

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND SPELLING

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**Abstract:** Communication is a vital tool that enables interaction among people. The information and communication technology revolution has resulted in easy and free access to various social media sites that allow users to receive and send messages. However, because this revolution has altered the information world, it also threatens effective communication. This study examined the effect of social media English on students' spelling ability. The researchers recommended that for students to achieve effective communication, they should maintain the habit of clarity in their written communication and not rely on social media English.

**Keywords:** Social media English, abridged spellings, English Language, Effect, Undergraduates.

### INTRODUCTION

Alassiri (2014) posits that people become more dependent on media that satisfy their needs than on media that provide only a few. When people find pleasure in that particular medium that provides their needs, they will be more inclined to continue to use that medium. As the media and social system overlap, the media, therefore, have a substantial effect on its users who wholly depend on it to derive satisfaction. According to Asad and Mamun (2012), people live in a world where technologies evolve daily, and people adopt new information, lifestyles, languages, et cetera. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, Google Plus, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, and others are prevalent among young people and significantly influence them (Asad and Mamun) (2012). Young people believe that what they do on social media is a trend; if they follow those trends, people will think they are smart. However, there is evidence that social media impacts the language acquisition of young learners. Young people are now mostly connected with people through social media, so they are unintentionally or intentionally following the trend of language acquisition.

Thus, Alassiri (2014) argued in communication skills that spelling is a form of communication that falls under the written form of communication and also requires a combination of letters to form words, which then form sentences to pass across a message or exchange meaning. According to Alassiri (2014), spelling is the selection and arrangement of letters that form a word. Spelling is critical in communication because it creates words that aid in sharing meaning. The significance of correct spelling cannot be overstated; as correct spelling completes the communication circle through the meaning embedded in the correctly spelt word.

Most students today use different social media platforms to communicate, and incomplete or unpopular spelling seems to form the most common means of communication

as it is an informal communication style. For instance, 'Lol' (*Laugh Out Loud*), 'ILuv U' (*I Love You*), 'Cum' (*Come*), 'Hbd' (*Happy Birthday*), 'Llnp' (*Long Life And Prosperity*) 'U' (*You*), 'Tjn' (*In Jesus Name*), 'Omg' (*Oh My God*), 'Tok 2 Me' (*Talk To Me*), 'Twimc' (*To Whom It May Concern*). Other examples are 'Winer' (*Winner*) 'Brb' (*I Will Be Right Back*), 'Kising' (*Kissing*), 'Helo' (*Hello*), and 'Ppl' (*People*). The concern is that students who frequently use the abbreviated method of writing when online tend to practise the same method during formal writing in the classroom. To this effect, social media spelling is gradually taking over written communication and indirectly jeopardizing students' usage of the Standard English language. Therefore, this paper examined the effect of social media English on students' spelling ability and the pros and cons of the effect of social media English on students' writing ability.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Communication is a vital tool that people use to interact with one another. The information and communication technology revolution has resulted in easy and free access to various social media sites that allow users to receive and send messages. However, because this revolution has altered the information world, it also threatens effective communication. Communicators on social media use language that is pleasing or appealing to them at random. Many students are well-versed in social media, and because they are so immersed in it, they use languages that appeal to them, one of which is abridged spellings.

Abridged spellings on social media can sometimes cause the intended messages meaning distorted, resulting in communication failure. According to Mahmoud (2013), some researchers are concerned that abbreviations, word shortening, and other violations of grammar rules may cause unintentional meaning to standard English, resulting in future communication barriers. The communication cycle becomes distorted when there is a communication barrier, and the meaning is completely lost. One major issue with using abridged spellings in communication is the limited number of characters per message.

This limitation has impacted many undergraduates' written communication due to the need to be compacted to fit within this limit while communicating effectively on social media. Given that the use of social media language is common and prone to misunderstanding, there is a need to empirically investigate the effect of social media English on undergraduate spelling ability.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to:

- examine the extent to which Redeemer's university undergraduates use abridged spellings to communicate on social media.
- determine the effect of social media English on the spelling ability amongst Redeemer's university undergraduates
- ascertain the attitude of Redeemer's university undergraduates on using social media English for communication.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Salaudeen and Lawal (2019) investigated the impact of social media on the traditional writing skills of mass communication students at a private university in southwestern Nigeria. The study employed a multilevel sampling strategy that included purposive, stratification, and total population sampling. A total of 143 answer scripts from a first-year writing course in the

Department of Mass Communication were examined using content analysis. The study discovered that, in the case of mass communication students, social media does not have the same overwhelming negative impact on writing competence as it does on undergraduate students. According to the findings, other factors, such as writing training, interplayed with social media to cause poor writing competence among university undergraduates.

Osakue, Oluranti et al. (2018) investigated the impact of social media on the English writing abilities of Nigerian youths. Data was collected using 110 copies of a survey questionnaire distributed to selected students. FGDs with students, in-depth interviews with some tertiary institution lecturers, and the researchers' direct observation of the issue under investigation provided additional information. The study discovered that most youths adopted an English variant that cannot be found in the Standard English (SE) matrix or even the popular Nigerian English variant known as Pidgin English (PE). The study also discovered that expressions like 'u' for 'you' are incorrect. 'gr8t' for 'great,' 'ur/urs' for 'your/yours,' and other deviational patterns have crept into students' writing consciousness in classes and examinations, making a lot of 'sense' in informal settings among youths but smacking of sub-literacy in formal. Belal (2014) investigated the influence of digital social media on the writing and speaking of the tertiary level student. The study was conducted at eight private and public universities in Bangladesh. Sixteen teachers and 160 students were chosen from five private and three public universities in Bangladesh. The findings indicated that digital social media influences tertiary level students' writing and speaking, with the positive effects outweighing the adverse effects. The findings confirmed that students and teachers could create group discussions to exchange ideas, share course-related materials, and appeal to their students about assignments, which helps the students improve their writing and speaking skills. However, the findings confirmed that digital social media has a negative impact. Students unconsciously use short- form words, incorrect grammar, and sentence structure in their formal writing and speaking, which is a result of their increased familiarity with those types of language through digital social media.

Leman and Adamu (2021) also investigated the impact of social media English on the communication patterns of university undergraduates in Nigeria's North-Central Zone. The study used a sample size of 383 students. The findings revealed that the students were engaged in using social media English, even in formal settings. Further research revealed that social media English is preferred for communication among undergraduates. It was also discovered that the undergraduates are quite addicted to the use of social media English, which appears to have negatively impacted their communication patterns. The findings imply that social media English is prevalent among undergraduates and that if usage is not limited, graduates who do not know how to spell correctly or use proper English expressions, even in formal situations, will be produced.

### **The usage of English language in social media**

The use of language on social media sites is characterized by aspects of the language, to name a few, emoticons, acronyms, and vocabulary alteration. Acronym is a feature of language popularly used on social media. It is in which the initial letters of different words are put together and pronounced as a whole sentence in an abbreviated form. Tayo, Adebola, and Yahya (2019), states that the use of acronyms (abbreviation formed from the initial letters of

other words are pronounced as a word) are now commonplace substitutes to whole sentence, e.g., *lol* (*Laugh out loud and TGIF* (*thank God it's Friday*)). English Language used on social media is a variety that is undeniably different from Standard English language of everyday use. While Standard English is based on grammatical rules and accordance, language use on social media is indeed a complete opposite where it does not abide by any grammatical rules or accordance. Language use on social media is open to just any word for use as far as it makes meaning to the recipient. Nevertheless, language use on social media is in fact posturing a lot of threat to Standard English language usage as students nowadays don't take the writing of Standard English as seriously as they should. Tertiary students are expected to write and stay informed about what is happening around them. However, with social media, this appears to no longer be the case. Many tertiary students now devote significant time to online gossip and other trivial matters. Various studies have revealed that most students no longer enjoy writing fiction (Imade, Elogie and Ikenwe 2016). Furthermore, numerous studies have revealed that many students graduate from institutions with inadequate writing abilities, attributing this to the poor culture they developed during their university days (Anjugu, 2013). In most tertiary institutions, students do not cultivate the habit of writing, and those who do write do so only to pass their exams (Tahir, Shah, et al. (2021).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Procedure***

Focus group discussions were used in this study to collect crucial data. This method is used to get people's views and opinions on specific issues, for example, social media English (Kumar, 1987). Eight group interviews were conducted at Redeemer's university. These eight groups represented each department in the eight faculties (Engineering, Built Environmental Studies, Natural Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Law, Humanities, Management Sciences and Social Sciences). The departments are Mass Communication, English, Banking and Finance, Biochemistry, Law, Computer Science, Estate Management and Civil Engineering. Each group consisted of four participants, making a total number of 32 respondents. The rationale of the focus group discussion method was explained to the respondents; more specifically, the objectives of the study were clarified during the introduction sessions. The focus groups were conducted in English and lasted approximately 40 -45 minutes.

### ***Measurements***

Adopting a structured FGD guide ensured that each focus group session followed a consistent framework. The article's appendix contains a list of essential questions. The interview began with an opening question from the moderator, who asked which social media platforms the respondents were members of. This question aimed to get everyone talking and provide an overview of how the respondents used social media sites. This question was not meant to be included in the study. After the opening, a general introductory question asked respondents to give an example of social media English they could remember. This question aimed to ensure that the respondents were informed on the subject of the study.

### ***Discussion***

The first objective, examined the usage of abridged spellings by respondents to communicate on social media, findings revealed that social media English are commonly used among respondents. Lending credence to these findings, Belal (2014) asserts that a new

means of online communication has emerged with its idiosyncrasies. This new communication style occurs through the use of social media sites, and it is primarily seen and common young people. The findings of this study also agree with Osakue, Oluranti et al. (2018) that social media English or spellings have a significant effect on their users; most addicted users unconsciously transfer it from social platforms to formal writings.

### Conclusion

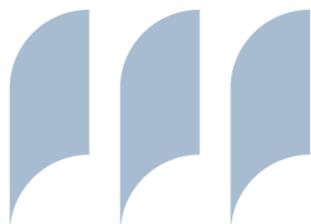
From the results gathered and analysed in this research work, it can be concluded that a reasonable number of respondents are addicted to using social media English, which has affected their spelling ability. This has affected their communication skills negatively, and because the English language has been abused, it has also led to poor spelling ability among the students. It can be concluded that students' motive for using social media to communicate ranges from the fact that it consumes less time and is very addictive and compelling. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that for students to achieve effective communication, they should maintain the habit of clarity in their written communication because communication cannot be comprehensible by using abridged spelling to communicate. However, it will instead affect their writing skills. It is also recommended that students should not depend on social media English with their accompanying spellings as the only mode of communication that is easier and time effective but should realize its negative influence on their writing skills.

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