



MOBILE TELEPHONY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON FORMAL WRITING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LUSHOTO DISTRICT OF TANZANIA

Abstract

Learning English as a second language in Tanzania comes with its peculiar challenges as the nation is strewn with hundreds of indigenous languages which serve as mother tongue or first languages (L1) of the majority of the populace. Competence in writing skill is an essential measure of students' competence in English language in Tanzania and beyond. However, studies have revealed that learners are performing poorly in written English especially in grammar. The study sought to explore features of mobile phone usage that may influence learners' written English in Lushoto District of Tanzania. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data collection instruments included a self-administered questionnaire for students and teachers of English language and a composition essay test administered to the students of forms 3 and 4. Students were sampled using proportional random sampling to include both boys and girls while teachers of English language were sampled using purposive sampling. Data was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme which produced statistical measures such as frequency, means, percentages and standard deviation. The different means were then subjected to a T-test which determined the level of significance of how students used mobile phones. The study found that 43% of the students in Lushoto District accessed and utilized mobile phones everyday each day. These constituted 60% of the student respondents. The most frequently used mobile phone feature was Facebook, at 96%; the Whatsapp at 89% and SMS with (60%), while twitter was the least used feature among the students. The study further established that the use of mobile applications negatively influenced learners' performance in spelling and punctuation but influenced vocabulary positively. The study recommends the intervention of teachers and parents to regulate the adoption of writing forms used in social media and encourage learners to use the mobile phone to learn formal English grammar and spellings.

Keywords: writing skills, Second language learning (SLL), technology

Introduction

Mobile Phones have become indispensable tools in learners' communication pattern. Learners especially those in secondary schools, have been attracted to this device and use it for personal and language learning purposes. Language learning is fundamentally a socio-cultural experience (Kannan & Munday, 2018). Recently, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) integration and applications have shaped how language is taught and learned in schools around the globe. The adoption of new technologies in the 21st century has also added a social dimension to ICT that allows for what is termed Networked Learning (NL) (Kannan & Munday, 2018). This has resulted in a revitalization of previous learning frameworks provided by Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Through the use of Networked Learning, learners of English have been empowered to connect globally, access resources openly, and self-regulate their learning processes. As a result, emerging trends are now utilizing these enhanced dimensions of learning with varied results.

To begin with, new technologies have allowed for adaptability, enabling learners to be autonomous, self-paced, and unconstrained by the traditional curriculum. Secondly, networked learning capabilities have shown potential for language learning in community settings. Thirdly, Open Educational Resources have paved the way for distributed expertise and have modified the role of the instructor. Lastly, the rising pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence tools that use Natural Language Processing (NLP) or Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) is altering how a second language can be taught and learned.

In many counties, blended learning has been adopted through which teachers combine digital media with more traditional forms of teaching thus combining face-to-face teaching and online lessons (Chong, 2018). Nevertheless, the ubiquitous availability of mobile phones has borne Mobile learning since online resources are accessible with a mobile app or mobile-friendly versions. For instance, word able app turns vocabulary-learning into a fun, competitive game that students can play with their friends. It has built-in, spaced repetition and active-recall learning to make new words.

Learning English as a second language in Tanzania comes with its peculiar challenges as the nation is strewn with hundreds of indigenous languages which serve as mother tongue or first languages (L1) of the majority of the populace. As a result, these languages may interfere to produce unusual or an appropriate word, in the learning process. Consequently, teaching English as a second language in Tanzania is fast becoming an arduous task as it is almost impossible to established theories of second language learning and impact on learners without encountering or having to deal with learners' self-imposed and deep-rooted mistakes which are gradually taking the place of the rules and grammar of the English language (Dozie & Ojilere 2019). According to Boraie (2020) there are eight current trends in the teaching of English as a foreign language in schools. These include: i) Change in the Goal of Teaching English where the goal of teaching English is to produce fully competent English-knowing bilinguals rather than imitation native speakers. The goal of learning English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn content such as science and mathematics, hence the integrated approach where the English teacher uses cross-curricular content and so the students learn both the content and English. ii) Early Start in Teaching English; iii) Change in the Approach to Teaching Culture to focus less on culture of native speakers and more on local and international culture; iv) Changing View of an English Teacher in terms of the teacher's linguistic, teaching, and intercultural competence; v) Change in Teaching Content and Test Design where teachers use a range of local texts or English translations of literature in the classroom; vi) adoption of E-Learning; vii) Strategic Teaching and Learning to foster student thinking as well as language content, outcomes, and learning activities; and viii) Teachers as Life-Long Learners so that, in a knowledge-based society teachers remain competitive through continuous professional development . Despite these existing trends, the situation in Tanzania presents several challenges that are pertinent in the use of English language in schools. According to Brock-Utne, Desai, Pitman & Qorro (2010) teaching and learning is more effective when mother tongue is used as medium of instruction. There is mismatch between language in the class and the language in the actual use of learned skills in society. Tanzanians learn via English, but the immediate environment out of school does not provide opportunity for practising the language. Moreover, when students complete their studies and work in different Tanzania companies or offices, the dominant language is Kiswahili because the clients to whom they provide services are Swahili speakers in most cases. This state of affairs impacts heavily, not just on the attitude of students towards

learning of English language, but also on their acceptance of the new approaches to the teaching and learning of the language (Lupogo, 2014). Hence, the effectiveness of the approaches to the learning of English language becomes a matter of concern as is envisaged in the present study. Writing as an essential skill in second language learning is undoubtedly a complicated process particularly for second language learners as it requires great skills which involve mastery of the rules of the language to perfect the art. However, there has been a different in the use of the grammar of the English language which has resulted in the decline in writing skill. Second language acquisition theory provides a platform for second language learning to progress by reiterating the need to consciously learn and relearn the rudiments of the target language, in order to enhance fluency (Bozkurt, 2015). This can only be achieved if learners make conscious efforts to master the rules governing the use and application of the language. However, teachers need to take up the challenge of teaching the right thing, the right way and focusing particularly on ways to try to unteach that which has been wrongly learned by learners. In this regard, teachers need to adopt instructional strategies that ensure the progressive achievement of proficiency (Belal, 2014).

Objective of the Study

The study sought to explore features of mobile phone that may influence learners' written English among secondary school students in Lushoto District of Tanzania.

Theoretical framework

The research is founded on two theoretical frameworks and they are: The Word Formation Theory and The Theory of Second Language acquisition. The word formation theory advanced by Yule (1985) emphasized the processes by which new words come into existence in a language and enhanced to fulfil the purpose for which they are formed. According Yule, word formation does not solely mean the creation of entirely new terms or words but also applies to already existing terms whose meanings were not readily acceptable at one time but which have been extended and modified to vary in meaning and interpretation and subsequently gained acceptance. The primary concern of the word formation theory advocated by Yule does not aim to denigrate a language but in keeping with the gradual directional change to meet the communicative needs of language users. Hence Yule made the following taxonomy of word

formation processes and each having a deep and abiding rule – “Coinage, Borrowing, Compounding, Blending, Clipping, Backformation, Conversion, Acronyms and Derivation”. The paradigm therefore is such that any attempt at word formation that does not align or identify with Yule’s 1985 classification which captures in detail the origin and composition of various new terms not only makes a mockery of the theory of word formation but amounts to gross meaninglessness. The theory of second language acquisition provided by Krashen (1987) accounts for the basics of second language (L2) learning which involves several intermediate stages unlike the first language (L1) which is believed to be subconsciously acquired by virtue of the natural and informal platforms upon which it thrives. Krashen’s theory noted that second language learning is not quite as seamless as first language acquisition as it requires great effort to achieve learning and mastery of the target language more so as there is an already existing language in the learner’s repertoire which may at one point or the other interface. Krashen tried to delineate language acquisition as a natural exercise which does not entail detailed and deliberate application of grammatical codes and rules but more of an innate disposition to grasp that which occurs around one. On the other hand, the theory defined language learning as a conscious exercise geared towards comprehension of the rules of a target language with a view to appreciating the fundamentals of the language. Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition comprises five key hypotheses and they include – “the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis”. The model thus postulates that second language acquisition involves the onerous task of sequential, systematic and conscious learning and relearning as well as mastery of the nitty-gritty, function, use, rules, applications, grammar, etc of the target language which is largely dependent on correction aimed at enhancing proficiency in second language learning and use. It therefore follows that experimenting with ideas, practices, variants or even forms which are not in tandem with Krashen’s 1987 renowned theory of second language acquisition only defeats the aim of language learning which is competence.

Literature review

Mobile technologies allow an increasingly diffuse array of interactions, extending the reach and accessibility of educational offerings to more students. The computer is now the primary medium to deliver content and interaction effectively across all channels, particularly the possibilities coming online. Are wide with social networking (Umachandran, et.al., 2016). Web based

learning environments have great potential to support student-centred learning as they are flexible, interactive, and resource-rich in nature (Coman, et.al. 2020). Unfortunately, although web-based learning environments have unlimited prospects for educational use, they do however have some drawbacks - namely the implementation problems and challenges that are confronted when it comes to meeting all students' instructional needs (Ismail,et.al. 2018). As second language learners and teachers, learning and teaching English the correct way has been the focus of several studies particularly as language is believed to be dynamic. The implication is that the language is subject to forms of modifications/change and learners are likely to blunder especially when the inappropriate forms are deployed for academic and formal purposes (Kern 2014).

Miles (2013) explored the effects of social media on language indicating that social media has tremendously changed the manner we relate with one another. The study noted that among other effects, social media has impacted positively in terms of: speeding up the rate of communication, encouraging creation and use of entirely new terms/ meanings which are informal, concise and often going contrary to the rules of grammar. However it is important to note that a huge downside to the study remains that these informal and new forms of language are moving into formal and academic writing as users are not able to draw a line between formality and informality as the case may be.

Similarly, Shaver (2013) analysed effects of social media on writing skills in the classroom and argued that social media can have positive and negative effects on writing skills and grammar which is largely dependent on the individual's formation and mind-set in the world of English grammar. Though the study noted from a pedagogic perspective that wrong use of grammar on social media can affect English language learners (ELL) whose first or native language is not English because learning a new language is problematic in itself and exposure to social media eccentricity only compounds the problem. The author stressed that a student who possesses a good grammar skill can only get better when exposed to social media while it may get worse for a student with poor grammar skills. Drawing from different circumstances, the study stated that while social media hinders thoughtfulness which can mar writing skills and grammar, it can also increase writing skills since social media permits interactions at will. The author concluded that

the issue of the positive and negative effects of social media on writing skills was still a grey area.

Kamnoetsin (2014) did a critical analysis of Facebook Impact on Collegiate EFL Students' English Writing in Thailand and noted that students' activity on social media was widespread and that has reflected in their use of English language. The study noted that the young adults, who were consistent users of the social media kind of language, produced worse formal writing than those who did not make a habit of this usage. The author pointed out some of the features of this usage to include; phonetic substitution, text language, abbreviations etc adopted to save time. In general, the research showed that social media idiosyncrasies pose a major threat to formal written English.

Similarly, Abbasova (2016) conducted a quantitative study aimed at exploring the impact of social networks on students' English language proficiency in Azerbaijan. The study primarily ascertained the positive and the negative effects of the use of social networks on the subjects' knowledge of the English language focusing on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as grammar and vocabulary. The study revealed that there were more areas of strength/positives in the use of social network on the subjects' use of English for instance vocabulary development, pronunciation, scanning ability. However, the study concluded that social networks impacted most negatively on their grammar and writing skill as their academic writings which is the medium for progress assessment on proficiency were riddled with odd jargon, shortened forms and spelling errors.

Also, Bouchikhi and Bouanani (2017) examined the impact of social media on students' academic writing in the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. The study focused on the negative effects of texting, use of informal expression as well as difference between texting and formal writing. Results of the study revealed that text language marked by spelling errors; grammatical blunders; capitalization imprecision; punctuation inaccuracy; irregular abbreviation/acronym use etc. pervaded the subjects' formal essays. Based on the

findings of the study, the authors concluded that text language was a terrible habit which affected the students' formal writing ability very negatively.

Regionally, Kardi (2018) evaluated the influence of social media on second language learners of the English language in Nigeria focusing particularly on the samples written English. The study reported that besides from the ease in informal communication, effortless dissemination of information and knowledge sharing which may be considered a benefit, social media has created immeasurable hazards in terms of formal writing. The author highlighted some of the glaringly visible errors in students' essays to include; use of abbreviations, hanging modifiers, spelling errors necessitated by consistent use of text language, construction of unacceptable structures etc. The study concluded that since English language learning requires feedback derivable from writing, examples from samples written work depict their inability to tell the appropriateness of one form or another as their essays were laden with self-acquired mistakes. While the present study will not examine written texts as feedback, per se, the study above does provide significant insights that are relevant to the present study.

In the same way, Abati (2016) reviewed social media and the English Language in Nigeria. The author enumerated a litany of a new kind of English being used and written by youths particularly on twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media platforms and aptly described these new forms as "meta-English". Abati noted that these new forms were already existing terms in English but its users had reduced them into meaningless abbreviations. The study concluded that the rise of a breed of young Nigerians who have no mastery of spellings, punctuations, tenses as a result of social media influence spell doom for use of English in schools.

Locally, Okoth (2014) sought to establish any influence of mobile phone technology on learners' classroom English grammar in day public secondary schools, in Nakuru North district and Nakuru Municipality. The study established that frequent access to the mobile phone correlated positively with learners' performance in English grammar. features that may improve learners'

performance in grammar included Google search, SMS, facebook and twitter. Teachers observed that Google search can improve learners' grammar whereas SMS and Facebook can enhance writing skills. The study recommended that curriculum developers should include teaching of SMS language in the syllabus and sites that can improve learners' language skills such as YouTube, WhatsApp, voice recorder, google search among others can be ventured.

These reviewed studies have shown that there is a fundamental problem in the Written English of second language learners which is attributed to social media influence and its result is poor articulation in the structure of formal sentences to say the least. However, while these studies dwelt primarily on the effects or impact of social media on English language learning particularly as it concerns writing, the present study extends its scope to ascertain the incidence of these emerging trends, record the frequency of use of these emerging trends, trace the possible causes of the use of these emerging trends, detail the effects of the use of these emerging trends as well as outline sustainable corrective measures to check the use of these emerging trends on formal/academic writing orthodoxy.

Methodology

This study was qualitative and analytic. The study was analytic to the extent in which the units of lexical and grammatical items will be evaluated based on their potential to display elements of new trends in language learning. The population that was targeted included the form three, and form four students, English Teachers and heads of school in secondary schools in Lushoto District in Tanzania. Five secondary schools were included in the study. A student questionnaire and a teachers' questionnaire, as well as a short composition were used to collect data. The primary data collected in this study was coded and tested for completeness and then analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics and presented using tables. The student's written text were analysed for lexical, grammatical and non-standard forms.

Results and Discussions

Learners' Access to Mobile Phones and Frequency of Usage

The students were asked to indicate whether they had ever used mobile phones and, using a given frequency range with a class size of 9; indicate the frequency with which they used the phone on a daily basis (in making/receiving a call, messaging or both). The frequency of daily usage per location of school was as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 1: Frequency of Mobile Phone Usage

Frequency of use		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Not at all	0	0	0.0	0
	1-10 times	6	12	12.0	12
	11-20 times	3	6	6.0	18
	21-30 times	18	36	36.0	54
	≤30 times	23	46	46.0	100
	Total 50	50	100	100.0	
Missing		0	0		
Total		50	100.0		

The findings in Table 1 show that highest percentage (46%) of the students in secondary schools in Lushoto District accessed and utilized mobile phones more than 30 times compared to a cumulative total of 18% who used their phones between 1 and 20 times; while 36% used their phones 21-30 times. The findings seem to confirm learners' access to mobile phones more easily from various sources including from friends, parents and relatives, with a good number of them equally being in possession of their own hand sets. Those who access from parents and relatives only do so under restrictions. This finding seems to corroborate the assertion by Ling, (2008) that learners have been attracted to this device because of its appealing nature especially to adolescents who constituted the majority of students in the study sample.

Popular mobile phone features among learners

The learners were asked to indicate the features of the mobile phone they enjoyed using and the frequency with which they used the features on the phones. The findings in this regard are presented in figure 1.

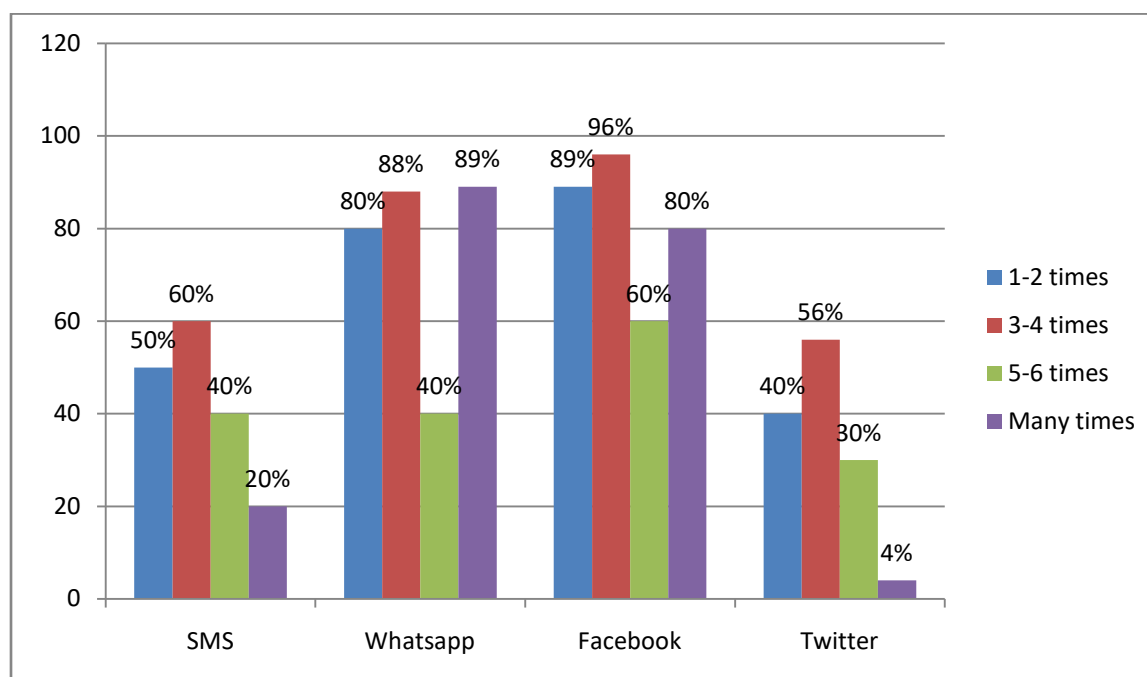


Figure 1: Preferred mobile phones features

Data shows the students' responses with regard to their preferences and frequency of use of features available on their mobile phones. Ninety six percent of the students indicated that they enjoyed using *Facebook* 3 -4 times a day; 89% used it 1-2 times; 60% used it 5-6 times; while 80% used it many times. This made Facebook the most popular site for the students. Whatsapp was the next most popular site with 89% using it many times; 88% using it 3-4 times; 80% using it 1-2 times, and 40% using it 5-6 times. The use of Short Message Service (SMS) was average with the majority (60%) using it 3-4 times; 50% using it 1-2 times; 40% using it 5-6 times; while only 20% used it many times. The Facebook emerged as the most frequently used mobile phone feature probably due to its popularity among young people across the various mobile service providers. Facebook's popularity was linked to its ease of use and instant exchange of information as well as the fun derived from its usage compared to the SMS. The respondents also indicated that it was easier to post photographic materials which they would not only store safely but also share with friends on the network. Making friends was also another reason for preference for the Facebook feature. Twitter was least popular, perhaps due to the nature of information exchanged through the service which is more of passage of important news than social issues that are common and popular among the learners.

Common grammatical mistakes made by students

The researcher further analysed and categorized the grammatical errors that were made by the students in their writing. This was meant to characterize these errors as spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence construction. The findings in this regard are presented in table 2.

Table 2: List of grammatical errors in CET

Grammatical aspect	Examples of errors	Standard form
Spelling	bcoz	Because
	wid	With
	pple	People
	frendz	Friends
	widin	Within
	dem	Them
	luk	Look

	Olduvai george	Gorge
	prefferr	Prefer
	happyness	Happiness
	toure	Tour
	Their must	There must
Sentence	...a chance to visit in your	A chance to go on your tour
construction	tour.	
	...I need a place where	..i need a peaceful and
	there peace and security	secure place
	I need to ask teacher when	I need to ask the teacher the
	there are thing....	things..
	When I go Serengeti,..i	When I go to Serengeti, I
	need to animals which are	need to see animals which
	attracting....	are attractive...
	I would lyk a good	I would like comfortable
	transport system that is to	transport to travel in, and a
	travel in a luxury bus and	good hotel to sleep in. it
	also the hotel dat I would	should good enough to
	go to sleep it should be	include air conditioning, a
	good enough which include	large bedroom and
	room dat have frequent air	luxurious sitting room.
	condition wiz a large	
	bedroom and wen comes to	
	the rest room it should be	
	luxurious	
	..i preffer to travel with ship	I prefer to travel by ship
	when am get a tour...	when I go to tour..
	All in all together about this	I need my teacher to
	tour I can needed to my	research well about this tour
	teacher to make a good	
	research...	

Punctuation	bagamoyo	Bagamoyo
	i	I
	Sentences without full stops	
Vocabulary	Helpment	Help
	roggage	Luggage
	Climate condition	Climatic condition

The data in table 2 shows four levels of errors that were found in student writing. With regard to the spelling aspect, students made outright spelling errors such as prefferr (Prefer) and happyness (Happiness) which indicated lack of knowledge of spelling; and direct borrowing from social media spelling forms such as frendz (Friends) and widin (Within). With regard to sentence construction, most sentences showed the students' lack of knowledge of syntactic rules in English. Moreover, the sentences showed a lack of knowledge of the use of lexical items. For instance, "When I go Serengeti,..i need to animals which are attracting..." clearly shows that the student lacks grammatical competence and cannot properly string together a meaningful sentence. While this was not the case for a few students, the majority in the sample displayed this problem. It can be deduced that spelling and sentence construction errors were predominant in the written compositions by the students in the sample. The cited excerpts allude to students who have not mastered the basic syntactic rules of communication in English. Moreover, it is evident that the sentence forms used are literal translations of mother tongue or Kiswahili. Spelling and punctuation may be attributed to the frequent interaction with the mobile phone, more so the frequent use of SMS service and Facebook, which are associated with shortening of English words and dropping of punctuation marks. There is a problem with capitalization such as "i", omission of commas and full stops.

Moreover, the study also identified abbreviated forms that are typical of forms used in social media and SMS communication. Table 3 shows some of these forms.

Table 3: word forms adopted from social media

Abbreviated form	Standard form
g9t	Good night
2be	To be
4us	For us
coz	Because
ō	Of
xo	So
n	And
wk	Week
2c	To see
b4	Before
@	at

Data presented in table 3 shows forms adopted from social media that were used by students in the writing. It can be noted that there are forms drawn from the keyboard of the mobile phone. These include “@” and “ō”. Also used in the writing are forms that combine letters and numerals which capture the sound patterns in the words they represent, for instance “2c” for “to see”; “b4” for “before”; “gd9t” “for good night”. These forms seem to be drawn from abbreviations that are typically used in mobile texting and have been adopted by students in their written work. The problem that emerges is the lack of awareness by students on the formal and informal contexts of use. It can be deduced that there is influence of mobile phone on learners’ grammar. This influence cascades into the students’ writing of extended texts signaling habitual use of these emerging forms of writing. Construction problems noted from the written composition suggest that students cannot differentiate between the informal written forms and the formal written forms. This finding corroborates the assertion by Amanda (2008) that cell phone texting has become an indispensable tool in learners’ communication pattern through sending text messages. The consequence has been a sharp rise in the use of mobile phone text forms in their formal written work.

Mobile Phone Features and Learners' Performance in English Grammar

The study further sought to identify the relationship between features of the mobile phones and learners' competence in written English. To achieve this, the learners' scores in the frequency of use of the SMS, facebook, whatsapp and twitter were correlated with their corresponding scores in sentence construction, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and layout of the CET using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis. The findings were as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mobile Phone Features and Learners' Performance in the Key Skill

		Sentence construction	Spelling	Vocabulary	Punctuation
SMS	SMS Pearson's (r)	.069	-.325**	.336**	-.147*
	p-Value	.341	.000	.000	.037
	Sample size	50	50	50	50
Whatsapp	SMS Pearson's (r)	.040	.058	.447**	-.036
	p-Value	.579	.420	.000	.641
	Sample size	50	50	50	50
Facebook	SMS Pearson's (r)	.465**	.085	.517**	-.462**
	p-Value	.000	.497	.000	.000
	Sample size	50	50	50	50
Twitter	SMS Pearson's (r)	.142*	-.052	.263**	-.369**
	p-Value	.048	.471	.000	.000
	Sample size	50	50	50	50

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The findings revealed that there were significant negative relationships between SMS use and learners performance in spelling ($r = -0.325$, $p = 0.000$) and punctuation ($r = -0.147$, $p = 0.037$), but significant positive relationships with vocabulary ($r = 0.336$, $p = 0.000$). There was a significant positive relationship between use of whatsapp and learners' scores in vocabulary ($r = 0.447$, $p = 0.000$), but the relationships between this mobile phone feature and learners performance in the other skill areas of English grammar remained insignificant. On the other hand, use of Facebook exhibited significant positive relationship with learners' scores in sentence

construction ($r=0.465$, $p=0.000$) and vocabulary ($r=0.517$, $p=0.000$), but a significant negative relationship with punctuation ($r= -0.462$, $p=0.000$). The relationship between Facebook use and learners' spelling scores was largely insignificant. Lastly, there were significant positive relationships between use of twitter and learners' performance in sentence construction ($r=0.142$, $p=0.048$) and vocabulary ($r=0.263$, $p=0.000$). The relationship between the use of twitter and learners' scores in punctuation was significant but negative, while that with spelling scores was insignificant. Overall, the data shows that there was a significant positive relationship between learners' interaction with the mobile phones features and their performance in CET with regard to sentence construction and vocabulary. This implied that performance in CET was directly related to the frequent use of the mobile phones by the students. However, a number of prior studies indicated that students who use text messaging on a frequent basis often use bad grammar, poor punctuation and improper abbreviation in academic writing. Teachers also indicated that students frequently used shortened words, improper capitalization, punctuation and characters like; &, \$ and @. Consequently, the findings imply that learners' skill in sentence construction was positively associated with frequent use of Facebook. Learners get to benefit from their friends' English grammar skills during conversations on social sites such as Facebook. This encourages them to sharpen their skills as they borrow from their friends, reinforced by the need to also show their prowess in English grammar if they are to be respected by their peers.

Conclusions

Majority of learners have access to mobile phone and use them for a range of purposes. The most frequently used mobile phone feature was Facebook followed by Whatsapp, while the least used feature by learners was twitter. The results also show that cell phone use, particularly text messaging, had a negative impact on students' writing skills. Student will write the wrong language if a text message will eventually destroy the Student's writing skills. As a result, the assignments and final reports written by the students were severely affected. In order to ensure the active use of mobile phones, appropriate instruction training should be conducted, to enable students to better use mobile phones.

The use of the various mobile phone features influence learners performance in Written English grammar both positively and negatively. Generally, frequent access to the mobile phone correlates positively with learner performance in English grammar, as noted from the differences

in learners' performance in CET which were statistically significant with a t-value of 5.775, $p=0.000$ at 192 degrees of freedom thus 99.9 level of confidence. Frequent access to mobile phone improves learners' sentence construction and vocabulary, while the seldom access to mobile phone was associated with the fewer mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

All the mobile phone features influence learners' performance in English vocabulary positively. Features that may improve learners' performance in sentence construction and layout are Facebook and twitter. However, these same features (Facebook and twitter) together with SMS affect learners' spelling and punctuation negatively if learners are not well guided

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- i. The study has shown that most learners have access to mobile phone and use mobile phone features for a range of purposes. While such access and usage has its advantages, it is incumbent upon the stakeholders in the education sector especially school administrators and teachers of English to carefully strike a balance between the positive and detrimental effects of such use and deliberately collaborate with parents to control the use of the mobile phone by learners to ensure that the standards of English language communication are not adversely affected.
- ii.
- iii. Further, it is recommended that caution must be exercised in encouraging learners to use the mobile phone features that have shown significant positive effects on certain elements of English grammar. This is because of the varied effects where the mobile phone features affect some elements of English grammar positively while affecting other elements negatively. If use of these features is not checked, learners are likely to get used to them so that they may no longer realize the need for Standard English constructions even in their formal communication phenomena.
- iv. Teachers should educate students on the negative and positive effects of mobile phone use in respect to their academic performance. This educational venture will help learners to avoid the features with detrimental effects on their performance and instead

concentrate on those that have potentials to boost their performance, whenever they get an opportunity to interact with mobile phones.

REFERENCES

Abbasova, M. (2016) *The Impact of Social Networks on the Students' English Language in Azerbaijan*. Conference: International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts: Volume: 3, Albena, Bulgaria

Bamgbose, G.A. (2018) *The effects of social media on the English language in Nigeria*. *The Nigerian Voice*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/265060/>

Belal, A. (2014) *Influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of tertiary level student*. Masters thesis, BRAC University.

Boonmoh, A. (2010) Teachers' use and knowledge of electronic dictionaries. *ABAC Journal*, 30(5), 56-74. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/1073806/Sharing_Successful_English_Teaching_Approaches_A_perspective_from_Thai_schools

Boraie, D. (2020) *8 Current Trends in Teaching and Learning EFL/ESL*, TESOL Leadership Blog. DOI <http://blog.tesol.org/8-current-trends-in-teaching-and-learning-eflesl/>

Brock-Utne, B., Desai, Z., Qorro, M. & Pitman, A. (2010) *Language of instruction in Tanzania and South Africa – highlights from a project*. Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Bouchikhi M. & Bouanani D. (2017) *The Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Writing in the Department of English at Tlemcen University*. Extended Master's Essay, University of Tlemcen.

Burns, N. and Grove, S. (2001) *The practice of nursing research: conduct, critique and utilization* (4th ed). W.B.Saunders: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Cavus, N. (2019) *The opinions of information technology students on using mobile learning*. In Proceedings of the International Conferences on Educational Sciences, Eastern Mediterranean University, Magosa, North Cyprus, 23–25 June 2018; Available online: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503539.pdf>

Chen, B., & Bryer, T. (2012) Investigating instructional strategies for using social media informal and informal learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 13(1), 87-100.

Chong, C.S. (2018) *Ten trends and innovations in English language teaching for 2018*. The British Council. Available online: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/ten-trends-innovations-english-language-teaching-2018>

Coman, C. Țiru, L. Mesesan S. Stanciu, C. Bularca, M. (2020) Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during the Coronavirus Pandemic: Students' Perspective. *Sustainability*. 12. 10367. 10.3390/su122410367.

Coady, J. (1993) Research on ESL/EFL vocabulary acquisition: Putting it in context. In T. Huckin, M. Haynes & J. Coady (Eds.), *Second language reading and vocabulary learning* (pp. 3-23). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Dozie, C. & Ojilere, I. (2019) Emerging Trends in English among Youths in Nigeria – An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*. 8. 70. 10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.8n.4p.70.

Espinosa, G. (2003). *Affection at school*. Paris: University Press of France.

Ismail M. , Sa'adan, N. , Samsudin, M, Hamzah, N. Razali, N. & I. Mahazir (2018) Implementation of the gamification concept using KAHOOT! Among TVET students: An observation. *Journal of Physics: Conference series*, Vol. 1140, IOP Publishing, Article 012013

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London Edward Arnold.

Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010) Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education? *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(4), 179-187

Kamnoetsin, T. (2014) *Social Media Use: A Critical Analysis of Facebook's Impact on Collegiate EFL Students' English Writing in Thailand*. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs), 2059

Kardi, E. (2018) *Influence of Social Media on Second Language Learners of the English Language in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the meeting of English Language Teachers' Association of Nigeria, Port-Harcourt.

Tilya, F. & Mafumiko, F. (2010) The compatibility between teaching methods and competence-based curriculum in Tanzania. *journal of the Faculty of Education*, University of Dar es Salaam, no. 29, p. 37-56

Umachandran, K. Corte, V. Periasamy, A. et al. (2019) *Designing Learning-Skills Towards Industry 4.0.* 11. 12-23. 10.18844/wjet.v11i2.4147.

Webb, S., & Chang, A.C.S. (2015) Second language vocabulary learning through extensive reading with audio support: How do frequency and distribution of occurrence affect learning? *Language Teaching Research*, 19(6), 667-686.

Yunus, M., & Salehi, H. (2012) The effectiveness of Facebook groups on teaching and improving writing: Students' perceptions. *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, 6(1), 87-96.

Yunus, M., Salehi, H., & Chenzi, C. (2012) Integrating social networking tools into ESL writing classroom: Strengths and weaknesses. *English Language Teaching*, 5(8), 42-48.

Zimmerman, C.B. (1997) Historical trends in second language vocabulary instruction. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second language vocabulary acquisition: A rationale for pedagogy* (pp. 5-19). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

