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Influence of Facebook Social- Media Usage on Students' Spellings in English Written Assignments in Public Day Secondary Schools in Eldoret North Sub- County

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the influence of Facebook social-media usage on students' English written assignments in Eldoret North Sub-County public day secondary schools. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population was 38 public day secondary schools with 15000 students and 88 Teachers of English in total. A sample of 150 students from a sample of 30% of the schools that was randomly selected was used in this study, which translated to 11 schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all teachers of English who participated in the interview and simple random sampling technique was used to select the students who filled questionnaires. Questionnaires, interviews and document analysis was used in data collection. Majority of the respondents agreed that they pay little attention to spellings when posting opinion on facebook, because friends care less about spelling mistakes. Most respondents agreed to get the meaning of shortened form of words used by their friends on Facebook. Most respondents agreed that they regularly use short forms of words when posting information on Facebook Social-media. The study established that sometimes students find themselves using the short forms of words when writing English assignments. Majority of the respondents agreed with the opinion that most of the opinions written on Facebook are presented in short forms. The students use short forms when commenting on their friends post on

face book, these short forms negatively affects masterly of spelling. The study recommend that the students should write formal English in Facebook posts

Keywords: *Face Book, Social-media, Students' Spellings, Written Assignments.*

Introduction

Social-media includes all technology that facilitates social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberations across stakeholders, Social-media includes such tools as electronic blogs, audio/video tools (YouTube), Internet chat rooms, cellular and computer texting, and social networking sites (Bryer, &Zavattaro, 2011).

Internet use and the use of social networking sites in particular, have grown significantly since 2000 with some estimates of nearly 78% of American adults using the Internet regularly; 46% of American adults 18 and older using social networking sites; and 65% of teens age 12 to 17 using online social networks (Rainie *et al.*, 2009). In terms of membership and daily usage, more recent estimates show Facebook as having over 750 million users worldwide; LinkedIn over 100 million members; Twitter having over 177 million tweets per day; and YouTube having over 3 billion views each day (Chen, & Bryer, 2012). The use of social networking sites has been repeatedly found to be the highest among those between the ages of 18-29 (Rainie *et al.*, 2011).

Facebook is at the lead of the Social-media race with more active users worldwide. It has become one of the most frequently accessed website at the moment. Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, who are alumni of Harvard. The typical University culture loves Facebook deeply, builds the lifestyle, rather than just a hobby or a fun time passing activity. Academic success is supreme goal to any student, with the social and family responsibility they have. Through Facebook, people exchange, interact, collaborate, and socialize with others in virtual communities. It has undergone huge expansion over time that leads to much use by individuals from all over the world. Its 661.3 million users represent annual growth of 45.2% (Facebook, 2012), while its business value has surged to US\$50 billion after an investment by Goldman Sachs in early 2011.

Most high school students are the major group using Facebook for fun, with the main purposes as connecting with their friends, sharing day to day activities, using features such as photo sharing, publishing wall posts, and stating their status updates. Few studies have been conducted on how learners use Facebook and its influence of their use of Facebook in promoting their academic studies. The eminence of Facebook among young people gives it the popularity. Studies from the USA by Boyd & Ellison (2007) found out that the various functions offered by Facebook make them attractive and irrevocable for their users. Walls, blogs, live chatting, photo album and applications of comments under it, video uploading, creating group, birthday reminder and horoscope. It is not only some photo sharing and other known applications that make Facebook popular and useful tools for students, but there are also some academic purposes which encourage students to frequently use these sites.

In the study conducted by Englander *et al.*, (2010), observed that students spend more time using Facebook for other purposes apart from educational use, thus affecting their academic outcomes. In another study Nalwa and Anand (2003), shows that students like to use internet for their own responsibilities and this affects their academics. This study is further elaborated by Karpinski (2009) whereby they stated that Facebook users had lower grade rankings than students who never engage in social interactions. Aforo (2014) conducted a study to establish the impact of Social-media on academic reading. The study established that student's institutions in Ghana often use their free time using Social-media which does not augur well for their academic performance.

In Kenya, Facebook is the most visited site after the search engine Google. Analysis reports on the Daily Nation put Facebook daily hits at two million (Mwaniki, 2010). By the year 2010 internet penetration in Kenya was only 10% of the population therefore only 3,995,570 people could access the service. The widespread idea of Facebook Social-media usage by students is a popular concern among schools, faculty, and guardians. There is a concern among various individuals such as researchers, mentors, and the parents as to whether it creates a positive or negative influence on students' language skills like writing. As most media is regarded as a source of entertainment, popular opinion believes it serves only as an interference and obstruction to academic achievement. The influence of Facebook social-media usage on language skills among secondary school students has not been well documented. Hence, this study investigated the influence of Facebook social-media usage on students' English written assignments in Eldoret North Sub-County public day secondary schools.

Literature Review

Facebook Social-media Usage and Students' English Spellings Skills

In Shih's (2011) interviews with students, some students noted the disadvantages of using Facebook to learn English writing. This is because students heavily relied on the online correction. When they had no help from the online correction tool they often used incorrect vocabulary and misspelled words in a regular classroom writing. White's (2009) study supported their studies that by setting up a discussion group, students can use a greater level of grammatical complexity in their writing, and can reduce mistakes; which they are unlikely to be able to do orally in a traditional classroom setting. In White's (2009) study 19 freshmen university students who were familiar with the traditional grammar translation method participated in his research.

The method employed by White was that every week, for 5 weeks, a question was provided for discussion on Facebook, and individual feedback was given for improving their writing skills. Students' progress was checked using four elements: spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes, words written, and motivation. Each week words written, grammar mistakes, and spelling mistakes were counted. When common grammatical mistakes occurred, they were posted on the group wall for discussion. Then students were asked to find a grammar mistake in a certain line and to correct previous mistakes. At the end of week 5, some positive improvements in grammar and spelling by students were evident. Students reduced mistakes because they had learned from the posts what mistakes they had made. They were aware of it and used it as grammar advice for further writing. The current study seeks to investigate the extent to which learners use Facebook social-media and whether it has a positive or negative impact on written assignments.

Through interactions with Facebook friends, the students are able to build confidence, increase their motivation and had a positive attitude toward language learning (Kabilan *et al.*, 2010; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Yunus, *et al.*, 2012). In addition, Facebook helps remove many barriers for students (McCathy, 2010) and might provide greater benefits for users who have low self-esteem and life satisfaction (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Promnitz-Hayashi (2011) suggested that activities in Facebook helped a lower language proficient student to become more comfortable participating in online discussions in an enjoyable and motivating way. It is easier for students to read and control the length and difficulty of their questions and post videos. They could make the activities as easy or challenging as they wished, making activities student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The findings of White's (2009) study of the use of Facebook to improve the motivation and academic writing of students indicated that students were motivated and they made some effort to improve their writing

skills. When they did not understand difficult words posted by group members they went to look up the word in the dictionary, then came back to reply and used words more carefully because they knew that someone was checking or reading their comments.

The habit of using English in informal short forms is prevalent among English language learners, and it affects students' academic writing. One participant from Yunus et al., (2012) study stated that using short forms and abbreviations is not a positive learning experience because students may get used to the habit and then use it in the formal writing tasks in school. Selwyn (2009) pointed out that Facebook failed to improve students' writing because students use informal writing structures rather than formal academic writing styles.

Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) noted that undergraduate students generally viewed the use of Facebook as most appropriate for social or informal learning purposes, rather than for academic work or formal teaching purposes. Gonzalez (2003) also reported a problem with using online communication; that it negatively affects the student's use of language, grammar, and spelling. She suggested that online communication often leads to the use of short phrases and incomplete sentences, and that it often becomes informal conversation that may negatively impact academic writing. Because writing on Facebook is different from writing in a classroom, students might not see the connection between the two forms of writing (academic writing and informal writing). They consider writing on Facebook as a type of informal writing for communication, not for academic purposes.

The common features of informal writing considered inappropriate in a writing class that have been widely used on online chats or social network sites areas follows: phonetic spelling use for transcription of standard pronunciations are such as "nite" for "night", "guyz" for "guys", "luv" for "love", "wanna" for want to, (Danet & Herring, 2007). emoticons or smileys use for conveying a feeling are such as facing a hard situation -_-!, being happy :) or :-), being sad : (or :- (. multiple punctuation marks or letters use for a prosodic affect are such as no more!!!!, Yes!!!!,aaaaahhhhh, soooo (Crystal, 2001). capitalization use: all capitals for 'shouting' such as "I SAID NO," asterisks for emphasis such as "the *real* answer" (Crystal, 2001, p. 35). special abbreviations or acronyms used for saving time and making it convenient, such as b4/B4 (before), lol/LOL (laughing out loud), oic/OIC (Oh I see). common shortenings used for easy use and convenience are 'u' (you), 'i' (I), 'r' re), 'thx' (thanks), 'pls' (please), 'tmr' (tomorrow). Selwyn's (2009) students wrote: "hey hun!! just to let you know i have come home for a bit as i am ill so won't be in education seminar tomoz!! but will be back next week so see u then!! Have fun!! love!! Xxxx". "WELL....!!!! lol. i think we should just STARE at him next time :) but atleast you always say something right! im just *blank* LOL. xXx" (p.162). The current study will highlight students' writing behaviours evident in facebook Social-media and influences on spelling in their written assignments that are directly associated to their overindulgence on facebook Social-media use.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) observe that descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to explain as well as explore the existing status of two or more variables of a phenomenon or population. The use of the descriptive survey research design for this study allowed the researcher to gather data directly from the public day secondary school students in their natural environment for the purpose of studying their attitudes, views and comments about their day to day interactions with Social-media. The

nature of the research necessitates that the participant's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are considered in order to construct situational knowledge of the effect of Facebook on students' performance in English language in Public day secondary schools.

Study Area

This study was undertaken in Eldoret North Sub County in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Uasin Gishu County is one of the 47 counties of Kenya and constitutes (Eldoret North, Eldoret East, Eldoret West and Eldoret South). In Uasin Gishu County there are a total of 113 public secondary schools. This study is limited to Eldoret North Sub-County which covers Soy and Turbo division. The area's economic activity is farming; maize farming. The choice of this study area was based on the consideration of the fact that the area is partly rural and partly urban surrounded with many small centres developing at a fast rate. It is also inhabited by mostly Nandi and Luhya communities and few inhabitants from other different communities. Among these inhabitants, the area has different social classes represented from the rich to the poor. Most of the schools are public day secondary schools with similar characteristics. So far, no study similar to the one that is under investigation has been done and documented in the recent past particularly in the wake of County Government.

Target Population

The target population comprised of all the public day secondary schools in Eldoret North Sub-County to which the results of this study was generalized. The accessible population in this study were the day public secondary schools from Eldoret North Sub- County, as at 2017. The target population for the study comprised of all students and Teachers of English from public day secondary schools within Eldoret North Sub- County. There are approximately 38 public day secondary schools with approximation of 15000 students and 88 Teachers of English in total. The table below shows a representation of target population.

Table 1: Target Population

s/n	Respondents	Public day secondary schools in Eldoret north sub-county
1	Schools	38 schools
2	Teachers of English	88 teachers
3	Form Four Students	15000 students

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

According to (Mugenda, 2012), for a population of less than 100, 100% of the population is taken to calculate the sample size, for a population of between 100 to 1000, 30% of the population is taken, for a population of 1000 – 10 000, 10% of the target population is taken to represent the target population and finally for any target population above 10000, 1% is taken to calculate the sample size.

A sample of 150 students from a sample of 30% of the schools that was randomly selected was used in this study, which translated to 11 schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all teachers of English who participated in the interview and simple random sampling technique was used to select the students who filled questionnaires. The study also targeted form four students since they are at the peak of polishing

their language skills which is examined; in this case writing skills and assumed to know how to use Facebook social-media better than the rest of the students. At this point, dominant influence attributed to Facebook social-media interactions (both negative and positive) can be identified from their written assignments.

Table 2: Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

s/n	Respondents	target population	sample size	sampling technique
1	Teachers	88 teachers	29 teachers	Purposive sampling technique
2	Form four students	15000 students	150 students	Simple Random Sampling technique
	Total	15088 respondents	179 respondents	

Questionnaire

The study used questionnaire as the main data collection instrument to collect quantitative data from the students. Questionnaires are a collection of items to which a respondent is expected to react in writing. The method is suitable when the information needed can be easily described in writing and if time is limited. Kombo and Tromp (2006) also hold that questionnaires ensure that confidentiality is upheld where sensitive information is involved. The questionnaire included both closed and few open-ended questions. This allowed the respondents to give their own views. The questionnaire entailed the statements on influence of Facebook Social-media usage on students' spelling. The participant indicated the extent to which the mentioned writing skills have been influenced.

Interview Schedule

The researcher conducted face to face interviews to collect data from sampled teachers of English in Eldoret North Sub County Public day secondary schools. The interview schedule was made up of questions which aimed at providing a high degree of objectivity, uniformity and allowed probing and clarification where possible. During the interview, the teachers of English majorly gave their view on whether or not they think Facebook media usage has influenced students' written assignments and gave necessary examples. The researcher probed to expound on any other information that is relevant and may have been left out in the questionnaire and observation schedule.

Document Analysis

The researcher looked at previously written assignments and compositions and used them to collect and analyzed data on language in use; spellings from form four students' composition books. The document supported data collected from questionnaires and interviews. This also gave the researcher the opportunity to get first-hand information on the influence of Facebook Social-media on English written assignments.

Data Analysis

The raw data from the questionnaires were cleaned to remove missing values. Data was coded for completeness and accuracy of information with the help of Statistical package for social science

(SPSS) which gave expected summary statistics of variables studied. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which include frequencies and percentages. Data was presented using frequency distribution tables and figures. The data from the interviews was summarized and organized in a manner that they answered the research questions as per objectives.

Findings

Influence of Facebook Social- media Usage on Students' Spellings in English written assignments

The objective of the study was to find out the influence of Facebook social- media usage on students' spellings in English written assignments in public day secondary schools in Eldoret North Sub- County. The respondents were presented with Likert scale questions in which they were to select the options that best describe their opinions. The options were; strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (U), agree (A), and strongly agree.

The researcher sought to know whether the spelling check feature in face book helps students reduce spelling errors in English assignments, the results indicated equal proportion on those that agreed and those that disagreed, 35(23.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 25(16.7%) disagree, while 43(28.7%) agreed and 39(26.0%) strongly agreed. The study established that students use short forms when commenting on their friends' posts on face book, as indicated by 62(41.3%) of respondents who agreed and 60(40.0%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, as opposed to 10(6.7%) who strongly disagreed and 13(8.7%) who disagreed. It was further established that most of the posts on Facebook are written in short form, as evidenced by 58(38.7%) of the respondents who agreed and 61(40.7%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement.

Majority of the respondents 46(30.7%) agreed and 32(21.3%) strongly agreed that they pay little attention to spellings when posting opinions on Facebook, because friends care less about spelling mistakes. On statement that sometimes I don't get the meaning of shortened form of words used by my friends on Facebook, 31(20.7%) of respondents strongly disagree, 18(12.0%) disagree while 56(37.3%) agreed and 41(27.3%) of respondents strongly agreed. Most respondents, 58(38.8%) agreed, and 29(19.3%) agreed that they regularly use short forms of words when posting information on Facebook Social-media, while 24(16.0) strongly disagreed and 26(17.3%) disagreed.

The study established that sometimes students find themselves using the short forms of words when writing English assignments, as indicated by 53(35.3%) of the respondents who agreed and 34(22.4%) of the respondents who strongly agreed as compared with 35(23.3%) who strongly agreed and 19(12.7%) of respondents who disagreed with the statement. Majority of the respondents, 59(39.3%) agreed and 38(25.3%) strongly agreed with the opinion that most of the opinions written on Facebook are presented in short forms. The responses are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Response on Effect of Facebook on Students' Spellings

	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The spelling check feature in face book helps me reduce spelling errors in my English assignments.	35	23.3	25	16.7	8	5.3	43	28.7	39	26.0
I use short forms when commenting on my friends post on face book.	10	6.7	13	8.7	5	3.3	62	41.3	60	40.0
Most of the posts by my friends are written in short form	12	8.0	14	9.3	5	3.3	58	38.7	61	40.7
I pay little attention to spellings when posting opinions on face book, because my friends care less about spelling mistakes	25	16.7	33	22.0	14	9.3	46	30.7	32	21.3
Sometimes I don't get the meaning of shortened form of words used by my friends on Facebook.	31	20.7	18	12.0	4	2.7	56	37.3	41	27.3
I regularly use short forms of words when posting information in Facebook Social-media.	24	16.0	26	17.3	13	8.7	58	38.7	29	19.3
I sometimes find myself using the short forms of words when writing English written assignments	35	23.3	19	12.7	9	6.0	53	35.3	34	22.7
Most of the opinions written on Facebook are presented in short forms	20	13.3	20	13.3	13	8.7	59	39.3	38	25.3

The findings from the interviews with teachers of English indicated that, teachers do not use Social-media for academic purposes with their students. The teachers strongly believe that Social-media negatively affects the students' spelling in English written assignments and they gave the following reasons; they find spelling mistakes in students' English assignments that can be attributed the use

of face book. students use short form of words which is the wrong spelling, most students tend to use the short form of a word that they are used to when communicating with friends, the messages and posts on Facebook does not really observe correct grammar rules as academic writing, thus continuous usage of short-forms and omitted punctuation and misspelt words, most posts on Facebook are not grammatically correct, most students prefer shortening of words to be able to communicate faster as long as the message has been passed, students use their leisure time on internet and Facebook as they use misspelt words, shortened vocabulary leading to a habit which is transferred to their academic writing and use of short forms of words, misspelt words and omitted or wrong punctuation.

The teachers of English mentioned examples of common short forms of English words that they find in students written assignments that can be attributed to the use of face book; *U* instead of you, *coz* instead of because, *b4* instead of before, *xo* instead of so, *thru* instead of through, *Btw* instead of by the way, *tho* instead of though, *av* instead of I have, *mom/dad* instead of mother/father, *bcoz* instead of because, *ur* instead of your, *b4* instead of before, *n* instead of and, *xo* instead of so, *Dea* instead of dear, *thnx* instead of thank you, *xo* instead of so, *Gret* instead of great, *gnite* instead of goodnight, *4got* instead of forgot, *pliz* instead of please, *4give* instead of forgive, *2moro* instead of tomorrow, *wen* instead of when, *nt* instead of not, and *gr8t* instead of great.

The researcher further conducted document analysis on students' composition books to counter check the data collected from the questionnaires and interviews. The researcher randomly selected composition exercise books and perused through to check on spelling mistakes. A total of 35 exercise books were selected in the selected schools and the spelling mistakes identified were recorded in a table. During analysis, the spelling mistakes were summarized in a table and frequencies and percentages of the spelling mistakes was calculated as indicated in table 4.2.

The researcher identified a variety of spelling mistakes such as; *coz* which is a short for instead of because 14(40%), *alot* in which the students combine separate words 8(20.0%), *whether* instead of weather which is confusion of homophones, *lose* instead of loose which is doubling letters, *wat* 4(11.4%) when the correct spelling is what, *principle* instead of principal 8(20.0%) which indicates Confusion of homonyms, *Their/They're* instead of there 7(20.0) in which the mistake was confusion of Homonyms, *properly* instead of probably 3(9.0%) which indicates inclusion of letters which don't affect sound of word, *escape goat* instead of scape goat 2(6.0%), and *intresting* instead of interesting 12(34.0%) which indicate mistake of omission of letters.

Table 4: Observed Spelling Mistakes

Common wrong usage by students as observed	Grammar Mistake	Correct Grammar/Correct usage	F	%
Coz	Short-form	Because	14	40
Alot	Combining separate words	A lot	8	23
Lose	Inclusion/Doubling letters	Loose	6	17.0
Whether	Confusion of homophones	Weather	9	26.0
Wat	Omission of letters	What	4	11.0
Principle	Confusion of homonyms	Principal	8	23.0
Like an angle	Wrong order of letters	Like an angel	4	11.0
Their/They're	Confusion of Homonyms	There	7	20.0
Beleive	Wrong order of letters	Believe	6	17.0
Properly	Inclusion of letters which don't affect sound of word	Probably	3	9.0
Escape goat	Misspell	Scape goat	2	6
Intresting	Omission of letters	interesting	12	34.0

Conclusion and Recommendations

Most respondents disagreed with the statement that the spelling check feature in face book helps students reduce spelling errors in English assignments. The students use short forms when commending on their friends post on face book. It was further established that most of the posts on Facebook are written in short form. Majority of the respondents agreed that they pay little attention to spellings when posting opinion on facebook, because friends care less about spelling mistakes. Most respondents agreed to get the meaning of shortened form of words used by their friends on Facebook. Most respondents agreed that they regularly use short forms of words when posting information on Facebook Social-media. The study established that sometimes students find themselves using the short forms of words when writing English assignments. Majority of the respondents agreed with the opinion that most of the opinions written on Facebook are presented in short forms. The students use short forms when commenting on their friends post on face book, these short forms negatively affects masterly of spelling. The study recommend that the students should write formal English in Facebook posts.

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