

# QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: WRITING SKILL IN SOCIAL NETWORK DISINTEGRATE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the impact of interacting on social network (Twitter) which disintegrates students' English language proficiency in terms of their writing skills. 30 undergraduate students from the English Language and Literature Department by the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences are required to answer 10 questions which divided into two parts. The researcher predicted that most of the respondents realize and admit that interacting on Twitter dilapidate their language proficiency especially on their writing skills. However, some of the respondents disagree with this and say that interacting on Twitter does not affect their writing skills and language proficiency. This research can be improve in the future as the mixed results of this study suggest that the researcher need to know more about language proficiency and the effect of social network on students' writing skills.*

**Keywords:** *social network, English proficiency, writing skill*

## INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first century technologies have become the tools that enable us to easily spread our plans and notions using the medium of Internet in both written and video blogging. Meanwhile, the earlier generations before us have the opportunity to spread their ideas in somehow different ways; using telegram and letter, nothing has altered about how and why humans be in touch, only the means we deliberate it. The growth of Phatic Communication firstly through short messaging service (SMS) and later on through Social Networking sites is shifting our language and how we correspond with each other both implicit and real world. Phatic Communication is a type of communication that is also known as social lubricant, as mentioned by Boxer, D. (2002), "Phatic communication, or small talk, is an important social lubricant." In the words of Erving Goffman, "The gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all." However, these little talks soon lead the speakers or writers of any language to shorten up every single word and conversation in their writings. Later on, this is the problem that most of the students in college level facing in their lives now. The communication that they use in their social network and phatic conversation get carried away and affected their writings.

As for college students in general, IIUM students in specific, these means of communications may have deteriorated their English language proficiency. This study focuses on the disintegration of English writing skill among IIUM students due to the usage of social networking. According to Oxford Dictionary, proficiency means a high degree of skill or expertise. As for university students that using English as the medium, their level of proficiency should be up to the standard where if not same as native speakers, it would be almost on the same level. However, language that being used in writing on the social networking; twitter for instant, may or may have not affected their level of

proficiency. Twitter is the most widely signed up social network by the university students as their main tools of communication. Due to the limit of word that can be used in every post, students may have shortened their writing and drop some of the linguistics elements, regardless of the grammatical aspect or spelling. This habit later on would be depicted in their writings in class or when they have to write properly, as expected on how university students would write.

The objective of this study is to determine whether social networking is the cause of disintegration on the English proficiency among IIUM students. This study will look at two dimension of their writing style and compare it; the first one is their writing in social network and the second one is through their academic writing. The second objective of this study is to determine the degree of influence from this particular social network (Twitter) on IIUM students writing. This objective will able to determine how influential the social network in the students' writing.

In relation to this research, this paper will answer two main questions that are going to be used in the findings. The questions are:

- What are the causes that contribute to the disintegration of English language in IIUM students' writing?
- How influential this social network affecting IIUM students' writing?

By understanding the causes that led to the disintegration of IIUM students in English language, mainly focuses on their writing skills, it hopes to provide a mean for teachers and students to overcome the problems in writing.

In this fast pace era, people are prone to choose things that can be done in an instant and mostly people can access information on the tips of their finger. Therefore, everyone indirectly follows this trend by joining and becoming part of the medium. As for social network, Twitter for instant, most people sign up for it because they know they will be able to obtain instant information about what is happening around the world. Not only within their society, but they are also able to retrieve information globally. With the beginning of rapid and more differed communications conduits by means of social media and social networks, English has acclimatized extremely well. Not only are English speakers and writers producing and accepting new structures and level of the language, but it may be that acronyms such as LOL or BFF became part of other languages.

However, the language used in this social network might somehow affect students writing skills in their real life. Virtually, everyone would just express their thought while consciously or sub-consciously disregarding the pragmatics and syntax of their sentences, but when it comes to academic writing, thorough analysis and concern is required to ensure the content of the paper reliable. All these acronyms and short form words have taken toll on the students' real life. According to Budra. P. (2010). "The words 'a lot' have become one word, for everyone, as far as I can tell. 'Definitely' is always spelled with an 'a' - 'definatly'." This is the obvious effect that can be seen in Simon Fraser University students when most of them are being exposed to social media too much. They have been depending to communicate through this medium and subconsciously, the language used in the social media has affected their academic writing. In addition, the error of spelling is not the only branch of academic writing that has been affected.

In other findings, the negative impact of too much exposure and time expenditure as well has affected the students of Waterloo University in their English writing proficiency. In a study conducted towards their third year students of English, thirty percent of the students who are admitted are not able to pass the test even at a very minimum level. Barret (2010) explained that they would certainly like that number to be a lot lower. University level of students who are not forget to be mentioned are the native speakers of English would have done better in their writing since they have been using the language as their mother tongue. On the other hand, the influence of social media and the language that have been used while interacting on the internet has affected their writing very much in real life.

Other study that has been found concluded that what have been written in the social media are exactly the same as what the writers would use in their actual conversation. However, in regard to the scarce of space provided in the Twitter for instant, has forced users especially student to have altered their sentence and neglected a few grammatical rules. As mentioned by McLuhan (n.d). "The ' content' of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print."

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The main purpose of this study is to find out how students of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science (KIRKHS), English Department (BENL); language in term of writing skill has been affected by the use of social media which is Twitter. Data for this research were collected through a set of questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to 30 BENL students. It was held at classrooms after they finished their class. The sample that has been chosen was 30 BENL students; 15 female and 15male students. They were chosen because they are recognized to have use English as their medium of communication even in social network.

### **Material**

The participants were given 10 questions and they had to answer the questions according to their preferences. The questions consist both of close and open ended. On the open ended questions, participants need to justify on the language used on Twitter. They were given the questions and no time recorded on how long they have taken to answer all the questions. The questions were based on their preferences on social network and how many hours have been spent on social network. Apart from that, there was also questions regarding on grammar and using short form when they are on social network (Twitter).

### **Findings**

For data analysis, the raw data was entered into computer by using spreadsheet software which is Microsoft Office Excel. The results were then transformed into charts like bar graph, pie chart and column graph. It is easier to analyse data in visual form as it is more readable.

**Figure 1: Daily average time spent on Twitter**

## Hours spent on Twitter

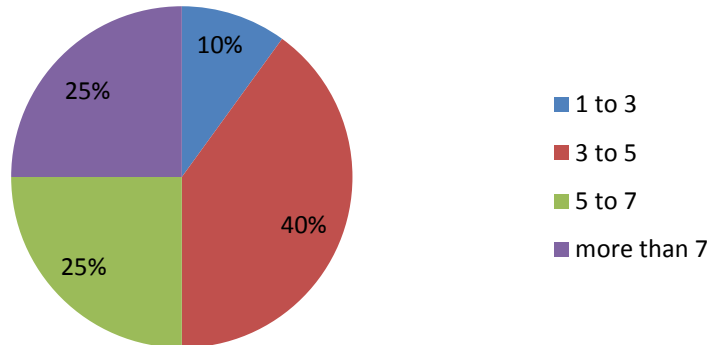


Figure 1 shows the proportion of time spent on Twitter in a day. It is obvious that majority of the students which is 40 percent, spent about three to five hours in a day for Twitter. Besides, 25 percent of the respondents are spending their time on Twitter in five to seven hours in a day and another 25 percent respondents spent more than seven hours of their time on Twitter. Meanwhile, only 10 percent of the students spent one to three hours on Twitter.

**Figure 2: Average of the respondents using short form**

## Using short form

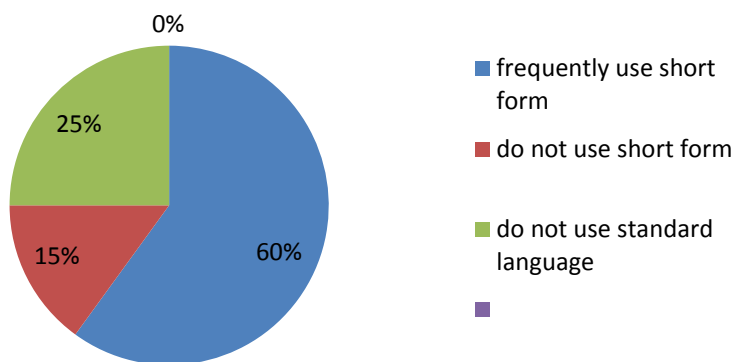


Figure 2 displays the students' attitude when writing or posting status and sharing ideas on Twitter. Up to more than half of the students admitted that they frequently using short form when interacting on Twitter (60 percent). On the other hands, 23 percent of the students do not even use standards English language when they are interacting. Only 15 percent of the students do not use short form and writing in standards English language.

**Figure 3: Average students use correct grammar when interacting using correct grammar**

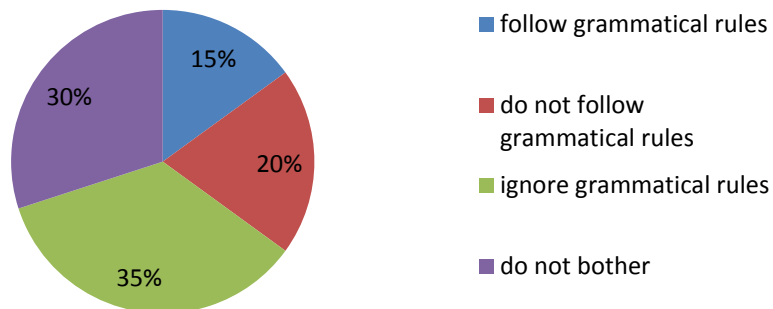


Figure 3 demonstrates the students' perceptions when interacting on Twitter using the correct grammar. There is a marked difference between students who really fond in language and follow all the rules and students who just enjoy interacting without really bother on the language manner. About 60-65 percent of the students have the same perceptions that language do not really matter when interacting on social network. Meanwhile, another 20 percent regard the matter of grammar as important but they do not follow the rules. Only 15 percent out of the 20 students really follow the grammatical rules.

**Figure 4: Opinion on Twitter and language**

### Twitter affecting language: writing

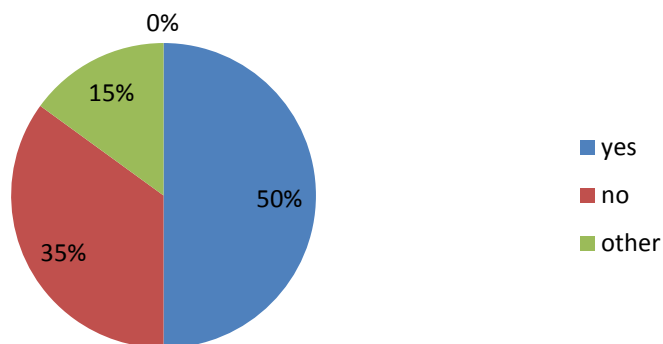


Figure 4 presents the students' view on whether interacting on Twitter affects them in their language proficiency especially in writing skill. This result indicates majority of the respondent which is about 50 percent, felt that interacting on Twitter really affects them in their writing skill. Yet, only 35 percent of the participants felt that interacting on Twitter does not affect them in their writing skill. On the other hands, 15 percent of the students do not think that it is relevant to relate interacting on Twitter and writing skill.

## **DISCUSSION**

As mentioned by Barret (2010), he explained that university level of students who are not forget to be mentioned are the native speakers of English would have done better in their writing since they have been using the language as their mother tongue. On the other hand, the influence of social media and the language that have been used while interacting on the internet has affected their writing very much in real life.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the interaction on Twitter has affected students' English proficiency and writing skill. According to the result of the study that has been conducted and based on the questionnaire that were given to 30 students of KIRKHS, English Department; the answers from the respondents shows that interacting on Twitter really has affected the mechanical aspects in their writing skills.

From the Figure 1, responds from the students have answered the question of how many hours has been spent on Twitter. This is very crucial for this research as the time spent by the students would significantly show how long they interact with other people on Twitter and abuse the language. However, from the 30 students, majority of them with 40 percent would have spent about 3-5hours in a day on Twitter. This might seem a little amount of times but after calculated with the time that they have spent on sleep, study, and eat, 3-5 hours is actually quite significant in number. Having this amount of time to be spent interacting on Twitter every day, their writing skill would have been deteriorated in time. Apart from that, the number of respondents that have been spending more than 7 hours in a day on Twitter is quite significant. It is recorded that about 25 percent of the respondent spend more than 7 hours of their time interacting on Twitter. Perhaps, this resulted due to some of the population of the respondents that are using smart phones. Therefore, due to easy access to the website, they would have spent more time on Twitter.

Meanwhile in figure 2, the students have responded on the question regarding using short form when they are interacting. Majority of the respondents with 60 percent of the sample admitted that they use short form most of the time when interacting on Twitter. This is due to the limitation of words that can be used when they want to post or update in the space provided. Therefore, the respondents must be creative enough to limit their words by using short form so that they are able to say everything in one post. Only respondents with 15 percent of the sample do not use short form as according to them, they do not mind posting many tweets as long as they do not abuse the language.

In figure 3, majority of the samples, about 60-65 percent does not follow grammatical rules and they could not be bothered about the rules at all. Most of them barely regard grammar as part of the language as they are interacting using social network and no one would have care. They just expressing and interacting using their own grammar rules, as long as the other party would understand what they are trying to say.

Lastly, in figure 4, this is the responds from the sample regarding their opinion on how Twitter affecting their writing skill. Majority with 50 percent of the sample agree that their writing in Twitter have affected their writing skill in real life. According to the reasons given, they said that due to lots of time have been spent on Twitter; their language has deteriorated because mostly people on social network do not use standard language. This somehow may have affected them as well. Only percentage with 35 of the sample that said

Twitter does not affect their writing skill in real life. This is because regardless of social network or academic writing, they still use standard language.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study provide some interesting approach into the impact of interacting on social network on the proficiency of English in writing skills among BENL undergraduate students. Contrary to what the researcher predicted, interacting on Twitter does not affecting or deteriorating students' English proficiency. This is because according to the, regardless of the medium that they are interacting, they are still using the standard language and not all of them disregard grammar or correct sentence structure. Therefore, deteriorating English proficiency cannot be associated with the usage of social network among the BENL students. As mentioned by Budra. P. (2010), "The words 'a lot' have become one word, for everyone, as far as I can tell 'Definitely' is always spelled with an 'a' - 'definitely'." He purposes that this is due to the excessive exposure of social network. However, this study has shown a contrast result. Findings in this research may later change the perception of some people that excessive exposure and usage of social network may lead to disintegration of English proficiency in writing skills among university students. The mixed results of this study suggest that researcher have to be careful in making the analysis and learn more about language proficiency in relation with social network in the future.

## APPENDIX

Social Networking Sites: Medium of Communication Online and Its Effects on Student's Language Proficiency (Writing)

This questionnaire is a part of the research for a research related to social networking in educational sector. The results of this survey will be used for academic purposes only. The survey is anonymous and does not require any personal details to be submitted.

Aggregated research data will be available for you upon survey completion.

The research team greatly appreciates your help and support with this research and thank you for your valuable contribution.

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Directions: Please provide the information needed by placing a check (√) on the space provided before each item.

Kuliyah:

1. Gender:

( ) Male ( ) Female

2. Age: 19-22 ( )

23-26 ( )

27-30 ( )

3. Year of study

1<sup>st</sup> year ( )

2<sup>nd</sup> year ( )

3<sup>rd</sup> year ( )

4. Multi media used in Communication Online:

- ( ) Computer
- ( ) Mobile Phone
- ( ) Others please specify\_\_\_\_\_

5. Account(s) on Social Networking Sites:

- ( ) Facebook ( ) Friendster
- ( ) MySpace ( ) LinkedIn
- ( ) Twitter ( ) Others \_\_\_\_\_

6. Hour(s) spent in Surfing these Social Networking Sites: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Reason(s) for Signing Up to these kinds of sites:

- ( ) Reaching out your far distant relatives and friends
- ( ) Current Trend
- ( ) Acquire new Friends or Gain new Acquaintances
- ( ) Improve language proficiency

8. Do you use short form in writing in social network?

- Yes ( ) No ( )  
Justify your answer.....

9. Do you use correct grammar when writing in social network? Justify your answer.

- Yes because.....  
No because.....  
Other .....

10. Do you think that twitter is affecting your language in writing?

- Yes because.....  
No because.....  
Other .....

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