Social Media Usage and Spelling Errors among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstracts

This study investigated the influence of social media platforms as predictor of spelling errors among selected senior secondary school students in Ibadan. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select 153 senior secondary school students from four local government areas in Ibadan. Two research questions were raised and answered in the study. Two research instruments were used collection of data namely: Achievement test on spelling (r=0.82) and questionnaire on social media usage (r=0.81). Data collected were analysed using descriptive and PPMC. The findings revealed that the level of usage of the social media is low which implies that the significant number of students do not use social media network for writing. The findings also established a significant correlation between social media usage and spelling errors among students. It was therefore recommended that language teachers should focus more attention on teaching spelling in isolation in the course of teaching vocabularies. In addition, language teachers should device more appropriate language teaching approach to teaching vocabulary items in language teaching class so as to alleviate spelling errors.

Key words: Language, Social media, Spelling error, Secondary school students

Introduction

The use of social media platforms has revolutionized communication system across the world judging by the rate at which people exchange information among their associates and friends. Using communication networks such as Facebook, Twitter Instagram, Blogs and You Tube is not restricted to age, professional affiliate, educational attainment and technological knowledge. This phenomenon has practically reduced the world into a global village where communication gap has been bridged through the instrumentality of information and communication technology and social media platforms. Boyd and Ellison (2007) affirm that media platform gives ample opportunity to individuals to establish a link and relationship with users that belong to the same professional or academic discipline or share the same characteristics, view and experience among members of the same community on the web. Social media platforms enable users to exchange ideas, opinions, and views and also make new friends and consolidate on building old friendship and relationship.

The rate at which information is exchanged on the web among users of social media networking sites is quite unquantifiable and immeasurable and this information ranges from gossips, debates, views and analysis. Researchers have acknowledged the impact of social media platforms on the writing skill of students most especially their ability to spell words correctly in formal writing and public examinations. Contrary to the submission of people about the negative effect of social media platforms, Ito (2009) claimed that teens use social media technologies for positive and productive activities that involve active participation in activities on-line. Ahn (2011) affirmed that using social media networks help the youth to acquire knowledge in a particular domain or field of study and as well practice the skills and knowledge acquired. Otuteye (2005) acknowledged the quantity of writing that college students produced through the use of social media. Kirshchner and Kapinski (2010) concluded that the use of Facebook correlates with the performance of students in their academics. In furtherance to this submission, it was affirmed that users of Facebook spend longer hours working on Facebook which eventually lead to poor academic output compared to those who do not use Facebook constantly. Junco (2012) on the other hand submitted that using Facebook does not have any effect on the academic achievement of learners. However, learners are always involved in abbreviating words while writing public examinations. Constant use of Facebook and resultant effects of abbreviating words has affected tremendously the spelling ability of students because students spell words in accordance with the way they perceive them which is at variance with the dictionary spelling of the words.

Facebook and Twitter enable students to share information, learn about their colleagues in the class and teachers and fosters interaction and deliberation on contentious and contemporary issues (Grosseck, 2008) and this view was also corroborated by (Muñoz, 2009). Thuraijaj and Roy (2012) submitted that that Facebook and Twitter engenders positive improvement in the learning of languages in general. Craig (2003) and David (2008) opined sending and receiving text messages through the instrumentality of social media promotes literacy in language among students because it makes possible for them use languages in productive ends. Craig (2003) further revealed that sending text messages endangers students' acquisition of literacy in language learning because it creates undesirable reading and writing habits because students often use abbreviations and unusual slangs, thereby limiting students' ability to use languages for formal literacy forum. Sending Text messages is

injurious to students' language proficiency since students confound informal language use with the standard language they learn at school. (Mphahlele and Mashamaite, (2005) stated that students displayed various errors in the use of language which vary from incorrect spelling to wrong grammatical structures. Spelling and grammatical errors are also visible in classroom exercises, examination scripts and research reports in the school system as reported by (Dansieh, 2008). Drouin (2011) affirmed that sending text messages has positive influence on the attainment of literacy skills among learners.

In the light of various research findings on the relationship between social media and spelling errors among second and foreign language learners, this study therefore investigates social media usage among students as predictor of spelling errors in selected schools in Oyo State.

Statement of the Problem

There is a consensus of opinion among stakeholders in the field of language education that the students are generally deficient in spelling as observed in their essay writing or public examinations. The problem of spelling error has affected the performance of students mostly in public examinations where students are required to express themselves in written form. Several efforts have been made by researchers to investigate various strategies or methods that could be used to remediate the problem of spelling errors among students but the problem still persist. Researchers have suggested looking into social media usage among students and the influence on their spelling ability among the young adults. This study therefore investigates social media usage among students as predictor of spelling errors in selected schools in Oyo State.

Research questions

1. What is the level of students' usage of social media?
2. What is the relationship between social media usage and students spelling errors?

Significance of the study

The findings from this study will be of immense benefit to stakeholders in the field of education in terms of sensitizing them on the variables responsible for the low performance of students in public examination which might not be unconnected with the problem of spelling errors emanating from constant use of social media platform as media of communication among young adults. The study will further help the language instructors in school to device effective method and strategies in the teaching of lexical items and vocabularies and most importantly spelling with a view to inculcating language competence in the learners. The curriculum planners and policy makers will avail themselves of the opportunities to formulate educational policies and design viable language curriculum that will emphasize the teaching and learning of spelling among secondary school students.

Research Design

The study is a correlational study where there was no manipulation of the variables because they are presumed to have existed prior to the research. All students at the upper echelon of the secondary schools in Oyo state constitute the population of the study. Four schools from four municipal areas were sampled and used for the study.

Two instruments were used in the collection of data in this study. They are Achievement test on Spelling (ATS). The achievement test was a self-designed instrument which contains thirty multiple choice questions designed to test the knowledge of students in spelling. The second instrument, Questionnaire on Social Media Usage (QSMU) which was adapted from online based questionnaire. Certain modifications were made on the items in order to ensure that the items conform to the purpose and intent of the study. The two instruments were subjected to face and content validity. Expert in the field of Educational technology validated the questionnaire on the use of social media platforms (QSMT) to ensure clarity, coverage and unambiguity etc. Achievement test on spelling (ATS) was validated by experts in the field of language and language education and instrument was considered valid for the study. The two instruments were subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alfa and co-efficient values of 0.82 and 0.81 respectively were ascertained which made instruments valid for the study.

Answer to research questions

Research Question One: What is the level of students' usage of social media?

Table 5: the level of students' usage of social media

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
1.	Do you think the use of social networking has affected your writing skill	0(0.0)	54(35.3)	58(37.9)	41(26.8)	1.92
2.	Are you using social networking technology for learning in schools/colleges	60(39.2)	26(17.0)	58(37.9)	9(5.9)	2.10
3.	Do you often abbreviate words while using social media network	49(32.0)	39(25.5)	49(32.0)	16(10.5)	2.21
4.	Using social media has affected my spelling in formal writing	46(30.1)	45(29.4)	39(25.5)	23(15.0)	2.25
5	I always abbreviate words while sending text message to friends and associates	34(22.2)	82(53.6)	33(21.6)	4(2.6)	2.05
6	I find it difficult to spell words correctly because of constant use of social media network	35(22.0)	69(45.1)	33(21.6)	16(10.5)	2.20
7	I am always confused spelling correctly while writing examination	46(30.1)	55(35.9)	41(26.8)	11(7.2)	2.11
8	Using social media platforms has no influence on my spelling errors	37(24.2)	79(51.6)	31(20.4)	6(3.9)	2.04
Weighted mean = 2.11						

Table 5 presents results on the level of students' usage of social media. A total of 88 respondents representing 56 % often abbreviate words while using social media platforms. A total of 59.5 % of respondents experienced difficulty in spelling correctly in formal writing through the use of social media. A number of 104 respondents representing 66% claimed that they find it difficult spelling correctly because of constant use of social media network while 75.8% of the respondents have not experienced difficulty in spelling correctly despite the fact that they use social media constantly.. In all, the weighted mean for the level of students usage of social media is 2.11 which is lesser than 2.50. This implies that the level of usage of social media among respondents is low.

Two: What relationship exists between social media usage and spelling error among students?

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between social media usage and students spelling error

Variables	Mean	S.D	N	R	P	Remark
Social media usage	30.20	3.83	153	.251**	.002	Sig.
Students spelling error	16.39	5.10				

** denote significant difference @0.05 level of significance

It is shown in the above table that the relationship between social media usage and spelling error among students is significant (r=.251, N=153, p < 0.05).

Discussion

The study revealed that the level of usage of social network by the students is low. The result contradicts the submission of Otuteye (2005) who claimed that college students used media tools such as blog, email and other social media to produce a huge volume of writing. The implication of the low use of socio media network could be as result of low computer and internet literacy by the participants in this study. The hard economic indices that characterize majority of developing countries in the third world countries made it extremely difficult for the population of the youth to take good advantages of the existing social media networks which can bridge a gap between real life communication and communicating via the social media platforms. The commonest media platform available to the respondents are text messaging and Whatsapp which made it possible for them to abbreviate words in order

to maximize the cost and space available to typeset the message.

The findings from this study revealed that social media usage has positive impact on spelling errors among the respondents. The findings supports the findings of Horton, Alloway and Dawson (2012) that states that using Facebook as social media site affects the students' ability to spell words correctly. Students displayed varied errors which include incorrect spelling of words and wrong grammatical structures (Mphahlele and Mashamaite, 2005). The negative effect of these spelling errors and wrongs grammatical structures could also be found in academic works of students which include class works and project writing. This implies that students cannot distinguish between writing in formal and informal setting. The use of abbreviation is not permissible in a formal writing such as writing report or examination. On the contrary however, Craig (2003) and David (2008) concluded that sending and reading text messages via the social media facilitates language literacy among students as it gives students more opportunities to be involved in language use. Exposure of students to the use of graphical representation of sounds through texting message is more pronounced and this would increase their writing skills outside the formal classroom system that is sometimes tensed and monotonous. Paradoxically, Craig (2003) further revealed that sending and receiving text messages also hamper students' literacy in language because it encourages undesirable exposure to bad reading and writing habits because abbreviations and slangs are commonly used, thereby endangering students' ability to use language formally. The language teachers are expected to alleviate the incursion of the use of jargons and abbreviation that could inhibit the ability to acquire literacy in any language.

Conclusion

Social media networks as predictor of spelling error among some senior secondary school students in Ibadan was the focus of this study. The findings revealed that the level of usage of the social media is low which implies that the significant number of students do not use social media network for writing. The findings further revealed a significant relationship between social media usage and students spelling errors. The findings implies that majority of the students cannot spell words correctly due to constant use of social media networks. The level at which students abbreviate words while sending text messages to friends and associates and while on social media networks is highly monumental and this has affected them in formal writing. They are always confused arriving at the correct spelling of words in formal writing and this have adverse effect on their performance in public examinations.

Recommendations

1. Language teachers should device appropriate measures and language teaching methodology to teach vocabulary items in isolation with special emphasis on correct spelling of words
2. Language teachers should not indulge the learners in the use of abbreviations both in speech and formal writing. The negative implication of the use of abbreviation on the general performance of students in public examinations should be adequately discussed with the students in the process of lesson delivery.
3. Language teachers should endeavor to enlighten the students on the difference between formal and informal writing. The relative features of both formal and informal modes of writing should be well articulated during teaching and learning process. Students' attention should be drawn to significant effect of spelling errors and over –dependence on computer for correct spelling on the general performance of students in public examinations.

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