



Digital Social Media and English Writing Skills: Students' Perceptions in an EFL Context

Ima Muslimah 

English Education Department, Muhammadiyah University of Enrekang, Indonesia

Correspondent Email: imamuslimah131116@gmail.com

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CORRESPONDENCE:

Ima Muslimah

imamuslimah131116@gmail.com

Universitas Muhammadiyah
Enrekang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digital social media has become an increasingly important platform for language learning, particularly in supporting students' English writing development. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of digital social media use in developing their English writing skills. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving 14 students from the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: social media use, preference for short-form words, grammar use, and bilingual word use. The findings revealed that students had positive perceptions of digital social media as a supporting medium for English writing. Most students frequently used social media in their daily activities and for academic purposes. They also considered social media useful for accessing English content, communicating with others, and practicing written English. The results showed that 71.4% of students were aware of grammar use when writing on social media, while 92.9% stated that social media helped improve their grammar. However, students also reported several challenges, including the frequent use of short-form words, bilingual expressions, and grammatical errors that may influence formal essay writing. Overall, the study indicates that digital social media provides valuable opportunities for students to practice English writing, expand vocabulary, and develop grammar awareness. Nevertheless, students need guidance to use social media more critically and academically so that informal writing habits do not negatively affect formal English writing performance.

KEYWORDS

Digital social media; students' perceptions; English writing skills; grammar awareness; EFL students

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INTRODUCTION

English becomes among the language that incorporates a huge role within the world. It is called the language of international communication. Because of this standing, many individuals are learning and making an attempt to accumulated it so they ready to

communicate with additional individuals worldwide and use it in their daily live. Moreover, recently people prefer the written form of communication in accessing information to the oral communication. Most English learners seem to agree that writing is the most difficult skill to master. Students low interest and lack

ability in writing their ideas with the use of correct grammar, vocabulary, diction, and punctuation are some indicators showing the unsuccessful of teaching writing especially in writing (Pratama & Hartono, 2020).

Social media are basically media which are used through various electronic, usually rechargeable, devices like mobile phone, computer, tablets, and many other ways to facilitate people sharing their ideas with others in an easy and systematic way. Social media are useful for communicating and sharing knowledge because they reach high of usability, and facilitate the users as compare to other sources. In education, social media play roles in language learning because they provide opportunities to English language learners to improve their language.

Social media may be outlined as web-based and mobile technologies used for communication. In English language teaching, the use of social media has evolved the years. According to Zheng, Yim, Warschauser (2018) writing via social media can provide opportunities for English learners communicate with native speaker and practice their written language in authentic and motivating ways. Wiki or blog have been mainly used for collaborative writing, facilitating writing, and also the use of YouTube in classroom teaching. Besides, the uses of social media in teaching and learning writing have the advantages for both the teachers and the students. Some teachers have got a lot of benefits from social media for their teaching activities by making use of them. Students may use YouTube to learn by watching, or Instagram and Facebook to express their idea through writing descriptive.

According to Sakkir & Abrar (2018), one of the strategies that are

interesting for students in writing is social media. This media is expected to increase students' interest and motivation in writing. In fact, the integration of formal and informal learning has been suggested as a way to enhance formal language learning in writing skill.

College students are more likely to access social networking sites on the internet on their campus than elsewhere. It is clear that most students are connected to digital social media and they spend most of their time on these social networking sites. Therefore, there is no doubt that digital social media influence student writing. Thus, students get a platform to be able to practice writing skills through digital social media.

Based on the observation on the writer did to the writing classroom of the second semester of Muhammadiyah University of Enrekang, most of the students had less in writing. It was because they considered writing as a difficult thing to do. Most of the students stated that was difficult to start writing. The student found it hard to start writing because they had no idea about what to write. On the other hand, there were also students who had million thoughts and feeling to be written. However, they cannot write it because they do not know how to start it. Referring to the research background, the purpose of this research is to find out the students' perception of digital social media towards the student's English writing skill.

METHOD

This research was a qualitative research in the form of case study that found out the students' perception of digital social media towards the students' English writing skill. Qualitative research involves collecting

and analyzing preliminary non-numerical data obtained from observations, interviews, tapes, documents, and the like. This study conducted in the second semester of English Education Department in Muhammadiyah University Enrekang with 14 students. This research used a questionnaire as an instrument consisted of four sections (A-D). Section A was the usage of social media which consisted of five questions (1-5), section B was the preferences on short form words which consisted of five questions (6-10), section C was the usage of grammar which consisted of five questions (11-15), section D was the usage of Bilingual words which consisted of five questions (16-20).

In this research, the instrument used by the researcher was questionnaire to collect the data via online used Google form. The question about the influence of digital social media in writing that adapted from a research conducted by Subair S., Tayo (2019) which was designed and validated instrument entitled "Social Media Usage and Influence Questionnaire (SMUI-Q)". Closed ended question are questions that can only be answered by selected from a limited number of options, usually multiple-choice questions with a single word answer "yes or no".

Data analysis is organizing and sorting data into patterns, categories, and basic units of description so that themes can be found and a working hypothesis process can be formulated, as provided by the data. The data analyzed based on the questionnaire results. The results of the questionnaire analyzed in three stages; data reduction; data display; and conclusion or data verification.

RESULT

This chapter discussed the finding of the research about the impact of social media towards student English writing. There were fourteen students at Muhammadiyah University of Enrekang, who had become informants of this research. In order to collect the data, the researcher provides a questionnaire that was carried out in two days on June 13-14 2022. After that, the researcher analyzed the result of the data by using theory from Huberman & mile, 1999.

The steps of data analyzed are data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. After reducing the data, namely grouping and reducing unnecessary data, then proceed to the next step, namely data presentation. This step will show data about the students' perception of social media toward students' English writing. After presented the data, it makes conclusion and verifies the data. In last steps is conclusion or explain based on the data that has been reduced and displayed. In conclusion the researcher found several impact social media towards students' English writing. The impacts were elaborated as follows:

1. *The usage of social media*

The data founded related to the usage of social media are gathered based on the answer of questionnaire number 1-5 that elaborated as follows:

Table 1. Students' perception towards the usage of social media

No	Statement	Yes	No
1.	I frequently use social media in a daily basis	92,9	7,1
2.	I frequently use social media for my academic purposes	78,6	21,4
3.	I am aware of the	92,9	7,1

	impact of social media usage		
4.	I do not mind being without the usage of social media	35,7	64,3
5.	I prefer social media more than books for academic purposes	57,1	42,9

2. The preferences on short form words

The data founded related to the preferences on short form words are gathered based on the answer of questionnaire number 6-10 that elaborated as follows:

Table 2. The preferences on short form words

No	Statement	Yes	No
6.	I frequently use short form words while typing in the social media	85,7	14,3
7.	I prefer the usage of short form words while typing the in social media	92,9	7,1
8.	I find it more comfortable and easier to use short form words in chatting	78,6	21,4
9.	I seldom make errors in essay writing due to the usage of short form words	57,1	42,9
10.	It became a habit to use short form words in English essay writing	50	50

3. The usage of grammar

The data founded related to the usage of grammar are gathered based on the answer of questionnaire number 11-15 that elaborated as follows:

Table 3. The usage of grammar

No	Statement	Yes	No
11.	I am really concerned about my grammar while using social media	71,4	28,6

12.	I improve my grammar through the usage of social media	92,9	7,1
13.	My friends from social media frequently point out my grammar errors in post or on chats	50	50
14.	I am only concerned about the message received and not about the grammar usage of my social media friends	78,6	21,4
15.	I frequently make grammar errors in my English writing due to social media usage	92,9	7,1

4. The usage of Bilingual words

The data founded related to the usage of bilingual words are gathered based on the answer of questionnaire number 15-20 that elaborated as follows:

Table 4. The usage of Bilingual words

No	Statement	Yes	No
16.	I frequently use bilingual while chatting on social media	42,9	57,1
17.	I understand better when I read posts from social media in bilingual	78,6	21,4
18.	I find comfort with the usage of bilinguals in social media	78,6	21,4
19.	I seldom face difficulties in writing suitable words in English	50	50
20.	I frequently make errors in essay writing due to the usage of bilingual words	100	0

DISCUSSION

In this section the researcher analyzed the data in order found the answer of the research problem regarded the students' perception of digital social media towards the students English writing skill that obtained from students at English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University of Enrekang

academic year 2022-2023. The data were obtained by using questionnaire as the main instrument. This research provided students demographic information to collect personal data of students from 14 students who has chosen by purposive sampling. The questionnaire included some question to provide some information about students in using social media. The questionnaire used as the main instrument in this research that consist of 20 question which can be classified into 4 section. First section is about *the usage of social media*.

This question was showed the questionnaire number 1 along with the students' response with the result 92% students used social media. The responses indicated that the majority of students at English Education Study Program Muhammadiyah University of Enrekang familiar and have a high interest with internet and social media. In line with statement by Akbari, et al (2012), said that social media sites fulfil the enthusiastic young generation user especially university student because they can use social media to share important moments of their lives or to share their ideas, opinion, and beliefs freely with their family, friends, and colleagues.

Based on the result finding in questionnaire number 2 about the social media in academic purpose, the data showed that 72% student used social media to their purpose academic. Social media provided fun learning resources so that it made students to interested leaning. Through social media the students can connect and communicative with their friends and other people around the world. In addition, Students can increase and exchanged information or knowledge by social media with other people. The

used of social media in education provided students with the ability to get more useful information, to connect with learning group and to do their assignment using the social media (Talaue,G.M,2018).

Based on the findings of the questionnaire number 3, about 92, 9% student aware toward the impact of social media usage and 64, 3% student have no aware of the impact of social media usage. The social media was not new things for students and that they used social media for academic purpose and self-expression. The student should be aware of the fact that over indulgence in social media addictive and time wasting. The habit in using social media can distract students from their academic work, adversely affect their academic performance, social interactions, and sleep duration, and lead to a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity, which in turn can render them vulnerable to no communicable diseases and mental health problem. It was related to the result by Timothy Adekonojo (2019) stated many students use the social media for the purpose of group discussion and tutorial, maintaining communication with friends and also use for sourcing current material for assignment but a significant of the students claimed that using social media reduces their time in spend studying, and some are distracted in classroom.

Based on the analysis of all the questions from the questionnaire number 1-5 it can be concluded that the student's perception toward the usage of social media is very positive. 93% of students are use social media in daily basis, the students also use social media for academic purposes and they prefer used social media more than books for academic purposes.

The second section on the findings is about *the preferences on short form words*. Based on the result of the questionnaire number 6, The students frequently used short form words (85,7%), questionnaire number 7, that students prefer used short form words (92,9%), and questionnaire number 8, that students are comfortable and easy to used short form words (78,6%) while writing in social media. The short form word was text abbreviations which is shortened versions of the word's phrases used. Short forms are used to save the time, avoid typing and ensure social media posts stay within a certain character limit. It was related to the result by Milana Abbasova (2019) stated that due to social media, the use of shortening increased rapidly and brought new spelling styles into the English language. However, based on the result of the questionnaire number 9 (57,1%) student make errors in essay writing due to the usage of short form words. It happens because when they write essay sometime unconsciously, they use short form in their writing. Most the student use short form in their essay because there is spelling checker in the computer. On the other hand, the students use simple sentence on their writing and there is no literary writing and sometimes it is monotonous to read their writing and there are lots of spelling mistakes because they don't care about misspelling of words.

Based on the analysis of all the questions from the questionnaire number 6-10 it can be concluded that the students are tend to used short form word in writing in social media. The students are more comfortable in using short form words in writing because it makes it easier for them and save the time.

The third section was containing *the usage of grammar*. Based on findings on questionnaire number 11, Majority of

the students think that they are conscious about their grammar while using social media (71,4 %) which help them to improve their writing skill. Although social media benefit the students as a source of communication between them and their lecturer, the addiction and over-participation of students can bring positive impact to their grammar competence since they are focusing more time to write and communicative with checking through their usage grammar. Social media was promoting bad grammar because students because people accustomed to writing colloquially when they write structured essays.

In English writing, 92,9% (questionnaire number 13) students frequently made grammar error due social media usage. Students are not careful about their grammar while talking to their friends in the social media and there are abundant uses of social media for communication, so it creates a greater impact on the use of grammar. The incorrect usage of grammar while writing on social media compromise the grammar competence of its users and leads to a domino effect incorrect grammar (Mahmud 2014).

Based on the analysis of all the questions from the questionnaire number 11-15 it can be concluded that the students are really concerned about grammar while using social media. Based on the data, student's grammar is improving through the usage of social media.

The last section of the findings is *the usage of Bilingual words* which is consist of 5 question. Based on the finding shows 78,6% (questionnaire number 18) comfort with the usage of bilingual's in social media. A bilingual refers to the alternative of two languages, English and Indonesia which happen during using social media. A bilingual has a positive effect on students for avoid

misunderstanding in social media. Students will be better when student read posts from social media in bilingual because Students sometimes use bilingual to translate and check spelling of several words during their use social media. However, students frequently make errors in essay writing due to the usage bilingual words in social media. The social media only translate the language by word then it's causing students difficulties in writing suitable words in English and difficult when writing on essays using grammatical correctness.

Based on the analysis of all the questions from the questionnaire number 16-20 it can be concluded that, the students are comfortable to used bilingual in social media, although the students often make mistakes in essay writing due to the use of bilingual words.

Overall, based on the conclusion data founded, the questionnaire contains 4 section which can be concluded as follows; First, students are frequently use social media in a daily basis and for academic purposes. Second, students frequently use and comfortable with using short form words in social media. Third, student's grammar is improved through the usage of social media. Fourth, students are comfortable to use bilingual in social media. Thus, it can be stated that the use of social media has positive perception to English writing students.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, students have a positive perception of the used of social media for English writing skill. They stated that social media provides an endless supply of English content with enable them to keep practicing their English skill specially writing, enlarges

their vocabulary, and increase their grammar. Further, as students can learn English from many ways in social media, especially for their academic purposes. Through social media the students can connected and communicated with their friends and other people to get more useful information for their academic purposes. The students also stated that, they are more comfortable to used short form word and used bilingual word in social media, because it makes it easier for them and save the time, although they often make mistakes in essay writing due to the used of bilingual words. Hence, the positive perceptions of the students show the potential on used social media as additional support for learning English in order to increase students' abilities in English language learning.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were: 1) The student should be sensitized on the purposive of used social media for education. Students should be aware that over indulgence in social media is addictive and wasting hence exercising self-control as early possible. The students should be advised on the danger of getting addicted to social media; (2) Lecturer should help the students to make meaningful used of social media by incorporating them into their lesson.

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