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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON WRITTEN ENGLISH SKILLS OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The challenges identified as a result of excessive use of social media in Nigerian secondary schools are enormous. This formed the basic need to find effective ways to utilize social media as a teaching medium for secondary school students. Thus, researchers selected one of the social media platforms and investigated its efficacy on the written English performance of selected senior secondary school students. The study specifically used Facebook and selected one hundred and eighty (180) students from Government Secondary Schools; Bomo Government Secondary School, Basawa and Government Girls' Secondary School, Samaru, as the experimental group, and one hundred and eighty (180) students from Government Secondary School, Jama'a, Government Secondary School, Kwangila, Government Secondary School, Sakadadi, and Demonstration Secondary School, Samaru as the control group. A t-test was used for the test with the aim of identifying the differences between the performance of students exposed to Facebook, and those that were not. The investigation involved pre-test, test I, test II, test III and a final test. One research question and one hypothesis were generated, tested and answered. The result of the study revealed significant differences between the written English mean performance score of the experimental and control group. The study proved that the use of this social media platform can lead to greater writing achievement among students. Therefore, it is recommended that students should be encouraged to use Facebook as a means of learning not only written English but the English language in general.

KEYWORDS: Facebook, social media, Asynchronous, Email, ICT, Internet.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information technology has reshaped our everyday lives, and simplified ways of doing basic activities in and outside rural and urban areas in Africa. This encourages teachers and students to make use of smartphones, iPads, and other portable devices for research work. All these devices are equipped for social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram. All these constitute what is known as 'Social Media' or 'Web 2.0', best characterized by the notions of social interaction, content sharing, and collective intelligence. Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections.

Perez (2013) defined social media as a group of Internet-based applications 'interactive platforms', that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Similarly, Abusalek and Qatawney (2013) affirmed that social media includes text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications. Social media is undoubtedly one of the most powerful origins of information and news. It includes various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the Internet, and to share information and resources.

It is a fact that the number of social network users is growing significantly worldwide. Besides that, social networks' capabilities are increasingly being leveraged effectively. Moreover, social networks are becoming less complex and more accessible, where young and older people can create and share content and interact easily through social networks. This created the opportunity to utilize social media in teaching and learning. The present study selected Facebook as one of the social media platforms to create, diversify, develop, and improve the pedagogical relation of teaching and learning of written English.

1.1 Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of social media on the written English performance of senior secondary school students.

1.2 Research Question

What is the difference between the written English mean performance of students exposed to social media and other students not exposed to social media?

1.3 Hypothesis

H0: There was no significant difference between the written English mean performance score of the students exposed to social media and those not exposed to social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

King and Sen (2013) claimed that social connections affect many aspects of lives; the fact that they can also be applied to education and learning comes as no surprise. The role of emerging social media may offer new opportunities to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Prensky (2001) revealed that students are often referred to as 'digital natives' having spent most of their time on computers, game consoles, digital music players, video cameras, cell phones, as well as

the Web itself. More and more uses of its unique features are being found every day, and it is not surprising that the field of education is also being strongly affected.

Social media networks such as Facebook support cognition, communication/networking, and cooperation (communities, collaborative work, sharing of user-generated and other content). It is classified as online learning based on the two different approaches to online learning that have emerged: synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous learning is instruction and collaboration in "real time" via the Internet. It involves tools such as live chat, audio and video conferencing, data and application sharing, shared whiteboard, joint viewing of multimedia presentations and online slideshows. Any learning tool that is in real-time, such as Instant messaging, Twitter, and Facebook that allows students and teachers to ask and answer questions immediately, is synchronous. Synchronous learning environments provide real-time interaction, which can be collaborative in nature incorporating e-tivities (Salmon, 2013). Asynchronous e-Learning, on the other hand, refers to learning and teaching that take place simultaneously via an electronic mode.

Synchronous language learning is closer to the communicative way of language teaching/learning with whiteboards, video chat or voice chat, providing immediate feedback to help students improve their language skills. Thus, it can duplicate the face-to-face real time classroom (Keegan et al., 2005). The familiarity of the classroom model, immediate feedback from the teacher and fellow students, and creating content quickly in the classroom, are the hallmarks of a synchronous language e-learning environment. Synchronous net-based discourses can improve understanding of complex subject matters (Pfister, 2005), and as a result, non-native English speakers can out-perform face-to-face language learners. However, it can be problematic for students due to being time bound, and the availability of technology on a scheduled time.

Rather than learning on their own, students who participate in synchronous learning courses are able to interact with other students and their teachers during the lesson. A synchronous virtual classroom is a place for instructors and students to interact and collaborate in real time. Using webcams and class discussion features, it resembles the traditional classroom, except that all participants access it remotely via the Internet.

Asynchronous learning methods use the time-delayed capabilities of the Internet. It involves tools such as e-mail, threaded discussion, newsgroups, bulletin boards, and file attachments. Asynchronous sessions require a simultaneous student-teacher presence. On the other hand, asynchronous environments are not time bound and students can work on e-tivities at their own pace. An asynchronous mode of learning/teaching has been the most prevalent form of online teaching so far because of its flexible modus operandi (Hrastinski, 2008). Asynchronous environments provide students with readily available materials in the form of audio/video lectures, handouts, articles and PowerPoint presentations. Asynchronous learning can be carried out even when the student or teacher is offline. Coursework and communications delivered via the web, email and messages posted on community forums, are perfect examples of asynchronous e-learning. In these instances, students will typically complete the lessons on their own, and merely use the Internet as a support tool. Rather than venturing online solely for interactive classes. Asynchronous e-learning can incorporate all L2 teaching methods that allow for delayed feedback and delayed response as in emails and discussion boards. Asynchronous language learning can be more encouraging for learners to ask questions that require long answers (Abu Seileek & Qatawneh, 2013).

Parsad and Lewis (2008) claimed that asynchronous e-learning is the most adopted method for online education, because learners are not time bound, and can respond at their leisure. The opportunity of delayed response allows them to use their higher order learning skills, as they can keep thinking about a problem for an extended time period and may develop divergent thinking. However, the asynchronous mode also carries that disadvantage of reducing direct feedback and immediate interaction. Bernard *et al.* (2004) confirmed that, in terms of achievement and attitude outcomes, asynchronous environments had more positive effects than synchronous ones. In spite of the positive outcomes for asynchronous instruction, the authors also found that retention rates were lower, and dropout rates substantially higher in asynchronous mode of learning than in synchronous.

Both asynchronous and synchronous modes can be beneficial for language learning (Pérez, 2013). A blend of the two models can give students opportunities to learn better than any of the individual modes. Asynchronous and synchronous modes can complement each other in teaching/learning language through the conversational framework (Laurillard, 2007), and constructivist approaches of creating meaning through dialogue, reflection and experience (Reynolds, Wang & Poor, 2002). When blended, they can provide a wonderful model for enhancing language learners' cognitive participation, information processing and motivation (Ge, 2011). Language learning is more of a skill-oriented process rather than content mastery.

In online learning, there is a plethora of different systems of learning, such as the Learning Management System (LMS), the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Web 2.0, which allow courses to be delivered. LMS and VLE have been used as applications that provide a comprehensive set of tools for educators to manage learning resources, assessment and grading. But in 2005, a new range of web tools began to find their way into general use, and increasingly into educational use. These new web tools are described as Web 2.0 tools, as they reflect a different culture of web use from the former "center-to-periphery" push of institutional websites. Web 2.0 is the current state of online technology as it compares to the early days of the Web, characterized by greater user interactivity and collaboration, more pervasive network connectivity, and enhanced communication channels. Social media are examples of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 has some sort of interaction capability between participants. Web 2.0 tools empower the end-user to access, create, disseminate, and share information easily in a user friendly, open environment. Web 2.0 tools have proved increasingly popular in both social media and educational application.

Thus, Web 2.0 has the ability to support active and social learning. It provides opportunities and venues for student publications and provides opportunities for effective and efficient feedback to learners. It also provides opportunities to scaffold learning in the student's Zone of Proximal Development (Hartshorne & Ajjan, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Web 2.0 tools include blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Podcast, Wikis, WhatsApp etc.

The present study utilized both asynchronous and synchronous learning activities. This allowed the students and teachers to benefit from the different delivery formats regardless of their schedules or preferred learning methods.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The design adopted for this research was a quasi-experimental research design. The design required the existing classes in a given school not to create classrooms through random selection

and random assignment. The study examined the effects of social media on the written English performance of selected senior secondary school students.

3.2 Population

The population of this study comprised of all the 2017/2018 registered SSII students in the seven (7) public senior secondary schools in Sabon Gari Local Government. The schools registered one thousand six hundred and fifty-nine (1659) students.

Table 1. Distribution of the Population of the Study

School	Male	Female	Total
Government Secondary School, Basawa (GSSBA)	101	105	206
Government Secondary School, Bomo (GSSB)	148	132	280
Government Girls' Secondary School, Samaru (GSSS)	-	240	240
Government Secondary School, Jamaa (GSSJ)	55	17	72
Government Secondary School, Kwangila (GSSK)	140	280	420
Government Secondary School, Sakadadi (GSSS)	52	178	230
Demonstration Secondary School, Samaru (DSSS)	111	100	211

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

In this study, one hundred and eighty (180) students of three classes were selected out of seven hundred and twenty (720) students of GSSBA, GSSB and GSSS and formed the experimental group. One hundred and eighty (180) students of three classes were selected from nine hundred and thirty-nine (939) of GSSJ, GSSK, GSSS and DSSS and served as the control group.

3.4 Instrumentation

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection and analytical procedure. The students were given the pretest, test I, test II, test III and final posttest. The students had 40 minutes to answer the questions. The questions for pre-test, test I, test II, test III and final post-test were of WAEC standard. The instrument used for data collection was essay writing.

4. RESULT

4.1 Score of the Students

The scores of the students in the two groups were graded into high, mid and low level to find out the difference between the written English mean performance score of the students exposed to social media, and those not exposed to social media. The grading was used to enable the classification of the effect and comparison between the two groups. Table 2 below is the total number and percentages for the experimental and control groups.

Table 2. Total Number and Percentages for Experimental and Control Groups

Essay Writing Experimental	Pretest			Test I			Test II			Test III			Final Test		
	No	Lev	%	No	Lev.	%	No	Lev	%	No	Lev	%	No	Lev	%
Content															
High	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Middle	180	85	47.2	180	84	46.7	180	110	55.6	180	124	68.9	180	171	95
Low	180	95	52.8	180	96	53.3	180	70	44.4	180	56	31.1	180	9	5
Organization															
High	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Middle	180	101	56.1	180	109	60.6	180	121	67.2	180	136	75.6	180	177	98.3
Low	180	79	43.9	180	71	39.4	180	59	32.8	180	44	24.4	180	3	1.7
Expression															
High	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Middle	180	80	44.4	180	82	45.6	180	113	62.7	180	152	84.4	180	167	92.8
Low	180	100	55.6	180	98	54.4	180	67	37.2	180	28	15.6	180	13	7.2
Mechanics															
High	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Middle	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Low	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100
Control	No	Lev	%	No	Lev.	%	No	Lev	%	No	Lev	%	No	Lev	%
Content															
High	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00	180	00	00
Middle	180	74	41.1	180	83	46.1	180	95	52.8	180	105	58.3	180	121	67.2
Low	180	106	58.9	180	97	53.9	180	85	47.2	180	75	41.7	180	59	32.8
Organization															
High	18	00	00	18	00	00	18	00	00	18	00	00	18	00	00

	0			0			0			0			0		
Middle	180	100	55.6	180	85	52.8	180	133	73.9	180	136	75.6	180	129	71.7
Low	180	80	44.4	180	85	47.2	180	47	26.1	180	44	24.4	180	51	28.3
Expression															
High	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000
Middle	180	79	43.9	180	73	40.6	180	64	35.6	180	70	38.9	180	64	35.6
Low	180	101	56.1	180	107	59.4	180	116	64.4	180	120	61.1	180	116	64.4
Mechanics															
High	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000
Middle	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000	180	000	000
Low	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100	180	180	100

Table 2 shows that before exposing the experimental group to social media, their performances were almost the same as with their counterparts in the control group.

- At the pretest level, the number of experimental groups in the low performance level was:
  - 95 or 52.8% in content
  - 79 or 43.4% in organization
  - 100 or 55.6% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At test I, the numbers of experimental group in the low performance level:
  - reduced to 96 or 53.3% in content
  - 71 or 39.4% in organization
  - 98 or 54.4% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the test II, the numbers of the experimental group in the low performance level:
  - dropped to 70 or 38.9% in content
  - 59 or 32.8% in organization
  - 67 or 37.2% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the test III level, the number of the experimental group in the low performance level:
  - dropped to 56 or 31.1% in content
  - 44 or 24.4% in organization
  - 28 or 15.6% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the final test, the numbers of experimental group in the low performance level:
  - reduced to 9 or 5% in content
  - 3 or 1.7% in organization
  - 13 or 7.2% in expression

- mechanics remained 180 or 100%.

- At the pretest, the number of control group in the low performance level was:
  - 106 or 58.9% in content
  - 80 or 44.4% in organization
  - 101 or 55.1% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the test I, the number of control group in the low performance level:
  - reduced to 97 or 53.9% in content
  - increased to 85 or 47.2% in organization
  - increased to 105 or 59.4% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the test II, the number of control group in the low performance level:
  - dropped to 85 or 47.2% in content
  - 47 or 26.1% in organization
  - 116 or 64.4% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the test III, the number of control group in the low performance level:
  - dropped to 75 or 41.7% in content
  - 44 or 24.4% in organization
  - increased to 120 or 61.1% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.
- At the final test, the number of control group in the low performance level:
  - reduced to 59 or 32.8% in content
  - 51 or 28.3% in organization
  - 116 or 64.4% in expression
  - mechanics remained 180 or 100%.

The improvement recorded in the experimental group could not be found in the control group. except in the area of mechanics. Where both the experimental and groups persistently recorded low performance. There was consistent improvement in the experimental group which could not establish in control. It was clearly seen where the low performance dropped in the test I and increased in the test II.

The above analysis has shown an obvious gap between the performance of experimental and control groups after the treatment activities such as chatting, questioning, brainstorming, grouping, planning, writing, rewriting, drafting and redrafting through Facebook. Also, other supportive elements provided in the Facebook like links to online dictionaries, textbooks, and visual aids, played a vital role in facilitating students' vocabulary development and effective writing skills. The effectiveness of the exposure to Facebook is clearly demonstrated by the scores of the final posttest.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

H0: There was no significant difference between the written English mean performance score of the students exposed to social media, and the students not exposed to social media. In order to test for significant differences between the experimental group and the control group after the treatment, t-test was used to establish the significance between the two variables. The result of the test is summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Two Sample T-Test on Mean Written English Performance Score of the Control and the Experimental Groups

Status	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t-value	Df	P-value
Content	Control	180	3.69	.861	.064	-12.864	358	.000
	Experimental	180	4.89	.909	.068			
Organization	Control	180	3.86	.785	.058	-12.967	358	.000
	Experimental	180	4.93	.784	.058			
Expression	Control	180	6.10	1.278	.095	-19.652	358	.000
	Experimental	180	8.66	1.188	.089			
Mechanics	Control	180	.61	.500	.037	-2.904	358	.004
	Experimental	180	.78	.619	.046			
Total	Control	180	14.32	1.758	.131	-26.194	358	.000
	Experimental	180	19.23	1.800	.134			

The result showed that the students exposed to Facebook performed better than those not exposed to the survey. This is indicated by the mean score of 3.69 for the control group, and 4.89 for the experimental group in content. The mean score of the organization of the written English stood at 3.86 for the control group, and 4.93 for the experimental group. The mean score of expression remained at 6.10 for control group, and 8.66 for the experimental group. In the mechanics, the mean score was .61 for the control group and .78 for the experimental group. The total mean score stood at 14.32 for the control group, and 19.23 for the experimental group. The observed levels of significance for the two variables (control and experimental) were lower than the fixed level of 0.05 (P>0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the written English mean performance score of the students exposed to social media, and those not exposed to the social media study is rejected.

5. DISCUSSION

The presented study investigated the effect of social media on the written English performance of selected senior secondary school students in Sabon Gari Local Government. It was obvious that the social media experiment involved chatting, brainstorming, teamwork, independent learning, and support, which can be an important issue for explaining the significant results of the improvement in writing skills. The finding from the hypothesis revealed that the students exposed to the social media experiment performed significantly higher in their written English than those not exposed to the treatment. The finding here agreed with the views of Berge and Collins (1995), O'Dwyer, Bebell, and Tucker-Seeley (2005), who strongly believe in the effect of modern

technologies on EFL students' performance. They emphasized the view that the Internet serves as a facilitator in our foreign language classes, especially in the teaching of writing skills.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the presented study, it is obvious that social media platforms effectively enhanced the written English performance of senior secondary school students. The study was carried out in stages, and all the stages proved to be positive. The following recommendations are made:

1. The issues of banning the use of mobile devices in secondary school's environment needs to be revisited.

2. There is a need to provide an opportunity for the Nigerian secondary school students to obtain android phone.

3. Teachers should prepare to embrace social media platform as a means of impacting knowledge not a means for unnecessary chatting.

4. Government should provide an avenue to utilize the social media platforms for teaching and learning.

5. Students should be engaged in meaningful chatting, interaction, discussion, coordination, planning, writing composition, revision and, correction through Facebook.

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