

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE ON THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE OF SHS STUDENTS IN ANLOGA DISTRICT**



MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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LANGUAGE OF SHS STUDENTS IN ANLOGA DISTRICT**



**A Thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Languages Education, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Applied Linguistics)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

APRIL, 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I, ISAAC APRAKU-BOADU, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the lovely women whose affinity to me has propelled me to this stage. My wife Lawrencia, my mother Faustina, my siblings, Nana Ama, Otubea and Darkoah. This is just a token of my appreciation for your invaluable contributions in my life.



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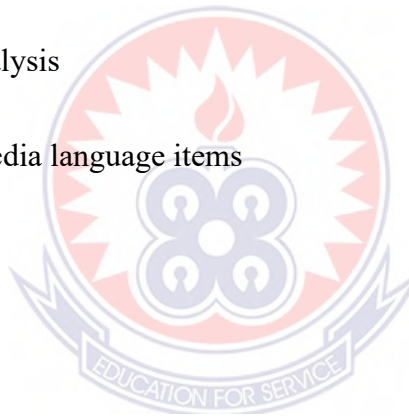
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges students encounter in using English for academic and formal purposes in relation to their engagement with social media. Specifically, it sought to identify the linguistic features of social media evident in students' interactions, explore students' perceptions of social media use and its influence on their English language development, and determine the relationship between English language proficiency and patterns of social media use. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study population comprised post-basic education students aged 14 to 20 years, who were second-language learners of English from five senior high schools in the Anloga District of the Volta Region. Data were collected through a descriptive survey involving 385 respondents selected through random sampling. Qualitative content analysis was applied to students' academic written texts and social media interactions. The findings revealed that students frequently employ grammatically incorrect and informal language in their social media communication, while attempting to use more formal and grammatically appropriate language in their academic writing. In some cases, social media was found to serve as a platform for enhancing students' English language proficiency. The study therefore recommends encouraging the consistent use of correct grammar and sentence structure on social media, establishing monitoring mechanisms to provide corrective feedback, and utilizing social media features to support student engagement and formal instruction. Although students demonstrate awareness of the distinction between informal social media writing and formal academic discourse, this awareness does not always translate into improved academic writing. In conclusion, while social media can function as a useful tool for teaching and facilitating language learning, it should complement rather than replace classroom instruction. Teachers are encouraged to integrate social media strategically to reinforce classroom learning and incorporate authentic digital texts into instructional practices.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social Media Language

As social media increasingly permeates everyday life worldwide, the language employed on these platforms has become increasingly prominent among users. Research indicates that social media attracts individuals across all age groups and social strata, including both native and non-native speakers of English, such as Ghanaians. Social media language may be defined as a distinct mode of communication associated with digital interaction, characterized by the frequent use of abbreviations, acronyms, jargon, and slang.

Esteron (2021) contends that the use of social media among students and teenagers has increased substantially over time, resulting in the emergence of internet slang, the creation of new words and symbols, and the redefinition of existing words with new meanings. Today, terms such as unfriend, selfie, sliding into **DMs**, along with emoticons and acronyms like **ATM** (at the moment) and **LOL** (laughing out loud), commonly used on social media, have influenced the vocabulary of users, particularly students and teenagers.

Ricaforte (2022) refers to the language used on social media as cyber slang, defining it as a term that encompasses shortcuts, selected words, and even limitations on the number of characters an author may use at a given time (Ricaforte, 2022, p. 231). Online expressions are often characterized by colloquial and nonstandard phonetic spellings, such as the use of “gotta” in place of “have to.” Cyber slang is increasingly becoming part of everyday routine and is progressively introducing entirely new forms of verbal communication (Hord et al., 2006).

Students constitute the primary group influenced by this emerging trend, particularly those with access to the internet, given that virtually all senior high school students participate in online platforms (Lenhart et al., 2007). As a result, their communication is no longer strictly governed by the rules of Standard English grammar. Many of the expressions that appear in their writing are absent from standard English dictionaries and are not recognized by formal language authorities. Esteron (2021) observes that the combination of informal personal interaction and adaptability to large audiences renders social media language especially susceptible to rapid change.

Students frequently use these slang expressions unintentionally when interacting with parents, teachers, lecturers, and other individuals. A substantial portion of the language to which they are exposed appears on the screens of computers, tablets, and smartphones, and their linguistic habits are increasingly shaped through interaction with digital technologies. This position is reinforced by Simpson (2014), who maintains that the language people encounter in their daily lives influences the vocabulary they choose to use.

In a related study, Esteron (2021) reported that social media use has a significant impact on users' formal English, largely because the language of social media is inherently informal, allowing users to create new expressions and influence one another's linguistic choices. According to Esteron, students' active participation in online communication, which encourages the formation of new words and phrases, seems to be contributing to a decline in their vocabulary development (Esteron, 2021, p. 96).

Saraswathi et al. (2015) report that the most prevalent linguistic features on social media include onomatopoeia, homophones, acronyms, code-switching, word shortening, jargon,

and repetition. Their study indicates that as many as 83% of respondents employ some of these features in their social media communication. Nevertheless, the use of abbreviations and short forms does not appear to impair English proficiency, since respondents are aware of examination requirements and understand that failure to comply with standard conventions may negatively affect their scores (Saraswathi et al., 2015, p. 313).

Similarly, Perbworth (2019) provides an overview of key elements of social media language in an online publication, identifying features such as hashtags, emojis, abbreviations, and text-speak forms. She further notes that languages naturally evolve over time and adapt in response to social, economic, and political conditions (Perbworth, 2019, p. 1).

Perbworth also noted that each generation develops its own distinct expressions and phrases that reflect the identity of that era, much like various social groups do. She pointed out that modern social media users often use words like “sick” with entirely new meanings, and the use of acronyms has become increasingly common. According to her, concerns about language change are not new—people have been criticizing such shifts for centuries. This is linked to linguistic purism, the belief that one particular form of a language is superior to others.

Teenagers, who constitute the majority of senior high school students, are highly active users of social media. This study therefore examines the influence of social media language on the English language use of senior high school students. Preliminary observations suggest the frequent use of a variety of English that does not strictly conform to

conventional grammatical rules. This form of language is perceived as a hybrid of spoken, written, and street slang varieties of English employed within specific social contexts.

Olejede, Ebim, and Abioye (2018) argue that English functions as a global medium of communication, widely used for information sharing, interaction, education, entertainment, and networking on social media platforms. Linguists acknowledge the exceptional adaptability of English, noting its rapid and effective evolution in response to developments in digital communication. The authors further maintain that contemporary native speakers of English must acquire new critical and interpretive skills in order to navigate the linguistic practices of different social media platforms, each of which, although oriented toward similar communicative purposes, displays distinct patterns of interaction and expression.

In addition, learning and using a language entails not only communicating with others but also sustaining diverse social relationships, shared values, and collective awareness. As Robin (1989) explains, language is a symbolic system grounded in conventional and largely arbitrary rules that can be endlessly expanded and modified to accommodate the changing needs and circumstances of its users.

English serves as the principal medium of instruction in Ghana's senior high school (SHS) education system, and consequently all examinations are conducted using the officially approved standard variety of English rather than forms developed primarily for social interaction. The 2019 curriculum that guides the teaching of English in Ghana's basic schools specifies that effective language learning requires the acquisition of four core skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It further classifies listening and reading as "receptive skills," since they involve the perception and comprehension of incoming

messages, while speaking and writing are designated as “productive skills” because they require the active use of language and the demonstration of acquired competence through oral expression and written compositions such as letters and essays (NaCCA, Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 2).

An article published on the Wall Street English website suggests that language learners should immerse themselves in English in order to develop the four core language skills. Such immersion entails integrating English into various aspects of everyday life, including the home, educational settings such as schools and universities, the workplace, and leisure activities.

Empirical studies examining the influence of social media language on students’ academic performance have yielded divergent results. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) and Asare-Donkor (2018) report that the amount of time devoted to social media has a negative effect on academic achievement. In a related study, Asare (2019) notes that informal and grammatically inaccurate forms frequently used on social media also appear in students’ examination scripts. These findings imply that students’ engagement with social networking platforms may shape their academic language use.

In contrast, other researchers have found no significant association between social media use and academic performance. For instance, Hashem (2015) and Egedegbe (2013) contend that social media engagement exerts neither a positive nor a negative influence on students’ academic outcomes.

The population for the present study consists of senior high school students in the Anloga District of the Volta Region of Ghana. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate how the

varieties of English these students use on social networking sites affect the English they employ in their academic work.

1.2 Social media

The International Network Platform, more commonly known as the Internet, constitutes a major technological development that provided the basis for the emergence of social media. It gave rise to a worldwide system of interconnected computers designed to enable the exchange of information (Belch & Belch, 2000). As a result, the Internet supports virtual interaction across geographical boundaries and has transformed prevailing conceptions of globalization that emerged after the Second World War. By effectively turning the world into a “global village,” the Internet allows individuals separated by vast distances to communicate with one another instantaneously.

Social media is a technological innovation that has influenced the lives of many people over the past decade and beyond. It constitutes an internet-based medium of social interaction that facilitates networking and enables communication with immediate feedback. Prominent social media platforms include Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, Snapchat, Vine, Tumblr, and Viber. Lusk (2010) defines social media as the use of platforms such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn for communication and for sharing photographs and videos.

Social media became popular between 2004 and 2006, even though it started quite earlier. Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp have courted interest across the globe. Facebook, for instance, has accumulated over 500 million users and continues to expand, with around 85% of undergraduate students reported to be active users of the platform (Schneider,

2010). A survey in 2016 pointed to the fact that “Facebook had over a billion users across the world”, (Alsaif, 2016, pp.10).

Over the past two decades, the Internet has fundamentally transformed patterns of communication at both local and global levels. Rapid developments in the globalized world have led to significant advances in information technology, particularly in the area of internet applications.

The social media revolution that emerged in the 1990s has been associated with a subsequent decline in the quality of standard written and spoken language. During the same period, social media experienced rapid and sustained growth. Critics argue that the use of social media promotes poor grammatical practices and, by extension, undermines standard language competence (Esteron, 2021, p. 96).

The extensive expansion of social media platforms has enhanced internet accessibility, enabling faster and more affordable communication. Social media may be defined as a collection of internet-based applications grounded in the principles and technologies of Web 2.0, which allow users to create, share, and exchange content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) trace the origins of online social interaction to the establishment of Usenet in 1979 by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis of Duke University. Usenet initially functioned as a global discussion forum that enabled users to post public messages. The contemporary phase of social media, however, began approximately two decades ago with the launch of Open Diary by Bruce and Susan Abelson, one of the earliest social networking platforms that connected online diary writers within a virtual community.

During this period, the term “weblog” was introduced and later abbreviated to “blog” after a blogger playfully divided the phrase “we blog,” thereby producing the term that is now widely used.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further proposed a typology of social media, identifying six major categories as follows:

1. Virtual Second World (Second life)
2. Social Networking Site (Facebook; 2go; BB chat)
3. Content Communities (Youtube)
4. Collaborative Project (Wikipedia)
5. Blogs and Micro blogs (Twitter)
6. Virtual Game World (World of war craft)

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further noted that virtual communities such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are mainly utilized for socializing and keeping up with current events. In contrast, LinkedIn functions as a platform for professional and business networking, while sites like Digg, Delicious, Reddit, and Instagram serve as social bookmarking tools for accessing specific information, news, and images. Moreover, platforms such as Wikipedia are primarily designed for educational purposes.

Social media users may be broadly classified into two categories: digital natives and digital immigrants. Digital natives are individuals born after 1980 who were raised in an environment in which digital media was already well established. By contrast, digital immigrants are those born before 1980 who encountered digital technologies later in life and were therefore required to adapt to the digital environment (AntonSon & Christopher,

2008). Senior High School students have gone through nine years of basic education after turning age six (6). It is therefore expected that such persons will be aged between fifteen and twenty years. Obviously, they were born after 1980 and are classified as digital natives, hence conversant with social media. This study will therefore investigate the extent to which social media use affects students' academic use of English language.

Datareportal (2023) indicates that at the beginning of 2023, Ghana had 23 million internet users, representing an internet penetration rate of 68.2% of the population. The report further revealed that there were 6.6 million social media users as of January 2023, equivalent to 19.5% of the country's population.

Statista (2022) reports that by the third quarter of 2022, WhatsApp was the most widely utilized social media platform in Ghana among individuals aged 16–64, reaching nearly 90% of internet users in the country. This was followed by Facebook and Instagram, with usage rates of approximately 64% and 62%, respectively. Given this demographic, senior high school students constitute a significant proportion of social media users in Ghana, highlighting the relevance of investigating the influence of social media language on their academic performance.

The report also indicated that the average Ghanaian spends approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes online each day, with 3 hours and 13 minutes dedicated specifically to social media activities, leaving only 17 minutes for other online engagements (We Are Social, 2016).

1.3 Problem Statement

The pervasive influence of social media continues to expand globally, with senior high school students born after the advent of these platforms being particularly engaged in

various social networking sites. Many students maintain accounts on multiple social media platforms. Through their interactions online, students often blend classroom-taught English with the informal language they encounter and produce on social media (Erdogan & Mustafa, 2017; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015; Otu, 2015). English language instructors in senior high schools frequently express concern over students' persistent difficulties with grammar, punctuation, and spelling, as well as broader challenges in mastering the language. Reports from the Chief Examiner of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) have consistently highlighted students' weak proficiency in grammar and spelling. The 2020 report, available on the council's website, notes the prevalence of faulty constructions, spelling errors, and grammatical inaccuracies in candidates' responses (WAEC, 2020).

In light of these concerns, this study sought to examine the extent to which students' challenges in using English for academic and formal purposes may be linked to their engagement with social media. The findings provide valuable insights into the role of social media in language learning, particularly in contexts where English is studied as a second language. This research addresses a gap in the existing literature on social media use by senior high school students in Ghana and its impact on academic performance. Previous studies, including those by Hasheem (2015), Alim and Shahzad (2014), and Wanajak (2011), focused primarily on students in Western or Asian contexts, whereas studies such as Otu (2015) and Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) targeted tertiary-level students. Accordingly, the results of this study make a significant contribution to the understanding of how social media use affects senior high school students' English language learning.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the study are to;

1. Identify the linguistic features of social media language present in students' online interactions.
2. Examine students' perceptions of social media language use and its impact on their English language proficiency.
3. Investigate the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their patterns of social media use

1.5 Research Questions

1. What linguistic features of social media language are evident in students' online interactions?
2. What are students' perceptions of social media language use, and how do they believe it affects their English language proficiency?
3. What is the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their social media usage patterns?

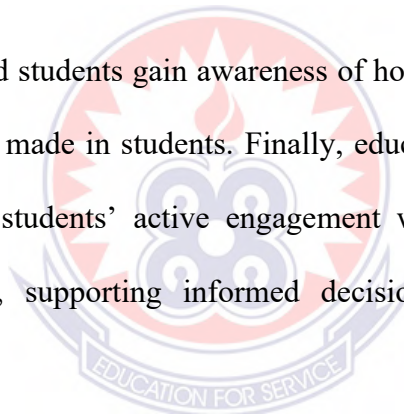
1.6 Significance of the study

Research exploring the impact of social media language on the English proficiency of senior high school students holds significant value for all stakeholders within the school community. With the widespread adoption of digital technologies such as smartphones and computers, social networks have become a central part of everyday life. This trend is largely shaped by the amount of time individuals spend on social media and the nature of their peer interactions. It is therefore important to assess whether these practices positively

or negatively influence students' language skills. This study, accordingly, investigates the influence of social media language on the English proficiency of the target population and provides a foundation for future research in this field.

Key stakeholders, including school administrators, students, parents, and policymakers, stand to benefit from the findings of this study. The results will guide senior high school administrators, particularly within guidance and counseling departments, on advising students regarding appropriate language use on social media. The study also offers insights into the broader effects of social media language on adolescents, who make up the senior high school age group.

Furthermore, parents and students gain awareness of how social media use can affect the educational investments made in students. Finally, education policymakers are provided with evidence of how students' active engagement with social media can influence classroom performance, supporting informed decisions on policy and intervention strategies.



1.7 Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that future research could seek to address, many of which relate to the methodology and sampling techniques employed. According to Akanle, Ademusun, and Shittu (2020, p. 110), Price and Muman (2004) define research limitations as characteristics inherent in a study's design or methodology that influence the interpretation and meaning of its results. Such limitations can restrict the generalizability, practical application, and overall usefulness of the findings, often arising from the initial decisions a researcher makes regarding study design and methods used to ensure internal and external validity.

Future studies could adopt a more controlled sampling approach to more precisely measure the impact of social media language use on students. For instance, conducting a case study in a single school could provide a focused sample for assessing the effects of social media on student outcomes.

Furthermore, the double-track system implemented in some senior high schools created challenges in selecting students from all grade levels during each visit. This complication contributed to delays and affected the equitable representation of students across the different levels in the schools sampled for this study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Grosseck and Holotescu (2008) and Muñoz (2009) observed that social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Twitter enhance students' ability to share information, for example, by creating class- or course-specific Facebook group pages. These platforms also enable students to learn more about their peers, interact with classmates and instructors, and participate in discussions related to course content. On Twitter, messages can be linked to a course or class blog, offering students opportunities to engage in various forms of asynchronous online discourse. Social media has thus become an extension of classroom learning, with class groups established on platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, and Facebook where educational interactions take place.

Additionally, Thurairaj et al. (2012) found that Facebook and Twitter can positively support language learning, suggesting that these platforms should be leveraged as tools for language education. Interviews with students indicated that social media activities are engaging and contribute to the improvement of their communication skills. The study further revealed that students generally enjoy using Facebook and Twitter for learning purposes, and these platforms are widely utilized for communication in English.

2.1 Social Media Language

The internet has impacted almost every aspect of human life, with communication being the most prominent. The Internet allows people all over the world to share messages in real time. Social media, which operates on the internet, is a platform for individuals and social communities to share messages. Messages shared on social media can reach the recipient

immediately and can be responded to in the same way or at any time that is convenient for the recipient.

According to Lee (2014), social networking sites had become an integral part of everyday life worldwide by the end of the first decade of the 2000s, reflecting the increasingly social nature of online interactions. He highlights that these platforms play a crucial role in shaping personal identity as well as fostering a collective sense of community.

Jimma (2017) explains that “social media through its various platforms provide text, voice and audio visuals that enhance language learning”. He contends that sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow users to share their views to a global audience who can equally respond to them. Other sites such as Youtube, Instagram and recently Tiktok are primarily video media sites where users can express themselves to their potentially global audience. These sites also have message board-style comment where discussion about the content of the video can take place (Jimma 2017, p.132).

Jimma notes that the appeal of social media stems from its ability to integrate multiple services and facilitate seamless sharing, attracting a large and diverse user base. Moreover, users from around the world bring their distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds to the digital environment (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kelly-Holmes & Pietikäinen, 2012). Engagement with social media also provides opportunities to develop all four core language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

The global appeal and usage of social media makes it “a melting pot of languages in different manners and for different purposes. This has resulted in the creation of an

alternate dialect that, with its immediacy, favours real-time communication as, for instance, the acronyms that are used in instant messages”, (Jimma, 2017, p.10).

Terms such as Netspeak, Netlish, Weblish, Internet language, cyberspeak, electronic language, computer-mediated communication (Crystal, 2001), and social media language all refer to forms of communication conducted over the internet. Essentially, any type of internet-mediated interaction can be classified under any of these labels.

Crystal (2001, p.91) goes on to argue that the “most general features of Netspeak or social media language distinctiveness are currently found primarily in graphology and the lexicon, as these are the levels of language where both innovation and deviation are relatively easy to introduce”.

Crystal (2008) identified several major categories of social media language in his subsequent writings, including shortening, clipping, reduction, abbreviated forms, numbering/alphanumeric homophony, contraction or vowel deletion, spelling aligned with pronunciation (graphemes), letter repetition to convey speech-like qualities or emphasis, and the use of single-letter methods. Asare (2019) further elaborated on some of these features, providing explanations as outlined below:

Category	Definition	Examples
Shortening/reducing	this refers to a style of writing in which a word or lexical item is shortened, typically by omitting one or more letters, to convey the intended message more efficiently. It involves the deliberate removal of a letter or group of letters in written form.	tnx for thanks, pls for please, evnin for evening
Numbering alphanumeric homophony	this is when a whole word or a part of a word is replaced by a number that is phonetically similar. It also refers to instances when numbers are used to replace words phrases or clauses.	2 for two, 4get for forget, xplain for explain, 2morrow for tomorrow, L8 for late
Graphones	This occurs when words are written according to their pronunciation. The term derives from <i>graph</i> (meaning “written”) and <i>phone</i> (meaning “sound”).	Fon for phone Daaria for diarrhea Dem for them
Clipping	This describes the process by which a multisyllabic word is shortened to a more concise form. Yule (2010) explains that this occurs when a word loses one or more of its syllables.	Lab for laboratory Chem for chemistry
Abbreviated forms	This refers to a word created by using the initial letters of a series of other words (Ljung, 2003).	ASAP - As soon as possible Lol – Laugh out Loud DM – Direct Message
Single Letter	This is when a letter is used to represent a word usually with one syllable	U – you

Table 1 Social media feature

Teenagers are rapidly adopting social media language as it enables them to differentiate themselves from older generations while fostering a sense of belonging among their peers (Kinsella, 2010). Interestingly, Baron (2011) found that teenagers generally can distinguish between formal and informal writing, suggesting that netspeak does not adversely affect their literacy. Although Baron acknowledged that nonstandard language has historically entered everyday formal speech, he emphasized that further evidence is required before asserting that social media language has a significant impact on teenagers' offline language. He maintains that students who communicate on social media are capable of recognizing the differences between formal and informal writing contexts.

Olojede, Ebim, and Abioye (2018) note that effective use of social media requires adaptability from every internet user. They further explain that English, as a universal language, is widely employed on social media platforms to inform, interact, educate, entertain, and network. Linguists also acknowledge that English has adapted rapidly and effectively to changes, particularly within social media contexts.

English remains the most widely used language on social media. According to data from Statista, English accounts for 58.8% of the languages used across websites and the internet, with social media platforms contributing significantly to this proportion. It is followed by Russian, French, German, and Japanese, which represent 5.3%, 4.3%, 3.7%, and 3.0% respectively, forming the five most frequently used languages online. Figure 1 provides further details on this language ranking.

These findings support the relevance of social media use among teenage learners of English as a second language. They highlight that social media language does not strictly adhere to conventional grammar rules and exhibits distinct features that differentiate it from the

Standard English used in academic contexts. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of social media language on the formal English of teenage users.

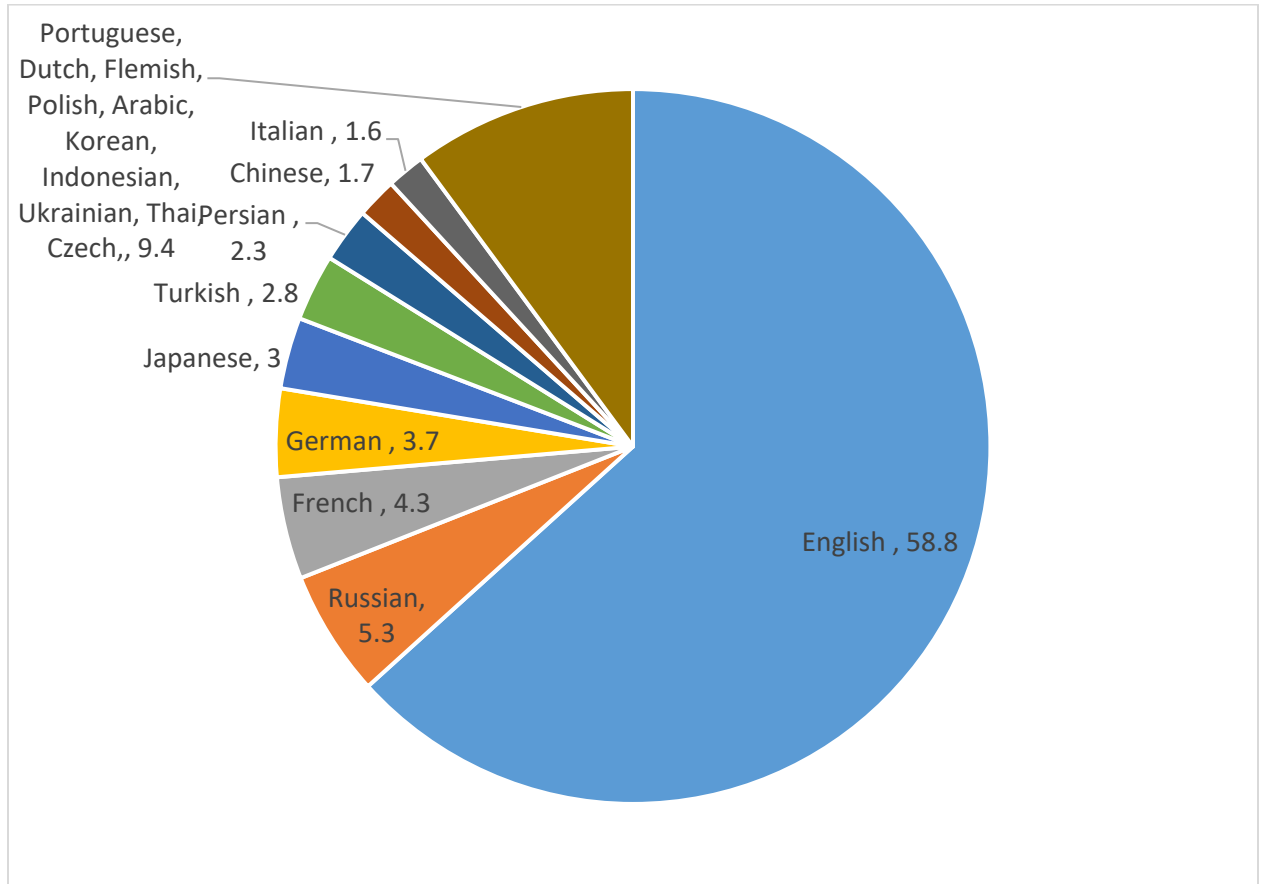


Figure 2 Languages most frequently used for web contents of January 2023

© Statista 2023 www.statista.com/statistics/262946/most-common-languages-on-the-internet/
Languages most frequently used for web content as of January 2023, by share of websites

The Figure 1 expressed above supports the view of Jimma (2017) who stressed that English is the lingua franca on social media. He further explained that since English is the language of the world economic super power after the Second World War, USA, it becomes the rallying point for many countries around the world. The advancement in technology leading to the introduction of social media platforms has further enhanced global

communication, thereby promoting the use of English language on Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and other social media sites.

2.2 Social Media Usage

Internet-based social media has become widespread among young people, including senior high school students. Asur and Huberman (2010) observe that social media has quickly evolved into a dominant mode of online communication, where users actively create, share, bookmark content, and engage in networking at an unprecedented pace. Its accessibility, speed, and extensive reach have allowed social media to exert significant influence on public discourse, shaping trends and agendas in areas such as politics, technology, entertainment, and the environment. These virtual platforms also provide young people with frequent opportunities to exchange ideas, emotions, personal information, images, and videos.

Rideout (2012) notes that unlike schooling or full-time employment, social media use has no formal breaks, and the time spent on these platforms has increased dramatically over the years. Hashem (2015) studied Egyptian students' social media habits, including the frequency of use, preferred platforms, and daily time spent online. The study found that 41% of students used Facebook and 32% used Google, while Snapchat was the least used platform, with only 40% of respondents engaging with it. Instagram emerged as the most frequently used platform (27%), while Twitter and YouTube received moderate engagement, rated three out of five.

Given that senior high school students in the country typically range from 15 to 19 years old, they are naturally drawn to social media. In many cases, social media has become an

integral part of their lives, with some students maintaining profiles on multiple platforms, as reported by Alim and Shahzad (2014).

A study on social media addiction at the University of Ghana by Otu (2015) observed that individuals increasingly access social media through mobile devices at any time and from any location, making it an integral part of daily life. This observation is supported by data from socialmediatoday.com, which estimated that approximately 1.925 billion smartphone users engage with social media via their devices.

Data from searchlogistics.com indicate that in 2022, individuals aged 16 to 24 spent an average of 3 hours and 1 minute per day on social media, followed by those aged 25 to 34 at 2 hours and 37 minutes. People aged 35 to 44 averaged 2 hours and 4 minutes, while those aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 spent 1 hour 39 minutes and 1 hour 13 minutes respectively. According to Datareportal.com, approximately 77% of the global population were social media users as of January 2023, with the number of users increasing from 4.62 billion in January 2022 to 4.72 billion in January 2023.

Social media continues to expand due to its widespread accessibility, convenience, technological flexibility, and multifunctionality (Brown, 2010; Schroeder, Minocha, & Schneider, 2010). The technology is continually improving, making platforms easier to use. Even native English speakers now require critical and interpretive skills to navigate the approximately 200 social media platforms, each with distinct communication styles. Interactions across societies and regions often incorporate indigenous varieties of English (Olojede, Ebim, & Abioye, 2018).

Perbworth (2019) highlights key features of social media language, including hashtags, emojis, abbreviations, and text-speak models. She emphasizes that languages naturally evolve over time, adapting to social, economic, and political changes. Each generation contributes its own nuances and phrases, shaping the identity of the period, while different social groups also influence linguistic variation (Perbworth, 2019, p. 1). Contemporary social media users often assign new meanings to words, such as “sick,” and acronyms are increasingly common. Complaints about language change are not new, as linguistic purism, the belief that one form of language is superior to others, has existed for centuries.

Fatimayin (2018) asserts that language use on social media constitutes a distinct subset of English that differs markedly from standard English. Whereas standard English is governed by established grammatical rules and principles of concord, social media language is not structured to conform to such conventions (Fatimayin, 2018, p. 8). Consequently, this form of language remains highly flexible and accessible, allowing users to employ any expressions that effectively convey meaning to their intended audience.

2.3 Related Previous Studies

2.3.1 Social Media Usage on Academic Work

Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) used the quantitative survey design to administer over one thousand questionnaire to respondents. They found among others that “the use of social media sites had affected academic performance of the respondents negatively”, (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015, p.99). They therefore stated categorically that “there was direct relationship between the use of social media sites and academic performance”, (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015, p.99).

Result of this study is relevant to the subject under study because English language forms the basis of all academic work. It will be interesting to know whether the negative response to academic work equally affects English language proficiency in students. Results from this study will go a long way to fill this void. It is however interesting to note that whereas the respondents of Owusu-Acheaw and Larson were tertiary students aged above eighteen years, the respondents of this study will be senior high school students aged between fifteen and eighteen years.

The use of social media by students requires attention and time that could otherwise be devoted to academic improvement. Hashem (2015) found that students spend between thirty minutes and six hours daily on social media.

Studies on the impact of social media use on academic performance have produced mixed results. While some researchers report no significant correlation between social media use and academic outcomes, others have established a relationship between the two variables. For instance, Kolan and Dzandra (2018) assert that social media use is linked to academic performance among university students. Conversely, Wheeler, Yeomans, and Wheeler (2008) and Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach, and Ortia (2009) identified four primary benefits of social media in higher education: developing collaborative skills, enhancing learning motivation, strengthening relationships, and providing personalized course materials. They emphasized, however, that students predominantly use social media to share information with peers.

O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) of the American Academy of Pediatrics highlighted that one key benefit of social media for students is the ability to connect with peers for assignments and class projects. They argued that social media improves learning by

enabling students to share knowledge and efficiently complete group work. This view is reinforced by Salvation and Adzhrudin (2014), who found that students use social media platforms to conduct group discussions, exchange ideas, communicate with teachers, and seek assistance from peers on assignments. When used responsibly, social media can therefore make a meaningful contribution to students' academic development.

Appeanti and Danso (2014) reported that students perceive interactions with teachers through social media as more engaging. They further noted that students believe their academic performance could improve if they had greater opportunities to communicate with peers and instructors via social media, highlighting the platform's value for academic collaboration. Similarly, Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) examined the educational use of Twitter among college students in the United States and found that the platform can serve as an effective instructional tool, enhancing interaction and learning between teachers and students.

An interview conducted by Rideout (2012) to examine teachers' views on the impact of entertainment media on students' academic performance revealed that 71% of respondents believed it negatively affects students' attention spans. Additionally, 58% of teachers felt that students' writing skills are compromised due to the frequent use of slang and abbreviations.

Conversely, Fishman et al. (2005) reported that regular engagement with emails, blogs, and other social media platforms can enhance students' writing abilities. They noted that these platforms encourage learners to take initiative in writing and to work more independently, a benefit attributed to social media's capacity to facilitate communication,

networking, access to information, research, and informal interaction (Abdulahi et al., 2014; Ahn, 2011).

In contrast, Naizabekov (2012) concluded that the distracting nature of social media promotes procrastination among students. He explained that excessive time spent online results in longer completion times for academic tasks, as students are frequently interrupted by online messages. Similarly, Osharive (2015) observed that growing numbers of students have become addicted to platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and he concluded that this dependency has a substantial negative impact on academic performance.

On the other hand, Hashem (2015) examined the relationship between social media use and academic development among Egyptian students aged 12 to 19 and found no significant association between the two. Her findings aligned with those of Egedegbe (2013), who reported that social networking sites had neither a positive nor negative effect on students' academic achievement in North Cyprus. Hashem further noted that although students spent considerable time on social media, they were still able to allocate sufficient time to their studies and achieve good grades.

Similarly, Alsaif (2016) reported that social media use does not significantly influence students' real-life social interactions or academic performance. In contrast, the study suggested that social media could serve as a valuable research tool and provide academic support for students.

In contrast, several empirical studies have reported negative effects of social media on academic performance. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), in a study of tertiary students in Ghana, concluded that social media use adversely affected academic outcomes. Their

survey of 1,508 students from Koforidua Polytechnic revealed that 86.8% of respondents primarily used social media for casual chatting and responding to messages rather than for academic purposes. Similarly, Otu (2015) found in her study on social media addiction at the University of Ghana that students predominantly engaged with social media for entertainment, content creation, opinion sharing, meeting new people, promoting events, and maintaining social relationships, all of which are unrelated to their academic responsibilities.

Research on the relationship between social media use and academic performance has produced mixed results across contexts. Kist (2008) reported that American teenagers with social media profiles primarily use them for socializing and coordinating with peers. Sanchez-Martinez and Otero (2009) identified a correlation between extensive mobile phone use and academic failure among Spanish high school students.

Studies in Ghana have also highlighted potential negative impacts. Kolan and Dzandza (2018) observed that social media can serve as a distraction and, in some cases, foster addictive behaviors that harm university students' academic performance. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) similarly reported that social media diverts students' attention from academic tasks and reduces focus during classes and study periods.

Investigations into Facebook usage support these findings. Miguel (2009) found that students who spent more time on Facebook achieved lower grades, with average GPAs ranging from 3.0 to 3.5 compared to 3.5 to 4.0 for non-users. Choney (2010) reported similar results, showing that Facebook users had an average GPA of 3.06, while non-users averaged 3.82. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) also cited Karpinski and Duberstein

(2009), whose study at Ohio Dominican University demonstrated that college students engaged with social networks had significantly lower GPAs than peers who did not use such platforms.

Ewa (2015) found that students themselves perceive social networking sites (SNSs) as negatively affecting their academics, primarily by reducing study time, causing distractions during lectures and library sessions, and lowering cumulative grade point averages. Additionally, frequent violations of language norms have been linked to extensive use of communication technologies, particularly the informal jargon prevalent on social media (Awoyemi, 2013; Ugot, 2010; Oluga & Babalola, 2013). Asare et al. (2022) further noted that social media language can have both positive and negative effects on students' writing, with the negative impact resulting from the adoption of unconventional writing styles that deviate significantly from Standard English conventions.

Tariq, Mehboob, Khan, and Ullah (2012) similarly concluded that social media use could negatively affect teenagers' and children's lives, including their educational outcomes.

2.3.2. Impact of Social Media Language on Students' English Language Learning

Olojode, Abioye, and Ebim (2018) found that social media language is marked by frequent use of contractions, which serve to enhance brevity, speed, and a sense of exclusivity. They also highlighted that while stylistic linguistic concepts such as Foregrounding and Deviation can help explain language use in student interactions, the widespread use of contractions in Facebook comments often leads to multiple breaches of Standard English conventions. Their study employed a qualitative research design, using content analysis on data collected from the Facebook accounts of University of Yaba students. It is noteworthy

that the participants were tertiary-level students aged over eighteen, similar to the sample in Owusu-Acheaw and Larson's (2015) research.

Furthermore, Olojode, Abioye, and Ebim (2018) emphasized that effective use of social media requires users to be versatile in their application of language. English, as a global language, serves multiple functions on social media platforms, including informing, interacting, educating, entertaining, and networking. This raises questions regarding what specific skills and competencies are necessary for achieving such versatility in language use.

Other researchers have had their say on the type of English used as medium of communication of social media. Nutakor and Israel (2022) cites the English Spelling Society (2012) as saying that one of the results of the influx of the internet on the English language is that misspelling has become a norm. Social media platforms and online communication have contributed to the perception that correcting typographical errors or following standard language rules is unnecessary. This has led many users, particularly children and students, to disregard conventional spelling norms (Bovill, 2010). In support of this, Benamara et al. (2018) assert that typographical errors are widespread on social networking platforms, where chat language and in-group slang have become increasingly dominant, especially on sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Brown (2017) notes that social media platforms are primarily used to convey emotions and ideas, allowing users to employ language freely according to their preferences. The main focus is on transmitting meaning to the recipient rather than on the correctness or quality of the language, particularly when users are aware that their messages are not formally assessed. Supporting this view, Ashraf (2019) found that a majority of respondents (57.1%)

did not prioritize correct English usage when communicating on social media. Paradoxically, most respondents also believed that short messaging does not negatively affect their grammar or overall language proficiency.

Amin et al. (2020) argue that social media usage contributes to a decline in writing skills, largely due to the frequent use of contractions, content-driven messaging, images, and web-specific language (p. 3131). Participants in their study reported that these modern forms of writing significantly influence academic writing, with instances of cyber slang and writing shortcuts increasingly appearing in formal texts. The study further observed that ungrammatical expressions and non-standard language forms are becoming more widely accepted, and that the prevalence of internet language, abbreviations, and shortened texts is adversely affecting conventional communication and causing misunderstandings.

However, Amin et al. (2020) also highlight the potential benefits of social media for language learners. The platforms provide learners with opportunities to expand vocabulary, enhance language proficiency, and engage with native speakers through audiovisual content, which can aid in correct pronunciation. Social media is described as an accessible, continuous resource for language learning.

Several studies emphasize that text-based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram offer students opportunities to practice reading and writing, essential components of English language proficiency (Sari, 2018). Sari (2018) stresses that consistent practice is critical for mastering a foreign language, and social media can serve as an effective tool to support this process. Similarly, Sanchez (2017) asserts that social networking sites facilitate the learning of foreign languages, including English, by providing interactive and engaging language practice opportunities.

Sari et al. (2019) further explain that social media allows students to practice language use anytime and anywhere, in diverse contexts: “Students express themselves in writing, they make an effort to be understandable and learn from their interlocutors, and also learn how to write briefly” (Sari et al., 2019, p. 331). The freedom and autonomy afforded by social media make it an ideal environment for practicing English. In addition, interactions with native speakers on these platforms can support nonnative speakers in achieving language mastery and building confidence in writing through continuous practice (Sari, 2019).

Sakkir et al. (2016) reported that social media can be an effective tool for improving English writing skills. Their study revealed that 64.28% of respondents were motivated to enhance their writing through social media, while 42.86% indicated that interacting with native speakers contributed to improvements in their communication abilities (p. 172). Similarly, Ibrahim (2013) found that Facebook impacts students’ writing in three primary areas: mechanics, language usage, and sentence construction.

Amin et al. (2020) argued that one of the potential threats of social media language to English language learning lies in its impact on vocabulary. Social media alters the meanings of existing words and introduces new terms that, while widely understood among users, do not conform to standard grammatical norms. Examples include words such as thread, pin, FaceTime, post, meme, platform, and handle, which have shifted in meaning, as well as hashtags, tweet, bio, DM, viral, troll, and drip, which have entered everyday vocabulary since the rise of social media. Amin et al. (2020) noted that young English learners may adopt such terms despite their nonstandard usage. Jimma (2017) adds that slang, loanwords, and acronyms are continually introduced on social media, and their ease of use facilitates rapid dissemination.

Consequently, social networking sites have become an important support system for language learning outside the classroom. While social media provides informal opportunities for practicing language, its pedagogical use in second language learning presents challenges that require further exploration, particularly in computer-assisted language learning teacher education (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Thus, while social media can serve as a valuable supplementary resource for language acquisition, it should not replace formal instruction. A balanced approach is recommended, combining informal exposure with structured, formal education and guided by appropriate policies for English language learning (Malik & Qureshi, 2024).

These perspectives contrast with the conclusions of Bayucan (2015), who argued that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, are not effective tools for helping students achieve proficiency in English. According to Bayucan, students primarily use social media to share ideas and receive immediate feedback, rather than to focus on grammar or proper language use. The study further noted that features such as spelling checks on computers and social media encourage students to neglect correct spelling rules (McEntee, 2012). Chatrooms and similar platforms generally foster an attitude that mistakes do not need to be corrected and standard spelling conventions can be disregarded (Bayucan, 2015).

Adei and Kokroko (2020, p. 262) similarly found that students' use of social media negatively impacts their grammar and spelling, as they often transfer "shorthand" writing styles from online platforms into their academic work. Their study revealed that students' academic writing frequently shows sentence fragmentation, reflecting the fragmented writing practices adopted on social media.

The findings indicate that social media language plays a prominent role in students' daily lives. Although it cannot be solely held responsible for errors in academic writing, its influence on students' language learning is considerable. Consequently, students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and senior high school administrators in Ghana should implement clear strategies to leverage social media as a supportive tool for enhancing English language learning.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study, which seeks to examine the effects of social media language on senior high school students in the Anloga District, will be guided by Social Construction Theory and Social Learning Theory.

2.5.0 Social construction theory

Social constructivism is a theoretical framework that posits understanding, meaning, and knowledge are constructed through social interaction and collaboration with others. Akpan et al. (2020) affirm Vygotsky's perspective that both language and culture are fundamental to cognitive development and shape how individuals perceive and interpret the world. In this view, learning occurs through language as concepts are communicated, interpreted, and internalized through lived experiences and interactions within a cultural context.

Fahim and Amerian (2015) note that Piaget's theory (Piaget, 1973; Piaget et al., 1977) emphasizes the role of one's environment or social context in learning, outlining a four-stage developmental process:

- a. sensori-motor,
- b. preoperational,

- c. concrete operational, and
- d. formal operational.

These assertions regarding the influence of the environment provide a foundation for incorporating external experiences into children's cognitive development. Moreover, Piaget, known for his constructivist perspective, argues that children's general cognitive tools support the development of language skills. He maintains that learning is a process of self-discovery, occurring as children interact with and observe their surroundings, which enables them to construct and internalize knowledge independently (Ghani et al., 2022).

2.5.1 Socio-Constructivism Explanations

Social constructivist theories of language acquisition emphasize the importance of social interaction between developing children and linguistically knowledgeable adults in explaining language development. This perspective is primarily grounded in the socio-cultural theories of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1968) and was later popularized in the Western context by Jerome Bruner (1983).

Akpan et al. (2020, p. 50) explain that social constructivism “states that language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality.” They highlight Vygotsky's view that language and culture play a central role in intellectual development and in shaping how individuals perceive the world. Concepts are learned through language, interpreted, and understood via experiences and interactions within a cultural context.

In this regard, online social media communities serve as environments that foster the creation of meaning and understanding. Second-language acquisition is most effective

when the language is taught in contexts where it functions as a tool for social interaction. Such settings allow learners to construct meaning and deepen their understanding of the language through authentic communication and engagement (Piaget, 1954).

Abderahmane and Chaimaa (2021) outline eight fundamental assumptions of social construction, three of which are;

1. Knowledge is constructed: Knowledge builds upon existing knowledge, with learners' prior experiences, beliefs, and insights serving as essential foundations for further learning.
2. People learn to learn as they learn: The process of constructing meaning relies on understanding and connecting with other meanings.
3. Learning is an active process: Learners must actively engage with sensory input to construct meaning. Rather than being passive recipients, they participate in discussions, reading, and other activities that facilitate their own learning and cognitive development.
4. Learning is inherently a social process, closely tied to our interactions and relationships with others. The influence of teachers, family members, peers, and acquaintances plays a significant role in shaping what and how we learn. Progressive education acknowledges the importance of social interaction in the learning process, utilizing dialogue, collaboration, and group-based activities to support knowledge retention and deeper understanding.
5. Learning is contextual. Learners do not acquire isolated facts or theories independent of their daily experiences. What is learned and retained is closely linked to the surrounding environment and real-life situations.

6. Knowledge is personal, as each individual brings unique prior knowledge and experiences that serve as the foundation for new learning. Consequently, the knowledge acquired will differ from person to person.
7. Learning primarily occurs in the mind. Although hands-on experiences and physical activities provide support, they are insufficient on their own. For learning to be effective and enduring, it must actively engage the learner's cognitive processes, as mental involvement is crucial for understanding concepts and retaining knowledge.
8. Motivation plays a crucial role in the learning process. Educators must find effective strategies to engage and inspire learners, stimulating their curiosity and encouraging active participation. Without motivation, it becomes challenging for students to draw on prior experiences and form meaningful connections with new knowledge, which are essential for deep and sustained learning.

When students engage with social media, they both contribute to and learn from the platform's lexicon. Language learning on social media is an active process in which both sender and receiver play dynamic roles, which are often interchangeable among users within a particular online community. Due to the global reach of social media, knowledge shared on these platforms can spread rapidly across the world. In this way, knowledge is actively constructed and disseminated among users worldwide.

McMahon (2017) highlights that social constructivism emphasizes the significance of culture and context in understanding social phenomena and constructing knowledge from these understandings. Nkobi (2011) further notes that social constructivism is based on specific assumptions regarding reality, knowledge, and the learning process. To effectively

understand and apply instructional models informed by social constructivist perspectives, it is essential to grasp the foundational principles underlying them. From Vygotsky's perspective, knowledge is constructed through interactions between individuals and their environments and is deeply embedded within cultural contexts (Schunk, 2000).

Amineh and Asl (2015) identify two key principles of social construction theory:

- a) Humans make sense of their experiences by constructing mental models of the social world and how it functions.
- b) Language serves as the primary system through which humans construct, interpret, and communicate their reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

In this framework, the learner is central to the learning process. Knowledge is constructed by the learner based on personal experiences, context, and cultural background (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Wertsch (1997) emphasizes that social constructivism recognizes the uniqueness and complexity of each learner, encouraging active participation and valuing interactions with more knowledgeable individuals as a means of forming understanding of societal symbols. Similarly, when learners engage with or read comments from proficient users on social media, they acquire knowledge of the platform's lexicon and construct meaning from these interactions.

Social construction is regarded both as a "theory of knowing" and a theory of "coming to know," positing that learners actively interpret, build, and explore knowledge through discovery (Candilio, 2015, p. 63). Learning is viewed as an internal process, constructed individually within the learner's mind.

Fahim and Amerian (2015) trace the origins of the social constructivist approach to language learning to cognitive theories of development, particularly Piaget's (1973) developmental cognitive theory. However, the core of the paradigm is grounded in Vygotsky's social interactionist or socio-cultural theory. Social interactionist approaches, based on social-cognitive models, assert that a learner's understanding of reality shapes the context for language development. Vygotsky (1978) further proposed that learners achieve optimal learning through collaborative problem-solving.

In the context of social media, a new user acquires language skills by interacting with experienced users, adopting their lexicon, and modeling their usage. This social exchange of language ultimately influences the English language learners acquire, demonstrating the practical application of social constructivist principles in digital communication environments.

Goldstein and Naglieri (2011) explain that the interactionist approach to language development posits that language acquisition results from the interplay between a person's innate biological capacity for language and exposure to linguistic input in their environment. Consequently, the social interactionist perspective represents a middle ground between the nativist and behaviorist theories of language development. On social media, a user's environment consists of their network of friends and the linguistic exposure they receive through interactions on the platform.

Social media thus functions as a space for human interaction where language is transmitted from one individual to another. It provides an environment in which language can be learned through engagement, allowing users who are less proficient to acquire linguistic

features from those who are more fluent. Social media language, along with its unique characteristics, can therefore be passed along and internalized by others within the network.

2.5.3 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a central concept in Vygotsky's (1978) theory, defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). Candilio (2015) explains that the ZPD represents the gap between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance from an expert or collaboration with peers. This highlights that human learning is inherently social.

Fahim and Amerian (2015) describe the ZPD as a theoretical construct indicating that tasks a learner can perform with assistance exceed what they can perform alone. Guidance may come from a more knowledgeable other, such as an adult, teacher, or peer (Candilio, 2015). In the context of language learning, this refers to linguistic tasks—such as correct syntax and appropriate vocabulary—that learners cannot perform independently but can master with support (Fahim & Amerian, 2015).

The concept of mediation is therefore fundamental to learning and human development. Candilio (2015) emphasizes that successful learning depends on interactions with peers to solve problems beyond the learner's individual capacity. Wood et al. (1976), cited by Candilio, introduced the term “scaffolding,” describing it as the process by which an adult controls aspects of a task beyond the learner's current ability, allowing the learner to focus on elements within their competence (Wood et al., 1976, p.90).

Language is considered one of the most powerful mediation tools. Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p.201) assert that “language is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and to themselves.” Within this framework, second language acquisition is socially constructed through interaction, and social contexts are critical to language learning (Ohta, 2000). Social interaction shapes learners’ agency, helping them internalize and apply the second language (L2) more effectively (Belz, 2001; Lantolf, 2000; McGroarty, 1998). The more proficient learners become in internalizing the L2, the more they can regulate and mediate peer interactions using the language as a cognitive tool (Kurata, 2011).

Peer assistance exemplifies how learners benefit from the ZPD framework. With scaffolding from a native speaker or more proficient peer, learners can overcome lexical and sociocultural challenges and perform beyond their independent capabilities (Candilio, 2015). Social media provides an important platform for such social interaction among language learners. Online interactions expose learners to new lexicons, which they internalize and practice, often unconsciously, thereby contributing to their language development.

2.6 Social Learning Theory

This theory is another media effect theory that is concerned with the behavioural changes that a media message can cause in the audience. Albert Bandura, a behaviour psychologist, created it in 1977.

According to Bandura (1977), learning occurs through observing the behavior of others, reflecting on it, and either adopting desirable behaviors or disregarding undesirable ones. The theory underscores the importance of the learner being attentive, possessing a strong

memory, and being motivated. In the context of language development, this involves exposure to language used on social media, which learners may begin to imitate.

Social Learning Theory suggests that behavior is learned from the environment through processes such as modeling, observation, and vicarious learning (McLeod, 2011). Samkange (2015) highlights that Bandura's emphasis on social cognitive principles of learning is particularly relevant to language acquisition. Learners acquire language by observing and being influenced by others who act as models. In this context, social media serves as a platform where learners can witness language use in real time and emulate the communication patterns of more proficient users.

Deaton (2015) identifies attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation as the essential conditions for effective learning under this theory. In order to harness social media as a tool for enhancing learning, students should be encouraged to engage in critical thinking about technology (Callens, 2014). As a product of technological advancement, social media language exposes language learners not only to digital tools but also to the evolving linguistic forms associated with them.

Leons and Berge (2012) assert that learning requires the learner to focus on the observed behavior or language. Studies indicate that students devote considerable time to social media daily; Erdogan and Mustafa (2017) report an average of three hours, which aligns with Searchlogistics.com (2022), showing that individuals aged 16 to 24 spend approximately three hours per day on these platforms. Jabe (2015) found that 51% of undergraduate students surveyed spent up to six hours daily on social media. Similar findings have been reported globally, demonstrating that students consistently engage with

social media for extended periods (Ahmed & Qazi, 2011; Onyeka et al., 2013; Anjugu, 2013; Akubugwo & Burke, 2013; Otu, 2015).

This extensive exposure ensures that users attend to, internalize, and subsequently reproduce the language encountered online. The reproduction of social media language is often motivated by social reinforcement and public validation. Skouteris et al. (2004) emphasize that learning occurs when individuals observe others receiving reinforcement for desirable behaviors. Consequently, language acquisition on social media operates through observation, retention, and replication of linguistic practices demonstrated by others.

Deaton (2015) highlights that educators teaching in classrooms with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds need to account for the technological skills and access of all learners involved in social media activities. Students from low-income families may have limited experience with or access to the tools required for meaningful engagement on social media. To address these disparities, it is essential to provide targeted training and ensure the availability of accessible technological resources.

2.6.1 Assumptions of Social Learning Theory

Omrod (2014) summarised the basic assumptions of social learning theory as follows:

- Humans are inherently social beings who acquire knowledge by observing the behaviors of others, along with the consequences—such as rewards or punishments—associated with those behaviors.

- Behaviors that are observed and rewarded are more likely to be repeated. The individual whose behavior is copied is known as the role model, and the act of copying is called modeling.
- Learning does not always result in an immediate change in behavior; the learned behavior may manifest later or may not occur at all.
- Cognitive processes play a critical role in learning. Elements such as attention, memory, rehearsal, motivation, and expectations of reinforcement or punishment influence how learning takes place.

Lyons and Berge (2012) outlined four essential components of social learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. They emphasized that for observational learning to take place, individuals must initially focus their attention on the behavior being modeled. The extent of attention given depends on the characteristics of both the observer and the model. For retention, learners must be able to remember the observed behaviors, a process that can be facilitated by imagery and descriptive language, thereby increasing the likelihood of accurate reproduction. Social media language, with features such as alphanumeric symbols, can enhance retention by making content more memorable.

Reproduction occurs when learners translate observed behaviors into their own actions, transforming mental representations of the modeled language or behavior into responses that mirror the original observation. Motivation is crucial for reproduction, as it provides the necessary drive for individuals to imitate observed behaviors; without motivation, efforts to replicate behavior are unlikely.

Deaton (2015) underscores the continued relevance of Bandura's social learning theory, particularly in the context of social media, where individuals observe, imitate, and model the behavior of others. He highlights that social media has transformed social interaction by enhancing cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and motivation. As a result, educators are encouraged to use social media strategically to support learning, as it can enhance student engagement, retention, and motivation.

It therefore stands to reason that social media creates an avenue or world stage where behavior patterns are observed, imitated, modeled, reinforced with a motivation and works through a lot of cognitive processes in a person.

2.7 Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

This perspective is consistent with the assumptions of Social Construction Theory and Social Learning Theory, both of which emphasize the social and communal dimensions of language, learning, and meaning-making. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for examining how students' interactions on social media shape their language use, perceptions, and proficiency in English. Social Construction Theory, as articulated by Berger and Luckmann (1966), posits that knowledge, reality, and meaning are constructed through social interaction within specific cultural and social contexts. Within this framework, language is viewed not merely as a tool for communication but as a socially constructed medium through which individuals create and negotiate shared understandings.

Identifying social media language traits among students aligns with this theoretical perspective, as features such as acronyms, emoticons, abbreviations, and nonstandard

spellings are socially constructed through continuous interaction in digital environments. These linguistic forms illustrate the dynamic and collaborative nature of language development in virtual contexts, where members of online communities collectively establish, negotiate, and reinforce meaning.

The theories also inform the second objective, which seeks to determine students' perceptions of social media language usage and its effects on English language proficiency. According to Social Construction Theory, speech and group interpretation are what influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Burr, 2015). As a result, shared conversations, peer norms, and society expectations regarding language use influence students' opinions of whether social media language improves or impairs their English skills. This suggests that ordinary communication in online and academic settings socially constructs ideas of language accuracy or acceptability. As a result, students' opinions regarding the propriety of language used on social media are a reflection of how they have internalized meanings that have been collectively negotiated in their social contexts.

This viewpoint is also supported by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which describes how people pick up behaviours and language patterns through modelling, imitation, and observation in social settings. Regarding the first goal, this theory clarifies how students pick up and employ specific linguistic traits that are frequently found on social media. Through frequent exposure and positive reinforcement of likes, comments, or social acceptance, students internalize these patterns by watching their peers, influencers, or other internet users. As a result, the digital environment functions as a social classroom where participation and observation lead to informal learning.

Social Learning Theory further asserts that reinforcement and feedback mechanisms have an impact on learning in order to achieve the second and third objectives. Students' opinions on language use on social media are influenced by how other people perceive their language use; if informal language use is socially valued, students may grow to like it. On the other hand, they might adopt more formal or careful language practices if nonstandard usage is criticized. This idea also underpins the third objective, which is to determine the connection between social media use and English language competency.

Altogether, Social Construction Theory and Social Learning Theory offer a logical explanation of how social media affects language use. While Social Learning Theory concentrates on how people pick up, internalize, and replicate these linguistic forms through observation and reinforcement, Social Construction Theory highlights how language characteristics and attitudes develop through communal meaning-making. Therefore, the theories work together to describe how social media functions as a learning platform and a socially constructed communicative environment, influencing students' language use, perceptions, and general English ability.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the study, detailing the research approaches, design, study population, sample, data collection instruments, and procedures. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. A triangulation design was implemented to compare and validate the findings from both methods before formulating conclusions.

For the quantitative component, a descriptive survey research design was adopted, while content analysis was utilized for the qualitative component. Accordingly, questionnaires were administered to an appropriate sample, and the responses were systematically analyzed.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, which facilitated the collection and analysis of students' perceptions regarding social media language use while also allowing for an examination of its presence in their academic writing. This approach enabled the investigation of three key aspects, providing a comprehensive basis for drawing conclusions:

- i. Students' perceptions of their social media language use
- ii. The occurrence of social media language features in students' online interactions
- iii. An analysis of students' academic writing to determine the relationship between social media use and English language proficiency

3.1.0 Mixed Method Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the influence of social media language on second-language learners' use of English in academic settings. Mixed-methods research entails the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p. 3) define it as an approach in which researchers collect and analyze data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study. This approach transcends traditional methodological boundaries and is guided by an overarching inquiry framework that directs the research process (Creswell, 1994). Consequently, mixed-methods research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative components in a single study (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

Sandelowski (2001) emphasizes that a researcher's worldview strongly shapes the choice of research approach. Positivist paradigms typically favor quantitative designs, whereas constructivist and naturalist perspectives prioritize qualitative approaches. Although traditional methodological positions often regard these paradigms as incompatible, mixed-methods research operates under philosophical assumptions that allow the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches throughout the study (Hanson et al., 2005). This orientation reflects a pragmatic philosophy that values research outcomes over strict adherence to a single methodology and supports methodological flexibility, encouraging a needs-based approach to the selection of research methods and concepts (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17).

A mixed-methods approach involves the intentional combination of qualitative and quantitative strategies within a single study to achieve a more thorough understanding of the research problem. Johnson et al. (2007, p. 123) explain that this type of research integrates elements of both approaches, including perspectives, data collection procedures, analytical techniques, and inferential strategies, with the aim of increasing both the breadth and depth of understanding and corroborating research findings.

This approach uses multiple methods to address the same research question, allowing researchers to examine a single dimension of a research problem (Jick, 1979, p. 602). It combines or integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to produce a more complete and nuanced account of the issue under investigation. Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 5) describe mixed-methods research as a process of collecting, analyzing, and integrating both types of data within a single study or across studies to enhance understanding of a research problem. Similarly, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) note that mixed-methods research involves gathering, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data in one study or multiple studies focused on the same underlying phenomenon.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocate moving beyond the traditional separation of quantitative and qualitative paradigms, emphasizing the value of recognizing the complementary strengths of both approaches and integrating them to improve rigor, comprehensiveness, and overall research quality. Doyle et al. (2009) highlight that seeking corroboration between qualitative and quantitative data enhances the validity of findings. Maxcy (2003, p. 86) asserts that the distinctive contribution of pragmatic researchers is to explore all possibilities while maintaining a practical focus, and Morgan (2007, p. 48) notes

that pragmatism provides a foundation for combining qualitative and quantitative methods, directing attention to methodological concerns rather than metaphysical debates.

This study's use of a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, provides a comprehensive framework for examining complex social phenomena, such as students' use of social media language and its influence on English proficiency. By integrating the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry, this approach enhances the depth, breadth, and validity of the research, allowing for triangulation of data and a holistic understanding of the relationship between social media usage and language outcomes.

The first objective, which sought to identify social media language features in students' online interactions, requires a detailed exploration of linguistic patterns and meanings in natural communication contexts. A qualitative method, such as content analysis of students' social media posts, is well-suited for identifying and describing these linguistic features. This approach captures the use of abbreviations, slang, emojis, and other informal language forms that may not be fully apparent through quantitative measures alone. The quantitative component complements this by measuring the frequency and distribution of these features across a larger sample, ensuring a more complete understanding of how social media language manifests among students.

The second objective, which aimed to determine students' perceptions of social media language usage and its effect on their English, benefits from a survey-based quantitative approach. Surveys provide measurable insights into the proportion of students holding

positive or negative views regarding social media language and its perceived impact on their English proficiency.

The third objective, which examined the relationship between English proficiency and social media usage, is most appropriately addressed through quantitative analysis, including correlation and regression techniques. These methods allow the researcher to determine whether variations in social media use are associated with higher or lower levels of English proficiency.

Overall, the mixed-methods design enables methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings by converging multiple forms of evidence. It allows the researcher not only to quantify patterns and relationships but also to interpret the meanings, motivations, and contexts underlying those patterns. This integrated approach provides a balanced and comprehensive understanding of how social media use affects students' language practices, perceptions, and proficiency, insights that would be incomplete if either qualitative or quantitative methods were employed in isolation.

3.2 Triangulation/Convergent Parallel design

Creswell (2006) identified four principal types of mixed-methods research designs, namely triangulation, embedded, explanatory, and exploratory. The present study adopts the triangulation design because, according to Creswell, it enables the researcher to seek convergence among data from different sources, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the findings. The triangulation design, also known as the convergent parallel design, is regarded as one of the core models in mixed-methods research. In this design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and

subsequently integrated during the interpretation phase in order to obtain a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the research phenomenon.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 67) refer to this approach as a “convergent” design because both qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently and integrated for comparison or confirmation, facilitating triangulation. Likewise, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 341) note that triangulation and convergence operate under the same methodological principle within mixed-methods research. Triangulation enhances the credibility and robustness of a study’s conclusions, making them more acceptable to proponents of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Creswell, 2006). This convergent parallel design enables the researcher to identify points of agreement and divergence in the data, thereby improving the overall validity of the findings, as illustrated in Figure 2.

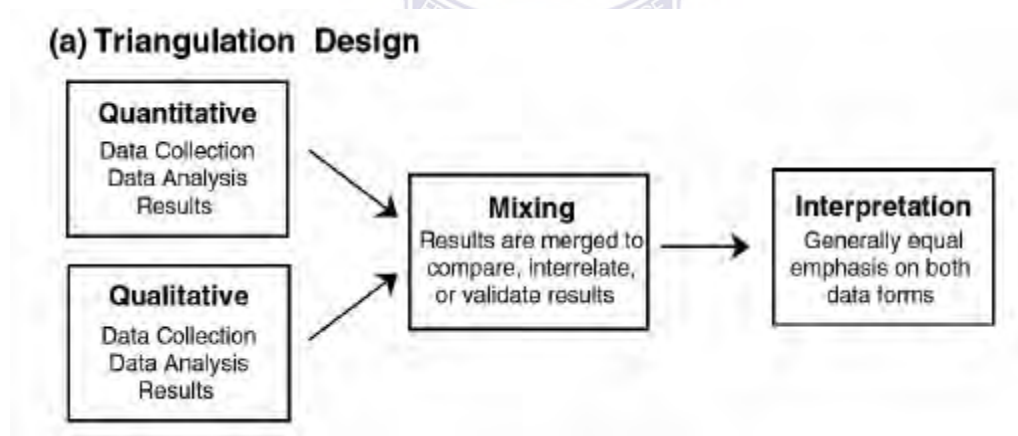


Figure 2: The Process of Triangulation

Triangulation or Convergent Parallel Design

In educational research, Creswell (2012) identified six major mixed-methods research designs. These include three sequential designs: explanatory, exploratory, and transformative, and three convergent or parallel designs: triangulation, nested, and transformative. The designs differ based on several factors: the use of an explicit theoretical framework, the implementation approach, whether data are collected sequentially or concurrently, the priority assigned to qualitative versus quantitative data, equal or unequal, the stage at which data are analyzed and integrated, whether separate, transformed, or connected, and the notation of procedures.

The triangulation design, previously called the concurrent triangulation design, is the most widely used and recognized mixed-methods design (Creswell et al., 2003). In this approach, qualitative and quantitative components are conducted simultaneously and are typically given equal priority. Integration of the two data strands occurs at the interpretation stage, representing the conventional application of triangulation in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) describe a variant of the triangulation design in which validated quantitative data are supplemented with open-ended qualitative questions embedded within a survey instrument. Another approach, the multilevel research model, investigates a system at multiple levels using different methods, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. For instance, qualitative methods may explore teachers' perceptions of an issue, which can then be compared with quantitative survey data capturing students' perspectives.

Despite its advantages, mixed-methods research has faced criticism, particularly from proponents of the incompatibility thesis. These critics argue that qualitative and quantitative approaches originate from fundamentally different epistemological traditions and therefore cannot be meaningfully combined in a single study. Methodological purists advocate for strict separation of paradigms and oppose the integration of these approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Sale et al. (2002) similarly caution against the uncritical adoption of mixed-methods research, noting that some researchers fail to consider the underlying philosophical assumptions and the significant differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Onwuegbuzie (2002) challenges the purist perspective that emphasizes a strict divide between positivist and post-positivist philosophies, arguing instead that these paradigms lie along an epistemological continuum, with mixed methods research positioned at the center. Similarly, Howe (1988) rejects the incompatibility thesis, advocating for a pragmatic approach where researchers focus on "what works" in addressing their research objectives.

However, Mertens (2003) critiques this pragmatist foundation of mixed methods research, asserting that decisions based solely on practicality or utility are insufficient, as they fail to consider the deeper questions of "practical for whom and to what end?" Despite this critique, many scholars maintain that the strength of pragmatism lies in its emphasis on selecting the most effective methods for answering a specific research question or set of questions.

Tashakkori and Teddie (2003, p.701) argue that pragmatist researchers follow what they term "the dictatorship of the research question," meaning that the research question takes

precedence over the methodology or underlying paradigm. Despite its advantages, the mixed methods approach faces practical challenges and criticisms. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlight that it can be difficult for a single researcher to conduct a mixed methods study when both qualitative and quantitative components are implemented at the same time. Managing these two phases concurrently demands substantial time, effort, and expertise in both approaches, which can create logistical and analytical challenges. Researchers must therefore possess strong knowledge of qualitative and quantitative methods and understand how to integrate them effectively to achieve valid results.

Sequential mixed methods studies also have limitations. Ivankova et al. (2006) note that completing distinct phases of a study can require significant time and resources. Doyle et al. caution that mixed methods researchers should anticipate these practical difficulties and be prepared to address them as they arise.

This study, which investigates the effects of social media language on students' English proficiency, employs a triangulation design, also referred to as a convergent parallel design. This design is particularly suitable because it allows quantitative and qualitative data to be collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The convergence of these two data types enhances the validity and credibility of the findings by corroborating evidence from multiple sources. Quantitative data from questionnaires and content analysis reveal measurable patterns and relationships between social media usage and language proficiency, while qualitative data from interviews provide deeper insight into students' perceptions and experiences. Integrating these strands ensures that statistical trends are supported by contextual explanations, resulting in a richer and more nuanced interpretation.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 67) emphasize that the convergent parallel design merges quantitative and qualitative results to compare and confirm findings. Similarly, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 341) note that triangulation and convergence share the same methodological objective: strengthening research outcomes through complementary evidence. By employing a convergent parallel design, this study achieves both empirical rigor and interpretative depth in examining how social media affects the English language development of teenage students.

3.3 Quantitative Research – Descriptive Survey

Kothari (2004) explains that quantitative research focuses on measuring quantity or magnitude and is suitable for phenomena that can be expressed numerically. He adds that the techniques and measurement procedures used in quantitative research produce discrete, quantifiable values, with data obtained through systematic empirical observation and measurement (Kothari, 2007).

Quantitative data analysis involves the systematic collection and evaluation of measurable and verifiable data and incorporates statistical procedures for the analysis and interpretation of numerical information (Creswell, 2007). The primary objective of quantitative analysis is to quantify hypothetical relationships or conditions. Such analyses are typically conducted by researchers with expertise in quantitative techniques, either manually or with the aid of computer-based tools (Cowles, 2005).

Ali (2021) identifies two principal advantages of the quantitative approach. First, it enables researchers to systematically classify, summarize, and present observations through descriptive statistical techniques. Second, it facilitates the interpretation of findings and the drawing of inferences about a phenomenon based on data obtained from a defined and

narrowly specified sample. Because such samples are systematically selected from larger populations, the resulting conclusions may be generalized to the wider population (Cowles, 2005). In this study, the sample was selected from the larger population of senior high school students in the Volta Region, specifically within the Anloga District. Accordingly, the findings will be analyzed using inductive reasoning, allowing conclusions drawn from the sample to be extended to the broader target population.

The descriptive survey methodology will be used for the analysis, which will include cross tabulation, percentages, frequencies, and charts. Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS will also be used to aid in the analysis. To avoid non-sampling errors, the test items will be carefully crafted and analyzed, Henry (1990). This will be accomplished by avoiding measurement errors and adhering to strict measurement procedures.

According to Kumekpor (2002), a scientific method is one that follows the rules of research. Because this study will be conducted on students in the Volta Region's Anloga District, it is hoped that senior high school students in this district will serve as a good sample.

Descriptive survey research involves studying a sample of a population to generate numerical descriptions of attitudes, opinions, or trends within that population. McNeill and Chapman (2005) describe it as a technique for collecting large quantities of data; typically in statistical form; from a broad audience within a short timeframe, primarily through closed-ended questions. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define the survey method as a process of gathering information from a sample group to determine its current status with regard to one or more variables. Similarly, Singh (2006) emphasizes that this method focuses on the present, aiming to identify the existing condition of the phenomenon under

study. According to Sjøberg et al. (2007), the survey method is particularly effective when a researcher aims to examine multiple variables using a large sample size and employs rigorous statistical analysis.

3.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis is adopted as the principal analytical technique for the qualitative component of this study. Samples of students' English Language academic writing, drawn from exercise books and examination scripts, will be subjected to qualitative content analysis in order to identify instances of social media language. In parallel, students' social media interactions will also be examined using the same analytical procedure.

Content analysis is widely regarded as a flexible and rigorous approach to the examination of textual data (Cavanagh, 1997). Rosengren (1981) characterizes it as a family of analytical strategies ranging from impressionistic and interpretive readings to highly systematic and rule-governed textual analyses. Historically, the method emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a technique for analysing diverse textual materials, including hymns, newspaper and magazine articles, political speeches, advertisements, folktales, and riddles (Berge, 2001, cited in Shava et al., 2021). This tradition underscores its capacity to generate holistic and meaningful insights from textual data.

Several scholars have provided influential definitions of qualitative content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) describe it as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.” Mayring (2000, p. 2) defines it as “an approach of empirical, methodologically controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and a step-by-step model, without rash

quantification.” Similarly, Berelson (1952) conceptualizes content analysis as a method for categorizing written or spoken material into groups of similar meaning that reflect either explicit or implicit messages. In line with these perspectives, Shava et al. (2021) view qualitative content analysis as an empirically grounded and methodologically controlled procedure for analysing texts based on their communicative content, with the aim of theory generation rather than numerical measurement.

Taken together, these definitions highlight qualitative content analysis as a systematic yet interpretive approach that enables researchers to explore and make sense of social reality in a manner that is both subjective and scientifically rigorous.

Weber (1990) explains that qualitative content analysis extends beyond the mere counting of words to a close examination of language, with the aim of classifying large volumes of text into a manageable number of categories that reflect shared meanings. In the present study, therefore, words identified as social media language will be systematically examined and interpreted within students’ exercise books, rather than treated only as frequency counts. This approach is consistent with Berge’s (2001) position that qualitative content analysis prioritizes the identification of distinctive themes that capture the range of meanings inherent in a phenomenon, rather than emphasizing the statistical significance of particular words or concepts, as is typical in quantitative text analysis.

3.4.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is grounded in inductive reasoning, through which themes and analytical categories emerge from the data by means of systematic examination and constant comparison conducted by the researcher. However, as Creswell (2007) explains,

the method is inherently flexible and may involve inductive procedures, deductive procedures, or a combination of both, depending on the objectives of the study.

Shava et al. (2021, p. 559) observe that the coding system typically employed in qualitative content analysis is capable of capturing both the manifest and latent meanings embedded in communication. They further note that data are often generated through in-depth, face-to-face interviews and analysed interpretively. In a similar vein, Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) argue that researchers frequently move beyond surface meanings in order to interrogate the latent content of texts, while Schreier (2012) emphasizes that the approach is particularly appropriate for data that demand interpretive engagement. Consequently, qualitative content analysis is widely regarded in educational research as a versatile and robust technique for the systematic analysis of textual data.

Building on this foundation, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three principal approaches to qualitative content analysis, distinguished by the extent to which inductive reasoning is employed: conventional qualitative content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis.

3.4.2 Conventional Qualitative Content Analysis

Berge (2001) explains that conventional qualitative content analysis involves the inductive derivation of coding categories directly from raw data and is frequently employed in the development of grounded theory. This approach is particularly suited to research designs that seek to describe a phenomenon, such as learners' responses to a specific teaching method (Shava et al., 2021).

Kondracki and Wellman (2002) refer to this approach as inductive category development. In traditional qualitative content analysis, data analysis begins with repeated reading of all the data in order to achieve immersion and gain an overall sense of the material (Tesch, 1990), in a manner comparable to reading a novel. A key strength of this traditional approach lies in its capacity to generate findings directly from participants' accounts, without the imposition of preconceived categories or prior theoretical frameworks.

3.4.3 Direct Content Analysis

Directed, or direct, content analysis begins with an initial coding framework derived from existing theory or prior empirical findings (Shava et al., 2021). Although preliminary categories are established in advance, researchers engage deeply with the data during analysis to allow additional themes to emerge inductively. Mayring (2000) notes that this approach facilitates the exploration of key variables and the relationships among them by providing an initial coding scheme and guiding the identification of connections between codes. In comparison with conventional qualitative content analysis, the directed approach follows a more structured and theory-driven procedure (Mayring, 2000).

Data for directed content analysis are commonly collected through interviews that begin with open-ended questions and subsequently incorporate more focused questions aligned with the pre-established categories (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Segments of data that do not fit the existing coding scheme are set aside for further examination to determine whether they constitute new categories or subcategories within existing codes. Mayring (2000) further argues that highlighting relevant text without immediate coding can enhance trustworthiness by ensuring that all potential instances of the phenomenon are captured. To achieve comprehensive and systematic coverage, researchers typically employ strategies

such as exhaustive sampling, prolonged engagement with the data source, and inclusive coding procedures designed to identify and document every relevant occurrence of the phenomenon under investigation.

According to Sheva et al., the primary advantage of employing a direct approach to content analysis lies in its ability to support and expand upon existing theories. Weber (1990) further explains that as research within a particular field advances, the direct approach highlights the reality that researchers often operate from an initial, unstructured perspective—a characteristic commonly associated with naturalistic research designs.

3.4.4 Summative Content Analysis

Summative content analysis initially adopts a quantitative orientation, as it begins with the counting of words or indicators; however, its primary objective is to examine the use and meaning of language through an inductive interpretive process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The procedure typically starts with the identification and quantification of specific words or other forms of manifest content and subsequently extends to an analysis of their contextual meanings and underlying themes (Shava et al., 2021). As Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) observe, this preliminary quantification is intended to explore patterns of usage rather than to derive meaning directly from numerical frequencies.

Kondracki and Wellman (2002) further emphasize that summative content analysis transcends simple word counting by incorporating the examination of latent content. In practice, the method involves manually or electronically searching texts for the identified terms, calculating the frequency of each word, and recording the source or speaker (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Shava et al., 2021). To enhance credibility, researchers may

also employ member checking to verify participants' intended meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Within this broader methodological framework, Shava et al. (2021, p. 555) outline a seven-step procedure applicable to the principal approaches to qualitative content analysis, including summative analysis. These steps include formulating the research questions, selecting the sample for analysis, defining the coding categories, outlining the coding procedures and coder training, implementing the coding process, establishing trustworthiness, and analysing the results of the coding process (McEwen, 2004).

3.4.5 Advantages of qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is highly adaptable, as it can accommodate data that is verbal or visual, obtained from existing sources, or collected directly by the researcher (Schreier, 2012). By interpreting verbal or written communication materials, this method facilitates a deeper understanding of social realities or phenomena and allows researchers to manage large volumes of data effectively. Additionally, qualitative content analysis is cost-efficient, as the materials required for its implementation are generally accessible and affordable (Creswell, 2007).

3.4.6 Weaknesses of qualitative content analysis

Sheva et al. (2021, p. 557) identify a key limitation of qualitative content analysis as the challenge of "locating unobtrusive messages relevant to the specific research question." In line with this, Schreier (2012) suggests that the method may be unsuitable for open exploratory research because it can only analyze pre-existing messages, which must already exist in oral, written, graphic, or video form.

Kondracki et al. (2002, p. 224) further note that qualitative content analysis can be time-consuming and labor-intensive, with coding schemes often becoming highly complex. Novice researchers may find the approach difficult due to the absence of standardized procedures and the intricacy of coding processes. Berge (2009) also observes that qualitative content analysis is not appropriate for testing causal relationships between variables.

Despite these limitations, qualitative content analysis is well-suited for the present study as it allows for a systematic yet flexible examination of textual and visual data. This method enables the coding and categorization of authentic posts, chats, and comments to identify recurring linguistic patterns, including abbreviations, slang, emojis, code-switching, and unconventional spellings. It directly addresses the study's first objective of identifying social media language features in students' online interactions. Through progressive coding, these features are organized into meaningful categories that reveal the distinctive characteristics of students' language practices on social media (Schreier, 2012, pp. 58–61).

3.5 Population

The population for this study consisted of senior high school students in the Anloga District. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) define a population as a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena. Similarly, Kumekpor (2002) describes it as the total number of all units of the phenomenon under investigation within the study area. Kothari (2004) adds that a population, or universe, comprises all items under consideration in an investigation, while Polit and Beck (2006, p. 258) define it as "the total number of people or elements that fit the specific set specification of the study."

Populations can be classified as either homogeneous or heterogeneous. A homogeneous population consists of members who share similar characteristics, with every element possessing the attributes defined by the target population criteria (Alvi, 2006). In contrast, a heterogeneous population includes members who meet the inclusion criteria but may differ in characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Alvi, 2006). This study involves a heterogeneous population, comprising both male and female students from rural and urban backgrounds and spanning different academic levels.

Specifically, the study population includes students from the five senior high schools in the Anloga District of the Volta Region: Zion College (ZICO), Anloga Senior High School (ANSECO), Anloga Technical School (ANTECH), Attokor Vocational Training College (ATOVOC), and Volta Senior High School (VOLTASCO). Across these schools, the total population is approximately 8,000 students. Shared characteristics among the students include being male or female, enrolled in SHS 1–3, aged between 14 and 20 years, having completed post-basic education, and being second-language learners of English.

3.6 Sample

A sample, according to Saravannel (1991), is a portion or fraction of all the components or units that make up a given population. The population is the mother that births the sample. The sample's characteristics are expected to be representative of the population.

This sample size will assist us in meeting the ethical requirement of maximising external validity via unbiased sampling techniques. Dattalo (2010) emphasised that the descriptions of the elements will accurately depict characteristics of the population from which they were chosen.

This study will use a combination of clustered sampling and simple random sampling. Initially, the population will be divided into clusters, and subjects within each cluster will be selected using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that every element in the population has an equal chance of being chosen (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This approach aligns with Dattalo's (2010) ethical considerations regarding participant rights, appropriate sample size, and the generalizability of findings.

Participant rights are respected by ensuring that students who choose not to participate are not compelled to do so. To determine the sample size, the study will apply Cochran's (1977) formula, which calculates the required number of participants when the margin of error and confidence level are specified.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Here, n = Sample size, Z = Critical value of the desired level of confidence, e = Margin of error/ desired level of precision, p = Maximum probability of variation in the distribution.

For a population of 8000, a level of confidence (z) of 95% = 0.95, a margin of error (e) of 5% = 0.05, and a probability of variation (e) = 0.5. The recommended sample size is therefore approximately 385.

3.7 Sampling Technique – Cluster

The cluster sampling technique will be employed in this study, with each of the five senior high schools in the district treated as a distinct cluster. Taherdoost (2016, p. 21) defines cluster sampling as the division of the entire population into clusters or groups, describing it as “a probability sampling technique in which researchers divide the population into multiple groups (clusters) for research purposes.”

For large study areas, Kothari (2014) recommends dividing the area into smaller, non-overlapping sections, randomly selecting some of these sections as clusters, and including all units within the selected clusters in the final sample. To form random groups, the researchers applied simple random and systematic random sampling techniques (Alvi, 2016; Singh & Masuku, 2014). As Wilson (2010) notes, a random sample is drawn from each cluster, and all selected clusters are incorporated into the final sample. Cluster sampling is particularly beneficial for studies in which participants are geographically dispersed, as it reduces both time and cost.

Taherdoost (2016) outlines the stages of cluster sampling as follows:

- Select a cluster grouping for the sampling frame, such as type of institution or geographical region.
- Assign numbers to each cluster.
- Select the sample using random sampling.

To determine the number of participants from each school, a proportionate sampling technique was employed. This method calculates the number of participants from each cluster based on its proportion relative to the total population (Leavy, 2017). This approach was necessary because the student populations varied across schools, with some, such as ANSECO, ZICO, and ANTECH, having large populations, while ATOVOC and VOLTASCO had comparatively smaller populations.

3.8 Sample Size

Taherdoost (2016) emphasizes that a random sample must be sufficiently large to allow for generalization and to minimize sampling errors or biases. When determining sample size, factors such as the population's complexity, the objectives of the study, and the intended

statistical analyses should be taken into account. Although larger samples are generally associated with reduced bias, Gill et al. (2010) note that beyond a certain threshold, further increases in sample size produce only marginal improvements. Researchers must therefore balance the benefits of larger samples against practical constraints such as time, funding, and other resources. In essence, while increasing sample size can lower sampling error, the rate of reduction diminishes as the sample grows.

Kothari (2004) also advises that when determining sample size, budgetary constraints must always be considered. As a result, the sample for this study will be representative of the population, with all aspects of the study being described in detail. Students in the target population will be male, female, SHS 1 - 3, aged 14 - 20 years, post basic education, and English second language learners. It goes without saying that every cluster for this study will share all of these characteristics, validating the credibility of any subject chosen for this study. A random sample within a cluster will contain elements representative of the study.

The sample size for the quantitative study will be 385, based on a population of 8,000 students, a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 5%. To increase the validity of the results, the study will distribute four (400) hundred questionnaires. Each cluster will require five (5) exercise books for the qualitative content analysis.

3.9 Instruments and Procedure for Data Collection

For the realization of the objectives of this study, a self-administered questionnaire was treated on the prescribed sample for the study. The first part consists of some questions to assess the social media use by students. The resulting responses will be rated on the Linkert Scale and later analysed.

The second section, on the other hand, consists of questions about the respondents' demographics. This is supported by Kothari's (2004, p.104) recommendation that items on a questionnaire be presented in a logical sequence, moving from easy to more difficult questions. He further proposed that personal and intimate questions should be saved for last.

Kothari (2004) defines a questionnaire as a sequence of questions arranged in a specific order on one or more forms, emphasizing that it constitutes the core of a study and must therefore be carefully designed. Given that this research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the researcher will also analyze the content of students' exercise books and selected social media interactions. Creswell (2009) notes that qualitative data can be gathered through document analysis, observation, or interviews. He further explains that, although instruments such as questionnaires may be used, it is ultimately the researcher who collects the data, highlighting the researcher's role as a critical instrument in the data collection process.

3.10 Ethical Issues for Consideration

Conducting mixed-methods research in schools necessitates careful attention to ethical considerations to safeguard participants and maintain the integrity of the research process. Key ethical issues include obtaining informed consent, protecting privacy and confidentiality, and ensuring secure handling of data. Ethics, understood as the study of what is right and wrong and the obligations of researchers, provides the framework for such considerations (Bos, 2020). The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004, 2018) highlights that researchers have responsibilities not only to participants but also to the wider academic community and society.

To adhere to these ethical requirements, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the School of Foreign Languages, Department of Applied Linguistics, which was distributed to all participating schools. This procedure ensured compliance with the principle of informed consent. BERA (2004, p.6) stipulates that researchers must obtain participants' "voluntary informed consent" prior to data collection, while Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasize that participants should fully understand the study's purpose, potential risks, and their rights, including the option to decline participation without penalty.

In line with these guidelines, a preamble was attached to each questionnaire. This preamble introduced the researcher, explained the study's purpose, and reassured respondents that their privacy and confidentiality would be protected. Participants were informed that their responses would not be used against them academically or in the future, an especially important consideration in small school communities where individuals could be easily identified (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Another ethical consideration was minimizing disruption to students' learning activities. Alderson and Morrow (2020) stress that research should not interfere with educational engagement or negatively affect students' emotional wellbeing. Accordingly, data collection was scheduled during break times and after regular learning hours.

3.11 Validity

The validity of a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel design stems from its ability to provide a comprehensive, corroborated, and contextually informed understanding of the research problem. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data are

collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and subsequently integrated to enhance the interpretive validity of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, pp. 67–69).

In the quantitative component, the questionnaire strengthens measurement validity by operationalizing variables such as students' perceptions and attitudes toward social media language through carefully structured and theoretically grounded items. Content validity is achieved through expert review and pilot testing, ensuring that the instrument adequately represents the intended constructs. Construct validity is further supported by aligning the questionnaire with established theoretical frameworks and previous empirical studies (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 252–254).

The qualitative component, based on the content analysis of students' social media interactions, enhances interpretive validity by revealing authentic linguistic features and contextual meanings. Credibility is reinforced through strategies such as member checking, data source triangulation, and systematic coding to ensure interpretations accurately reflect participants' experiences (Schreier, 2012, pp. 58–61; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 301–305).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings during interpretation strengthens convergent validity, as results from the questionnaire and content analysis corroborate and complement one another, providing a richer understanding of students' social media language practices. By examining both areas of convergence and divergence, the design mitigates potential biases and increases explanatory power. Overall, this mixed-methods approach ensures robust internal and external validity through methodological triangulation and comprehensive data integration.

3.12 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency, dependability, and replicability of research results (Nunan, 1999, p.14). In this study, reliability is addressed within the quantitative and qualitative components and then across the integrated mixed-methods design.

In the quantitative phase, which uses a questionnaire, reliability is ensured through careful item construction, standardized administration procedures, and pilot testing. To reduce researcher bias, the collected data are processed and analyzed using standardized statistical procedures, providing consistent and replicable results.

In the qualitative component, which employs content analysis, reliability, also called dependability, is maintained through systematic documentation of the analytical process, including coding strategies, category development, and interpretive decisions (Schreier, 2012, pp. 75–78). An audit trail is kept to allow external verification of the analytical steps, while peer debriefing and reflexive journaling enhance confirmability and reduce subjective bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 301–305).

At the level of the convergent parallel mixed-methods design, reliability is strengthened through explicit procedures for integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, ensuring consistency between the two data strands. According to Merriam (1998), dependability can be achieved through the researcher's positionality, triangulation, and audit trails. In this study, triangulation confirmed convergence of evidence, enhancing the stability and dependability of interpretations. For example, students' responses from the questionnaire were cross-verified with the linguistic features observed in their social media interactions, reinforcing the overall reliability and credibility of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This study looks at the effect of social media language on the English language use of senior high school students in Ghana's Anloga District. The methodology, sample, and its techniques were explained in the chapter before this one. This chapter presents an analyses of the results obtained from the data collected with instruments like the questionnaire and content analysis to answer the research questions. In a research study such as this, data presentation and analysis involve organizing and structuring the information gathered from respondents in a clear and systematic way, allowing the findings to be easily interpreted and understood at a glance (Nwankwo, 2006).

4.1 Students Use of Social Media

Table 2 Students with account on Social media

Proportion of Participants who have an Account on any Social Media Site			
YES	356	91.75	91.8%
NO	29	8.25	8.2%
	385		100%

Details of Table 2 reveals a strong social media use by the respondents of this study. Approximately, ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents are active on social media with only eight percent (8%) having no social media account. This corroborates the findings of previous studies in the country. Asare-Donkor (2018) found that all the 300 senior high school students who responded to his study have at least one account on social media. The studies of Kolan and Dzandza (2018) and that of Okyere (2019) all had almost all responding senior high school students using social media.

Students across basic, secondary, and tertiary education levels have been utilizing social media for a variety of purposes (Asare et al., 2022). This supports the assertion that the expanding scope and influence of social media usage among students cannot be underestimated (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018).

The next set of tables and figures explore the perceived effects of social media language on our respondents. These responses are graded on the likert scale and presented on the table 4.

4.2 Social Media Language Features Students Use

As revealed by Crystal (2008) and explained by Asare (2019), social media language can be categorized into shortened words, clippings, hashtags, emogi's, alphanumerals, among others. The study therefore sought to find which of the features or categories are used by our respondents in their social media engagements.

The results indicated that respondents employed all the social media language features identified by Crystal and Asare in their interactions. This aligns with Kinsella's (2010) observation that young people adopt informal vocabulary as a means of distinguishing themselves from previous generations. Figure 1 shows that emojis were the most frequently used feature, with over two hundred (200) respondents utilizing them. They were followed by alphanumerals, shortened forms, slang, and abbreviations, while hashtags and clippings were the least used features. The figure below presents the usage frequency for each feature.

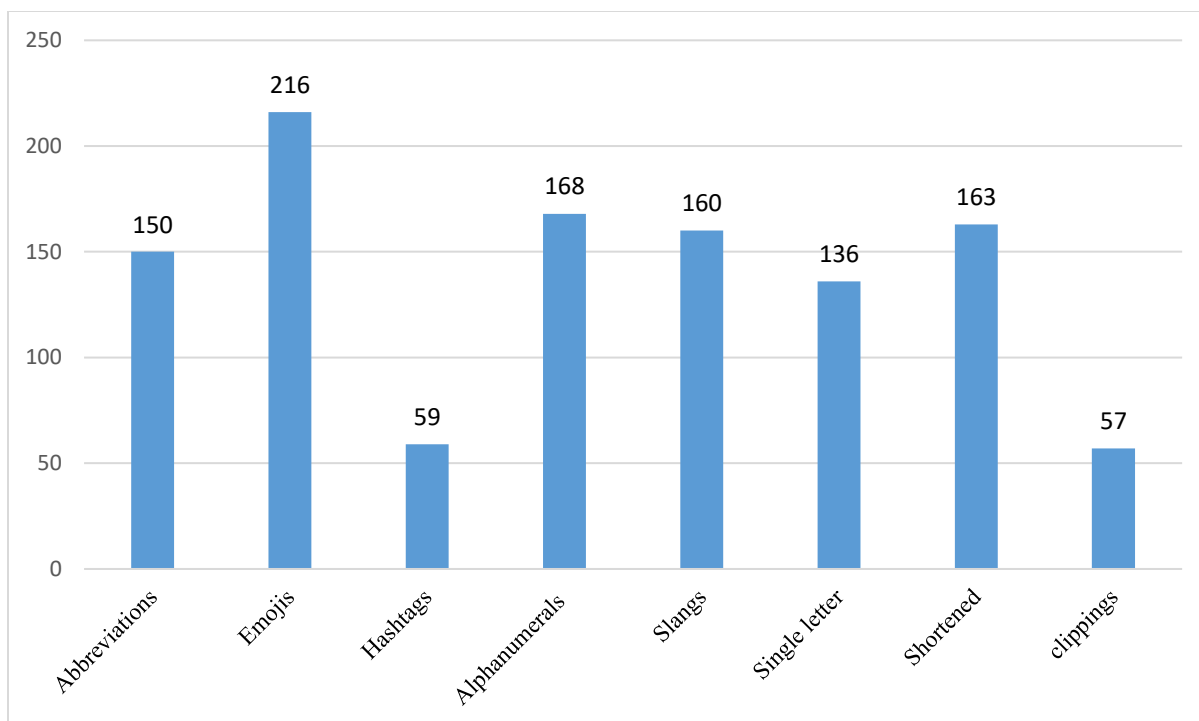


Figure 3 Features of social media language used

As seen in figure 1, out of the three hundred and fifty six (356) respondents who use social media, two hundred and sixteen (216) of them use emojis. This figure represents sixty one (61%) percent of the respondents. One hundred and sixty eight (168) respondents, representing forty seven (47%) percent use alphanumerals. Others are one hundred and sixty three, (163) representing forty six percent (46%) use shortened, one hundred and sixty (160) representing forty five (45%) use slangs, one hundred and fifty (150) representing forty two percent (42%) use abbreviations, one hundred and thirty six (136) representing thirty eight (38%) use single letter (homophones), fifty nine (59) representing seventeen percent (17%) use hashtags, and fifty seven (57) representing sixteen percent (16%) use clippings.

Further qualitative analysis shown of social media interactions between students revealed the use of these features as outlined by Crystal (2008). Figure two (2) and Figure three (3)

reveal features such as homophones, slangs, single letters, abbreviations, shortened words and clippings. These and others in the appendix 1 to 14 give credence to the features as mentioned by Crystal. Terminologies such as “shawty”, “apy”, “hu” may not be used by an older person even on social media.



Figure 4 Social media chat between two SHS students showing social media language 1



Figure 5 Social media chat between two SHS students showing social media language 2

These terminologies are what Ricarforte (2022) defines as cyber slangs. Since social media is a melting point of other languages as indicated by Jimma (2017), an alternate dialect

which favours real-time communication has been created. An observatory content analysis of the social media interactions of the students some of which are displayed in Figure 4 and Figure 5 revealed social media language elements which are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Language Features of Social Media in Students' Chats

Social Media Language	Social media feature type	Meaning
Sef	Clipping	Self
U	Homophone	You
IDK	Abbreviation	I don't know
Kk	Slang	Okay
Y	Homophone	Why
Boi	Slang	Boy
Wanna	Slang	Want to
Yh	Slang	Yes
Re	Shortened	Are
Der	Slang	There
Ge	Abbreviation	Good evening
Hw	Clipping	How
Kul	Slang	Cool
Sch	Clipping	School
Sap	Slang	How are you
Adey	Slang	I am
Abi	Slang	
Spy	Slang	Observing/watching
Morrow	Clipping	Tomorrow
Natin	Clipping	Nothing
Hu	Slang	Who
Wat	Clipping	What
Shawty	Slang	Short person
Gyal	Slang	Girl
Ur	Clipping	Your
Fior	Code switching	Get out (code switch)
Hwe ne jon	Slang /code switching	Look at his silly self (code switch)

Appendixes 1–8 provide further insights into the language features of social media observed in students' chats.

4.3 Perception of students on their usage of social media

Table 4: Use of Social Media and Participants' Perception of Its Effect on The Usage of Formal English Language

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Responding to written messages on social media improves my reading and comprehension skills (N= 356)	3.78	1.09	94 26.4%	156 43.8%	59 16.5%	28 7.9%	19 5.3%
My audio conversations in English on social media improves my listening and speaking skills (N=348)	3.86	1.05	105 29.5%	152 42.7%	54 15.2%	33 9.3%	12 3.4%
I use proper sentence structure when writing on social media.(N = 356)	3.10	1.29	68 19.1%	67 18.1%	100 28.1%	76 21.3%	45 12.6%
I use correct grammar when writing on social media (N = 356)	3.09	1.24	50 14.0%	98 21.6%	87 24.4%	77 21.6%	44 12.4%
My school mates correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes on social media (N=356)	2.97	1.34	57 16.0%	84 23.6%	69 19.4%	84 23.6%	62 17.4%
Shortened forms of words or phrases are seen in my academic writings. (N = 356)	2.48	1.44	48 13.5%	52 14.6%	55 15.4%	70 19.7%	131 36.8%
Slang used on social media is seen in my academic writings. (N = 356)	2.49	1.44	43 12.1%	59 16.6%	45 12.6%	92 25.8%	117 32.9%
Social media use helps to improve my writing and reading skills (N=356)	3.43	1.29	68 19.1%	143 40.2%	60 16.9%	45 12.6%	40 11.2%
I can credit my improved English language use to social media (N=356)	3.34	1.17	59 16.6%	118 33.1%	99 27.8%	49 13.8%	31 8.7%
My grammar and vocabulary have become bad because I use social media (N =356)	2.28	1.24	25 9.8%	46 13.1%	51 14.7%	115 31.7%	119 32.5%
My use of formal English language is becoming bad due to my frequent use of social media (N=356)	2.64	1.29	41 11.5%	58 16.3%	61 17.1%	123 34.6%	73 20.5%
My use of social media does not affect how I use formal English (N=356)	3.62	1.30	105 29.5%	128 35.9%	45 12.6%	39 11.4%	36 10.1%

The findings presented above highlight students' perceptions of their social media usage and its impact on their English language skills. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for each item. Overall, the results indicate that students generally hold positive views about the role of social media in enhancing their English language competence.

Specifically, the results show that students strongly agreed that responding to written messages on social media improves their reading and comprehension skills ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.09$). Similarly, they strongly agreed that engaging in audio conversations in English enhances their listening and speaking abilities ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.05$). These high mean scores suggest that social media interactions are perceived as informal yet effective platforms for language learning, as they provide opportunities for authentic communication in English. This finding is consistent with Alzahrani (2020), who reported that social media fosters language practice through exposure to diverse linguistic inputs.

Moderate average scores were observed for the statements regarding proper grammar and sentence structure when posting on social media ($M = 3.09$ and $M = 3.10$, respectively), which indicates a range of adherence to language standards in online communication. The comparatively high standard deviations ($SD \approx 1.25$ – 1.30) suggest variability in students' levels of linguistic discipline across different social platforms. Likewise, the nearly neutral average ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.34$) for peer correction of grammatical mistakes implies that while students are active on social media, they rarely point out each other's errors — suggesting a lack of collaborative learning in the online environment.

In contrast, the lowest mean scores were recorded for items suggesting negative spillover effects of social media language on academic writing, such as the use of slang and shortened words in formal work ($M = 2.48$ and $M = 2.49$, respectively). This pattern indicates that most students are able to distinguish between informal and academic contexts and maintain appropriate linguistic boundaries despite their frequent online interactions. The findings therefore contradict earlier concerns that the use of social media language may erode formal writing standards (Tagoe & Abakah, 2021).

Furthermore, the results reveal that students generally believe social media enhances their literacy skills ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.29$) and contributes to improvements in English usage ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.17$). Conversely, statements suggesting that social media use worsens grammar, vocabulary, or formal English yielded low mean scores ($M = 2.28$ and $M = 2.64$, respectively), with respondents largely disagreeing with those claims. The statement “My use of social media does not affect how I use formal English” recorded a relatively high mean ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.30$), underscoring students’ perception that their formal language proficiency remains intact despite informal online interactions.

Overall, the data reflect a positive perception among students regarding social media as a tool that supports language learning and the development of communication skills. These results align with previous research highlighting that social media platforms can supplement classroom instruction by providing meaningful contexts for authentic language use (Mahmud, 2022; Aydin, 2018). Students also appear to be aware of maintaining linguistic standards, demonstrating the ability to compartmentalize their social and academic writing behaviors.

The next set of questions explores whether students' social media engagements have affected their English language proficiency, as suggested by Esteron (2021). Esteron expressed concerns that students who frequently engage in online communication, which often involves creating new words and phrases, may experience a decline in vocabulary quality. These claims were investigated through a series of related items on the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Which Social Media Platform Influences Writing and Reading

Regarding the social media platforms that most influence students' writing and reading skills, WhatsApp emerged as the leading platform, with 213 respondents indicating its use, representing nearly 60% of the sample. It was followed by Facebook (165 respondents), YouTube (148), TikTok (148), Instagram (95), Telegram (94), Snapchat (81), Twitter (70), LinkedIn (18), Pinterest (9), and Tumblr (4). In percentage terms, Facebook accounted for 46%, YouTube 42%, and TikTok 30%. Other platforms had lower percentages, with Instagram at 27%, Telegram 26%, Snapchat 23%, Twitter 20%, LinkedIn 5%, Pinterest 2.5%, and Tumblr 1%.

This is graphically shown in the figure 5 below.

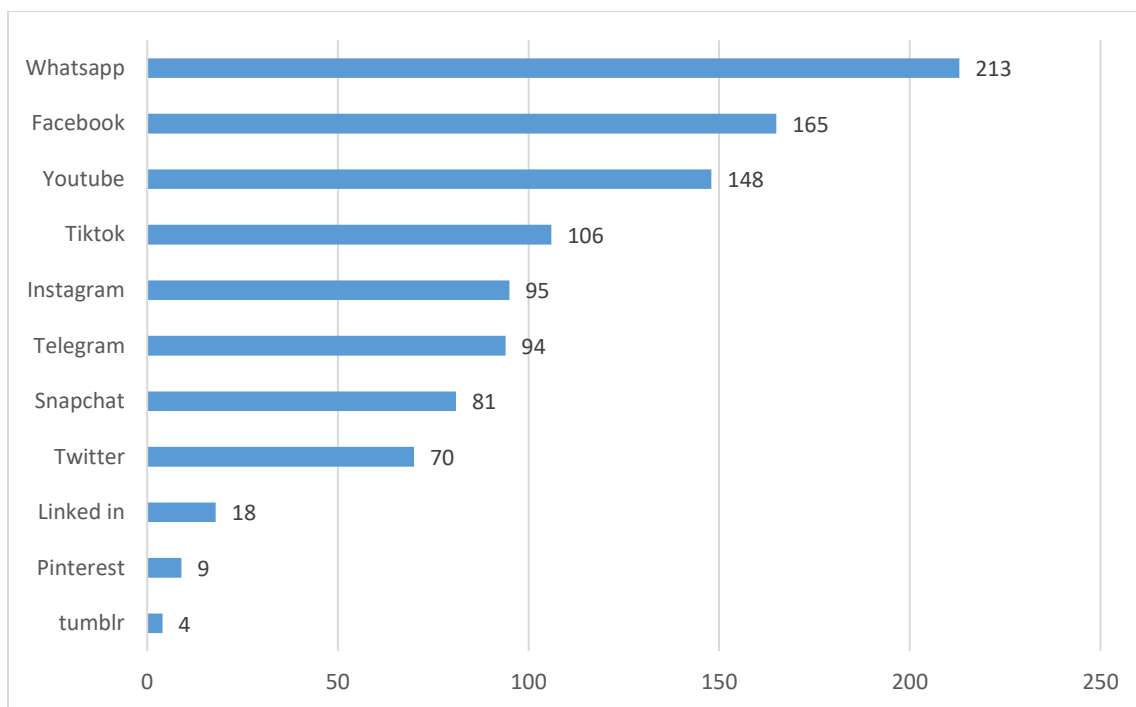


Figure 6 Social media site that improves writing and reading

4.3.2 Which Social Media Platform Affects Listening and Speaking

The responses from the study on the question of which platform improves listening and speaking revealed that one hundred and fifty six (156) respondents, representing forty four percent (44%) say Youtube influenced their listening and speaking the most. Youtube is closely followed by Whatsapp with one hundred and fifty five (155) respondents, also representing forty two (42%) of the respondents. Others like Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, Twitter and Pinterest had 142, 128, 87, 70, 66, 52 and 16 respectively. These results are translated as 40%, 36%, 24%, 20%, 19%, 15% and 4% respectively.

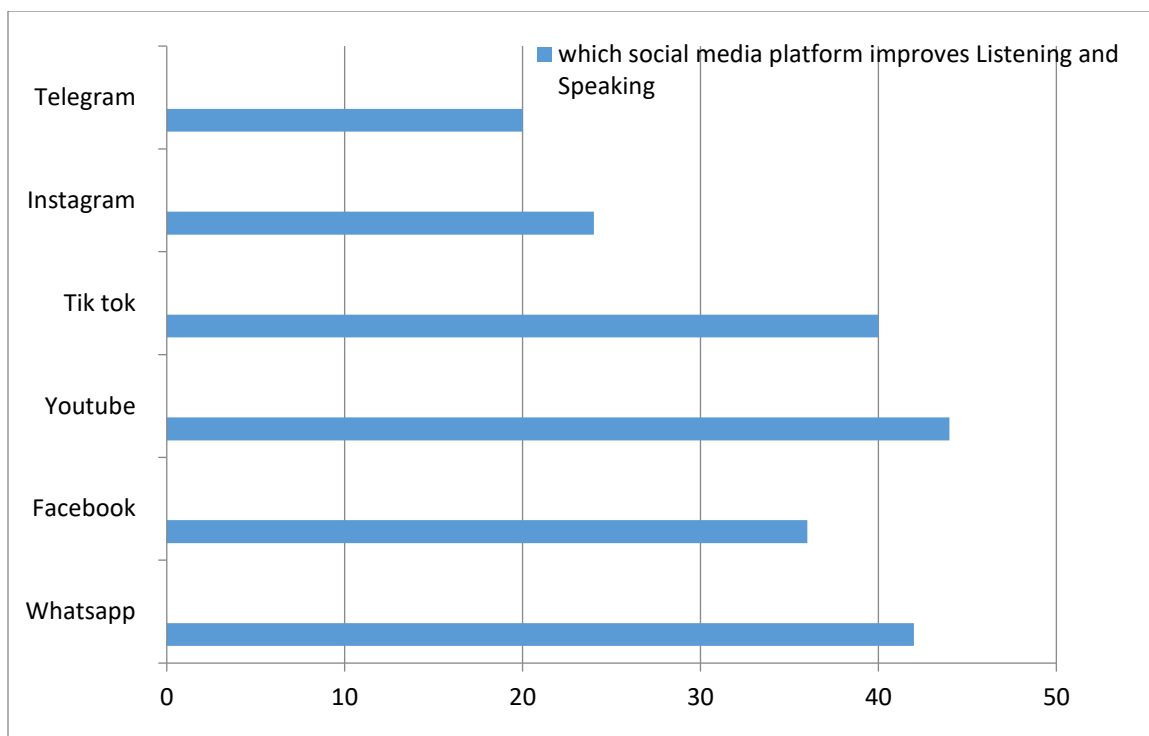


Figure 7 Social media that improves listening and speaking skills

4.3.3 Social Media Platforms Affecting Reading and Comprehension

Regarding the question of whether social media messages improve reading and comprehension skills, Figure 8 shows that 44% of respondents agreed, while 26% strongly agreed. Overall, this indicates that 70% of the students perceive social media as enhancing their reading and comprehension abilities. In contrast, 18% of respondents were neutral, 8% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed.

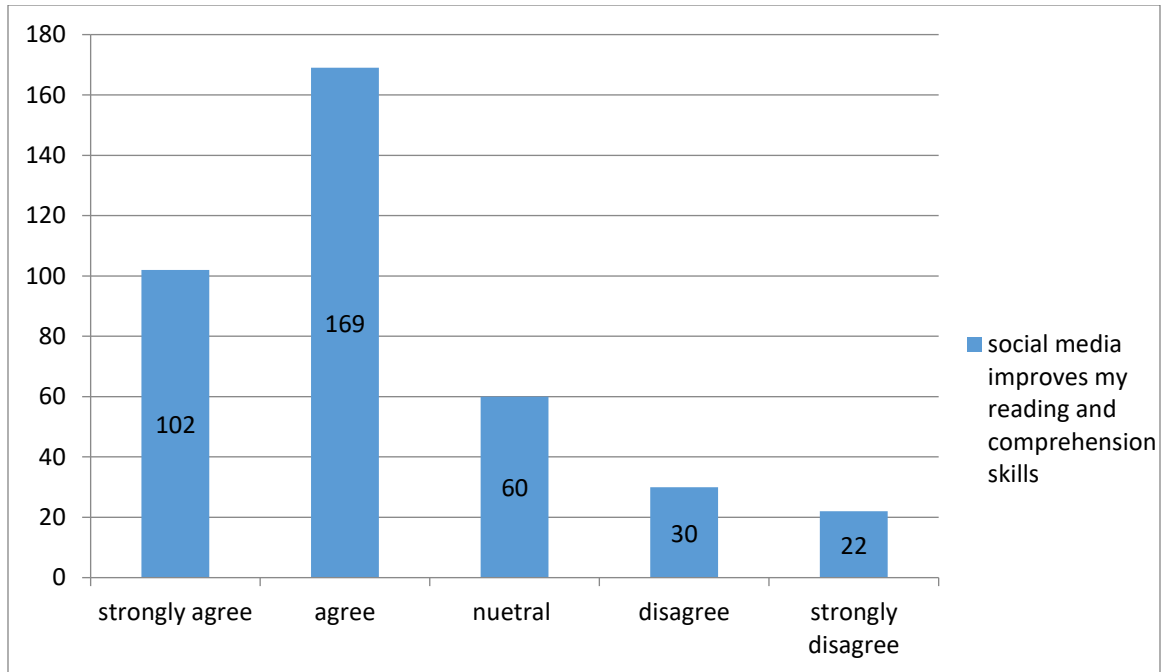


Figure 8 Social media improves reading and comprehension skills

4.3.4 Audio Conversations in English on Social Media Improves My Listening and Speaking Skills

Figure 9 illustrates respondents' views on the impact of social media exposure on their listening and speaking skills. The study found that 29% of participants strongly agreed and 43% agreed that engaging in audio conversations improves their listening and speaking abilities. In contrast, 15% were neutral, 9% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed with the statement.

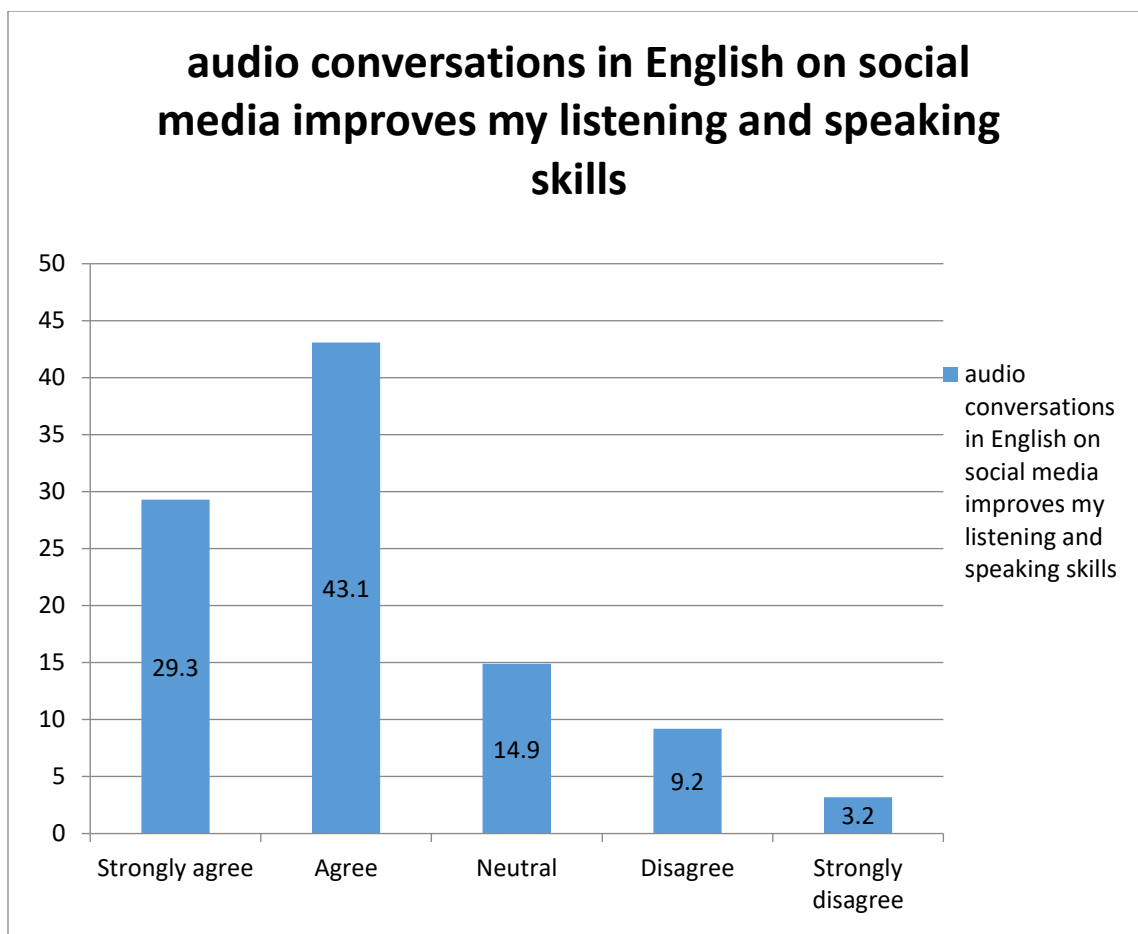


Figure 9 audio conversations improves listening and speaking skills

4.4.0 Influence of Social Media on Students' English Proficiency

To examine the relationship between English proficiency and the use of social media sites, a series of questions was administered using a Likert scale. These questions were designed to capture students' perceptions of the effects of social media language on their English language skills, including writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to assess the correlation and regression between the identified variables.

4.4.1 The Use of Proper Sentence Structure on Social Media

The responses regarding the importance of using correct sentence structure in social media writing revealed no definitive trend among participants. Approximately seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement, while an equal proportion (75%) also indicated some level of disagreement, reflecting a divided perception. Additionally, a considerable eighty-three percent (83%) disagreed with the notion, with forty-six percent (46%) strongly opposing it. Notably, about twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents remained neutral on the issue. This pattern of responses suggests that students hold divergent views about the relevance of correct sentence structure in social media communication. While some appear to value grammatical accuracy even in informal contexts, others perceive social media as a flexible linguistic space where adherence to formal writing conventions is less important.

4.4.2 Students Correct Grammatical Errors and Spelling Mistakes on Social Media

On the statement “My school mates correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes on social media”, the responses did not show any clear pattern. Whereas sixteen percent (16%) strongly agreed and twenty four percent (24%) agreed, nineteen percent were neutral, twenty four percent (24%) disagreed and another seventeen percent (17%) strongly disagreed.

The study went further to measure the perception of students on their use of correct grammar, and correction of grammar and spelling mistakes. The results on the use of correct grammar show that twenty six percent (26%) agree, fourteen percent (14%)

strongly agree, twenty four (24%) percent are neutral, whilst, twenty one percent (21%) and thirteen percent (13%) disagree and strongly disagree.

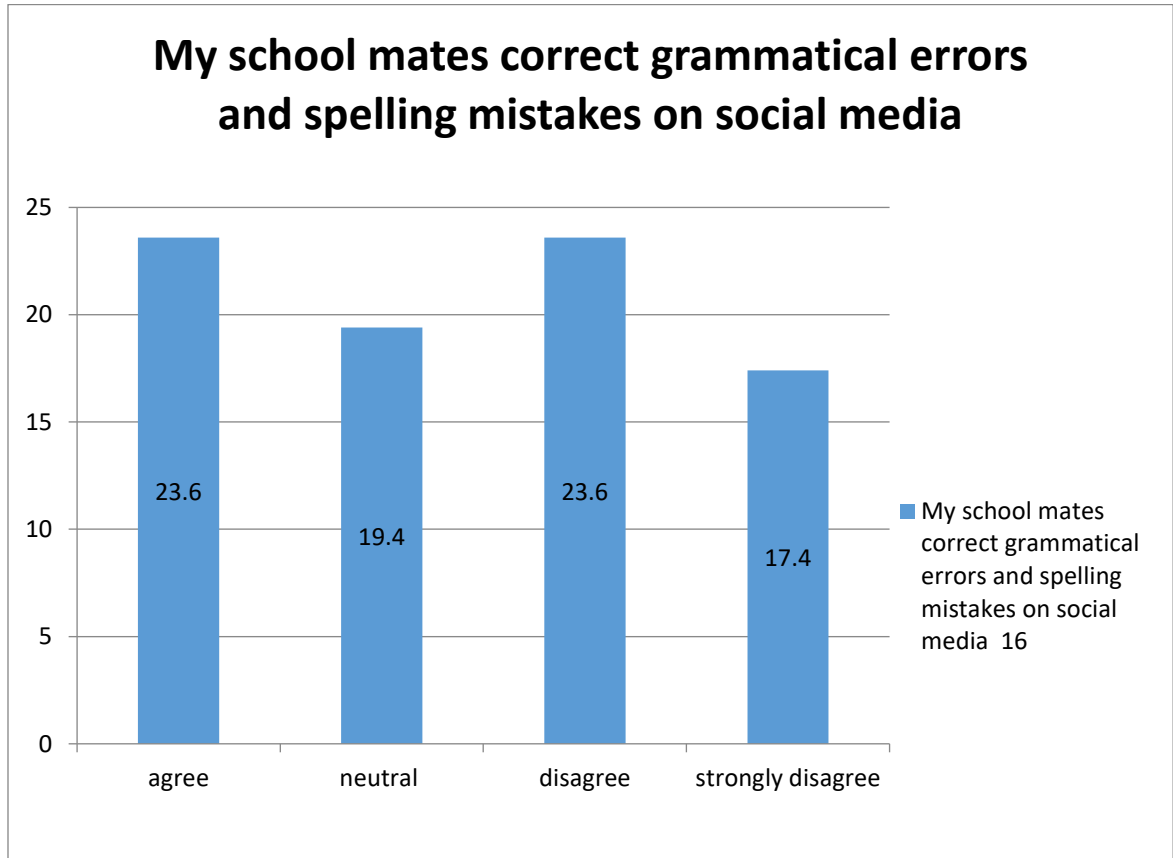


Figure 10 My school mates correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes on social media

Table 5: Relationship between English Proficiency and Social Media Usage

Correlation analysis

Measurement constructs	1	2
Social media usage	1	
English proficiency	0.982**	1

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$

Source: Field data, 2024

Correlation analysis examines the relationship between variables without exerting control over them. When investigating two quantitative variables simultaneously, this is referred to as simple correlation or simple regression. Analyses involving more than two quantitative variables can take the form of partial correlation, multiple correlation, or multiple regression, depending on the complexity of the relationships (Sthapit, Yadav, Khanal, & Dangol, 2017).

In the present study, a simple correlation was employed to assess the link between social media usage and English proficiency. As indicated in Table 4 (page 78), the correlation was very strong and statistically significant ($r = 0.982$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that increased use of social media among Senior High School (SHS) students is strongly associated with improvements in English proficiency, especially when the platform is used constructively.

The results indicate an overall positive relationship between students' engagement with social media and their English language skills. Respondents reported that social media enhances their literacy, with many agreeing that it improves reading and writing abilities ($M = 3.43$) and attributing gains in English proficiency to their social media interactions ($M = 3.34$). These findings imply that the interactive and text-rich nature of social media facilitates vocabulary expansion and greater writing fluency.

The statistical analysis further supports this relationship, demonstrating a very high positive correlation ($r = 0.982$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as students engage more frequently with social media, their English competence tends to increase, highlighting the platform's potential as a meaningful context for authentic language practice.

Moreover, students generally disagreed with statements suggesting that social media negatively affects grammar or formal writing, as reflected in low mean scores for grammar deterioration ($M = 2.28$) and formal language use ($M = 2.64$).

The strong agreement that social media does not negatively affect formal English ($M = 3.62$) reinforces the idea that students can differentiate between informal online communication and academic English. Taken together, both the perceptual data and the correlation results demonstrate that social media serves as a supportive environment that enhances, rather than diminishes, English proficiency among students.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Variable	B	β	S.E	t	Prob.
Constant	0.207		0.032	6.478	0.00**
Use of Proper Sentence Structure on Social Media	0.532	0.575	0.040	13.416	0.00**
Use correct grammar when writing on social media	0.398	0.414	0.041	9.672	0.00**
S.E of estimate	0.224				
R-Square	0.965			F-statistic	4873.91
Adj. R-square	0.965			Prob.(F-stats.)	0.00**

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$; * Significant at $p < 0.05$

Regression analysis investigates the relationship between independent and dependent variables by examining how variations in the independent variables affect outcomes in the dependent variable (composite scores). According to Kafle (2019, p. 129), regression analysis is a statistical method used to determine the nature of relationships between two

or more variables and to estimate the value of an unknown dependent variable based on known independent variables. In this framework, the variable used to predict outcomes is referred to as the **independent, predictor, or explanatory variable**, while the variable being predicted is called the **dependent, explained, or regressed variable** (Montgomery, 1982).

In the present study, regression analysis was employed to assess how independent factors—specifically, the use of proper sentence structure and correct grammar on social media— affect English proficiency as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 5, social media usage exhibits a strong and positive relationship with English proficiency ($F = 4873.91$, $p < 0.01$). The analysis indicates that social media usage collectively accounts for approximately 96.5% of the variance in English proficiency. Among the predictors, proper sentence structure has the greatest influence ($\beta = 0.575$, $p < 0.001$), while correct grammar also contributes significantly ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < 0.001$).

Overall, the results demonstrate that social media usage positively and significantly enhances students' English proficiency, with adherence to proper sentence structure emerging as the most influential factor.

4.4.3 Social Media Language Features in Academic Work

4.4.3.1 Shortened Words and Phrases in Academic Work

Responses from the students on the infiltration of shortened words in their academic writing, the responses revealed that twenty three percent (23%) disagreed and thirty two percent (32%) strongly disagreed that shortened forms of words or phrases are seen in their academic writing. On the other side of the responses, fourteen percent (14%) strongly agree

and approximately sixteen percent (16%) agree to the statement made. However, another fifteen percent (15%) gave a neutral response to the question.

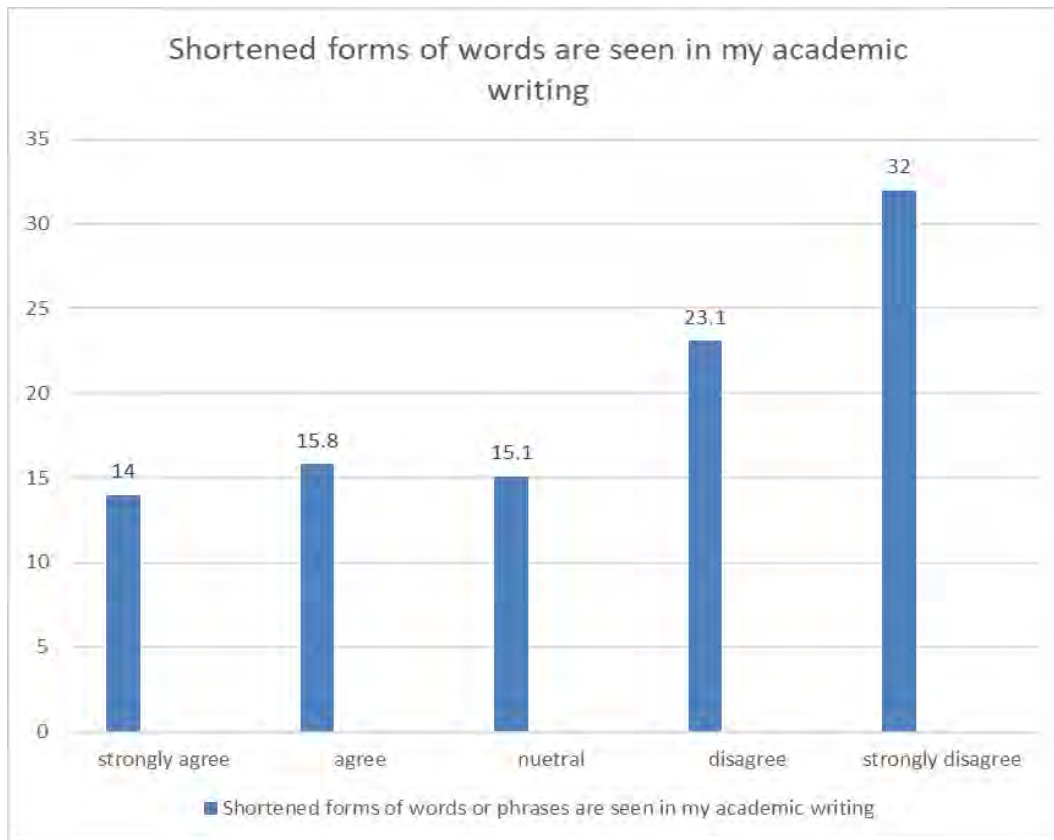


Figure 11 Shortened words in my academic writing

4.3.3.2 Social Media Slang in Academic Work

As revealed in figure 11 on page 84, the statement “Slang used on social media is found in my academic writings” was responded as follows; thirteen percent (13%) strongly agreed, seventeen percent (17%) agreed respectively to the statement. Thirteen percent (13%) were neutral while twenty-five percent (25%) disagree and thirty-two percent (32%) strongly disagree. This clearly depicts a disagreement to the statement.

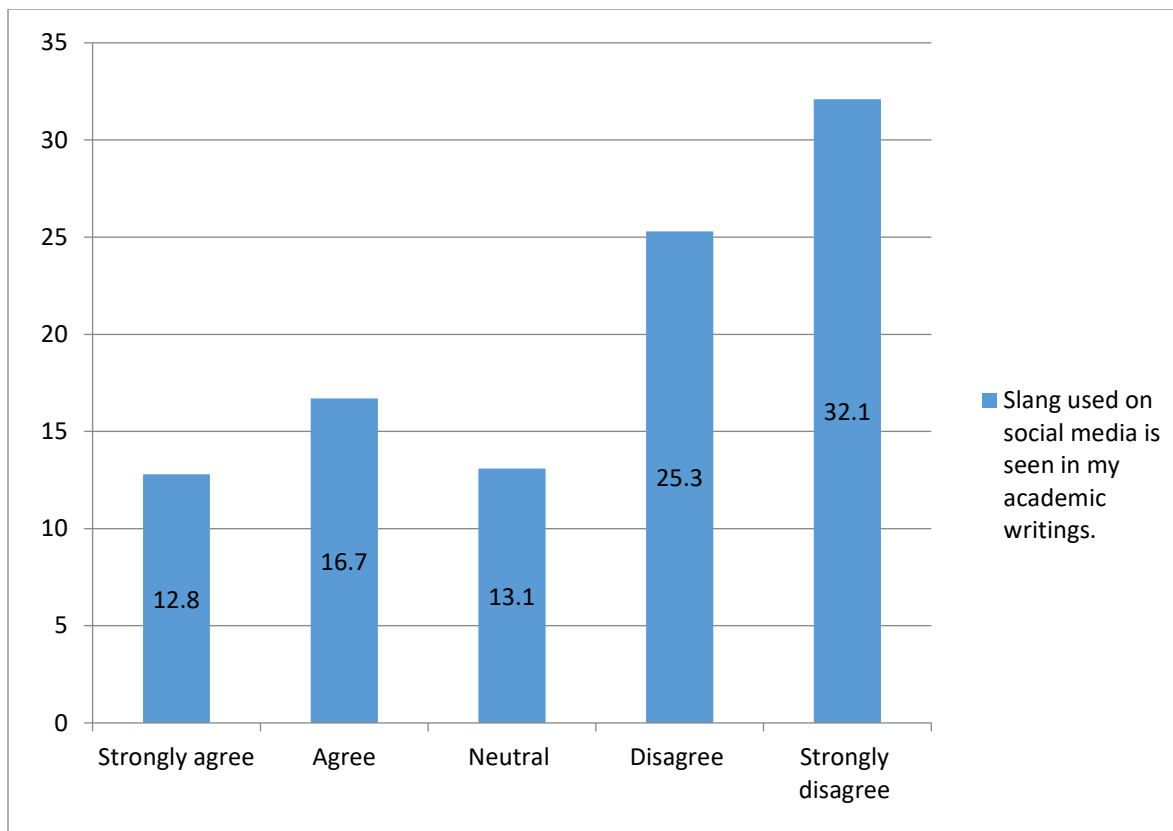


Figure 12 Slang used on social media is seen my academic writing

Figure 13 and 14 on pages 96 and 97 respectively which are excerpts of students' academic writings give credence to the quantitative responses that slang and shortened words are not seen in students' writings. It could be seen that these excerpts did not reveal any social media language features.

Ex 7
- 27th - 10 - 2022

Write a letter to your father abroad telling him some challenges that you are going through.

Anlo Senior High School,
Post Office AHI 10,
Anloga.
27-10-2022.

Dear Daddy,

I would like to draw your attention to some challenges that I'm going through. Some of these challenges are Money, foods, fruit etc.

Just some days ago, I find challenges in Money to buy my exercise books, shoes because all my shoes and sandals are stolen by my mates and the senior, which lead me to wearing of my friends spoils sandals to school which I don't like.

One of these challenges are ^{lack of} food. ~~Now-a-days~~ food at dining hall are now expensive although you will not buy them at the hall by but them very very expensive. ~~Something~~ Sometimes when I go in for food at

Figure 13 Excerpt of students' classwork

the hall I find it difficult to eat because sometime what I expect to eat I don't get that much, ~~but~~ ^{and} sometimes I don't even get food to eat because of shortage of the food.

Bushes hair, because I don't have money I can't bob my hair. And there is a saying that when you have a bushes hair all that you will learn will not stick in your mind and because of that I want money to bob my hair to prevent that saying.

To I also want a wrist watch to be checking time because in our school when the bell rings for period over, or breakfast, or lunch it won't say anything like that so if you have your own wrist watch you will know all that.

To ~~conclude~~ conclude these are my challenges that I am facing now I know that all this will be done. I am ask you this items because I don't any work ~~doing~~ ^{that} I'm doing to cater for myself. God Himself will bless us.

Cord. → 03
 Exp. → 05
 Org. ← 03
 M.A. → 02

Your son,
 Bright.

Figure 14 Excerpt of students' classwork

4.4.3.3 Social Media Credited for Improved English Language

Importantly, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “*I can credit my improved English language to the use of social media.*” The results, presented in Figure 12, show that 17% of participants strongly agreed and 32% agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 27% were neutral, and 14% and 10% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively.

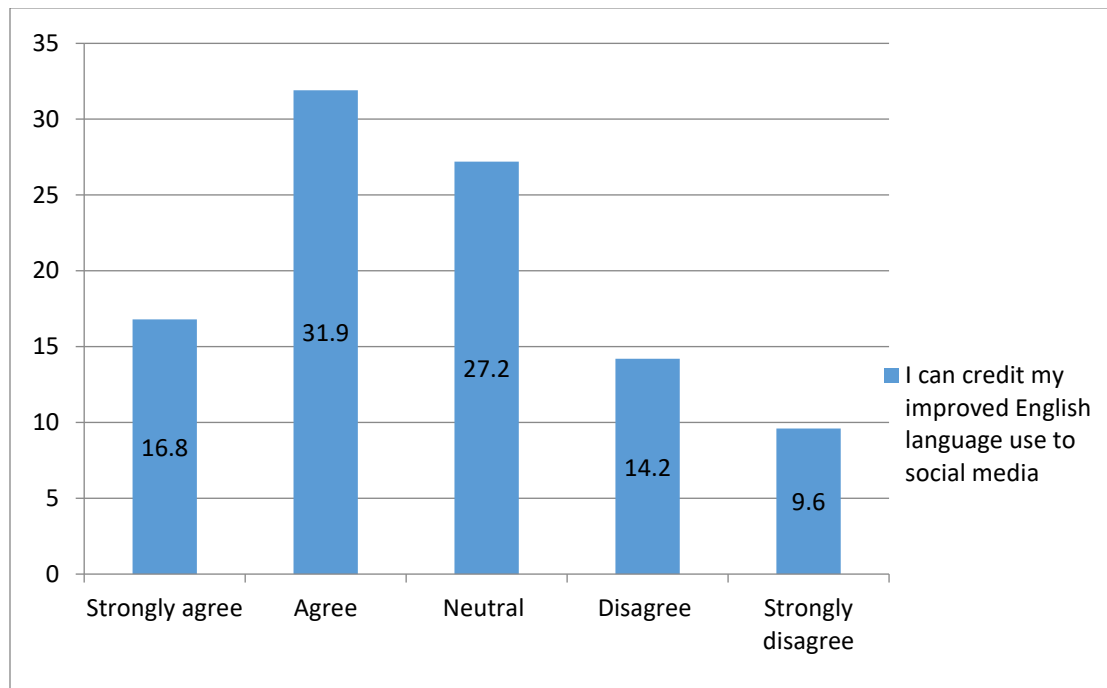


Figure 15 Social media improves English Language

4.4.3.4 Social Media Affects Grammar and Vocabulary

The study went on to enquire about how social media affects one’s grammar and vocabulary. The statement was “My grammar and vocabulary has become bad due to my use of social media”.

The results as displayed in figure 16 showed that eight percent (8%) strongly agreed, thirteen percent (13%) agreed. There was fourteen percent (14%) who expressed a neutral

view to the question, while thirty two percent (32%) disagreed and thirty three (33) percent (%) strongly disagreed with the statement made.

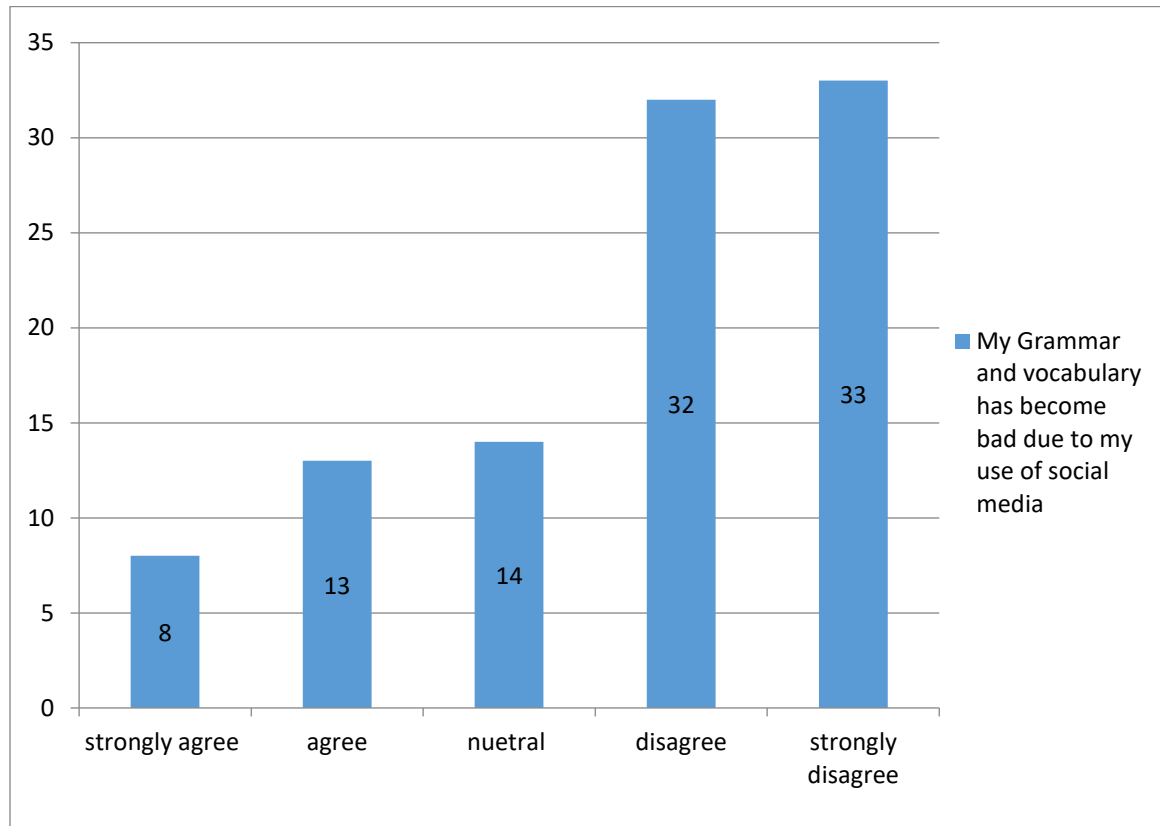


Figure 16 Grammar and vocabulary are bad because of social media

The results presented in Figures 15 and 16 address a key research question: whether students perceive social media usage as negatively affecting their English language skills. Figure 15 illustrates responses to the statement, “*My use of formal English language has become bad due to my frequent use of social media.*” The findings indicate that 11% of respondents strongly agreed and 16% agreed with the statement. Approximately 18% were neutral, while 35% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed, suggesting that most students do not view social media as detrimental to their formal English usage.

These results are further supported by responses to the subsequent statement, “*Social media does not affect how I use formal English language.*” Here, 29% of respondents strongly disagreed and 36% disagreed, while 14% were neutral. Only 11% agreed and 10% strongly agreed with the statement. Figure 16 provides a visual representation of these findings.

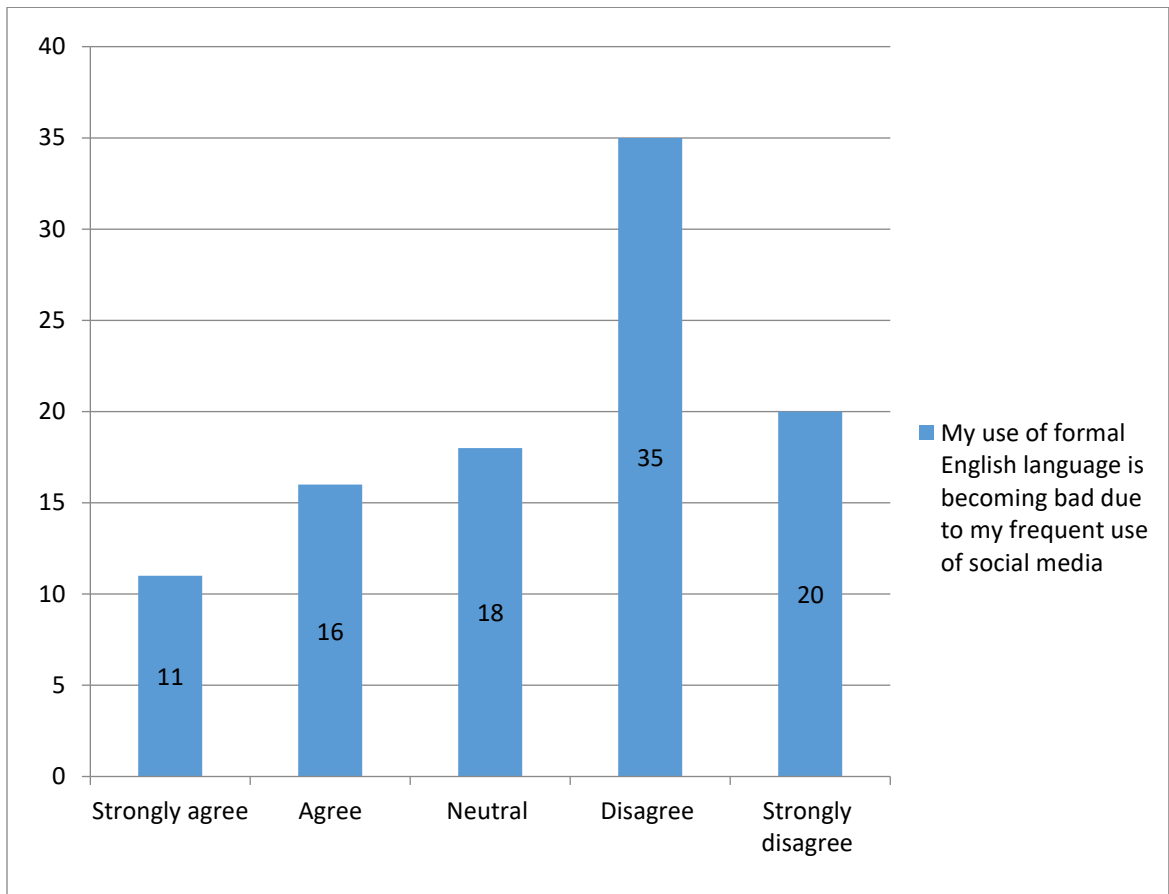


Figure 16 Frequent use of social media destroys English proficiency

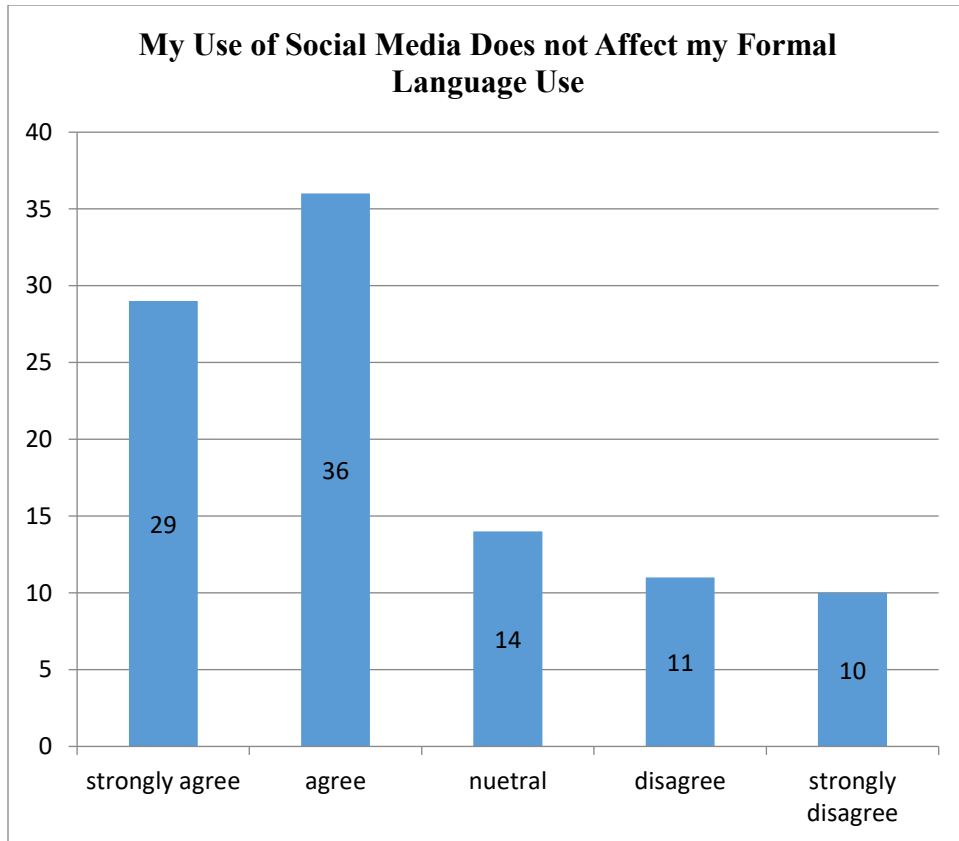


Figure 18 Use of social media does not affect Formal English Language use



here today were once in our school school uniform like us and we will soon be like them, I, therefore, The chairman, on behalf of the Board of Governors and the headmaster give them a rousing welcome home. I strongly believe we are in good mood to mark this occasion. It would be my desire to do a roll-call but it is the preserved role of the Headmaster. Nevertheless, I welcome all the year groups present since the establishment of the school in 1999 to the present year group 2023, the newest to join the squad.

The chairman, the Board of Governors the Headmaster with his able staff have been doing their possible best in the running of the school, which is so glaring for all to see. However, our school buildings need new coats of paint. It is on record that, the last painting was done a score and four years ago. The painting of our buildings will give our great school a face lift. We, therefore, crave the indulgence of the old students Association to come to our aid in this light.

Lastly, our library is under resourced and some part of the roof is leaking so during rainy seasons there is very low patronage of the facility. Please do come to our aid.

The chairman, Board of Governors, all protocols

Figure 19 Excerpts of students' classwork

4.5. Discussion

As mentioned before in this study, one of the findings of this study as revealed in Figure 3 and Figure 4 and aggregated in Table 2 is that senior high school students use informal and grammatically incorrect language when they interact on social media. This goes to confirm the views of Crystal (2001), Kinsella (2010), Baron (2011) who argued that teenagers use social media language which allows them to distinguish them from older people. They therefore adopt peculiar elements such as shortening and reducing, alphanumeric homophony, graphemes, clipping, abbreviated forms and single letters (Crystal, 2008). All these mentioned elements are used by respondents of this study in their social media interactions. A content analysis of the social media interactions of the responding senior high school students revealed an extensive use of the features of social media language in their interactions. Some of such words are listed below;

Social Media Language	Meaning
Sef	Self
U	You
IDK	I don't know
Kk	Okay
Y	Why
Boi	Boy
Wanna	Want to
Yh	Yes
Re	Are
Der	There

Social Media Language	Meaning
Ge	Good evening
Hw	How
Kul	Cool
Sch	School
Sap	How are you
Adey	I am
Spy	Observing/watching
Morrow	Tomorrow
Natin	Nothing
Hu	Who
Wat	What
Shawty	Short person
Gyal	Girl
Ur	Your
Fior	Get out (code switch)
Hwe ne jon	Look at his silly self (code switch)

Table 7 List of social media language items

Wise (2009, p.373) observed that literacy is the cornerstone of student achievement and anything that will undermine this should not be entertained. He added the time students spend on social media where they engage in such grammatically incorrect language may affect their literacy and language lessons.

The study found that 92% of senior high school students surveyed have profiles on at least one social media platform, which they access periodically. Furthermore, 70% of the respondents reported using social media on a daily basis. These findings support previous research by Asare-Donkor (2018), Okyere (2019), and Godwin (2019), which indicated that senior high school students are active users of social media. Regarding the characteristics of social media language observed in students' interactions, the study identified the use of emojis, alphanumerals, shortened forms, slang, abbreviations, single letters, hashtags, and clippings. The frequency of use follows the order presented, with emojis being the most frequently used feature.

A content analysis of several academic writings of students of students revealed that most of the students used formal English in their academic writings. Only two students out of twenty five scripts analyzed representing eight percent (8%), showed social media language features in academic writings. One of such scripts published below reveals the use of single letter 'u' to represent the word you. The other error which is prominent in most of the scripts analyzed is spelling mistakes. It is not yet proven if this is a feature of social media or a direct derivative of social media language adaptation. The percentage of students reporting negative effects of social media on their formal English usage may not be large enough to fully support Okyere's (2019, p. 55) observation that social media negatively impacts grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. Okyere's respondents indicated that their spelling had deteriorated as a result of participating in social media networks. Similarly, Asare-Donkor (2018, p. 26) noted that students' academic writing often includes abbreviations derived from social media, which can lead to lost marks or even failure in examinations. Nutakor and Israel (2022, p. 39) also concluded that social media influences students' spelling in academic contexts.

However, Imtiaz et al. (2023) argue that spelling mistakes among second language learners stem from multiple factors beyond social media use. These include the complexity of the English spelling system, phonological challenges, inadequate spelling instruction in schools and universities, lack of student interest or diligence, poor reading and listening skills, and low motivation (Bareiki, 2012, p. 272). According to Baloul (2017), as cited by Imtiaz (2023, p. 183), mastering correct spelling requires understanding the causes of errors, letter-sound correspondences, English spelling rules, deficiencies in teaching, influence of the mother tongue, poor reading habits, and careful proofreading.

Thus, the prevalence of spelling errors among students cannot be attributed solely to social media usage.



Dear Uncle,

THREE THINGS THE FAMILY NEEDS WHEN YOU ARE COMING BACK FROM OUTSIDE.

I am very happy to write to u this letter, I hope by the grace of God you are well.

The reasons why am writing this letter to u is about the three things the family needs when you are coming back from outside.

To start with, the family needs fridge. The reason why the family needs fridge is that so that some food item will be kept in it to prevent it from spoiling early and also to keep some vegetables in it. to keep it well from spoilages, early.

To continue with, the family also needs a draward where our kitchen stuff can be kept and also to beautified the kitchen very nice also to look very attractive and to maintain the kitchen very clean.

To end with, one things also the family needs is TV the family to watch news or to know what is going on in the system today. Also to help them using fan beautified the sitting room very nice for more attraction.

The family will be happy when u were able to provide all this things that we have aske from you.

Your's faithfully,

Figure 20 Student class exercise

The second research objective aimed to examine students' perceptions of how social media usage influences their English language skills. Quantitative correlation analysis revealed that, overall, respondents did not perceive social media as having a negative impact on their English. Instead, they regarded it as a valuable tool that complements classroom learning. The study found a direct and very strong positive correlation between social media usage and English proficiency ($r = 0.982$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, responses from the quantitative survey indicated that students generally disagreed with statements suggesting the

infiltration of informal language into academic work, such as “*shortened forms of words or phrases appear in my academic writings*” and “*slang used on social media appears in my academic writing.*”

On the effects, the respondents generally agreed to statements like “I can credit my improved English Language to the use of social media”, “Use of social media does not affect formal English Language use”, “Social media improves reading and comprehension”, “audio conversations on social media improves listening and speaking”. They further disagreed to statements like “my grammar and vocabulary is bad because of social media”, “my English is becoming bad due to my frequent use of social media”. Further to that, qualitative content analysis of academic writings of the students studied gave credence to this view shared earlier as it did not reveal much of social media language elements.

These findings align with Malik and Qureshi (2024), whose study indicated that social media language positively influences Pakistani second-language English learners. The researchers observed that students benefit from exposure to English content on social media, particularly through interaction with native speakers, which provides authentic vocabulary usage in natural contexts. Notably, the spelling and grammatical errors observed in students’ written scripts could not be directly attributed to social media use, as highlighted by Imtiaz et al. (2023).

Adei and Kokroko (2020, p. 262) found that most students are capable of producing formal English without interference from social media language, with only a minority exhibiting such influences in their academic writing. Similarly, Ahmed (2019) reported that

participation in WhatsApp groups significantly motivates Yemeni EFL students to improve their reading and writing skills, enhancing vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing fluency.

The current study further supports a positive association between social media use and English proficiency among second-language learners, consistent with Saeed (2021), who emphasized that exposure to English on social media can significantly enhance language learning. Okyere (2019) similarly observed that social media usage positively impacts students' academic performance by improving their grasp of academic concepts.

Nonetheless, some studies suggest potential negative effects. Social media and its language features may distract students from classroom learning (Awoyemi, 2013; Ugot, 2010; Oluga & Babalola, 2013). Asare et al. (2022) and Ewa (2015) further note that social media use can adversely affect academic writing by diverting attention away from formal learning tasks.

Overall, the findings indicate that senior high school students perceive social media as a supportive tool for learning English alongside formal classroom instruction. Students attributed improvements in their language skills to social media, agreeing with statements such as *“Social media improves my reading and comprehension,”* *“Audio conversations on social media improve listening and speaking,”* *“I can credit my improved English language to my use of social media,”* and *“My use of social media does not affect formal English language use.”*

Quantitative analysis using SPSS revealed a very strong positive correlation between social media usage and English proficiency ($r = 0.982$, $p < 0.01$; $M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.05$). These

results corroborate prior research by Ahmed (2019), Okyere (2019), Adei and Kokroko (2020), and Malik and Qureshi (2014). Consistent with Malik and Qureshi (2024, p. 183), most students in this study perceive social media as beneficial for language development, with activities such as viewing English-language videos, reading comments, and engaging in discussions with English speakers significantly enhancing vocabulary and overall language competence.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the study using a convergent parallel mixed methods design, which combined questionnaire responses with content analysis of students' social media interactions. The integration of these approaches enabled a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic features students employ online, their perceptions of how such language use affects them, and the relationship between social media engagement and English language proficiency.

The content analysis identified the key features of social media language in students' online communication. The study found consistent use of informal, non-standard linguistic forms, including alphanumerals (e.g., *gr8*), single-letter substitutions (e.g., *u*), graphemes (e.g., *der*), abbreviations (e.g., *IDK*), slang expressions (e.g., *spy* for observing), and various shortened forms (e.g., *hw* for *how*). These patterns reflect the dominant conventions of digital communication among students and provide objective evidence of the prevalence of social media language.

Questionnaire data offered insight into students' perceptions of the impact of these linguistic practices on their academic English. The majority of respondents indicated that social media language does not negatively affect their ability to communicate formally or use grammatically correct English in school-related tasks. This suggests that students consciously differentiate between informal online interactions and the formal language required in academic contexts.

In line with the study's final objective, the data also show that students generally perceive social media engagement as beneficial to their English language development. Frequent interaction with written content on social platforms was reported to enhance vocabulary, writing confidence, and overall language proficiency.

Overall, this chapter has systematically presented findings from both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study. The integration of these data strands provides a holistic and nuanced understanding of students' language behaviors and beliefs regarding social media usage.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study, which examined the effects of social media language on the English proficiency of senior high school students in the Anloga District of the Volta Region, Ghana. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, outlines the study's recommendations and limitations, and presents the overall conclusions. The conclusions are drawn from a mixed-methods approach employing a triangulation design, which combined a descriptive survey of 385 respondents randomly selected from five schools in the Anloga District with a qualitative content analysis of the academic writing of 30 of these respondents.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were aligned with its objectives, which sought to identify the features of social media language used by students, examine students' perceptions of social media usage and its effects on their English language, and explore the relationship between English proficiency and social media engagement. A summary of the key findings is presented below:

1. Prevalence of Social Media Language: Senior high school students are actively engaged on social media and frequently use informal, non-standard language, commonly referred to as social media language, when interacting online. Features observed in their communication include alphanumerals (for example, gr8 for great), single-letter substitutions (for example, u for you), graphemes (for example,

der), abbreviations (for example, IDK), slang (for example, spy for observing), and shortenings (for example, hw for how).

2. Perceptions of Formal Language Use: The majority of students reported that their use of social media language does not negatively influence their ability to use grammatically correct and formal English in academic contexts.
3. Positive Impact on English Proficiency: Students generally perceive social media as a beneficial tool for enhancing their English language proficiency, supporting improvements in both written and spoken skills within academic work.

5.2 Recommendations

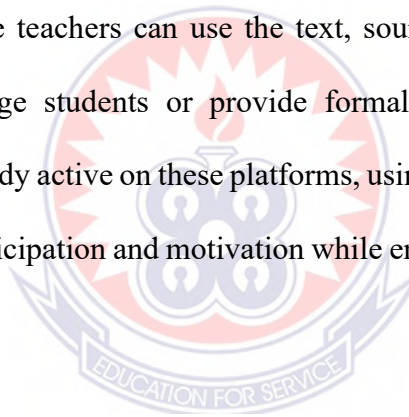
This study provides valuable insights into social media usage among senior high school students and the ways in which the form of English used on these platforms influences their language skills. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of social media's impact on students and can inform policymakers, school administrators, and educational managers in developing appropriate guidelines and strategies. Additionally, students themselves can benefit from this knowledge by gaining awareness of how social media language may affect their English language development and academic adaptation.

In view of the foregoing, the under listed should be the recommendations;

1. Although most students expressed that social media does not negatively impact their formal English, they should be encouraged to use grammatically correct language and sentence structure on social media since it goes to impact their adaptation to the English language. In a similar vein, students could be made aware of the differences between informal online language and formal academic English.

Lessons focusing on code-switching, language registers, and context-appropriate communication will help students maintain proficiency.

2. All stakeholders of senior high school should build a concerted monitoring mechanism to correct grammar and ensure proper English language use on social media. Policies that encourage the responsible use of social media for educational purposes should be developed. These policies could include guidelines on digital citizenship, online safety, and effective academic engagement. Implementing such guidelines will help ensure that social media use remains constructive and supports the academic objectives of the institution.
3. English language teachers can use the text, sound and visuals that social media provide to engage students or provide formal instruction for students. Since students are already active on these platforms, using them for instructional purposes can improve participation and motivation while enhancing English language usage.



Recommendations for Further Studies

1. Future research could focus on a controlled sample to more precisely measure the impact of social media language usage on students. For instance, a qualitative case study could be conducted within a single school or a specific group of students to gain deeper insights.
2. Although students in this study generally perceive social media language as having little or no effect on their academic work, it would be valuable to investigate how

social media language usage specifically influences the English language proficiency of male and female senior high school students separately.

It is the conviction of this study that should these recommendations be given the attention it requires, the English language of senior high school students will improve with their presence on social media and their use of social media language features.

5.4 Conclusions

Social media language, which is the primary language used for communication on social media, is typically grammatically incorrect and contains elements like clips, slang, single letters, alpha-numerals, and other similar terms. Every social media interaction of the students who responded to the study displayed some of these characteristics, which heightens the concern that they may seep into their academic work and further sabotage their classroom-acquired English literacy.

This was however not entirely the case as the perception of the students on their engagement on social media and their use of social media features was on a positive note. The respondents held that social media rather positively impacted their proficiency of English in the classroom and use of English in their academic work.

The study generally found that students do not necessary transfer these elements to their academic writing but are fully aware of the difference of informal writing on social media and formal academic writing. It however found that there are occasional slips, where students could inadvertently use single letters like “u” to represent you in their academic writing. Other errors found in their academic writing were spelling mistakes and wrong punctuations could not necessary be blamed on social media language usage. These errors may be attributed to other factors, such as limited knowledge of the English spelling

system, phonological challenges, insufficient spelling instruction in schools and universities, lack of student interest or motivation, poor reading and listening skills, and low personal drive (Bareiki, 2012).

It has become apparent from this study that social media can be a very effective platform for instructing, facilitating and complementing language learning. As noted by Malik and Qureshi (2024), social media-based resources should not replace classroom instruction but rather serve as a complementary tool. In examining the impact of social media on English language learning, Amin and Mehmood (2020) emphasized that English instructors can leverage the engaging nature of social media to support classroom teaching. They highlighted that social media offers access to a wide range of informational content, written materials, and vocabulary resources. Teachers can incorporate authentic messages, articles, audio recordings, and other content from social media platforms into their instructional practices (Amin & Mehmood, 2020, p. 3133).

Furthermore, adolescents perceive social media as a popular platform for social interaction, and their usage aligns with current trends (Mahama, 2015, p. 60). Amin and Mehmood (2020, p. 313) recommended that educational programs, learning exercises, and instructional materials should be designed to promote language learning through social media platforms. They suggested that widely used tools such as Wattpad, websites, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Skype, and YouTube can be effectively utilized to enhance learners' reading, writing, speaking, listening, as well as for practice and extension activities (Amin & Mehmood, 2020, p. 313).

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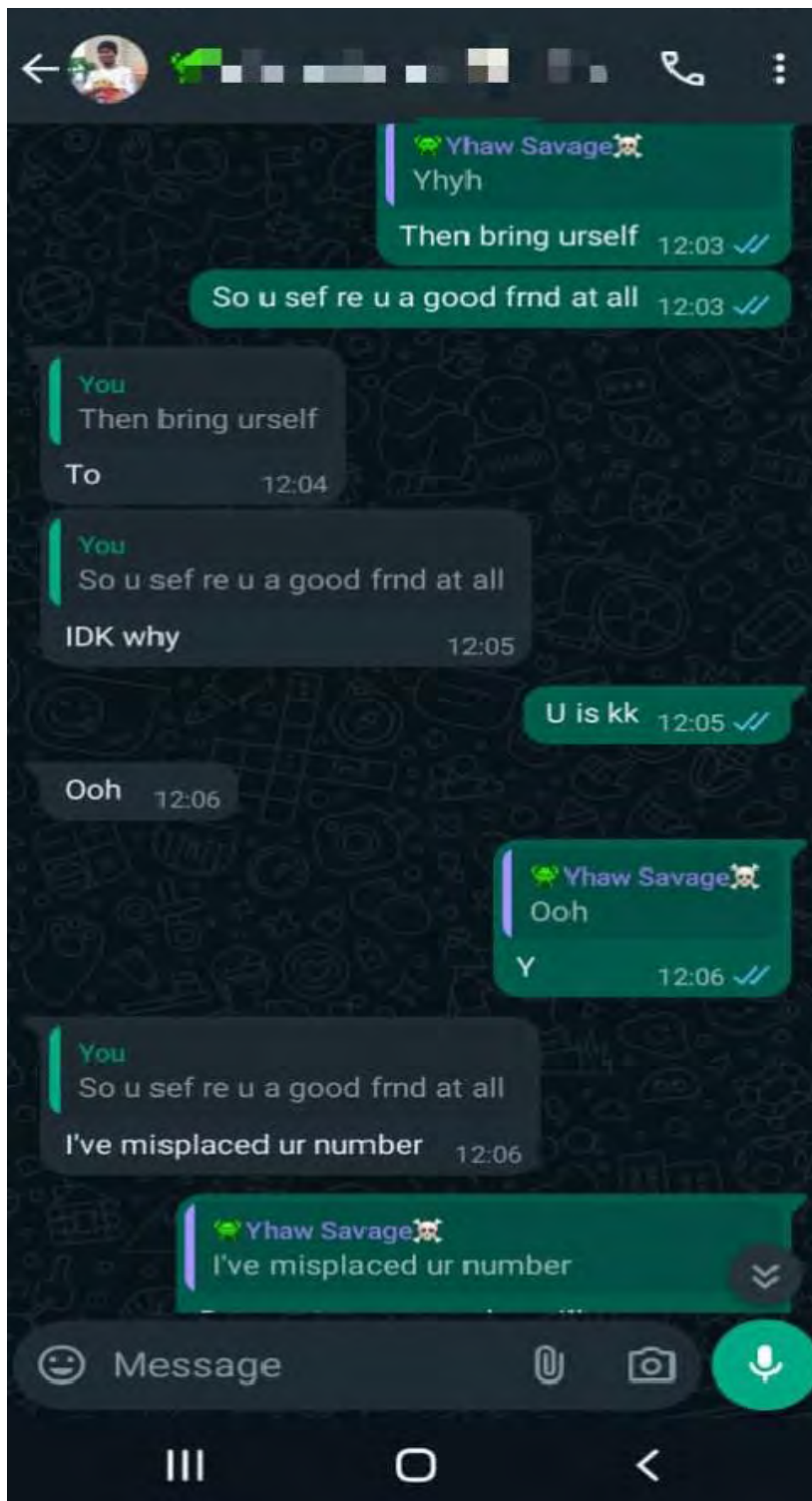
APPENDIX



APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2



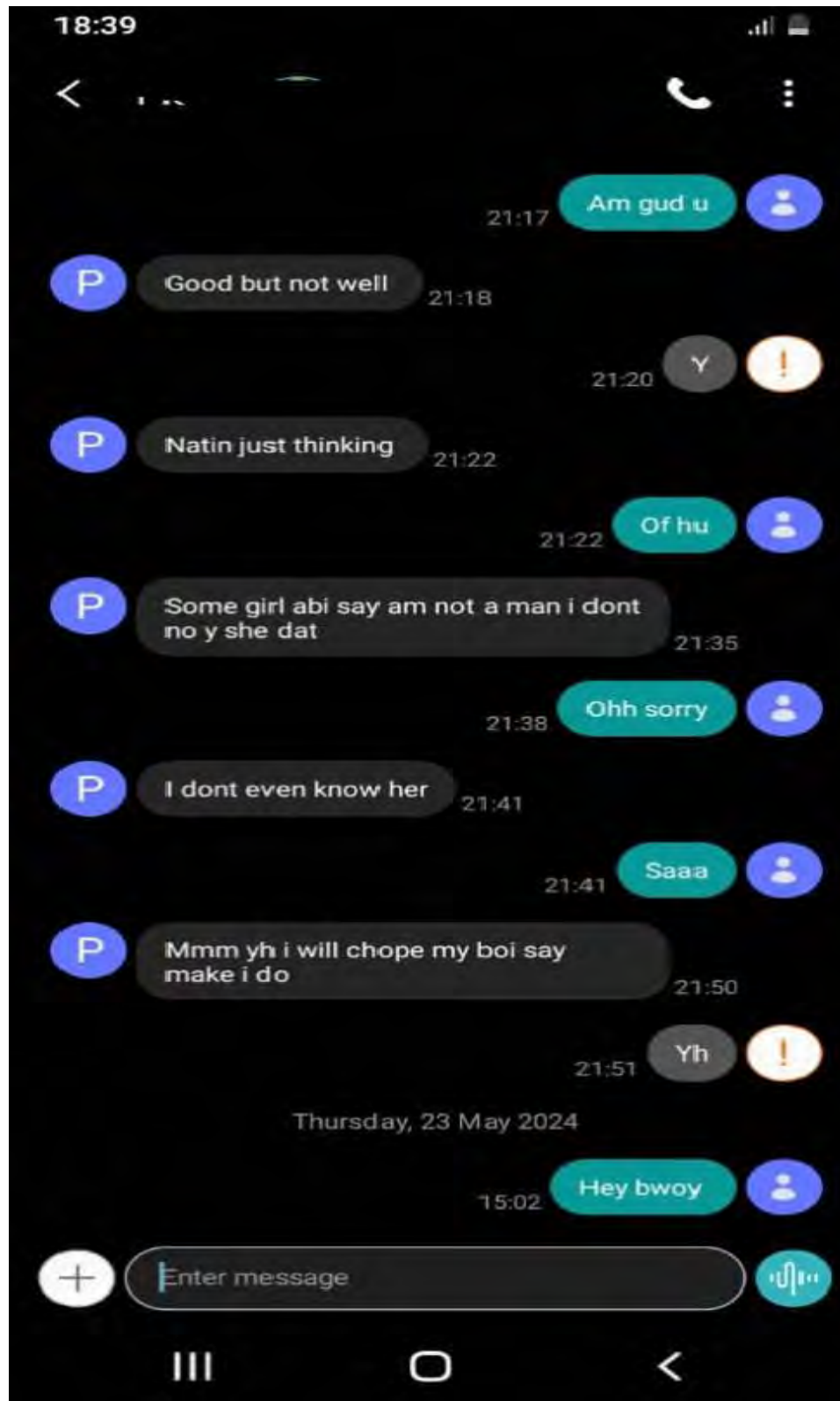
APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 4



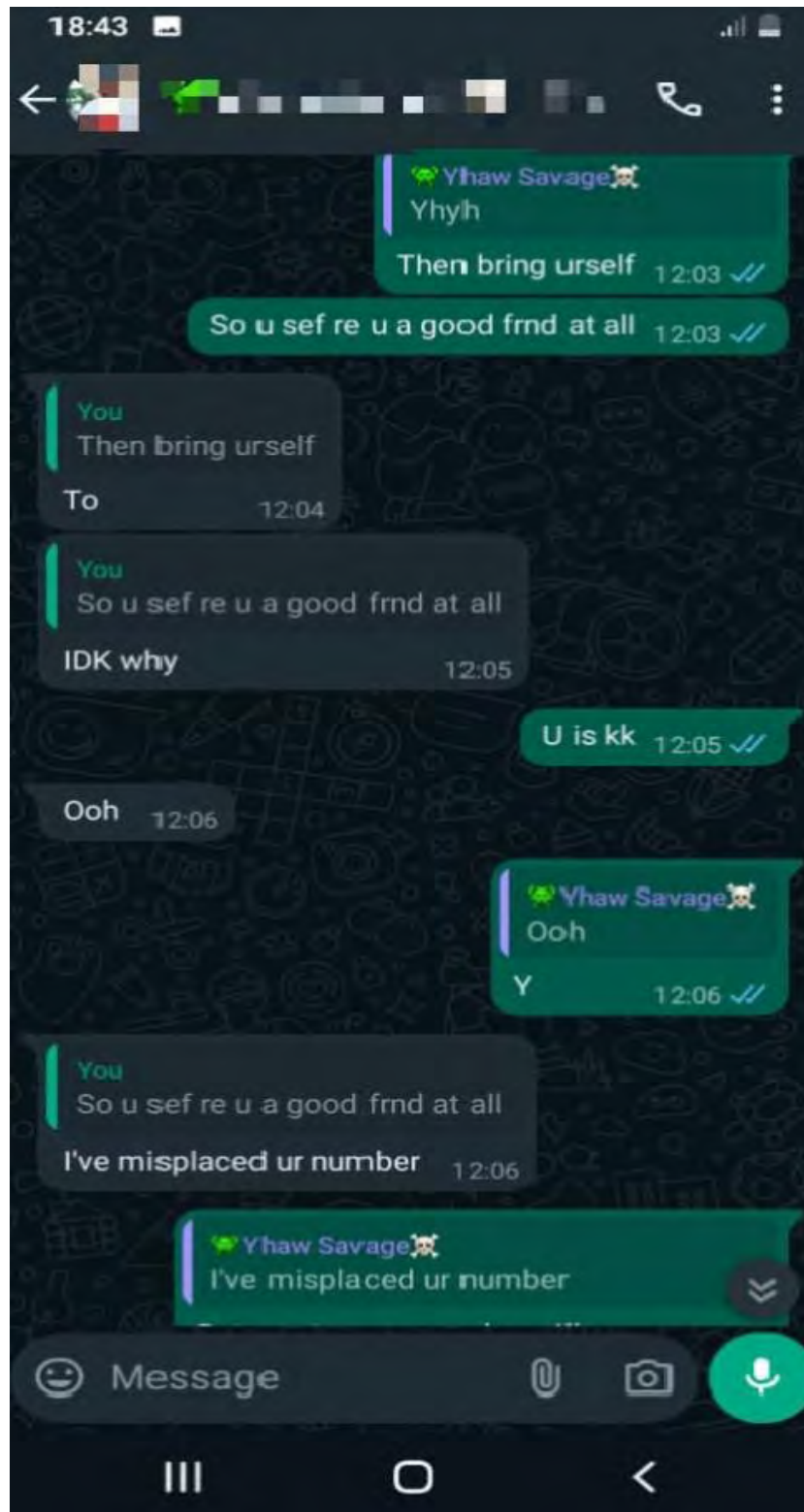
APPENDIX 5



APPENDIX 6



APPENDIX 7



APPENDIX 8



APPENDIX 9

Ex 4 - 27th - 10 - 2022

Write a letter to your father abroad telling him some challenges that you are going through.

Anlo Senior High School,
Post Office Aml 10,
Anloga.
27-10-2022.

Dear Daddy,

I would like to draw your attention to some challenges that I'm going through. Some of these challenges are Money, foods, fruit etc.

Just some days ago, I find challenges in Money to buy my exercise books, shoes because all my shoes and sandals are stolen by my mates and the senior, which lead me to wearing of my friends spoils sandals to school, which I don't like.

One of these challenges are ^{lack of} foods. ~~Now-a-days~~ food at dining hall are now expensive although you will not buy them at the hall but they are very very expensive. ~~Something~~ Sometimes when I go in for food at

APPENDIX 10

7. Curb ÷ To control or limit something especially something bad.

Example: He needs to learn to curb his temper.

8. Uncouth ÷ rude or socially unacceptable.

Example An uncouth boy.

9. Misconstrued ÷ Formal: ~~more~~^{to} misunderstanding something that someone has said or done.

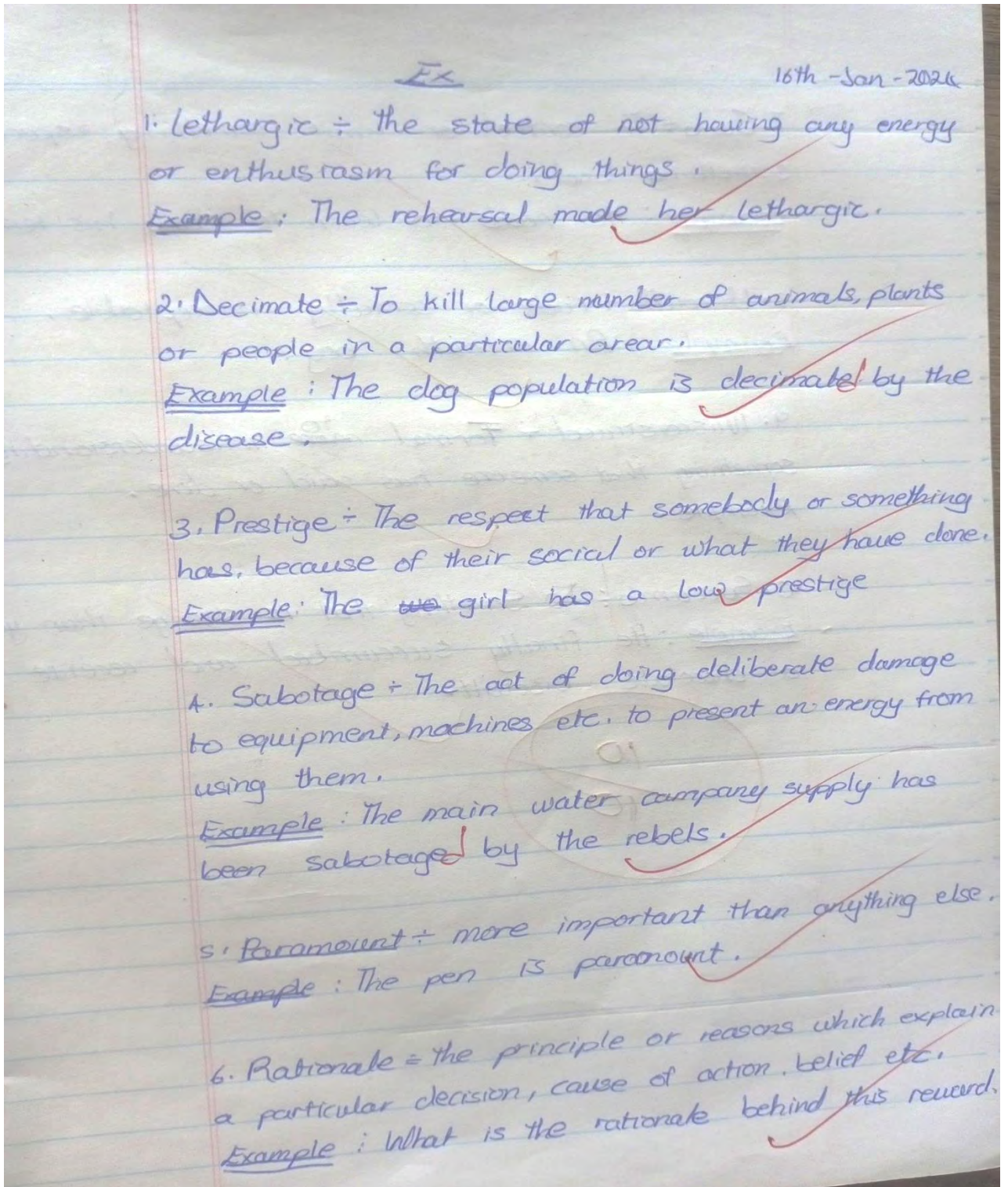
Example.

10. Succumb ÷ To something that is stronger than you.

Example: He finally succumbed and receive a chocolate biscuit.

10
—
10

APPENDIX 11



APPENDIX 12

Ex 3

2) You have observed some malpractices in your school that you think should be discouraged. Write a letter to the Headmaster or Headmistress, discussing at least three of these evil practices and suggest how they can be checked.

Anlo Senior High School
Post Office Box AW 10,
Anloga, Volta-Region.
20th October, 2022

The Headmaster,
Post Office Box AW 10,
Anloga - Volta Region.
Dear Sir,

EVIL PRACTICES IN MY SCHOOL

I would like to draw your attention to the causes of some of the evil practices in my school. Some of the evil practices are smoking, bullying students, bushes hair, gambling, etc. Just some few weeks later some student are being found outside the school campus, they were found raping the own student which is an evil act which can lead to lost of life of the student, which is not good. So because of that I want you to stop them for dating

10
20

APPENDIX 13

the hall I find it difficult to eat because sometime what I expect to eat I don't get that much, ^{and} but sometimes I don't even get food to eat because of shortage of the food.

Bushes hair, because I don't have money I can't bob my hair. And there is a saying that when you have a bushes hair all that you will learn will not stick in your mind and because of that I want money to bob my hair to prevent that saying.

To I also want a wrist watch to be checking time because in our school when the bell rings for period over, or breakfast, or lunch it won't say anything like that so if you have your own wrist watch you will know all that.

To ~~conclude~~ conclude these are my challenges that I am facing now I know that all this will be done. I am ask you this items because I don't any work ^{that} ~~doing~~ I'm doing to cater for myself. God Himself will bless us.

Cont. → 03
 Exp. → 05
 Drg. ← 03
 M.A. — 02

Your son,
 Bright.

APPENDIX 14

here today were once in our school school uniform like us and we will soon be like them, I, therefore, The chairman, on behalf of the Board of Governors and the headmaster give them a rousing welcome home. I strongly believe we are in good mood to mark this occasion. It would be my desire to do a roll-call but it is the preserved role of the Headmaster. Nevertheless, I welcome all the year groups present since the establishment of the school in 1999 to the present year group 2023, the newest to join the squad.

The chairman, the Board of Governors the Headmaster with his able staff have been doing their possible best in the running of the school, which is so glaring for all to see. However, our school buildings need new coats of paint. It is on record that, the last painting was done a score and four years ago. The painting of our buildings will give our great school a face lift. We, therefore, crave the indulgence of the old students Association to come to our aid in this light.

Lastly, our library is under resourced and some part of the roof is leaking so during rainy seasons, there is very low patronage of the facility. Please do come to our aid.

The chairman, Board of Governors, all protocols

APPENDIX 15

Salaries to pay teachers, teachers no longer come to class to teach students for past 2 months they have been home just playing, I would like you to come for them and give them quality education outside there so they can become the people you always have wanted them to be a doctor and an engineer in future. This can only come to pass if you do it for us.

In ~~Conclusion~~ Conclusion, I know you won't turn a deaf ear to my letter, and immediately you receive it I need you to write towards it. Thank you and take good care of your self and greet Uncle Papi and his family for me, feel them are really missing them.

Yours ever,
Jotsu Richard.

Conts	—	02
Exp.	—	04
Org.	—	03
MFA	—	02
		<hr/>
		11

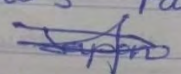
APPENDIX 16

in the school campus. This will stop raping of students in the school.

One of these evil act again is bullying of student. Some senior think that they are seniors as they are above the law of the school so they start bullying their ~~junior~~ juniors to fetch them water ~~to~~ bath for them, some gari for them to eat to solve this problem I want to call the seniors and communicate our informations with them and tell them to be unique with us in the Dormitory, school and dining halls.

Again Stealing, stealing is going on too much, because some time when we go to school and prep time some senior don't go to school and prep they stayed inside the dormitory and be stealing our short break into our chop boxes take all our provisions some mixed chemicals in our provision in the chop boxes.

To conclude, I hope the point mentioned above and the solutions listed above will be attended in order to reduce ~~needs~~ evil practices in my school.

Yours faithfully,

Dehu Bright Keheli

APPENDIX 17

Socially, intellectually and financially healthy and strong. This sport is played across the world, and also, a lot of schools and colleges conduct football tournaments.

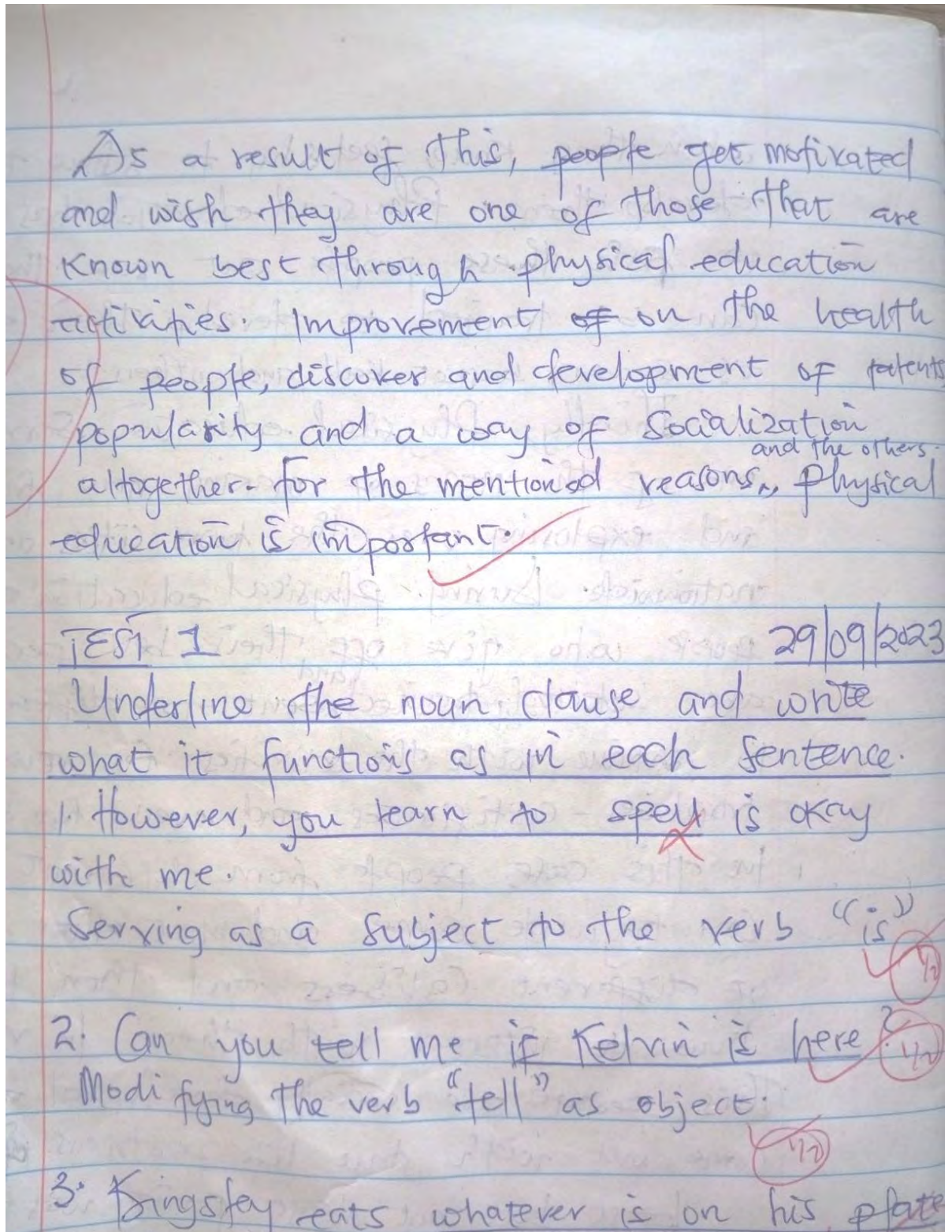
Moreover, the football match is played with only two goalposts, a field and a football. It is a 90 minute game in which two teams, with each team having eleven members, are required to play.

Furthermore, also, some benefits in playing football. The health benefits of football include, Reducing body fat. Building strength, stamina and speed.

Training your brain, improving concentration and coordination. Promoting teamwork, being social and boosting your confidence. This football is an important game from the point of view of the Spectator as well as the player. This 90 minutes game is full of excitement and thrill. Moreover, it keeps the player mentally and physically healthy, and disciplined. And this ninety-minute game tests their sportsmanship, patience, and tolerance.

In conclusion, the governments should spend money on sports facilities for ordinary people because not all of them can have a chance to

APPENDIX 18



APPENDIX 19

Dear Uncle,

THREE THINGS THE FAMILY NEEDS WHEN YOU ARE COMING BACK FROM OUTSIDE.

I am very happy to write to you in this letter, I hope, by the grace of God you are well.

The reasons why I am writing this letter to you is about the three things the family needs when you are coming back from outside.

To start with, the family needs ~~fridge~~ the reason why the family needs ~~fridge~~ is that so that some food item will be kept in it to prevent it from spoiling early and also to keep some vegetables in it. to keep it well from ~~spoiling~~ ~~early~~.

To ~~continue~~ with, the family also needs a ~~draw~~ where our ~~kitchen~~ ~~stuff~~ can be kept and also to beautify the kitchen very nice also to look very attractive and to maintain the kitchen very clean.

To ~~end~~ with, one thing also the family needs is TV the family to watch news or to know what is going on in the system today. Also to help them using ~~for~~ ~~beautified~~ the ~~city~~ ~~room~~ very nice for more attraction. ~~sitting room~~

The family will be happy when you were able to provide all these things that we have asked from you.

Yours faithfully,

APPENDIX 22

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I'm a post graduate student at the University of Education, Winneba studying Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in Applied Linguistics. I have designed this survey instrument to enable me carry out a research on the Topic "The Effects of Social Media Language on the English Language of SHS Students". This study is purely an academic work and your answers will be appreciated and held as confidential.

1. Do you have an account on any social media site?

Yes

No

2. How long have you been on social media?

1 – 2 years

3 – 4 years

5 – 6 years

7 – 8 years

9 years +

	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	Responding to written messages on social media improves my reading and comprehension skills					
6	My audio conversations in English on social media improves my listening and speaking skills					
7	I use proper sentence structure when writing on social media.					
8	I use correct grammar when writing on social media					
9	My school mates correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes on social media					
10	Shortened forms of words or phrases are seen in my academic writings.					
11	Slang used on social media is seen in my academic writings.					
12	Social media use helps to improve my writing and reading skills					

13	I can credit my improved English language use to social media					
14	My grammar and vocabulary has become bad because I use social media					
15	My use of formal English language is becoming bad due to my frequent use of social media					
16	My use of social media does not affect how I use formal English					

17. Which social media site improves your writing and reading skills? (choose all that apply)

- Facebook [] Twitter [] Telegram [] Whatsapp []
 Youtube [] Snapchat [] Instagram [] Tik Tok []
 LinkedIn [] Pinterest [] Tumblr [] Other,

.....

18. Which social media site improves your listening and speaking skills? (choose all that apply)

- Facebook [] Twitter [] Telegram [] Whatsapp []
 Youtube [] Snapchat [] Instagram [] Tik Tok []
 LinkedIn [] Pinterest [] Tumblr [] Other,

.....

19. How frequent do you use social media?

- Daily [] several times a week [] once a week [] rarely [] never []

20. Which of the following do you use in your social media interactions? (choose all that apply)

- Abbreviations [] emojis [] hashtags [] alphanumerals [] slangs []
 Single letter [] shortened [] clippings [] add any other -

21. List 5 social media slangs you use? Eg. Sup, yawa, drip, etc.

_____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____

Demography

22. Sex: Male Female

23. Age: 13 – 14 15 – 16 17 – 18 19 – 20 20 +

24. What class/form are you?

Form 1

Form 2

Form 3

25. What course are you offering?

General Arts

Visual Arts

Business

Science

Technical

