing.
- There is no significant impact of social media language encoding of male and female performance in essay writing.
- There is no significant impact of social media language encoding on students’ interest in essay writing.
- There is no significant effect of social media language encoding on the interest of male and female in essay writing.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a descriptive research design in the University of Port Harcourt, Faculty of Humanities. The population of the study was the English studies students of the Faculty of Humanities which is about 350 students. The sample size consists of 187 students. A purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Two instruments were used for data collection, social media language interest inventory (SMLII) and essay writing performance test (EWPT). The instruments were validated by my supervisors and other experts in the field of measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was done using Cronbach alpha and inter-scorer reliability and the coefficient values of 0.74 and 0.75 were obtained. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, Hypotheses 1 and 3 were tested using dependent/paired samples t-test while Hypotheses 2 and 4 were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 significant level.

RESULTS

Research question 1: To what extent is the impact of social media language encoding on students’ performance in Essay Writing?

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation analysis showing the impact of social media language encoding on students performance in Essay Writing

| | N | Mean | Std. Dev | Std. Error |
|----------------|-----|---------|----------|------------|
| Students perf. | 161 | 34.2236 | 5.93083 | .46741 |

Table 1 presents the results of the impact of social media language features and encoding on students’ performance in Essay writing. The table presented the score of students mean and standard deviation score, based on the table, it can be inferred that social media language and encoding had an impact on students’ performance in essay writing.

Research question 2: To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on the performance of male and female students in essay writing?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analysis the impact of social media language encoding on the performance of male and female students in essay writing.

| | Gender | N | Mean | SD |
|----------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|
| students perf. | Female | 134 | 34.06 | 5.886 |
| | Male | 27 | 35.00 | 6.201 |

Table 2 provides the mean and standard deviation of male and female students, From the table, the male had a higher mean score and standard deviation. it shows that the impact of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing was more reflective for the male than it was for the female.



Research question 3: To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on students interest in essay writing?

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation analysis showing the impact of social media language encoding on the interest of students in essay writing.

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| students-Interest | 161 | 33.6398 | 5.25780 | .41437 |

Table 3 presents the results of the impact of social media language encoding on students’ interest in essay writing. Based on the table, it can be inferred that social media language encoding has an impact on students’ interest in essay writing.

Research question 4: To What extent is the impact of social media language encoding on the interest of male and female students in essay writing?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation analysis the impact of social media language encoding on the interest of male and female students in essay writing

| | Gender | N | Mean | SD |
|-------------------|--------|-----|-------|-------|
| students Interest | Female | 134 | 33.55 | 5.906 |
| | Male | 27 | 34.03 | 5.137 |

Table 4 the table shows that the impact of social media language encoding on students ‘interest mean in essay writing was more effective for the male than it was for the female as seen in the table.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant effect of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing

Table 5: Paired samples’ t-test analysis no significant impact of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing.

| N | \bar{x} | SD | Df | T | Sig. | P | Decision |
|-----|-----------|------|-----|--------|------|------|----------------------------------|
| 161 | 34.22 | 5.93 | 160 | 41.057 | .000 | 0.05 | Reject Ho ₁ P<0.05 |

The table 5 shows a computed paired samples t-test that has $t(160) = 41.057$, $p < 0.5$, i.e. $p = .000$ is less than 0.05 and this is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is significant effect of social media language encoding on students’ performance in essay writing. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted. This implies that there is significant effect of social media language features and encoding on students’ performance in essay writing.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of social media language encoding on the performance of male and female students in essay writing?



Table 6: ANCOVA analysis showing significant impact of social media language features and encoding on the performance mean scores of male and female students in essay writing

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------|---------|------|
| Corrected Model | 265.285 ^a | 2 | 132.643 | 6.886 | .001 |
| Intercept | 12254.247 | 1 | 12254.247 | 636.185 | .000 |
| Performance | 60.569 | 1 | 60.569 | 3.144 | .078 |
| GENDER | 217.319 | 1 | 217.319 | 11.282 | .001 |
| Error | 3043.411 | 158 | 19.262 | | |
| Total | 52560.000 | 161 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 3308.696 | 160 | | | |

The table 6 shows that the computed $F(1, 158) = 11.282$ $P < .05$, i.e. $p = .001$ is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant effect of social media language encoding on the performance mean scores of male and female students in essay writing as computed $F(1, 158) = 11.282$ $P < .05$, i.e. $p = .001$. The null hypothesis of no significant effect of social media language encoding on the performance mean scores of male and female undergraduates in essay writing is rejected and alternate accepted this implies that the difference exists between them.

Hypotheses 3: There is no significant impact of social media language encoding on students' interest scores in essay writing.

Table 7: Paired samples' t-test analysis no significant effect of social media language features and encoding on undergraduates' interest scores in essay writing.

| | N | \bar{x} | SD | Df | T | Sig. | P | Decision |
|-----------|-----|-----------|------|-----|-------|------|------|-------------------------------|
| -Interest | 161 | 34.22 | 5.93 | 160 | 6.589 | .000 | 0.05 | Reject H_{01} $P < 0.05$ |

The table 7 shows a computed paired samples t-test that has $t(160) = 6.589$, $p < 0.5$, i.e. $p = .000$ is less than 0.05 and this is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is significant effect of social media language encoding on students' interest score in essay writing. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted. This implies that there is significant effect of social media language encoding on undergraduates' interest in essay writing.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant effect of social media language encoding on the interest of male and female students in essay writing.



Table 8: ANCOVA analysis showing significant effect of social media language encoding on the interest scores of male and female undergraduates in essay writing.

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|---------------------|
| Corrected Model | 425.631 ^a | 2 | 212.816 | 5.787 | .004 | .068 |
| Intercept | 2958.230 | 1 | 2958.230 | 80.448 | .000 | .337 |
| INTEREST | 266.822 | 1 | 266.822 | 7.256 | .008 | .044 |
| GENDER | 172.933 | 1 | 172.933 | 4.703 | .032 | .029 |
| Error | 5809.934 | 158 | 36.772 | | | |
| Total | 231855.000 | 161 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 6235.565 | 160 | | | | |

The table 8 shows that the computed $F(1, 158) = 4.703$ $P < .05$, i.e. $p = .032$ is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant effect of social media language encoding on the interest of male and female students in essay writing as computed $F(1, 158) = 4.703$ $P < .05$, i.e. $p = .032$. The null hypothesis of no significant effect of social media language encoding on the interest scores of male and female undergraduates in essay writing is rejected and alternate accepted. This implies that the difference that exists between them is statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the following deductions were made:

1. Social media language encoding has an impact on students' performance in essay writing.
2. Social media language encoding has an impact on students' interest in essay writing.
3. Social media language encoding has more impact on male performance in essay writing.
4. Social media language encoding has high impact on male interest in essay writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcome of the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Students, parents and teachers should harness the social media as a tool for strengthening the fluency of English amongst themselves, their wards and students by patronizing software that foster the learning of English rather than just chatting away with informal expressions.
- ii. Institutions should put in place measures to curb the excessive use of social media while encouraging students to type correctly and speak correctly even on social media as it affects that conventional English skills.
- iii. Be Aware of Your Tone; be conscious of the tone you use in your writing. Social media may be casual or even hostile at times. Adapt your tone to the situation and audience, but strive for professionalism in more formal contexts.
- iv. Avoid Excessive Use of Abbreviations and Emoticons; While abbreviations and emoticons are common on social media, they should be avoided in formal writing.
- v. Proofread and Edit; Speed is frequently prioritised over accuracy in social media. Take the time to check and revise your formal writing for grammatical and spelling problems.
- vi. Be Aware of Language patterns; Social media influences language patterns. Keep up with current trends and adjust your writing accordingly, but keep the distinction between casual and professional language in mind.



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