

**EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' FORMAL LANGUAGE
COMPETENCIES**

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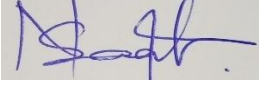
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MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree, diploma or certificate in this or any other university

Signed  Date 13th NOVEMBER 2021

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This research project has been supervised by me as the university supervisor and it has been submitted for examination with my approval.

Signed.....  Date: 19th November 2021

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DEDICATION

To my mother Loise Nabifwo, my guide and source of strength and my late Father Jeremiah Mabanja, I cherish you all.

To my beloved Grail community members around the Globe and siblings Grace Arusa, Francis Mabanja, Nicholas Okoba, Rael Masinde and Susan Mabanja all my Niece and Nephews, you are always in my heart. I appreciate all the support and prayers you gave me, accepting to journey with me and encouraging me when I was almost giving up.

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I would like to thank my friends with whom I consulted and received encouragement.

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I give all glory to the Almighty God. I thank my parents and siblings for their support. I appreciate my classmates who sat through the course with me and for their devotion to making the journey worthwhile. I thank the University of Nairobi fraternity for giving me a peaceful and conducive environment for learning. Much appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Samuel Ngigi, for his invaluable support and advice.

God Bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Social media has in recent years changed the way individuals and groups use language during interaction. English being one of the dominantly used languages has attracted many modifications in spellings and grammar by users of different social media platforms. University students in their middle and final year of studies spend long hours on social media platforms interacting both formally and informally. It is not clear however, whether use of informal language impacts their formal language competency. This study therefore examined the effects of social media on university student's formal language competencies. The study sought to: determine ways in which university students use social media platforms; establish the language used by university students on social media platforms and examine how the use of social media affects formal use of language by students. The mixed method study adopted a descriptive design. Quantitative data was collected through a survey with a closed-ended questionnaire which was issued to 130 students. Six FGDs of students and six KIIs of lecturers were used to collect qualitative data. Quantitative data are presented in form of figures, tables and charts. Qualitative data were analyzed and presented thematically using narrative format. The results show that the students used social media for social interactions for the most part: watching movies and listening to music; interaction with friends and family; browsing educational material and activities; learning and school assignments; and entertainment and social interactions. Language was mostly informal on the social media platforms and included modified words and phrases to suit the context of interaction. The use of social media platforms had diverse effects on the students English language competency, which included transference of the communication habits from the platforms to the classrooms thus negatively affecting the students' speaking, reading and writing of English. The study concludes that social media has a significant spillover effect on the students ability to use English in formal set ups and therefore there is need to moderate the extent of use of informal English to limit use in formal, academic set ups. It is recommended that students strive to use social media for more constructive, especially academic, work, besides being careful not to use the non-standard language and other informal derivatives thereof in class. Educators should create awareness among students to adopt more standard language use on social media and be wary of overuse of the informal. More studies should be done on a different population, at higher levels of learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	i
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Overview	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.1.1 <i>Social media</i>	2
1.1.2 <i>Student’s interactions on social Media</i>	4
1.1.3 <i>Formal Language Competencies</i>	5
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3 Research Objectives.....	8
1.3.1 <i>General Objective</i>	8
1.3.2 <i>Specific Objectives</i>	8
1.4 Research Questions.....	8
1.5 Justification of the Study	8
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	10
1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Overview	12
2.1 General Information.....	12
2.2 Social Media Platforms.....	13
2.3 Use of social media platforms by university students.....	13
2.4 Modifications of English language as used on social media platform.....	15
2.4.1 <i>New words meaning</i>	17
2.4.2 <i>Misspelled words and Abbreviations</i>	19
2.4.3 <i>Affixation Methods and Compounding in Social Media</i>	20

2.5	Effect of Social Media on Students formal language competency	21
2.6	Theoretical Framework.....	23
2.6.1	<i>Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)</i>	23
2.6.2	<i>Cultivation Theory</i>	25
2.7	Research Gaps.....	26
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....		27
3.1	Overview	27
3.2	Study Design.....	27
3.3	Research Methodology	27
3.4	Study Site.....	28
3.5	Target Population.....	28
3.6	Sampling Method and Sample Size	28
3.6.1	Sampling Method.....	28
3.6.2	Sample Size.....	29
3.7	Data Collection Methods	30
3.7.1	<i>Survey Questionnaires</i>	30
3.7.2	<i>Key Informant Interviews</i>	30
3.7.3	<i>Focus Group Discussions</i>	31
3.8	Data Collection Tools	31
3.9	Data Analysis and Presentation	32
3.10	Validity and Reliability.....	32
3.11	Triangulation of Data.....	33
3.12	Data Management	33
3.13	Ethical considerations	34
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION		35
4.0	Overview	35
4.1	Response Rate.....	35
4.2	Socio-Demographic Profile	36
4.3	University Students Use of Social Media Platforms.....	38
4.4	Language Used by University Students on Social Media Platforms	45
4.5	Effect of social media use on students' formal use of English language.....	52
4.6	Key Findings.....	58

4.6.1	<i>University Students Use of Social Media</i>	58
4.6.2	<i>Language used by University Students on Social Media Platforms</i>	58
4.6.3	<i>Effect of Social Media Use on Students' Formal Use of English Language</i>	59
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		60
5.1	Overview.....	60
5.2	Summary.....	60
5.2.1	<i>Students use of social media platforms</i>	60
5.2.2	<i>Student's language use on social media</i>	61
5.2.3	<i>Effects of social media platforms on students language competencies</i>	64
5.3	Conclusions.....	65
5.4	Recommendations.....	66
5.5	Suggestions for further studies.....	67
REFERENCES		68
APPENDICES		73
APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION		73
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE		74
APPENDIX III: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE		77
APPENDIX IV: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION INTERVIEW GUIDE		79
APPENDIX : WORK PLAN		81
APPENDIX VI: BUDGET PLAN		82

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 4. 1 Target Sample-Response Rate Comparison</i>	35
<i>Table 4. 2 FGDs and KIIs (Participant Breakdown)</i>	36
<i>Table 4. 3 Age Bracket by Department and Gender</i>	37
<i>Table 4. 4 Gender by Year of Study</i>	38
<i>Table 4. 5 Ways in which University Students Use Social Media Platforms</i>	40
<i>Table 4. 6 Students Language Use on Social Media Platforms</i>	47
<i>Table 4. 7 Social Media Platforms & Students Language Use</i>	53

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CMD	Computer-Mediated Language
CT	Cultivation Theory
DU	Daystar University
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRP1	Group 1
GRP2	Group 2
GRP3	Group 3
GRP4	Group 4
GRP5	Group 5
GRP6	Group 6
KII	Key Informant Interview
KI	Key Informant
KI 1	Key Informant 1
KI 2	Key Informant 2
KI 3	Key Informant 3
KI 4	Key Informant 4
KI 5	Key Informant 5
SIPT	Social Information Processing Theory
SLC	Student Language Competencies
SM	Social Media
SM	Social Media Platforms
SNS	Social Networking sites
SN	Social Networking Sites

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter contains the background information on social media and students' language competencies. It also discusses the research problem, research objectives and research questions, rationale/justification of the study, significance, and the scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Language is a dynamic tool for communication that has been seen to evolve and diversify from one era to another and the technology hasn't left it the same either. How things are done is changing with the growth of convergent technologies and the internet of things (IoT), and so are the words in use and the lingo, with the latter changing at an accelerating speed (Crystal, 2005). Words that were not in use only ten years ago now affect people significantly, because of online interactions that call for coining or inventing words to refer to new or changed things.

Iverson and Vukotich (2009) and Kozinets (2009) found the reality of social communications to obtain a new dimension after the second millenium, as new representations of communication through interactive online channels developed and became incredibly popular and widely accepted more rapidly than ever before. These new models of communication introduced a radically different dimension on how to share and interact on the Web, by removing the power over what is shared online from the control of organizations to the social media mangers and influencers—collectivity of independent web users. Ewing (2008) claims that social media uses pull technology to connect people, actively engaging them in creating and managing the content shared online thereby giving individual freedom to contribute to creating, publicizing and sharing of information, This has been enabled by the coming into existence of

user friendly sites, tools, platforms and applications, which include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Blogs, MySpace, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, LinkedIn, and so on.

Interactions on social media include use of neologism and modified English words meant to promote a first way of communicating and easy understanding among the users that are later sneaked into the English language and end up sounding like new vocabulary whenever they are used in informal communications like in academic works of students (Murray, 2016). Bussman (1996) points out those neologisms are newly formed linguistic expressions that are recognized by part if not the entirety of a language community to denote new objects or state of affairs, which new objects or state of affairs are widespread. They are prevalent in areas of technology, industry, politics, culture or science. According to Crystal (2016), English language is likely to change its meaning when it's used without considering its rules irrespective of its variety and the region where it's spoken.

1.1.1 Social media

Social media is a platform that creates highly interactive spaces for individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss and modify user generated content, this by employing mobile and web-based technologies (Kietzmann, 2011). According to Kaplan and Haelein (2010), social media is a functional building block that provides a platform for identity creation and sharing, conversing, sharing, presence, relationship building, representations and groups. Ellison and Boyd (2013) define social media as a communication platform that affords users unique or special profiles, public linkages and enables them to create and use user-generated content.

Social media has provided interactive communication platforms for different users to “share”, “like” or “comment” on media content created by online users. It has become an

important space where individuals have opportunities to identify with each other as well as manage their daily lives through some selected social interactive activities including socializing, seeking for information, gaming, friendship and playing. Most social media users identify with specific groups of their choice and choose what to do with them on social media spaces (Durfy, 2018).

Durfy (2018) observes that while on social media, users are prompted to consume and produce different contents which they identify with within their specific groups. Users have the freedom to learn how to create different contents and choose what to consume without any limit. The existing social media environment attracts individuals differently by allowing some activities to take place; the reasons why people want to be on social media include socializing, identities, friendship, gaming, dating, relationships, learning and finding information and creating new information at the same time (Kim & Kim, 2017).

Social media sites such as twitter, Facebook, instagram, linkedin, whatsapp and blogs, which are commonly used by young people have connected users from different parts of the world and later developed them to expert online users. Social media shifted the physical traditional space of communicative interaction to virtual spaces like facebook,instagram twitter and whatsApp which have now been adopted by most users especially the young generation. Social media has enabled online users to have virtual interactions aided by mobile and web technologies giving the users the possibility to network and share, discuss andcreate content information (Castells, 2003).

1.1.2 Student's interactions on social Media

Rotondi, et al. (2017) points out that Social media has reshaped the way individuals interact and communicate among themselves for the past three decades. As part of technologies with high demand in the contemporary world, social media has become embedded in people's lives, especially the youth in different ways including connecting them to each other, allowing space for learning and interacting with the world.

Dybwab (2009) observes that availability of strong internet connections and mobile networks have provided a real time and space for the young users specially students to create relationships, pass time, entertain themselves, solve their problems, create relationships, and build on companionships and social interactions. The presence of strong technological gadgets like mobile phones, tablets, laptop and desktops are today inseparable with human beings. Youths are among the social media users who have embraced the use of the new technologies to share information within their groups, they have a chance to make "comments" on the shared information and even appreciate the shared information "by liking/loving "what others have shared depending on which social platform they are interacting on. (Dybwad, 2009).

As the universal language, English is in constant change to accommodate technological developments. Social networks such as Facebook, among others contribute significantly to the acquisition and learning of English as a second language. A number of advantages of social media exist to learners, which include increasing motivation and development of social skills. A study by Dhanya (2016), and Namaziandost and Nasri (2019), revealed that due to the diverse avenues in brought about by social media, learners are able to improve their language skills. Besides, social media creates an opportunity for learners to experience participating in appropriate, real-time, on-going actual conversations on the sites. Belal (2014) claims using

social media leads to reduced anxiety and improves production of language. The networking sites are okay (Fodeman & Monroe as cited in Derakshan & Hasanabbi, 2015).

1.1.3 Formal Language Competencies

Language is seen as a language well-suited for use in instances where “natural language” is unsuitable. Chomsky (1956) uses mathematics, logic or computer programming concepts to explain the meaning of formal language as; where the formulas of language stand accurately specified, syntactic and semantic relations to one another. Formal language strictly adheres to the set laws that dictate how words and phrases should be structured during communication. Any set of Language consists of words whose letters are taken from an alphabet and are well formed according to specific rules wrongly cited (Chomsky, 1956).

The English language is one of the most widely used and spoken in the world today. With 379 million native speakers, it was the third most widely spoken and used language in the world. It is widely employed in the workplace, as well as in politics, society, sports, and other fields of study and research, including economics (Eurocentric, 2016). Certainly, English is one of the world’s most prominent languages, and it is spoken in five countries, including the United States and New Zealand, which Kachru (1985) refers to as the inner circle. There are some countries outside of the inner circle where it is an official language because it is an imported language (Kachru, 1985).

Pre-colonial and early colonial Kenyans faced a choice between three competing languages for use in the classroom: vernaculars, Kiswahili, and English (Mbaabu, 1996; Whiteley, 1974). An educational principle of that time was that, “the most effective medium of instruction was the language best known by a youngster at his admission into school life” (Gorman, 1974, p.104; Mbaabu, 1996). The missionaries, in particular, held this attitude, but it

wasn't universally agreed upon. At the time of its introduction in African schools in 1909, there was widespread agreement that English should be taught.

Time spent on social media is a problem in regard to the volume of language used by the users. In the evenings, students are more likely to spend time on social media than during the day. In this situation, students are using language signs and symbols to interact informally rather than for instructional purposes on these social media platforms (Woods & Scott, 2016).

If you want to communicate effectively on social media, you'll need a language. Users on all social media platforms benefit greatly from the availability of these language signs and symbols, which may be used most effectively on social media during interactions. According to Kerkorian & Anderson (2008), there are some words and phrases that can only be used on social media platforms in the form of signs and symbols like emoji that may not be understood by everyone.

Although English is majorly used on social media platforms, the language rules pertaining to the language are not applied so much here since most communicative interactions are done in informal form. Common vocabularies based on acronyms like OMG (Oh My God), TBT (Throw back time), DM (Direct Message) and LOL (Laughing out Loud) are being used both in formal and informal communications (Zappavigna, 2012).

University students are at the top of the academic ladder as they prepare to join the professional arena, therefore, they need to be competent in their communication skills as a requirement in any professional field. However, there have been concerns especially from employers that young employees and interns have demonstrated weaknesses in their communication skills due to poor use of English language (Malta University language school,

2017). They also need language for academic performance, for written and oral presentations, for writing and speaking skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In spite of the rapid use of convergent communication technologies and use of the internet by the youth for social and formal interactions, there is inadequate literature on English neologisms and its effects on formal use of language among students in tertiary institutions in Kenya. Issues of concern are such as the effects of long hours spent on social networking sites on their study time, poor grammar and wrong spellings in academic work as well as diversion of attention from their studies (Ndaku, 2013).

Centuries ago, travel, contact or exchange timeframes limited social connections and access to knowledge. Communication technologies today, however, allow people all over the world to make connections and have exchanges instantaneously (Albion, 2011). With the current radical shift in how knowledge is created and shared, coupled with the global connectedness (Ito et al., 2012; Siemens & Matheos, 2010; Weller, 2009), questions have arisen about whether humans interactions, networking and knowledge sharing through technologies have possibly transformed learning.

Challenges include how best University students can be tamed to appreciate time spent on social media, use productively space and opportunities on social media for their academic growth. (Cambridge International Educational Assessment, 2018). Harwood (2012) posits that 98% of university students spent at least 7-8 hours a day on social networking sites interacting informally using English words modified into characters and phrases, using emojis, colloquial language, shortened words, using numbers in place of letters, and applying abbreviations and initials to mean words. However, in Kenya this area has not been adequately researched to

establish how informal language used by youth on social media is affecting the students English language competence (Johann, 2017; Rachel, 2021; Ahmad & Khairunesa, 2016).

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study is to interrogate the effects of social media on university students' formal language competencies.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To determine ways in which university students use social media platforms
2. To establish the language used by university students on social media platforms
3. To examine how the use of social media affects formal use of English language by students.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What do students use social media platforms for?
2. What language do students use on social media platforms?
3. How does social media use affect formal use of students' language?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The study is based on the use of social media and the manner in which English language is used by university student's in order to show correlation with formal language competencies outcomes. It is important since the use of social media inevitably is a part of everyday life and

language use thereon a worthy area of investigation—to determine how it affects the use of formal, standard English especially by learners.

The study would help to explain the dynamism of how words are formed through social media interactions, their meanings and their incorporation in formal communication. It is also beneficial to the language researchers to understand factors that influence the production and the continuous use of the social media neologisms; the evolution of language, shared meaning and other trends.

Kenyan universities have complex and diverse students of different demographics. This study benefits them as far as it investigates student use of technologies across these demographics thus assisting in determining how the different groups are using the technologies. It may therefore provide guidance on how to have an integrated application of technologies for learning to meet diversified student's needs (Frاند, 2000; Oblinger, 2003; Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 1999, 2009).

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to bring out an appreciation of social networking sites as tools, powerful enough to bring about an evolution of language and interaction dynamics; the realization of formal English language as an important tool for official communications in environments where it should be used including learning institutions and the corporate world. Scholars note that usage of English Language in the 21st century among university students contains words and phrases that are not acceptable for official use in formal communications (Sheikh & Inkpen, 2008) thus the need for research and recommendations for solutions and further investigations.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study sought to interrogate the effects of social media use by university students' formal language competencies. The respondents were from Kenya College of Accountancy (KCA) University, limited to undergraduate students from the Departments of Film Arts & Education, and Journalism & Media and as well as only 6 trainers in English language and communication-related units in a country that has millions of university going students and young people of different academic expertise.

The study was limited to one university in a country where there exist other universities whose students' formal language competency is impacted by the social media phenomena. The study was also limited to mixed methodology because of data collection methods via survey, Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the quest to get in-depth understanding of the formal and informal communication endeavors in question.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

- Language:** A code where ideas about the world are represented by a conventional system of signals for communication
- Competency:** It is a system of linguistic knowledge possessed by a speaker of a language.
- Formal:** A less personal language used when writing for professional or academic writing purposes like university assignment.
- Standard English:** Language that is the most widely accepted form
- Students:** Males and females under study
- University:** An institution of higher learning
- Modified English:** English that has been changed and is used by young adults in social media
- Social Media:** Forms of electronic communication through which people create online communities to share information, ideas and personal messages, and includes Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Myspace, and so on.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This section includes literature on effects of social media on university students' English language competencies; it also looks into the conceptual framework, theoretical framework and discussion on the relevance of the theories applied to the study.

2.1 General Information

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are used for several purposes including information search, learning, business marketing, entertainment, socialization and interaction. They provide spaces for individuals to freely choose what they want and what they regard as satisfying to their needs. According to Anika (2012), controlling how individuals use social media and the type of language used during interaction on different social networking sites could be a hard task. It is therefore important to note that being on social media is a freedom of choice, it's part of a lifestyle in this technological era for particular groups that exist in contemporary society.

The majority of SNS users are under the age of 25: three-quarters of adult internet users under the age of 25 have a profile on one or more social networking sites (Lenhart, 2009). Only 8% of adult internet users had personal websites in 2005. However, by 2009, the percentage had doubled to 35%. Over a third of SNS users check their profiles on a daily basis, while nearly a quarter of those who use these sites also check in once or twice a week.

Golyankaya (2012) points out that despite the rules and laws that dictate how the English language should be used in both its formal and informal contexts, notably, different varieties of English language may slightly determine how this language is used. He further shows the

differences between the two major varieties of English and how they are consumed by different levels of the users in different environments including on social Networking sites.

2.2 Social Media Platforms

Advancement in technology and the digital world in the 21st century has provided opportunities that are highly embraced by Youth especially the university students. Young people can access several social media platforms from wherever they are as long as they possess digital devices with reliable internet in the comfort of their spaces (Lua, 2016).

Widespread use of the Internet, new integrative technologies and the new media have created a globalised world of virtual spaces that have changed the way people do interact and engage in their daily activities, business and even religion. Current statistics indicate that there are at least 3.78 billion daily active social media users at global level; this equates to 48% of the world population (Mohsin, 2021). Mohsin found out that 84% of young adults aged 18-29 form the highest generation which uses social media actively at least up to 2.5 hours a day. Generations of individuals aged 30-49 form 81% social media users, ages 56-64 forming 73% users while ages 65 and above form 54% users of social media (Mohsin, 2021). Mohsin points out that young adults aged between 18-29 social media users is the leading generation group with broadest access to social media platforms.

2.3 Use of social media platforms by university students

One group that is increasingly exploiting social media platforms is youth, the majority of them being the category of university students. The introduction of social media enabled a replacement method for folks, significantly the younger generation, to attach with each other, supporting common interests, goals and even values(Gully, 2012).

The urge for university students to participate actively on social media platforms is higher compared to other groups. There are multiple reasons that attract different groups to register on social media platforms. These groups could best be categorized according to age, gender, occupation, level of education, social class, economic status as well as cultural reasons. Several social media activities will engage different groups of users differently depending on what they consider important (Boyd, 2007). Common reasons include Psychological, social needs and sometimes academic needs which involves searching information especially for academic purposes meant for adding knowledge for the specific courses pursued by students (Owusu-Acheaw, Gift, Larson, 2015).

Dhanya G. (2016) states that net has affected the well-liked learning sorts of youth desirous to learn English round the world. Teachers, to stay relevant and effective, have to be compelled to use ‘learning technologies’ to assist students reach the planet outside the room. Lecturers currently adhere to innovative practices in teaching- learning methods and have modified their roles into ‘facilitators’.

Some students seek entertainment needs like playing games downloaded or signed up for online and listening to music, watching movies by exploring youtube, netflix and other platforms. This kind of platform offers them opportunities to learn and develop their talents as well. Others use SNS for socializing through chatting, playing games (competing), keeping in touch with family and maintaining communication with existing friends; snap chatting; sharing interesting things; following a group; sharing expressions of opinions; and gaining more contacts. Hence, decreasing emotional stress, spreading information, creating groups, buying and

selling products, increasing their fame, sharing and solving their problems among other benefits (Owusu-Acheaw, Gift, & Larson, 2015).

Boyd (2007) observes that while they engage in all the above activities, there is a way in which the students reduce their stress or manage it as their minds are fully engaged actively. Search platforms make them feel happy when they fully engage their minds actively. There is also an individual experience of rewarding the brain when students are actively engaged on different social platforms especially when they feel they lack sufficient support from their real physical environments. Interactive communication becomes a consolation to their worrying situations (Boyd, 2007).

Language learners' self-confidence, attitude, and motivation were found to have significantly increased as a result of social media (Kabilan et al., 2010). In the survey, students said that being active on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter had given them a more positive outlook on studying English because of the features that allow them to develop their language skills. Facebook and Twitter, in particular, expose students to a wide variety of materials. While keeping up with worldwide news on Twitter, people have access to a variety of written texts from other Twitter users. This means that students can learn a big number of new phrases and words without having to spend a lot of time reading a lot of books (Khan, Ayaz Khan & Khan, 2016).

2.4 Modifications of English language as used on social media platform

Any language is a symbol of identity to a specific group of people. It is a connecting tool for communication between users in any given environment. Language varieties used on

different social media platforms define social classes of individuals at different levels. (Tariq, et al., 2012).

Language is prone to change with time depending on the context in which it is used; formally or informally (Murray, 2016) as it is a dynamic communication tool that evolves to accommodate new words, signals and nonverbal expressions wherever users evolve. English language users who are not versed with the modified words on social media platforms may unknowingly apply the new terms they come across on SNS assuming they are Standard English words (Mworio, 2015) or these words might accidentally find themselves in formal communication contexts due to frequency of use.

Internet slang, often known as jargon, has gained in popularity as social media has become increasingly prevalent. These jargons have made it easier to communicate quickly. However, this could have a negative impact on other social media users. Slang terms like ROFL (roll on the floor laugh), BTW, TTYL, and LOL are used often on the Internet, and some individuals are concerned that they could harm their English vocabulary. In countries like Thailand, numbers, like 555, used to have the same meaning as LOL, for example (Jimma, 2017).

The terms “unfriend,” “selfie,” “fleek,” and “emoji” have been around for a long time, but they’ve recently started making their way into our everyday language.

The Oxford Dictionary has even included some of these concepts, such as YOLO (You Only Live Once) and compound words like “Craptacular” and “Amaze Balls,” as well as a social media fad of combining the initials of high-profile couples to form a mix word, such as Brangelina.

Aboard these words are a colossal array of social media specific acronyms, starting from the virtually universally notable “LOL” celebrating its twenty-eighth birthday this year (Laughing Out Loud), “DM”, (Direct Message) and “FOMO” (Fear of Missing Out) and “TBT” (Throwback Thursday). The speed at which new vocabulary is introduced on-line, used, quickly over-used and so discarded is fantastic and has never been so fast. Examples of terms that might currently be thought of as “antique” text speak on social media are: OMG, TXT, GR8, M8 and L8R.

2.4.1 New words meaning

2.4.1.1 Bump

Means scrolling either up or down, like in a forum when the list of items or topic is long and can't show in one complete page, the word “bump” is used to mean scrolling to the next page to allow other content to be seen(Geikhman2015).

2.4.1.2 Troll

Geikhman (2015) The word is used to mean to avoid entertaining a stubborn person on social media. When in a social networking site in a group there exists a member, who seems to be inquisitive or too much, one might use the word troll to mean avoid. Example: Don't give a room to trolls, you will only encourage them and waste your time.

2.4.1.3 Totes and Ado

As used on social media, they mean “totally” and “adorable”. From the way the two are spelt, they might sound very different from their original words. However, the contexts in which they are used during interaction possess the original meaning of the words as they are also used

informal communication. For example; those shoes are adorbs, you should totes get them (Crystal, 2011)

2.4.1.4 Just Sayin

It's a common phrase mostly applied at the end of a sentence during social networking interaction. It portrays rudeness or meanness in a sentence. However, the way it is used makes the user sound as though they don't have a bad intention. It covers the negative attitude that is in the mind of the user. You sound like you haven't gotten enough sleep, just saying.

2.4.1.5 Pwned

A common word used in social media in online games. The word is created from the original English word "owned" when applied in video games in social media, however, it has a different meaning as it means "defeated" or humiliated. Example: I spent all a lot of time revising for the paper but I failed. The exam pwnedme (Geikhman, 2015).

2.4.1.6 N00b/Newb

A common word written with two zeroes in the middle but pronounced as Noob. It's used to show how someone is new in something or is behind the trending topic in social media. Also indicates that an individual is a beginner in something. Example; don't waste your time on him, he is a N00b (Geikhman, 2015).

2.4.1.7 Photo Bomb

The Maximillian dictionary spells the above word separately as "Photo" "bomb". The social media users however have blended it to spell as one word instead. It is used in social networking sites to show when an intruder who is not expected to appear in a photo shows up. Most of the time, the person sneaking the photo does this without the knowledge of the

photographer. Example, the girl's photobombed our snap making it look so galish (Geikman, 2015).

2.4.1.8 TL; DR

The above initials are used in social networking site communication to inform that the receiver of a text was not able to read the whole text as it was too long. "Too Long: Didn't Read" " Sometimes it's used to show laziness on the reader's side or too much information on the writer's side. Your TXT was TL; DR (Gikhman, 2015)

2.4.1.9 NSFW

The above initials are common as well during communication in social media. The initials are originally from the English words Not Safe for Work. In the context of social media communications, they are used to indicate that the content that the reader is about to access is not safe as it could be having some disturbing images or dirty content (Geikhman, 2015). This would happen an example when there is a mistaken communication in social media between the boss and the employee

2.4.1.10 Haha

Whereas the above word doesn't spell any serious, it has been widely used in social media during interaction to express a kind of a joke. Example: My baby is trying to hold the baby picture on my phone, haha! (Geikhman,2015)

2.4.2 Misspelled words and Abbreviations

Informal	formal
Hav bin waitin 4 uamsg (<i>wrong spelling</i>)	I have been waiting for your message
Ma skul won anadatrofy(<i>wrong spelling</i>)	My school worn another trophy
It a'ntua portion IJN (<i>abbreviation contraction</i>)	it isn't your portion in Jesus' Name

C U SN (<i>single letter spelling</i>)	see you soon
Wlgiv (<i>deletion of last letter</i>)	will give
TTYL (<i>abbreviation</i>)	talk to you later
G9T (<i>spelling in numericals</i>)	good night
Dia (<i>slang/Pidgin</i>)	dear
Tnx (<i>use of phonemic spelling</i>)	thanks

A study carried out by University of Iceland (2017) by Daniel Jimma evaluated the language of social media and how it affected users of Standard English. Jimma called the social media language a lingua Franca language. The study also investigated whether there was a particular age that was more influenced by social media language. The study revealed that social media played a big role in diluting formal English language of its users and influencing the users to adopt the informal English found on social media.

2.4.3 *Affixation Methods and Compounding in Social Media*

Communication language has demonstrated a similar way of forming words on social media, Zimmer (2014) explains how young adult users of social media platforms make use of the social media terminologies and modify them to communicate meaning that is understood within a particular group during interactions. He further demonstrates how some of the affixed social networking terms are modified to communicate a particular meaning to the users. For example, the following words would be used this way on social media; unfriend, poking, tagged, tweet, unlike.

*I am going to **unfriend** you if you keep on **poking** me.
 I noted that you **tagged** me in that horrible pic.
 How often do you **tweet**?
 I had to **unlike** his picture immediately*

The method accepted for new words in English to be formed is using prefixes and suffixes in the order: pay(baseword)+Pre(Prefix)= prepay(newword); enjoy(baseword)+able(suffix)= enjoyable (newword). However, social media does not apply any rule here using the same method. Instead, social media users have been able to form words in the same way despite lack of proper language guidelines (Pavel and Nolt, 2001).

2.5 Effect of Social Media on Students formal language competency

Students, in particular, may experience both positive and bad consequences as a result of their use of social media sites. They can have both positive and negative effects on the people who use them, depending on the situations in which they are employed (Boyd, 2016). The social and psychological requirements of social media users can be met through the use of these platforms.

The features and services offered by each social networking site are unique. Communication on these platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, is impacted by their uniqueness (Boyd, 2016). As a rule, Twitter encourages the use of fewer words in a tweet because it is designed to be read quickly. The maximum message length allowed on Facebook, on the other hand, is substantially higher. When it comes to Instagram, however, there is no limit on the number of images or videos that can be shared (Mansor, 2016 and Sebah Al-Ali, 2014).

Targeted vocabulary learning is linked to an increase in word knowledge according to a comprehensive review of vocabulary research by Hairrell, Rupley, and Simmons (2011) To build vocabulary, the study revealed that exposing oneself over and over again to word, analyzing context, and employing semantic techniques are all popular methods. The growth of one's vocabulary was also influenced by extensive exposure through reading (Nagy & Heibert, 2011).

There are a number of factors that influence how much time is spent reading extensively, including language proficiency and how complex a document is (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015).

Incidental learning is often associated with online vocabulary development. Other academic or non-academic activities can lead to this form of learning. When people engage, solve problems, practice, and observe, it can also happen. Unplanned and unintended learning is referred to as “incidental” learning. Inaccurate forms of a language are also exposed to and picked up by learners. Accordingly, instructors must be aware of the consequences that may impair the ability and learning of their students (Kabilan et al., 2010 as cited in Kasuma, 2017).

Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have also received some criticism for creating a dependence among teenagers on these services. Academic performance suffers because of the pupils’ reliance on freely available information. The more time students spend on social media, the less time they have to contact with real people, which reduces their ability to communicate effectively both in person and online (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi, & Bano, 2019).

Despite the fact that Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are recognized as learning tools, the platforms have a negative impact on students’ learning experience.

Using Facebook as an example, users can both practice and consume writing in this virtual environment. Many written articles are available to them, allowing them to both express themselves and learn from others. Derakshan and Hasanabbasi (2015), on the other hand, argue that the informal, non-academic tone of many of the posts makes them unsuitable for language-learning contexts. Cross-cultural communication is difficult for most multinational virtual organizations because of the language barrier. For virtual international communities, including

English as one of the most commonly used languages attracts many adjustments (Roebuck & Britt, 2002).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Besides teaching students what to study, it is crucial to understand how students learn and to teach them effective learning practices (Weinstein & Mayer, 1983). To better understand effective learning practices and tactics, it's important to look at how people learn with technology outside of official classrooms or classroom settings. Theories are used to explain, forecast, or analyze a phenomenon, according to Swanson, Richard (2013). Theories frequently question or expand upon previously held beliefs about a subject. Both information processing theory and cultivation theory will serve as the foundation for this project.

2.6.1 Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)

Social information processing theory can be traced to George Miller in 1950. It was then developed from cognitive theory by Joseph Walther in 1992. SIPT is based on online interpersonal communication which focuses on restricted textual symbols and adapts the absence of none-verbal cues. (Walther, 1992). The theory advances to explain individuals' use of computer-mediated communication to develop interpersonal impressions and to advance relational communication over time online.

According to SIPT, the human brain works like a computer whereby the "input" is the information we give to the computer or our brain, our thought process filters the information or stimuli, deciding what to save from our sensual memory to our short-term memory and finally what to formulate in our long-term memory (Roebuck & Britt, 2002; Ya'u, 2004; Olaniran, 2007). Social media users are attracted by the new words and phrases that are created and used

on social media, they then process the words in their sensory memory and store them shortly, as they continue using the stored words and phrases occasionally on social media platforms during interactions, they end up storing them in their long term memory (Wang, Walther, & Hancock, 2009).

2.6.1.1 Application of Social Information Processing Theory

The Incorporation of different cultures and languages during interactions between people attracts Paralinguistic codes or the use of signs and symbols that portray emotions and meaning in written texts through manipulation of icons, capitalization, parentheticals and emoticons causing international challenges in the online interaction environment (Olaniran, 2011).

Interaction on social media platforms according to SIPT entails communication expectations especially in the presence of diverse language use and cultural norms. SIPT explains that in such a context, cultural meaning and comprehension of the used language is rather important.

There are three considerations of SIPT; media appropriateness, Richness and social presence which emphasizes on media attributes that vary according to individual differences (Rice, 1993). SIPT explanation of online interaction and how language is used claims that messages and information can be transmitted on online communities but not the meaning of these messages. Ways in which created signs and symbols of communication are used do not convey the same meaning to all individual groups existing online due to different cultural attributes.

2.6.2 Cultivation Theory

This theory was developed by George Gerbener (1970) it was initially used to explain how viewing Television for longer hours affects the perceptions and attitude of viewers in the real world. An update for the same theory was done by Cynthia Vinney (2019). The origins of social media focus on time spent on watching television; it categorizes the viewers as either heavy, moderate, or light viewers. The theory stipulates that the longer hours that viewers stay on television watching, the higher they become passive consumers of what is presented to them, hence affecting their way of living. The social constructivist model, presents the process of language learning as one that involves students' active participation in their own learning process (Cynthia Vinney, 2019).

The current Cultivation theory mechanisms uses three approaches to describe how social media cultivates some transformations in individuals attitudes, beliefs and behaviours; first there is the natural estimation of real life frequencies as they arise on social media, secondly, the estimation focuses on changing the attitude and perception of the individuals who spent a given amount of time on social media and relating this to their daily life; the third cultivation is the final which explains how individuals users of social media platform end up using the consumed content in their real lives which later cultivates their beliefs and observable behaviours which are developed from mechanisms one and two (Hawkins & Pingre, 1982&Nabi& Sullivan, 2000).

2.6.2.1 Applications of cultivation theory

New media “social media,” such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have all been shown to impact people's attitudes, behaviors, and views, according to this notion (vinney, 2019). According to Swan (2017), pupils' grammar and spelling have been negatively impacted

by social media. Youth's behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of the natural environment are influenced by the amount of time they spend on social media. It's also more likely that what kids see and read on social media influences their physical environment and their beliefs.

According to Vygotsky (1987), individuals' intellectual growth is influenced by cultural and social relationships. Transferring from socially supported to individually regulated performance, also known as the transition from inter-psychological to intra-psychological, is necessary for improving one's cognitive function. As Kathryn (1998) asserted, a better level of cognitive development can be accomplished through engaging in meaningful learning, as opposed to simply accumulating information. There is a substantial link between the use of social media and the learning of a new language.

2.7 Research Gaps

Salaudeen and Lawal (2019) proposes that further investigations on challenges posed by social media on writing culture be considered on different categories of students, employers and lecturers/educators to aggregate their perspective and experiences on the link between addiction to social media chatting and students' writing culture.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the methodology used to undertake this study. As such, this chapter indicates the study site, the research design, target population, sample size, data collection and analysis, pilot study, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Study Design

This is the plan of action, structure and strategy framework that is used to interrogate a phenomenon and obtain feedback on the research questions or control variance (Ogula, 2005).

This study employed a descriptive design whose major emphasis was on enquiring deeper into the research problem. Creswell and Creswell (2017) defines research design as an approach that details the methods and procedures for the collection and analysis of required information. A descriptive design is suitable for this study because it does not only find facts but helps formulate important knowledge and solutions to significant problems. The purpose of description is to organize the findings to provide them with explanations, and then test those explanations (Krathwohl, 1993). Many research studies describe aspects such as form, structure, activity, and change over time, relation of natural or man-made phenomena in relation to other phenomena.

3.3 Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed method approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data. Quantitative research focuses on the collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe, explain, predict, or control variables and phenomena of interest (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). By contrast, qualitative research method provides in-

depth explanations to approach research objectives to study natural experiences in their settings; attempt to make out sense or construe meanings people bring forth (Denzin& Lincoln, 2005).

This method was adopted for the reason that by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data the study findings are grounded in participants' experiences and hence the results are objective. The quantitative instrument was administered first, followed by the KIIs to collect qualitative data, where the qualitative data built directly on the results from the quantitative phase. This had the effect of explaining further the quantitative results in an explanatory sequential design.

3.4 Study Site

The study was conducted at KCA University main campus. KCA is situated along Thika Highway, about 12 kilometers from Nairobi CBD.

3.5 Target Population

A population refers to a group of people, objects or institutions with common characteristics (Ogula, 2005). For this study, the population included 1336 undergraduate students from the School of Education, Film Arts, and Journalism and Media Studies at KCA University as well as language/communication lecturers.

3.6 Sampling Method and Sample Size

3.6.1 Sampling Method

Sampling is a procedure that makes it possible for a researcher to make inferences about a population based on the nature of the sample. According to White (2013) it is not always possible to study the entire population of interest, hence Sekaran and Bourgie (2016) advise that

one should study only a sample of the population instead of collecting data from all the elements in a population for it would be time consuming and costly.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling for the FGDs. With the aid of the class representatives, eight students from different classes were identified to participate in the FGDs. Cluster sampling technique was used to select survey respondents from KCA University students from the School of Film Arts & Journalism in Media . It involved dividing the population into recognizable “clusters” in this case, their year of study and then from the years their classes were identified (Cochran 1999; Schreuder et al., 1993; Gregoire & Valentine, 2008) and questionnaires were administered. Purposive sampling technique was also used to identify lecturers for the KIIs, as they had knowledge of, relation to and expertise in formal language use (Freedman et al., 2007). These techniques were suitable as they helped the researcher to easily reach reliable respondents for the survey, KIIs and FGDs.

3.6.2 Sample Size

The researcher conducted a survey on 130 students of 1336 which is 10% of the population, which is acceptable in a descriptive research as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) consider a sample size of 10-50% to be acceptable. Six FGDs of eight students each were conducted as Prasad (2017) suggests an average of 8 participants in each focus group discussion, terming a number bigger than 8 as being a crowd. There were three groups of female students and three groups of male students. Six KIIs were conducted, which being qualitative data, a small number is acceptable since the samples collected from qualitative data help to appreciate and comprehend in-depth complexity and variations of the context surrounding a phenomenon.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is the process of preparing and collecting data (Rugg & Petre, 2007). The researcher used a structured questionnaire to conduct the survey, and a semi-structured interview guide for the FGDs and KIIs.

3.7.1 Survey Questionnaires

Survey research collects data from a sample of people or topics by asking them questions and analyzing their responses (Check & Schutt, 2012). If you want to generalize your findings, you need to collect data from a wide number of people, which is why this study used a research survey. It was thought to be flexible in terms of what it may be used to examine (Mertler, 2018). The researcher sent questionnaires to 107 of the 130 students who had been selected for the study because some had not shown up at the university.

University students' socio-demographic profile; their use of social media platforms; and the language they use on social media platforms were all included in the questionnaire's four key components. On a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each topic.

This was a psychometric response scale that asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to a statement.

Class representatives were used to help the researcher identify the students' academic year and then randomly distribute questionnaires to them..

3.7.2 Key Informant Interviews

The research also conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with key informants who were lecturers teaching language and communication skills units at the university. Since they

were the people at the core of English language acquisition, they had first-hand knowledge and experience with the social experience in question and hence relevant subjects to the study.

According to Oishi (2003) the primary goal of key informants is to acquire qualitative description of perception or experiences instead of measuring facets of the experience.

The researcher, through the dean of studies identified six lecturers teaching language related and communication units, she contacted them by visiting their offices and calling them and booked appointments with them on the days and time that they were available and then she then conducted unstructured interviews using a semi structured interview guide.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions

FGD is an approach in which groups of individuals are chosen to participate in discussion of a predetermined topic (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2017) for qualitative data collection to gain extensive apprehension of social issues. This study made use of six FGDs of eight students each—three composed of male students and three of female students—to collect qualitative data from participants that was meant to help the researcher gain extensive apprehension of social issues (Gibson, 2012).

3.8 Data Collection Tools

Survey data for the study was collected through a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide questions to conduct both the KIIs and FGDs. The tools were guided by the research objectives.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis means computing of certain measures in order to identify patterns of relationships that are present among data groups (Kothari, 1995). The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) to obtain reliable results, which were later presented using tables.

Qualitative data was then analyzed thematically and presented in narrative forms. According to Herzog and Hitters (2019), thematic analysis is an approach popular in analyzing patterns related to themes. The researchers classified responses into major themes and presented an analysis of each of them in a narrative form. Kothari (2004) argues that the primary mission in the analysis of data is to look for patterns in the data by noting similarities and differences.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

Joppe (2000) defines validity as “the extent to which a research measures what it was intended to measure”. According to Cook and Campbell (1997) validity is the closest possible approximation to the truth and falsity of a given inference or proposition. The researcher ensured that test items in the data collection tools were set in a manner that they genuinely represented the area of the study informed by the study objectives and the theories used for the study, which ensured the results obtained from the data analysis was actually represented the variables of the study.

According to Nunnally (1978), reliability has to do with how consistently an measurement can be used to analyze a number of conditions with similar outcomes. Therefore, it measures the extent of repeatability of the results when various individuals carry out the same tests on various instances under changed situations which can serve as alternate tools to measure

the same construct. Using both quantitative and qualitative data in this research ensured that the qualitative data from the KIIs and the FGDs supported the initial data from the survey which ensured reliability. The status of the key informants as experts in English language learning and the multifaceted nature of members from FGDs ensured objectivity and safeguarded the integrity of the information to be gathered.

3.11 Triangulation of Data

Data collected was analyzed separately for each component to produce its own sets of findings. The researcher then combined these findings—triangulation—to corroborate the two sets of findings derived from the quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more complete picture (Sandelowski, 1995).

The information from the KIIs and that from FGDs was triangulated by comparing and differentiating the themes emerging in order to lend complementary support to the explanation and to improve accuracy. The findings of these methods was then synthesized with those of the survey to improve data completeness hence facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of perspectives from each stakeholder group (Lambert &Loiselle, 2008) for systematic analysis and a broad and deep understanding of issues.

3.12 Data Management

Data was collected in the form of filled questionnaires, audio recordings and short notes made during the KIIs sessions and FGDs. The questionnaire data was fed into the SPSS software for analysis while the data in audio form was transcribed verbatim by typing in MS Word in a personal computer. The data was then stored in paper, and then later transferred to the

researchers' personal computer through a card reader for the audio and through typing for the written texts.

3.13 Ethical considerations

Sobal (1994) states that ethics in research is about applying ethical standards in the planning of a research, data collection and analysis, and the dissemination and use of the results thereof. The researcher ensured privacy and confidentiality of the research data. The research findings were not disclosed to a third party who may use it for personal gains. Anonymity of the data was also (Sobal, 1984) was also observed. Identifiable characteristics of respondents such as their names were not used instead pseudonyms were used. The respondents consent was sought before undertaking data collection. The information obtained was only used for the study and other academic purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Overview

The main objective of this study was to interrogate the effects of social media on university student's formal language competencies. Three specific objectives formulated: to determine ways in which university students use social media platforms; to establish the language used by university students on social media platforms; and to examine how the use of social media affects formal use of English language by university students.

Descriptive statistics, namely frequency and percentage were used to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied on the qualitative data. This chapter presents the findings of the survey as triangulated with findings from FGDs and KIIs in the respective sections in line with the stated objectives.

4.1 Response Rate

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of the response from the various sample strata. Six FGDs (three groups of male/female students), of eight students each were conducted and 6 KIIs interviewed.

Table 4. 1

Target Sample-Response Rate Comparison

Category	Target Sample		Response	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Journalism and media	87	66.9	72	55.4
Education, Film & Arts	43	33.1	35	26.9
Total	130	100.0	107	82.3

Source: Survey Data (2021)

The survey targeted 130 students and managed to obtain data from 107 of them representing 82.3% response rate, which according to Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) is acceptable for generalization of findings. Category statistics show Journalism and Media department having a 55.4% response rate, and Film, Arts and Education, 26.9%.

Table 4. 2

FGDs and KIIs (Participant Breakdown)

FGD	No. o Participants	KI	Description
1. GRP 1	8	1.	English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
2. GRP 2	8	2	English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
3. GRP 3	8	3	English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
4. GRP 4	8	4	English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
5. GRP 5	8		English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
6. GRP 6	8		English Language and communications Expert (Lecturer)
Total	48	4	

Source: Researcher (2021)

4.2 Socio-Demographic Profile

The respondents' socio-demographic characteristics were captured as gender, department, year of study, and age bracket. These various were cross-tabulated with each other as found appropriate to create a profile based on the spread of responses.

Department, Gender and Age Bracket

The respondents' age bracket, operationalized as "Below 20," "20-24," and "Above 25 years," as spread across gender and department (Journalism & Media, & Education) is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3*Age Bracket by Department and Gender*

Department/Gender	Age Bracket						Total	
	Below 20 years		20-24 years		Above 25 years		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Journalism and media	27	25.2	40	37.4	5	4.7	72	67.3
Male	12	11.2	18	16.8	3	2.8	32	29.9
Female	15	14.0	22	20.6	2	1.9	40	37.3
Film, Arts & Education	13	12.2	20	18.7	2	1.9	35	32.7
Male	6	5.6	9	8.4	1	0.9	15	14.0
Female	7	6.5	11	10.3	1	0.9	20	18.7
Total	40	37.4	60	56.1	7	6.5	107	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2021)

The results in Table 4.3 show majority (56.1%) of the respondents occupying the 20-24 years age bracket followed by those aged below 20 years (37.1%). The least represented age bracket was above 25 years, which is explained by the fact that the respondents' education level is strictly undergraduate and thus comprises relatively young adults, and teenagers to some extent.

Female gender (56.0%) had a slightly higher proportion in the respondents sample compared to male (44.0%).

The Department of Journalism and media (67.3%) was larger than that of Film, Arts & Education (32.7%) in terms of student representation.

Year of Study and Gender

Apart from stating their gender, the respondents were required to indicate their year of study, which variable was presented as a of 2nd-3rd year dichotomy. Data on gender and year of study were then cross-tabulated. Table 4.4 shows gender-year of study cross-tabulation.

Table 4. 4

Gender by Year of Study

Gender	Year of Study				Total	
	2 nd year		3 rd year		<i>n</i>	%
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Male	15	14.0	32	29.9	47	43.9
Female	20	18.7	40	37.3	60	56.1
Total	35	32.7	72	67.3	107	100.0

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Results in Table 4.4 show the majority of the respondents being in their third year of study, 67.3%, with the second-year ones at 32.2%, which is less than half the proportion of the third years. More females were in either second (female, 18.7%; male, 14.0%) or third (female, 37.3%; male, 29.9%) year of study. These results are consistent with the population trends in the country which have gender representation favoring females.

4.3 University Students Use of Social Media Platforms

Objective one was to determine ways in which university students use social media platforms. The questions relating to this objective sought information on a number of aspects classified into use generally, and time allocation for social media activity. Use of social media platforms for: watching movies and listening to music; interaction with

friends and family; browsing educational material and activities; gaming, learning and school assignments; and entertainment and social interactions.

Then there was time allocation for: academic learning and research, and English language learning and research. The survey required the respondents to rate their responses on a five-point likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree) to the statements, each of which related to ways the students used social media platforms. Table 4.5 presents the results of the combined responses across the statements.

Table 4. 5*Ways in which University Students Use Social Media Platforms*

Variable	Rating										Total	
	SD		D		NAND		A		SA		n	%
Students use of social media platforms	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I use social media platforms for watching movies and listen to music	17	15.9	9	8.4	8	7.5	45	42.1	23	21.5	107	100.00
I use social media platforms to interact with friends and family	6	5.6	6	5.6	4	3.7	41	38.3	50	46.7	107	100.0
I use social media platforms to browse educational material and activities	2	1.9	2	1.9	2	1.9	41	38.3	60	56.1	107	100.0
I use social media platforms for gaming	21	19.6	27	25.2	8	7.5	38	35.5	11	10.5	107	100.0
I use social media platforms for learning and for my school assignments	3	2.8	4	3.7	8	7.5	51	47.7	40	37.4	107	100.0
Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on entertainment and social interactions	16	15.0	32	29.9	16	15.0	23	21.5	20	18.7	107	100.0
Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on academic learning and research	5	4.7	10	9.3	16	15.0	39	36.4	37	34.6	107	100.0
Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on English language learning and research	4	3.7	24	22.4	16	15.0	34	31.8	29	27.1	107	100.0

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; NAND = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A= Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Source: Survey Data (2021)

The results in Table 4.5 indicate that the dimension, students' use of social media platforms had several presentations highlighted in specific subjective attitudinal statements: The students used social media platforms for watching movies and listen to music Agree. 42.1% and strongly agree 21.5%. They used social media platforms to interact with friends and family, strongly agree, 46.7%; agree, 38.3%. They used social media platforms to browse educational material and activities, strongly agree, 56.1%; 38.3%.

The proportion that used social media platforms for gaming was 35.5% (agreed), but a notable 25.2% disagreed, with another 19.6% registering strong(disagreement, which counterbalances the agreement with this statement and shows a considerable extent of aversion to gaming on social media. The application of social media platforms for learning and for school assignments took up the highest proportion of response, with 37.4% registered agreement and 47.7% strong agreement.

Response to spending most of the student's time on social media platform for entertainment and social interactions had a not-too-wide discrepancy between agreement and disagreement response at 29.9%/21.5% suggesting some ambivalence about this use. Even the extremes of opinion had a nearly equal share of student response at 18.9 strongly agree and 15.0% strongly disagree, which suggests again that the respondents disagreed but not as strongly as they agreed, although the difference is not too big.

On the social media platform use dimension of using most of the time n social media platform for academic learning and research there was majority agreement (36.4% agreement; 34.6% strong agreement. Finally, there was majority acceptance (58.9%) collating the 31.8% agree and 27.1% strongly agree response to using most of the time spent on social media platform on English language learning and research.

All the eight FGDs cited interaction with family and friends, entertainment, educational research, information, online business as the reasons that the students used social media platforms. In one of the groups, Grp 2, a participant said: *“I use it for research about Mass Communication.”* In another group (Grp 2) the participants used the platforms for *“getting information of what is happening around the world, i.e. through Twitter.”* It also gave them ideas on how to go about the course, and the confidence. Another participant, from Grp 4, stated: *“I use Instagram for entertainment and getting informed.”*

The participants in each of the groups had been influenced by other social media platform users to engage in some specific social activities. Here is how some of them spoke:

“Yes: like donating to the needy” (Grp 1).

“Educating the people on some importance of some government activities e.g., voting” (Grp 2).

“Yes: my friend have influenced me to follow conversations on twitter and Facebook” (Grp 3).

“Yes, some have influence me to attend social events” (Grp 4).

“Yes, especially social media influencers” (Grp 5).

“YouTube has greatest influence, celebrities’ shows us their lifestyle and you feel like that where you need to be” (Grp6).

In answer to the question *“Have you lured friends or others to engage in different activities you relate with on social media platform?”* FGD findings showed the participants to be in agreement. Sample participant responses, with explanation of some the specific activities:

“Yes, so that to get to interact more and give more likes” (Grp1).

“Yes, almost of my friends have watched content as a result of my influence.” (Grp2).

“Yes, occasionally Post videos and encourage them to watch them as well as they post their own” (Grp3).

“Yes, videos and conference callings, Covid-19 made us lure our” (Grp4)

“Yes, advising them some platform has advantages” (Grp5)

Yes, advising them some platform has advantages (Grp6)

A question was posed to the FGDs, *“Does the use of social media platform dictate how you interact with others on different social media platforms?”* The general response across the eight groups was that it had dictated the participant’s interactions with others. The kind of language used was mostly *informal*.

“I sometimes try to copy what I see online.” (Participant, Grp 1)

“On social media platform one interact with people from different background, culture, so one handles each and every one differently” (Participant, Grp 2)

“After getting some information I no longer view people the same way” (Participant, Grp 3)

“I find it hard to relate to social media users who post information that depicts my culture as oppressive” (Participant, Grp 4)

“Different platform uses different command language” (Participant, Grp 5)

“Yes, some platforms influence you to be more serious while others have more joking issues (Participant, Grp 6)

Asked how much time they spent on their preferred social media platform, the groups all agreed that they used most of their free time there, the average being six hours.

Responding to the question on students’ use of social media, all the four KIs agreed that students used social media platforms with friends, more so their classmates, with KI 1 noting that the need for such interactions had created “coded communication,” which only the students themselves understood; reason being that *“they wanted to keep the peer secrets.”* For KI 2, students also spent time on the platforms *“doing their own things.”* He observed, however, that

“others do business like selling jewelry and clothes for purposes of making money online, while others are actually there for entertainment.”

Such entertainment as suggested by K1 2 included the use of memes, what the KI termed “enjoyment.” The KI felt that since “University students are being affected, the question would be, how we engage them to be more productive on social media, rather than spending most of this time on social media.” Having agreed that student social media uses were basically centered on interaction with peers, KI 4 noted that “students are taken on it with a lot of zeal,” perhaps because “social media is an open space that any person can feel free to be on it. It doesn’t limit anyone from registering to any social network.” He also listed a number of specific uses as: watching online movies, making friends, and building relationships.

I think mostly it is the kind of interaction; like friendships would be a big motivation as they want to explore the world and get new friends. So I would say again that engagement of activities depends on the principles of communication (KI 2).

There was consensus that interaction, more so with friends, was the biggest motivation for the students being on social media. The results are consistent with what studies say about social media use , for example, Gully (2012) who observed that since social media was introduced, it enabled a replacement method for folks, significantly the younger generation, to attach with each other, supporting common interests, goals and even values. Further, they are in line with the observations of Boyd, 2007; Owusu-Acheaw, Gift and Larson, 2015; and Dhanya, 2016) that uses are varied for different groups depending on what they consider important, with common reasons include psychological, social needs and sometimes academic needs which involves searching information especially for academic purposes meant for adding knowledge for the specific courses pursued by students. Buying and selling also happens as well as solving their problems among other benefits (Owusu-Acheaw, Owusu-Acheaw, Gift &Larson, 2015).

4.4 Language Used by University Students on Social Media Platforms

Objective two was to establish the language used by university students on social media platforms. The key aspect evaluated here was operationalized as five dimensions (items) of students language use on the platforms of interest: social media platforms as a determinant of language use, modification of English language words and phrases to fit into conversations, creation of room for individual learning of new modified words and phrases for informal and formal interactions, interaction as an interference with the formal English language competency, and derivation of stock terms for use in communication.

Opinion statements on students' language use on social media were provided for rating on a five-point likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree), each statement representing a specific aspect of students' language use. Table 4.6 presents the results of the combined responses across the statements.

Table 4. 6*Students Language Use on Social Media Platforms*

Variable	Rating										Total	
	SD		D		NAND		A		SA		n	%
Students language use on social media platforms	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Student's use of language is based on different social media platforms they interact on.	8	7.5	5	4.7	13	12.3	54	50.9	26	24.5	106	100.0
Students prefer using modified English language words and phrases to fit in to their conversations on different social media platforms.	6	5.6	14	13.1	14	13.1	42	39.3	31	29.0	107	100.0
Social media platforms create room for individual students to learn new modified words and phrases for informal and formal interactions.	3	2.9	5	4.8	10	9.5	54	51.4	33	31.4	105	100.0
Language used on social media platforms for informal interaction interferes with my formal English language competency	11	10.4	26	24.5	23	21.7	36	34.0	10	9.4	106	100.0
I derive most of the terms I use in my communication from social media platforms.	11	10.3	28	26.2	14	13.1	35	32.7	19	17.8	107	100.0

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; NAND = neither Agree nor Disagree; A= Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Table 4.6 shows student's language use on social media platforms as taking a particular form. The forms, relate to aspects of interaction. It was shown that: student's use of language is based on different social media platforms they interact on, 50.9% agreed; strongly agreed 24.5%. Students preferred using modified English language words and phrases to fit in to their conversations on different social media platforms, 39.3% agreed; strongly agreed, 29.0%.

Social media platforms create room for individual students to learn new modified words and phrases for informal and formal interactions, 51.4% agreed; 31.4% strongly agreed. Language used on social media platforms for informal interaction interferes with the formal English language competency, 34.0% agreed; but the result is counterbalanced by the 24.5% disagreement; and a 21.7% neutral response. This probably means that the student was unsure yet what effect exposure the language on social media was having on them. It could as well be that the student had the ability to segregate informal from informal use of English language. That they took what happened on social media being limited to entertainment. The students derived most of the terms they used in communication from social media platforms, 32.7% agreed; 17.8%. Yet there was a considerable percentage, 26.2%, that did not derive the terms they used to communicate from social media.

Students' language use on social media platforms drew a rich vein of thought from the KIs who appeared to unanimously agree that the seemingly unique communication needs of this largely youthful group had created an altogether different kind of language use; what KI referred to as coded communication for secrecy. English words were effectively modified in some instances to suit their conversations and pursue the subjects they want to" (KI 4).

They were also in agreement that the reality now was compromised standards of formal English language use.

KI 1:

You see, you see, these students want to communicate first with their peers, they are also conversing with multiple friends, and they therefore want to achieve high typing rates. And speeds, they want to use few words to give a huge information, they will most of the time prefer to use initials like 9 and T to mean night. The limits of character they use actually dictates how they use language on social media and later, this is transferred to academic work.

For KI 2, the type of activity, and level of seriousness, dictated the use of formal/informal language. If just chatting or interacting with peers they will definitely go for informal language unlike when they are engaging in business when they might see the need of using formal language.”

The situation had deteriorated so much that it had created a big barrier between them and their lecturers. Aside from flouting Grammar rules (and spelling) in their academic work, their personal messages (SMS) had telling spelling errors resulting mainly from shortened forms of words. This hard-to-interpret kind of writing had been imported into class, finding its way into essays, for example.

It's sad that they end up using the same words in their academic work. I have personally called students sometimes when am marking their work to let them explain what they meant. You use a lot of thinking when trying to figure out what they meant. They have their own language (KI 1).

The situation had been precipitated and was characterized specifically by the preference for *“using short forms of words, and sometimes they go as far as mixing letters and numbers. I can say they play a lot with words and phrases, mathematical figures are gaining prominence and are being used in integration of words to communicate.”* (KI1).

This was lamentable for *“they end up using the same words in their academic work.”*

The KI 1 had had to ask a student to clarify what he or she meant, often realizing in the process that such improper word use was consciously done.

KI 2 agreed,

I think class presentations have also posed the issue in a way that you might find students who start presentations so well using formal language but once in a while you realize that they are not able to maintain the form, they interchangeably make use of both formal and informal even in an official presentation.

On control of language use, the KIs some students could switch effortlessly between formal and informal English; but these were few. KI 2 stated:

From my experience that there are those who are able to switch to these codes appropriately without messing up in terms of spelling, grammar and speaking, you can actually tell thus when you are marking and even when you are speaking to some of them, there those who are really using these language forms so correctly.

The majority certainly were in the group that could not make an effortless switch, especially in class presentations, for “you realize that they are not able to maintain the form, they interchangeably make use of both formal and informal even in an official presentation” (KI 2).

Language use assessment revealed a lot of issues:

“I find myself doing a lot of corrections on students’ work ...I guess especially sheng, which they use on social media. They implicate it during the write up of academic works” (KI 3).

There was marked interfere with language use. Their ability to articulate issues was largely impeded: KI 4:

Much as they are trying, you find that they are limited with their dependency on social media platform. They lack proper language development skills. They have lack adequacy, they lack linguistics to help them bring out the points they want to bring out.

Thus language use on social media had interfered significantly with proper English language use. This had risks for the future of the country: lack of competent professional communicators especially in international relations and diplomatic circles. KI 1:

“Good languages that were meant for world relations might fade away. Imagine a world where people cannot write to diplomats; they cannot communicate in proper language professionally.”

K2, felt that the platforms can be useful, helping students to pronounce words, which was a significant departure from, the trend of response from the KIs who saw no benefit to language use in any of them.

The effect of language use on social media platforms was so profound that there was much worry for the students’ academic work, personal and professional engagement after school. Assessors will not always ask for explanations and clarifications where there was a conflict of meaning, certainly not in the final exams. They would simply mark what is presented, resulting in poor performance. These were shared concerns across the KIIs.

Overall, the biggest motivation for the dynamism in language use on social media was technology and peers, according to KI 3.

The findings on language use on social media platforms do not differ from what is available in reviewed literature that found language varieties being used on different social media platforms to define social classes of individuals at different levels, and that language was prone to change, getting formal or informal depending on context (Tariq, et al, 2012; Murray, 2016). The dynamism was such that language evolved to accommodate new words, signals and nonverbal expressions.

English language users who are not versed with the modified words on social media platforms may unknowingly apply the new terms they come across on SNS assuming they are

Standard English words (Mworio, 2015) or these words might accidentally find themselves in formal communication contexts due to frequency of use. Modifications/internet slang included terms such as ROFL (roll on floor laugh), BTW (by the way), TTYL (talk to you later), and LOL (laugh out loud), others like 555 mean LOL which is 555 in Thailand, for example (Jimma, 2017).

4.5 Effect of social media use on students' formal use of English language

Objective three aimed to examine how the use of social media affects formal use of English language by students. The questions posed covered six dimensions: English language reading skills, English language writing skills, English language speaking skills, English language comprehension skills, English language expression skills, learning motivation. Data was obtained from students' responses, opinion ratings, on a five-point likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree) of each specific statement relating to these dimensions of effects. Table 4.7 presents the results of the combined responses across the statements.

Table 4. 7*Social Media Platforms & Students Language Use*

Variable	Rating										Total	
	SD		D		NAND		A		SA		n	%
Social media platforms & students language use	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language reading skills	4	3.7	11	10.3	6	5.6	55	51.4	31	29.0	107	100.0
Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language writing skills	3	2.8	14	13.1	6	5.6	52	48.6	32	29.9	107	100.0
Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language speaking skills	4	3.8	5	4.8	9	8.7	46	44.2	40	38.5	104	100.0
Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language comprehension skills	7	6.5	11	10.3	10	9.3	51	47.7	28	26.2	107	100.0
Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language expression skills	6	5.6	7	6.5	7	6.5	65	60.7	22	20.6	107	100.0
The use of social media platforms increases learning motivation, both in formal and informal contexts.	3	2.8	6	5.6	8	7.5	40	37.4	50	46.7	107	100.0

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; NAND = neither Agree nor Disagree; A= Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Results in Table 4.7 regarding social media platforms and students' language use show that using social media platforms had helped me improve my English language reading skills, 51.4% agreed; 29.0% strongly agreed. Using social media platforms had helped the students improve their English language writing skills, 48.6% agreed; 29.9% strongly agreed.

Using social media platforms had helped the students improve their English language speaking skills, 44.2% agreed; 38.5% strongly agreed.

Using social media platforms had helped the students improve their English language comprehension skills, 47.7% agreed, with 26.2% strongly agreeing.

Using social media platforms had helped the students improve their English language expression skills, 60.7%; 20.6% strongly agree.

The use of social media platforms increases learning motivation, both in formal and informal contexts, 37.4% agreed; 46.7% strongly agreed.

Results from the FGDs showed that the students were able to get ideas and gain confidence to overcome stage fright. This must have come from watching videos of motivational speakers and others who communicated on various topics.

While the students were all praises for the social media, the KIs thought different. KI 2, for instance, recalled the kind of problems faced with improper transference of language:

I think I have had a problem with some of my students transferring this in exams whereby it's not really supposed to be that way unless you have been asked to handle a question on abbreviation, acronyms something like that.

Language appeared to have completely lost meaning with the advent and student use of social media platforms. Informal language has taken over the formal even where it is inappropriate: "Students writing skills have really been affected. *"You find that most of the*

conversations on social media are very informal and this has affected their communication skills—poor grammar (KI 1).

Suggested for the students to do was to engage their classmates on something more productive. In light of the consensus by the key informants that the use of social media platforms had negatively impacted student language use, one suggestion was for developers of social media platforms to have a way of correcting wrong use of language. They could have, for example, a software that automatically corrects it, *“something similar to autocorrect” (KI 2).*

KI2 would not recommend that students use social media to improve their reading and writing skill, notwithstanding that they spent most of their time there. They would bring inappropriate language use to class. Though sometimes they wrote in a formal way, their class presentation was affected by informal language.

Could social media be converted for academic work though? KI 3 thought it would be worthwhile:

I wish it’s possible. This can be very helpful to us because you find that most of the time students spent either on their phones or laptops they are on chatting on Facebook, tweeter and Instagram

It would be potentially beneficial for students’ *“academic work and language,” besides being useful to educators.*

Social media had far-reaching effects that included character formation, as KI 3 observed.

Social media not only affects the language of the students but also their character especially those in their prime ages. Now that they spent most of their time on their phones chatting with friends, their social life is more affected as well; very little of their time is spent on serious work. I wish it’s possible that these platforms are converted to be used for productive works of students.

The KI 4 also thought there was need to look at wider societal, humanitarian benefits beyond economic concerns:

If service providers can collaborate, but now I don't know how because that is a social space and the things are social. It's meant for social interaction, it shouldn't limit people in any way. Social media is there for business. They are there to make money the use of all these languages, mother tongues and whatever people use is all meant for interaction between people. We live in a world where economists outweigh the intellectuals. I don't really know if there can be a candid and fare discussions about this or see how to stem this.

In other words, social media spaces were a convergence of interests. The service providers were mostly concerned about money, while the students in this case cared more about the interactions and little about the negative effects the platforms were having on their language and overall social development. English language in particular had been very negatively impacted. The deterioration of the language standards ought to be checked for good of students and the wider society.

For KI 4, generation and language use and remained a key concern not least because there existed a gap to bridge. Since language use is indispensable to humans, it would be more meaningful to have people to consider stability in language use appreciate substance in communication including in music, where the current generation of productions has sacrificed substance on the altar of entertainment.

Although the survey suggested improvement of key language competencies, the KIs did not agree.

KI3, in particular observed how student language use had deteriorated, expressing also the need for an urgent solution:

Their reading skills in class are very poor. When you give them an article to read, you can see them almost struggling with pronunciation. Pronunciation is a problem , linguistics is a problem, diction is a problem – they do not know what words mean , they cannot bring out the meaning of what is being said , the situation is not good at all, I wish there can be something that could be done to all this. It's quite a challenge.

Agreeing to the existence of a real problem, the pronounced interference had resulted the fact that the students were:

“limited with their dependency on social media platform. They lack proper language development skills. They lack adequacy. They lack linguistics to help them bring out the points they want to bring out” (KI 4).

The findings of the KIIs largely differed from those of the survey on the effects of language use on social media. Specific issues relating to competency areas of language were noted. Yet it is not unimaginable that such a variance exists. There seems to be a big difference in the conceptualization of language competency. While the students appear to equate competency to volume of interactions, the speed at which they can type, the KIs are focused on principles of communication and the substance of an academic process geared towards society-wide and global professional communication aspirations.

Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, have also been discovered to have an impact on how people communicate and speak (Boyd, 2016).

As a rule, Twitter encourages the use of fewer words in a tweet because it is designed to be read quickly. The maximum message length allowed on Facebook, on the other hand, is substantially higher. When it comes to Instagram, though, there is no limit on the length of a message (Mansor, 2016 and Sebah Al-Ali, 2014).

Extensive reading has a positive effect on vocabulary development, according to Rupley, Simmons, and Nagy (2011) and Nagy and Heibert (2011), while Ford-Connors and Paratore (2015) argue that the regularity of time spent reading widely, language proficiency, and the complexity of the text all play a role in this relationship.

According to past research findings, instructors should carefully assess the possible consequences of students' social media use on their ability and learning (Kabilan et al., 2010 as cited in Kasuma, 2017).

4.6 Key Findings

4.6.1 University Students Use of Social Media

The students use social media platforms for social interactions for the most part: watching movies and listening to music; interaction with friends and family; browsing educational material and activities; learning and school assignments; and entertainment and social interactions.

4.6.2 Language used by University Students on Social Media Platforms

University students' language use on social media platforms had distinct characteristics with far-reaching implication for academic interactions. There was modification of English language words and phrases to fit into conversations. It created room for individual learning of new modified words and phrases for informal and formal interactions—generally, the stock terms used for use in communication. The interactions on the platforms had caused pronounced interference with the formal English language competency according their lecturers.

4.6.3 Effect of Social Media Use on Students' Formal Use of English Language

The effect of students language use controversially divided along two axes: the students' axis and the lecturers,' a fact explained by apparent motivation and perception difference of communication across generation, and a blurring of the boundary between formal and informal domains of language use. What the students perceived communication/English language competency their lecturers perceived as lack of/inadequacy of language skills development. The students reported that they had improved their English language reading skills, English language writing skills, English language speaking skills, English language comprehension skills English language expression skills, and learning motivation. This came about as a result of using social media platforms such as Youtube for information and education-oriented research. Their lecturers,' assessors, saw only scarcity in their language competency to the extent that it did not meet the academic standards.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The chapter summarizes the study by giving various conclusions and recommendations. There were three objectives formulated for the study: To determine ways in which university students use social media platforms, establish the language used by university students on social media platforms; and examine how the use of social media affects formal use of English language by students.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Students use of social media platforms

The researcher began by assessing the student's use of social media platforms. The survey conducted indicated that students use social media platforms for a number of activities, a larger part of the respondents indicated the use of social media platforms for interactions for the most part. Other respondents indicated that they use social media platforms for watching movies and listening to music while others agreed that they interact with friends and family on different social media platforms. Some students also stated that they largely use social media platforms for browsing educational materials and research activities; learning and school assignments; and entertainment and social interactions.

The study was keen to establish through Focus Group Discussions how social media platforms influence university students to interact with others while they engage on different social media platforms for diverse activities, participants in the eighth groups agreed that they use social media to follow on activities that are introduced by others while others have also been influenced by the activities they introduce on social media platforms. This means that the activities that students engage in on social media platforms sometimes depends on what others

do. The study established that some of the influencing activities that students engage in are based on serious issues while others are just meant for jokes. The study indicated that serious activities include those which exposes students to learning new words and phrases on social media platforms which helped them improve in key areas language skills like writing, reading and speaking. The discussions also exposed the time that university students spent on social media platforms revealing that majority of the students spent all their free time on social media. Only when they are in class or sometimes when they are engaged in a serious activity they will not be on social media platforms. Some participants in the group thought they roughly spent up to six hours during the day time and night time to be on social media platforms.

Key informants on the other hand stated that there is also a commercial use of social media platforms by those students who make money online by selling business items an activity that has nothing to do with language use. That social media platforms in a way attract individual students who chose to specifically use it purely for businesses. Another Key informant indicated that students use social media to do their own things which are only known to them and the specific groups they interact with on social media. Another responded from key informant thought that students use social media for just socializing mostly informally with friends and classmates mostly when they are not in class.

5.2.2 Student's language use on social media

The study through Focus Group Discussions established that University students' language use on social media platforms had distinct characteristics with far-reaching implication for academic interactions. There was most formal use of language to suit the purpose of the interactions, which was mostly with their peers. Language was therefore modified in both

structure and meaning and this modification was considered appropriate or inappropriate by the focus Group discussion participants.

The study had established that students use short forms of words on social media and also integrate figures and numbers to form words used by them during formal interactions on social media platforms on different occasions. The Key informant expressed concerns on how technology is changing the way young people are using language uncontrollably on social media platforms. According to them, the use of social media platforms is changing the way students use language in a more relaxed way not considering situations where it's formal or informal. Longer hours spent on social media by university students is extremely affecting the value of language which is considered as a tool that should be preserved for future generations.

University students had derived some words and phrases from social media platforms and used them in other forms of communication either formal or informal. When probed further on whether the words and phrases were specifically from the English language conversations, the participants of Focus Group discussions indicated that they were not very sure about the forms of the words and phrases they would pick from these platforms since it could sometimes happen so first without them noticing this immediately but maybe later when it had already happened. Some part of students saw the social media platform as a platform for education and information with the benefit of increasing their course matter in this case.

The Key informants mentioned that the interactions of students on social media platforms had caused pronounced interference with the formal English language competency, mainly because there was transmission of the modified words and phrases on social media platforms to the classroom and academic work. The study saw the lecturers more focused on the kind of imitation they observe the students written and spoken language. In general, however, social

media has affected University students\ language, for or for worse. The effect, though perceived differently, relate to improved their English language reading skills, English language writing skills, English language speaking skills, English language comprehension skills English language expression skills, and learning motivation. This came about as a result of using social media platforms such YouTube for information and education-oriented research.

On whether the students had the ability to differentiate between formal and informal language on social media platforms during their interactions, the study outlined that a very small percentage of the students would have this ability, this is because while on social media, most of them are carried away by those activities that others do which are mostly informal and thus they are more likely to use informal language than formal. The Key informants mentioned that most of the students are controlled on social media, the aspect of communicating at higher speed as they type words as they chat with their friends sometimes dictates them to shorten some words and even use letters sometimes to replace complete words. This then means that such type of engagement cannot allow them time to be keen on using formal or informal but what they achieve in their communication is what matters.

Again, this lead to modifying language in different ways to fit in to their conversations. As research indicates that students lack the ability to establish a balance on when to use formal or informal language on social media platforms. When probed further on what they thought would be motivating factors that led students to use their preferred forms of language on social media, one Key informant stated that technology itself is a motivating factor since it allows individuals to explore on different platforms. The research outlined that social media platforms are meant for social activities which mostly are informal, that means that users on social media will always perform these activities using an informal language. Only a few individuals may

manage to use both formal and informal language in its rightful way during interactions although, they will still do this with a lot of struggles.

5.2.3 Effects of social media platforms on students language competencies

The study has shown both negative and positive effects of social media platforms on university student's formal language competencies. Respondents from survey showed how positively social media platforms promoted their English language competencies including those of their reading, speaking, comprehension and writing. On the negative side of social media platforms on student's language competencies, key informants unanimously agreed that students provided accounts where they have sometimes used short forms of English words and phrases in to their academic work mostly in writing during exams. This means that there is a contradiction between what students claim they have experienced on social media platforms in terms of language effects and what lecturers are receiving from their academic work. The lecturers expressed concern that students are falling victims of modifiers of formal language and this is totally affecting their academic performance especially the writing skills citing dangers on the country ending up with poor future writers.

The study considered some of the risks that are more likely to affect university students formal language competencies while using social media platforms for longer hours, the study established that the risk would be more on communication competencies especially when it comes to formal writing and speaking, as mentioned by key informants, there have been situations where students have great ideas as during their class presentation but they lack words to express their ideas and during class presentations. The participants in the Key informant thought that this is caused by a mixture of both formal and informal words that students possess.

Indicated to some level social media posing both negative and positive effects through social media activities that students engage in.

On whether social media platforms should be converted for the use of academic performance and English language learning, the study established that it would be good if social media platform developers considered establishing rules and laws that would dictate how language use should be used by the practitioners. This question basically engaged the key informants since they were the language experts.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that university students use social media platforms which has both positive and negative effects on their formal language competencies. Language was mostly informal on the social media platforms and included modified words and phrases to suit the context of interaction. The use of social media platforms had diverse effects on the students English language competency, which included transference of Modified English words and phrases from the social media platforms to the classrooms thus negatively affecting the students' speaking, reading and writing skills in English language. This perspective is especially prevalent among the educators.

Social media has a significant spillover effect on the students' ability to use English in formal set ups and therefore there is need to moderate the extent of use of informal English to limit use in formal academic set ups. Interactions of students on social media has been established by the study to be of considerable level of the concern to the educators and other stakeholders who perceive its impact to be mostly negative. In most cases, the study has established that students often interact on social media platforms using both formal and informal language which has a negative effect on the language meant for academic purposes. The students use different social media platforms for varieties of activities including friendships,

watching moves, educational matters, entertainment like watching music and even interacting with family and friends.

It was established that students were using modified English words on social media platforms and in different occasions transferred these words to their formal communication especially writing. These happened consciously or unconsciously depending on the types of interactions the students engaged in. Being on social media platforms made students discover new friends and at the same time exposed them to the English words and phrases that were either modified to fit in a certain conversation or on the other hand created room for the students to also modify words and phrases that would be used by others as well. A high percentage of students use social media for majorly interactions, researching on academic assignment and entertainment. They also spent longer hours.

5.4 Recommendations

First the study recommended that students strive to use social media more constructively, especially academic, work, besides being careful not to use the non-standard language and other informal derivatives thereof in class. Educators should create awareness among students to adopt more standard language use on social media and be wary of overuse of the informal. More studies should be done on a different population, at higher levels of learning.

The study recommends that the Policy makers to collaborate with social media platform developers to look in to initiating content that would control the key areas that affect students formal language competencies including writing ,speaking and reading skills .

The study further recommends that the social media Practitioners (especially students) be monitored by their educators in terms of time spent on social media in relation to the culture of users modifying formal language words and phrases.

The researcher recommends more studies to be undertaken with keen observation in the field of formal language competencies on different levels of learners and groups probably those in higher levels and even educators and trainers who are involved in imparting knowledge based on language meant for formal communication; this will assist in buying their views and experiences concerning different ways of language use on social media by different levels of learners

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

This study recommends further studies on the impact of social media on the development of cross-cultural communication skills among East African students, strategies for integrating social media into classroom education, and college students' understanding of digital citizenship and digital literacy.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Respondents,

RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

I am a Masters student at the University of Nairobi, school of Journalism and Mass

Communication. I am writing to seek your consent to participate as a respondent in a research I am conducting towards the fulfilment of an award of Masters' degree from the University of Nairobi. My research is on *Effects of Social Media on University students Language competencies at Daystar University Main Campus, Nairobi County*.

I will collect data using focus group discussions, Survey and key informant interview where upon acceptance, you will participate in either. The research is intended to benefit students in developing the ability to apply the knowledge of using formal language in academic works during the process of learning.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further information, contact me at:

Sarah NasimiyuNalyanya

Tel: 0725383519

Email: mabanja@student.uonbi.ac.ke

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and tick in the appropriate column the response to

each items as follows:

- Ø **STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD)**
- Ø **DISAGREE (D)**
- Ø **NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE (NDNA)**
- Ø **AGREE (A)**
- Ø **STRONGLY AGREE (SA)**

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	NAND	A	SA
	Students use of social media platforms					
1	I use social media platforms for watching movies and listen to music					
2	I use social media platforms to interact with friends and family					
3	I use social media platforms to browse educational material and activities					
4	I use social media platforms for gaming					
5	I use social media platforms for learning and for my school assignments					
6	Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on entertainment and social interactions					
7	Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on academic learning and research					
8	Most of the time I spend on social media platform is spent on English language learning and research					

	Students language use on social media platforms					
6	Student's use of language is based on different social media platforms they interact on.					
7	Students prefer using modified English language words and phrases to fit in to their conversations on different social media platforms.					
8	Social media platforms create room for individual students to learn new modified words and phrases for informal and formal interactions.					
9	Language used on social media platforms for informal interaction interferes with my formal English language competency					
10	I derive most of the terms I use in my communication from social media platforms.					
	Social media platforms and students language use					
11	Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language reading skills					
12	Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language writing skills					
13	Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language speaking skills					
14	Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language comprehension skills					

15	Using social media platforms has helped me improve my English language expression skills					
16	The use of social media platforms increases learning motivation, both in formal and informal contexts.					

APPENDIX III: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Students use of social media platforms

1. For how long have you been a lecturer of English or other Language related units?
2. How would you describe the students' use of social media platforms like Facebook, twitter, instagram e.t.c?
3. How would you describe the different types of activities that students engage in, on social media platforms?

Language used by students on social media platforms

- i) How would you perceive students' use of language on different social media platforms?
- ii) According to you, would you say there are different forms of English language that students use on social media platforms?
- ii) What do you think would be the motivating factors that lead students to use their preferred forms of language on social media platforms?
- iv) Would you say students have the ability to differentiate between formal and informal language use on social media platforms.
- v) Would there be chances that student's use of different forms of English language has an impact on their formal language competencies

Effects of social media use on students language competencies

- i) As a language expert, what would you say about the relationship between language used on social media and its effect on student's English language competencies?
- ii) What would you say about the short forms of English language used on social media platforms by students?

iii) What do you think would be the risks of students using short forms of English language on social media platforms?

iv) Do you think the use of social media platforms by university students have any effects on students' reading and writing skills?

v) Would you recommend the use of social media platforms by students for improving their writing, speaking and reading skills?

vi) Do you think the use of social media strengthens the language competencies of university students?

APPENDIX IV: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part A: Usage of social media platforms by students

- i) What are your main uses of social media platforms?
- ii) Are there specific activities that you engage in on different social media platforms?
- iii) Are you influenced by other social media platform users to engage in some specific social activities?
- iv) Have you lured friends or others to engage in different activities you relate with on social media platforms?
- v) Does the use of social media platforms dictate how you interact with others on different social media platforms?

Part B: language use of students on social media platforms

- i) Which language do you prefer using on social media platforms? formal or informal
- ii) How much time do you spend on your preferred social media platform?
- iii) Do you use modified English words and phrases created by you or by others on social media platforms?
- iv) Are there social media platforms that motivate you to use certain English words and phrases during interaction?

Effects of social media use on students Language

- i) Do you find yourself using modified words and phrases used on social media platforms in your formal communication like class assignments?
- ii) Does your social interactions on different social media platforms affect your different use of English words and phrases?

- iii). Are you keen on using formal English words and phrases in your academic assignments without integrating modified English words and phrases used on social media platforms?
- iv) Do you think interacting on different social media platforms affect the way you use English language in learning?

APPENDIX : WORK PLAN

ACTIVITY	DURATION
Concept note Writing	October November 2019
First Meeting with supervisor	February 2020
Background research and identifying research problem	February 2020
Objectives and significant of the study	March 2020
Scope and limitation of the study	Mid-march 2020
Literature review	By end of march 2020
Theoretical Framework and completion of chapter 1& 2	By Early April 2020
Meeting with the supervisor over chapter 1 & 2	The last week of April 2020
Methodology	Early June 2020
Meeting the supervisor over chapter 1,2& 3	Mid June 2020
Preliminary pages of the proposal	Last week of June 2020
Meeting the supervisor over the whole proposal document	Last week of June
Proposal Defence	Third week of August 2021
Implementing the correction from the defence	September 2020
Meeting with the supervisor for corrections in chapter one	First week of October
Implementing more corrections on chapter 1, 2 & 3	November & December 2020
Meeting with the supervisor for final corrections and more guide	Third week of January2021
Processing the field work documentations and certificate	March 2021
Data collection and Analysis with the supervisors guide	September & October 2021
Editing proof reading	October & November 2021
Project Defence	November 2021

APPENDIX VI BUDGET PLAN

ITEM	ESTIMATED COST IN KSH
Books	12,000
Printing and binding	20, 000
Internet expenses	15,000
Research logbook	2,000
Miscellaneous	5,000
Total cash	Total KSH 54, 500