

Impact of Technology on Youths: A Study of Emergence of New Forms of Communications among Nigerian Youths and their Challenges to Education and Language Learning

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Abstract

The English language plays a key role in Nigeria. It is a major means by which knowledge is impacted. As a result of the advancement in technology, the language has gained more recognition and has improved communication worldwide. However, many users especially the youths have abused the use of social networking. In the past, the poor performance of students in written English was attributed to inadequate motivation, teaching and learning environment, and lack of facilities. Today, other factors have emerged as a result of technological advancement and the internet. The spelling system of English is a major problem for the second language user community. New forms of written expressions among youths now compound this. The question is: what are the effects of social media on students' writing? The question was answered through a comparative review of the written text in social media and academic settings. Samples of Nigerian youths' written texts were collected via social media platforms, in addition to paragraph essays from various students in selected schools in Lagos. Findings indicate that youths use new forms of expressions in their social communication, which may not be understood by the older generation. Youths also do not abide by the grammatical rules in both formal and informal writings as reflected in their writings. Therefore, it is recommended that formal and non-formal writings should be taught comparatively in the classrooms to increase awareness of the new forms of expressions that infiltrate academic writings. Also, for a good quality of education to be promoted in Nigeria, teachers should discourage these new forms of technological expression among youths.

Key Words: Social networking, youths, essays, academic writings, English as a Second Language (ESL)

Introduction

There is no doubt that communication systems have improved worldwide. The telephone system, for example, has moved from analogue to digital, from digital to cellular and from cellular to Global System Mobile (GSM). Through this latest communication system,

information is passed from one location to another in ‘point to point’ communication. Ango explained that data is shared from one person to another in the classroom, or with billions of people around the world. This is made possible through the use of media (2016). Through social media, information is shared, sent and received.

One important tool of social media is a mobile phone. Mobile phones are used to store, play, display and record information (even in form of audio data), take photos and videos and access the internet. Whenever mobile phones are connected to the internet, they may be used for facebooking, skypeing, WhatsApping, twittering, etc. In other words, these media are accessed through mobile phones when they are connected to the internet. The internet was defined by Adigun et al as “a hugely complex mass of networks and computer systems linked together, all using common data transfer protocols to move information around from one location to another” (2013). Most people have access to the internet by subscribing to the Internet Service Provider (ISP), an organization that provides connectivity. This affords many youths easy access to the internet through which they make use of various social media.

The language of media is typically English. From observation, many youths send and receive information via social media in English despite the fact that they have their own local languages. English has become the predominant language of the internet communication and social media. In addition, English is the language of instruction in many African countries, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore, this language plays an important role in education. This language is used to provide and promote quality education. As a result of the role of English in Africa, many varieties of English have emerged. This, combined with advancements in social media, has produced a new form of communication in English, which I see as a coded language. This

language of youths is understood primarily only by themselves. It appears that social media has introduced new communication patterns and created new forms of expression among youths, hence the need for this study.

Statement of the Problem

In the past, factors such as inadequate motivation, teaching and learning environment, lack of facilities, etc. have been thought to contribute to the poor performance of students in English and other related subjects. Today, other factors have emerged as a result of advancement in social communication. In an attempt to communicate with friends via social networking, youths have created new forms of expression in order to shorten words and communicate as fast as possible. This is evident in their spelling system. I would like to point out that abbreviating words in taking notes and interacting socially is not bad, but it is a problem when incorporated into formal writings. As a teacher, I have examined students' scripts and found instances of using informal expressions in formal writings such as examinations.

Though social media and the use of mobile devices have improved social communication greatly, there are implications for students' performances in schools. Social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn etc. are used more often than expected. Others are fond of chatting with their friends at worship centers and churches. The use of these devices is so extensive that it infringes on time for study, thereby negatively impacting their education. It seems the culture of reading, which is bad in Africa, has become worse. Because of using the internet, students may not be thinking critically again. Some students commit plagiarism; they go online to copy their assignments and pretend to be the original writers. As a lecturer, I have caught some students committing this type of cybercrime.

If stakeholders in education want to develop students' cognitive abilities and cognitive skills, and encourage critical thinking, a drastic step must be taken to curb this problem resulting from advancement in technology. These ethical issues must be examined. Therefore, the study explores how youths use social networks in communication, with a focus on the contents and features of their language.

Literature Review

Communication, Social Media and Language

In the words of Williams (1989), communication is “(1) the exchange of symbols, common messages, information; (2) the process of exchange between individuals through a common system of symbols; (3) the art of expressing ideas, and (4) the science of transmitting information” (p.10).

It could be deduced from the above that communication does not only involve the transmission of messages from one person to another, but it also involves exchanging symbols, ideas and information. Irrespective of what is exchanged, communication occurs through language. Mahmud made it clear that, “Communication skills are the ability to use language (repressively) and express information (expressively), and these skills include lip-reading, finger spelling, sign language, and interpersonal relations” (2013, p.127). This shows that language plays a significant role in communication. Salami, Osoba and Fakoya even described it as “a means by which humans exchange ideas or pass on information” and “a tool for creating and maintaining interaction” (2000, p. 9).

Williams (1989) identified six levels of communication as intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, large group, organisational and mass communication. Intrapersonal is a

communication within one person while interpersonal is a communication between two persons. Small group (up to 25) and large group (more than 25) communication involves more than two people. Organisational communication, on the other hand, is a communication among a group of persons related to some type of business or administrative structure. The last level, mass communication, is from one person or a group of persons through media to large audiences.

Forms of Communication

Mahmud (2013) classified communication into four categories; verbal, written, non-verbal, and mediated communication. Mahmud's study focussed on non-verbal communication and written communication which “is a subset of non-verbal communication.” He further explained that “written communication reports on what writing is, how writing gets done, and what writing does in the world, consistently providing readers with new research findings, new theoretical concepts and new ways of understanding how writing is practised in schools, workplaces and communities” (Mahmud 2013, p.127). On writing, Pope (1998) states that ‘writing is the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of signs or symbols’. Writing is an important kind of communication.

Apart from writing, another kind of non-verbal communication is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC can be regarded as a media communication. It is defined “as the type of communication transaction that occurs via two or more computer networks” (Mahmud, 2013). Media communication falls under electronic media since mass media can be classified into the print and the electronic media. Adigun’s definition of data communication captures all kinds of electronic media. He described data communication as “the exchange of information in

any form ... over some kind[s] of an electrical communication system such as telephone lines and computer-based networks” (Adigun et al., 2013, p. 127).

Technology and Social Media

According to Godfrey (2014), electronic media includes radio, television, journalism, and the new electronic media platforms. The focus of this study is social media, which is a form of electronic media. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus defines social media as “websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone”.

In a simple way, Neal (2012) described social media as “the easy-to-use services that anyone can use to interact with other people online” (p. xxiii). This description is further explained by him that one is using social media when one is watching or commenting on YouTube videos, liking a friend’s Facebook update and reaching a colleague’s blog. In other words, using social media involves all activities that one performs online. Also, it must be noted that many people are active social media users today. This fact was supported by Carrigan who explained that there are more than one billion Facebook users – 1,425,892 (2016, 2) which is more than one-third of the internet users. This encourages global communication.

According to Ango (2016), “... communication technology has turned the world into a global village” (p.198). This shows that social networking is a universal phenomenon and has helped greatly in sharing ideas from point to point. Amedie explained the importance of social media thus:

Through social media, anyone online is empowered by an unrestricted flow of information to add to their knowledge bank. In today's world, it is undeniable that social media plays an important role in impacting our culture, our economy and our overall view of the world. Social media is a new forum that brings people to

exchange idea, connect with, relate to, and mobilize for a cause, seek advice, and offer guidance. Social media has removed communication barriers and created a decentralized communication channel and open the door for all to have a voice and participate in a democratic fashion including people in repressive countries. This media outlet accommodates a wide variety spontaneous, formal, informal, scholarly and unscholarly writings to flourish. It enables common interest-based groups such as students to work in a collaborative group project outside of their class. It fosters creativity and collaboration with a wide range of commentators on a number of issues such as education, the economy, politics, race, health, relationships... (Amedie, 2015 p. 3).

It is worth noting that Amedie mentioned education in his explanation, demonstrating the importance of social media to education. It is useful for both scholars and students. Also, social media should be seen as tools or platforms for reaching the world of academics through teaching and learning. It is possible today, for instance, for a teacher in London to be coaching a student in Nigeria through any of the social media platforms. On education, Neal is of the opinion that academics should care about social media in the process of educating students. He also emphasised the need to incorporate social technologies into our classes and our student communications (Neal 2012, xxvi).

Ango (2016) noted, “While the tremendous advances in science and technology being experienced in the world have brought untold advantages to humanity, there have also been numerous negative consequences of such developments” (p. 197). In order to establish the fact that social media have disadvantages, Amedie identified three negative impacts of social media thus:

First, social media fosters a false sense of online “connections” and superficial friendships leading to emotional and psychological problems. The Second harm of social media is that it can become easily addictive taking away family and personal time as well as diminish interpersonal skills, leading to antisocial behaviour. Lastly, social media has become a tool for criminals, predators and terrorists enabling them to commit illegal acts. And the third analysis will consist

of showing the link between the psychological problems caused by social media and criminal activities committed. (2015, p. 4)

As clearly shown above, social media cause problems for some of their users. Many people have been duped through the use of social media. Also, many have lost their interpersonal relationships with family members since they prefer to be chatting online instead of relating to their family.

In addition, Ehmke in her article identified 'Cyberbullying' and 'the imposter syndrome' as problems of social media on teenagers. She quoted Wick who explained that, "Kids text all sorts of things that you would never in a million years contemplate saying to anyone's face" (Ehmke, 2018, p.5). This assertion is supported by Murthy (2018) who wrote that "Social media (from mainstream platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to organization-specific tools) have become increasingly pervasive" (p.1). Murthy is right in his observation because it is not uncommon today to check the social media and discover evils committed by these media users.

Evolution of English

English as a language can be traced to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language. Before one can talk about Modern English, it is necessary to trace it to its origin because Modern English is a combination of the old and the new English. There are three periods of English, namely: Old English, Middle English and Modern English. It is explained in *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, Deluxe edition, that Old English was influenced by Anglo-Saxon dialects. Old English is different in terms of spelling, sound, grammar and vocabulary. Some of the Old English words are *stana* (stone), *nama* (name), *forgyf* (forgive), *dag* (dog), and *gyltas* (guilt). During this period, the English language was characterised by highly inflected endings. In the Middle English period, there was

a great reduction in word inflections. During this period, English was influenced by the French language. French words were incorporated into English. Such words include *reign, court, clergy, faith, sculpture, palace, pillar, beef, etc.*

Today, English is the primary language of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia. These communities use this language to communicate or express their thoughts, feelings and ideas in their various environments. As a result of colonialism, trade and commerce, and missionary activities, English moved to African countries including Nigeria (Adegbola, 2005).

English as the Language of Social Media

The fact that English plays a major role in the language of social media cannot be over-emphasised. In Nigeria, the English language performs many functions. It is used in various transactions. It is the language of education, politics, commerce, religion and social media. Awonusi (2009) clearly stated that “a world that is becoming increasingly dependent on technology has come to rely on the use of English” (p.36). To him, the advancement of science and technology has helped in the global advancement of English. Awonusi in another article further classified the use of English in mass media into the print and the electronic media. Even in social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, English is often used by the users to exchange information and ideas. In this line, Akere described English as the language that is used for enacting many social relationships.

On the language of social media, Carrigan cautioned that the fact that the social media are exercising such an influence over language should not be a surprise. As pointed out by Carrigan, the meanings of existing words are changing, including words like ‘astroturfing’ and ‘stock

puppet’ that are now internet words and have been included in the dictionary. He also mentioned some syntax of social media such as ‘@’ and ‘#’ which are used to address a user and to indicate a hashtag respectively. Frederick Williams is even of the opinion that, “The new technologies are changing the way we humans communicate” (Williams, 1989, p. 16).

Procedure

As this study investigated the impact of social media on youths’ writing, the data were drawn from Nigerian youths’ conversations collected from social media platforms – Facebook and WhatsApp – and written texts from selected senior secondary students in Ipaja-Ayobo area of Lagos State.

From social media platforms, some youths’ chats on the internet were examined. In getting data from the selected schools, two secondary schools (a public and a private school) were chosen. In each school, students in the senior classes were chosen. It is believed that these students are mature enough to write meaningfully on any given topic. Also, only the students who showed interest were allowed to participate in the written exercise. In the two schools, a total number of forty-five students were involved. The students were given three simple topics to choose from to write a paragraph essay. This afforded students the opportunity to express themselves on a subject most comfortable to them. The topics included: (1) My best teacher (2) My Facebook page (3) My favourite meal. Write-ups were collected and analysed with a focus on expressions and grammar.

Results and Discussion of Findings

1. The Use of English in Social Media Platforms

From the data collected via Facebook and WhatsApp, it was discovered that youths use these platforms to exchange information, ideas and congratulatory messages as shown in texts 1, 2 and 3. Their chats are also characterised by abusive and incomprehensible language. In their expressions they use abbreviations, slang, code mixing, wrong use of punctuation marks and words, and make frequent grammatical errors.

Good wishes

Social media platforms are used by youths to greet, congratulate especially on their birthdays and to ask after one another's welfare as shown thus:

Text 1

A: Happy Sunday
 B: Same to u
 A: How is the day going?
 B: Its going on fyn
 A: Gud

Text 2

A: good morning to u all
 B: xame

Text 3

A: ... long time hw are u doing
 B: Bro am fine, happy new year.
 A: Tnxan same to u
 B: I don't see u in church nwwer did u go
 A: Please we will chat some other times, am running out of battery now
 B: Ok bro

In Texts 1, 2 and 3, the interlocutors were exchanging greetings and asking each other how things were. Expressions like good morning, thanks, happy birthday, etc. are regarded by Aijmer (1996) as the formulae of social exchange. They are forms of communication used to perform social functions such as greetings. The word 'please' in Text 3 is used as an apologising expression.

Abusive language

Apart from using social media platforms for social functions, the data collected also indicated that youths use abusive language among themselves. In Text 4, the first speaker told the second that he had ‘goat teeth’. In response, the second person called the other one ‘Ode’. This is a Yoruba word that means ‘stupid’.

Text 4

A: We no u have goatteeth but that does not mean u we be sending it biko

B: *Ode*

Incomprehensible language

Apart from using abusive language, it was also observed that some conversations in the data collected could not be understood. One may be wondering what ‘baddo’ and ‘qIssaval tins’ mean.

Text 5

A: Georgexybaddo

B: qIssaval tins.....Wanna go out buh m alone, looking for bae to take out.

This buttresses our assumption that youths’ social language is understood among themselves. They are fond of adding extra letters (which are suffixes that are not meaningful in English) to some words to create a special effect on their communication and to restrict the meaning of their conversations to themselves alone. In speaker A’s chat, the two words – Georgexybaddo – can be broken down to ‘George’ and ‘-xy’ and ‘bad’ and ‘do’. Could it be said that the speaker was telling the other person – George – that he is bad? If that be the case, how do we account for the suffix *xy* in English and ‘do’ which is a verb? All these point to the fact they have created new forms of communication.

Abbreviations and slang

Youths' conversations are full of slang and abbreviations. It would be even difficult for any adult who is not familiar with their expressions to understand their languages. For instance, in Text 6, 'Ly' and 'Lol' are slang used as chat abbreviations for 'love you' and 'lots of love'. Words – *nid*, *yr*, *pix*, *tnx* and *u* – in the same text should be noted. They are not slang, but they are shortened, reflecting the emergence of new communication in social media.

Text 6

A: Hey, I nidyrpix
 B: for what, u idiot
 A: Ly
 B: Lol
 A: Tnx

The use of abbreviations in new media communication can be grouped into two – acronyms and reduction. Acronyms are words formed from the initial letters of some words. This definition goes with slang identified in our texts. Other slang expressions found in this category are *Lmao* (laughing my ass off), *Smh* (shaking my head), *hbd* (happy birthday), *nbd* (no big deal), *ptl* (praise the Lord), *ily* (I love you), *o4u* (only for you), *rl* (real life) and *rw* (real world). These abbreviations in our text are regarded as reduction since they are not acronyms; they are individual words reduced by removing one or more letters. More examples in the texts are *Bae* (baby), *bcos* (because), *hv* (have), *rly* (really), *4eva* (forever),

It must also be pointed out that in abbreviating words in an online communication; numbers are also used as *o4u* and *4eva*. More examples are in sentences (1) and (2) where '4' stands for 'for', '2' for 'to', '9te' for 'night' and 'any1' stands for 'anyone'.

1. 4 9te again..... I kno go talk
2. any1 who fail 2 try d path 2 sucesswil remain poor 2 his grave, whil 2 b sucess...

Code mixing

In Nigerian youths' conversations analysed, there are instances of code mixing. Code mixing is a situation whereby a speaker combines two or more different languages when speaking or writing. That is, English is used with indigenous Nigerian languages and Pidgin. This is evident in the sentences below.

3. I know GOD is always with u n u don't hv choice than to give him d glory' ijoope mi re e' on ur behave, HBD pa'di mi.
4. Lmao...abiooo
5. We no u have goat teeth but that does not mean u we be sending it biko

In sentences (3) and (4), there is a mixture of English and Yoruba languages in each sentence. In sentence (3), 'ijoope mi ree' is in Yoruba which means 'Here is my dance of praise.' In sentence (4), 'abi' is a kind of exclamation used in reaction to a conversation. The last sentence (5) contains an Ibo word 'biko' which means 'please'.

Inclusion/exclusion of punctuation marks and capitalisation

In the texts analysed, punctuation marks were used, but not at all where they are expected. Almost all the data collated did not have appropriate terminal punctuation marks especially a full stop as shown in sentences (7) and (8). Additionally, an apostrophe is omitted in sentence (8). *Its* is used as a possessive determiner instead of *it's* (it is). The social media users do not care to end their conversations. In sentence (6), an ellipsis sign was misused. This kind of punctuation marks is indicated by three dots (...) to show that an item has been omitted. However, in our data, more than four dots were used. This is also true of sentence (1).

Also, a correct sentence must start with a capital letter. On the contrary, many of our data samples were missing a capital letter at the start, and within a sentence where needed. Sentences (7) and (9) buttress our point. Non-compliance with the convention of punctuation marks and

capitalisation by social media users “may be due to the constraint of space and need to save money. It could also be because the writers are ignorant of the marks” as explained by Babalola (2010, p. 467).

6. qIssaval tins.....Wanna go out buh m alone, looking for bae to take out.
7. borrow me your bae
8. Its going on fyn
9. he said it would have been better if she was about 26 up but he likes her.

Wrong use of words

In the texts gathered, we also found that some words were wrongly used. For instance, in sentence (9), *there* is wrongly used for *their* which is a possessive determiner to indicate ownership or possession of *face*. Similarly, in sentence (10), two words were written as one. The word *rudeboi* should be separated into two to read “rude boi” (boy).

10. Please ooo this group is for the people to be sending there face
11. U look at meu see a rudeboi. But He looks at me.....and He says am a Heir!

Grammatical errors

Grammar deals with the correct formation of sentences. In the sentences below, grammatical errors occur because the rules of grammar are not taken into consideration. A singular third person verb ‘is’ is used with ‘u’ (you). In English, ‘you’ as a pronoun is conjugated with the irregular. So, in these sentences, the correct form of the verb ‘are’ should be used.

12. Tnx how is u
13. Babe,how'su?

2. Analysis of Students’ Written Texts

In order to complement our findings from social media study, we carried out a survey in both public and private schools in Lagos. Some students were asked to write a paragraph essay each on any of the given topics. From the texts collected, we discovered some of the errors identified in social media communication were also found in students' scripts. These are presented below:

Wrong use of words

It could be said that some students do not know the difference between 'his' (possessive determiner) and 'is' (verb). In sentences (14) to (17), both were used wrongly. 'His' is used in sentences (14) and (15) instead of 'is' while it is used in sentence 16 instead of 'he's' or he is. In sentence (16), two words – *he* which was used as the subject and *is* as the verb – were joined together to form one – his. In sentence (17), 'is' is used instead of 'his'. This shows that some students are confused about the usage of both 'his' and 'is'.

14. He his dark in complexion.
15. He his married with children.
16. His kind and generous.
17. In is test, if you get less than 9, he will beat us.
18. ... who have joined us as learned so much from stories ...

In addition, in sentence (18), another word 'as' which can function as a conjunction, a preposition or an adverb was used as a verb. It seems the student wanted to write 'has' which is not a correct form of the verb to be used in that context. It should be 'have'. The above sentences may be corrected thus:

- ✓ He is dark in complexion.
- ✓ He is married with children.
- ✓ He is kind and generous.
- ✓ In his test, if you get less than 9, he will beat us.
- ✓ ... who have joined us have learned so much from stories.

Punctuation and capitalisation errors

As clearly shown in the social media communication analysed in this study, some youths do not care about the rules of punctuations in their conversations, this is also evident in their essay writings. This assertion was noted by Babalola (2010) who explained that students' texts featured "bizarre punctuation conventions ranging from non-use and deletion of important marks like stops, comma, question mark, colon [and] semi-colon". In this study, the punctuation errors identified in students' texts collected included:

19. iove the food because of it's nutritional value....
20. My favourite meal, is Black Amala and Ewedu soup.
21. I like him because he. is highly intelligent...
22. He Plays With Us Very Well ...

In sentence (19), an apostrophe (') was wrongly used. Instead of using the possessive form 'its', a contraction form 'it's' of 'it is' or 'it has' is used. Moreover, in sentence (20), a comma is inserted after the subject of the sentence. The use of a comma in this context is redundant because there should not be a separation between the subject and the verb 'is'. Similarly, a full stop is redundant after 'he' in sentence (21). The correct versions of sentences (19), (20) and (21) are:

- ✓ I love the food because of its nutritional value...
- ✓ My favourite meal is black Amala and Ewedu soup.
- ✓ I like him because he is highly intelligent...

Apart from the wrong use of punctuation marks, it was discovered as well that there are capitalisation errors in the texts gathered. Examples are in sentences (19) and (22) where small and capital letters were used wrongly. In sentence (19), 'i' should be written in capital letter. In English, every sentence must start with a capital letter. In addition, 'I' as a pronoun should be

written in capital letter wherever it occurs in a sentence. In sentence (22), all words were written in initial capital. Each word began with a capital letter without minding the convention as noted by Hodges and Whitten (1986) that words are capitalised according to the standard convention.

Hence, sentence 22 may be corrected thus:

- ✓ He plays with us very well ...

Concord errors

Concord simply means agreement; agreement that relates to the form in which the different parts of a sentence relate with one another. In the data collected students did not consider the rules of concord as shown below:

- 23. She have four children. (has)
- 24. Mrs. Nwosu do concentrate on her work. (does)
- 25. It nourish the body. (nourishes)

In these sentences, all the subjects – She, Mrs. Nwosu and It – are singular; therefore, their verbs should be singular as well. However, the writers used plural verbs – have, do and nourish in that order. This shows that some students do not know the rules of concord. The correct forms of words are enclosed in brackets.

Run-on sentence or comma splice error

A run-on sentence is a sentence in which two or more main clauses are brought together without an appropriate punctuation mark or conjunction as shown in sentence (29). Before ‘I’ there should be a conjunction or an appropriate punctuation mark to separate the clause in which ‘I’ occurs from another. Similarly, there are comma splices in our texts. A comma splice occurs

when two independent clauses are joined with a comma as demonstrated by the writers of sentences (26), (27) and (28); their clauses are separated by commas.

- 26. My name is ShaibuRazaq, my facebook page is something I cannot do without.
- 27. She is short and fat, she is fair in complexion, she is teaching us Economics.
- 28. My Ajayi is a kind and loving teacher, he communicates well with his students.
- 29. ... and have done well both in life and in their education I hope you can join us on the group.

Their corrections are:

- ✓ My name is Shaibu Razaqand my Facebook page is something I cannot do without.
- ✓ She is short and fat, fair in complexion and she is teaching us Economics.
- ✓ My Ajayi is a kind and loving teacher and he communicates well with his students.
- ✓ ... and have done well both in life and in their education. I hope you can join us in the group.

Other errors

Other errors that must be pointed out are fragments (incomplete sentences) and number errors. It was also observed that some students wrote fragments. An example is ‘Dark in complexion.’ This unit of grammar was written as a complete sentence whereas it is a phrase. Another error is non-pluralisation of count nouns as shown in this sentence:

- 30. There are many good teacher.

The word ‘teacher’ should be pluralised to read ‘teachers’.

Conclusion

This study explored how youths use social media platforms in communication. It studied new communication patterns among them and examined the effects of social media on students’ writing. The purpose of the study was achieved by examining youths’ chats on Facebook and WhatsApp. This was complemented by senior secondary students’ essay writing.

From the findings, it is interesting to note that social media platforms are used by youths to perform social functions that help to establish interpersonal relationships among themselves. However, their language is incomprehensible, complicated by the use of abbreviations and slang classified into acronyms and reduction. Acronyms in new media communication include *Lmao*, *Smh*, *hbd*, *nbd*, *ptl*, *ily*, *o4u*, *rl* and *rw* while examples of reduction abbreviations are: *Bae*, *bcos*, *hv*, *rly*, and *4eva*. Our findings also revealed that the social media users do not observe grammatical rules and punctuation conventions in their conversations. In the same vein, similar errors were found in students' essays analysed. These errors include punctuation and capitalization errors, concord errors, run-on sentence and comma splice errors, and wrong use of words.

Therefore, it could be concluded that new forms of communication have really emerged among youths as a result of advancement in technology and social media, and these have greatly influenced their writings. There is no doubt that non-observance of grammatical and punctuation rules in social media communication pose a threat to youths' education, particularly in their academic writing.

Recommendations

Education stakeholders and parents should be aware of the new forms of communication that have emerged among youths. Hence, there is a need to teach both formal and non-formal writings comparatively in the classrooms to increase awareness of the new forms of expressions that infiltrate academic writings. For a good quality of education to be promoted in Nigeria, teachers should discourage these new forms of technological expression among youths. Also, parents should be intentional in encouraging their children to use social media for academic

purposes. They may also buy books that can help their children to learn how to use social media for academic and research purposes. As for youths, they should engage one another on the internet by sending and receiving information that will help them improve in their studies especially in English because this language plays a major role in writing and in studying other subjects. They should converse about the subjects they are taught in schools whenever they want to interact on social media platforms and endeavour to write well and meaningfully for their own good. They should apply critical thinking in social media communication as advocated by Carrigan (2016) that one should think about why one is using social media before one starts it. He advises the users to “Make a list of the audiences [they] want to reach. Think about why [they are] taking a significant amount of time to post and chatter. What’s in it for [them]? And what’s in it for [their] audience?” (p. 115). Following Carrigan’s advice will be of great help to social media users and help them to write well.

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