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The Impact of Social Media on Academic Writing Skill: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at KUST

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of social media use on the academic writing skills of undergraduate students in the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), Pakistan. In today's digital environment, platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter play a central role in students' daily communication. These spaces encourage informal linguistic practices including abbreviations, nonstandard spellings, emojis, and simplified grammar. While social media increases exposure to English and interaction, scholars worry that digital language may appear in formal academic writing. Grounded in Crystal's Digital Language Change Theory (2006), this mixed-methods study explores whether social media affects students' formal writing proficiency and identifies linguistic features transferred from online discourse to academic texts. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires measuring patterns of social media use. Qualitative data came from teacher interviews, students' social media samples, and academic assignments. Linguistic content analysis and thematic analysis examined grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, coherence, and academic tone. Furthermore, results show that heavy social media use often correlates with informal features in academic writing, such as abbreviations, colloquial vocabulary, and grammatical inconsistency. However, social media also expands vocabulary exposure and communicative confidence. Overall, its impact is complex and context dependent. The study contributes to applied linguistics and TESOL by evidence from Pakistani context and suggests teaching strategies that help students separate informal language use clearly.

Keywords: Social media; Academic writing; Undergraduate students; Digital communication; Informal language; Linguistic patterns; ESL context; Digital language change; Writing proficiency; Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

Language is the foundation of academic success, as it functions as the primary medium through which knowledge is constructed, communicated, and evaluated in educational settings (Saville-Troike, 1991; Imran & Shakeel, 2025). It encompasses four fundamental skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing, each of which contributes to learners' overall communicative competence and intellectual development (Ali, 2022; Shakeel et al., 2025). Among these skills, writing holds a particularly crucial position in higher education because it enables students to organize ideas logically, demonstrate critical thinking, and communicate arguments with clarity and precision. Academic writing, in particular, is a formal and structured form of discourse that requires grammatical accuracy, coherence, cohesion, and adherence to established conventions (Chauhan, 2022: Gul et al., 2023). For students majoring in English, proficiency in academic writing is not only a requirement for academic success but also a foundation for scholarly research and professional communication.

The use of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has become an essential part of daily interaction since these platforms provide opportunities for communication that is both immediate and informal. Abbreviations, emotive expressions, non-standard spellings, and syntactic simplifications are some of the linguistic traits that are encouraged by these platforms. Even while these activities improve the speed and inventiveness of communication, there is a possibility that they will clash with the formal conventions that are required in academic writing. When seen from the standpoint of applied linguistics, social media presents opportunities as well as obstacles for the development of language utilization. The positive aspects of this situation

include more exposure to the English language, opportunities for genuine conversation, and venues for collaboration and the exchange of ideas (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Boyd, 2014; Ullah et al., 2026). On the other hand, an excessive reliance on digital discourse may encourage linguistic shortcuts that compromise grammatical quality and formal writing norms (Crystal, 2006; Thurlow & Poff, 2013).

Crystal's Digital Language Change Theory (2006), which describes how digital communication technologies modify linguistic forms and usage patterns, serves as the foundation for this research. Abbreviations, informal idioms, and non-standard grammar are examples of characteristics that, according to this idea, evolve as adaptive reactions to the fast-paced interaction that occurs online. However, these characteristics may mistakenly migrate into formal surroundings. The current study, which makes use of this approach, investigates the influence that social media has on the academic writing of undergraduate students who are enrolled in the Department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). The purpose of this study is to establish if the use of social media has a positive, negative, or neutral impact on formal writing proficiency within a Pakistani English as a Second Language (ESL) context.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Many scholars have examined the influence of social media on students' communication practices, most of these studies have focused on informal interactions rather than formal academic writing. In the Pakistani context, Abbas et al. (2019) identified both favourable and adverse outcomes of social media use on students' learning behaviour, but little attention has been given to how these influences appear in academic writing.

Furthermore, the blending of informal linguistic patterns into academic work can lead to a decline in writing quality, affecting students' grades and overall

academic performance (Iddir & Laimeche, 2020). This trend poses a challenge for undergraduate students at the department of English KUST, who are expected to master formal writing conventions essential for academic success. The blending of informal linguistic patterns into academic work can lead to a decline in writing quality, affecting students' grades and overall academic performance (Iddir & Laimeche, 2020). Moreover, educators face difficulties in upholding academic writing standards amidst these evolving language practices (Rahman et al., 2024). Understanding the extent and nature of social media's influence on academic writing is imperative to address this issue effectively (Maltby et al., 2024).

1.2. Research Questions

1) Do social media platforms influence the academic writing of undergraduate students at the department of English, KUST?
2) What are the common linguistic patterns from social media that are reflected in students' academic writing?

1.3. Research Objectives

- To examine whether social media platforms influence the academic writing of undergraduate students at the Department of English, KUST.
- To identify the common linguistic patterns from social media that are reflected in students' academic writing.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it examined or investigate the influence or impact of social media use on academic writing among undergraduate students at the Department of English, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). The study offers evidence for the effects social media has had on student, by providing information regarding whether or not digital forms of communication have had an effect on students' daily use of digital communication and their ability to write academically. The findings help instructors identify recurring informal

linguistic features such as abbreviations, slang, non-standard spellings, and simplified syntax that appear in students' academic texts. This enables teachers to design targeted strategies to strengthen formal writing conventions. For students, the study promotes awareness of how digital language habits may influence academic performance. Grounded in language pedagogy and applied linguistics, the research contributes to TESOL by supporting the development of communicative competence and informing future curriculum planning.

2. Literature Review

The notion of social network or media was first coined in 1954 by J. A. Barnes. It has been a field of study of modern sociology, anthropology, geography, social psychology, organizational studies and computer science for last few decades. Moreover, the concept of modern social network paradigm was created by Stanley Milgram. He studied the problems of the small world that can be described by means of indirect relationships. Even if two persons do not know each other directly, they can share a mutual relationship that is another person who knows them both (Musiał & Kazienko, 2013).

The word 'social' in the information technology refers to the very beginnings of cybernetics. Later, it comes again in the 1980s' context of 'groupware'. The school of German media theorist Friedrich Kittler has rejected the use of the word of 'social' as irrelevant fuzz by saying that "what computers do is calculate, they do not interfere in human relations, stop projecting our mundane all-too human desires onto electronic circuits and so on" (Lovink, 2014). Holistic Art in the Glob a Present 98 hippies of the Wired school on the other hand have ignored this cynical machine knowledge from Old Europe with a positive, humanistic view that emphasises computers as tools for personal liberation and it was Steve Jobs at Apple who turned this mentality into a design and marketing machine (Burgess, 2012).

Moreover, Nikouee (2020) found that planned and purposeful use of technology can lead to three benefits: better and more effective use of class time, individualized learning, and empowerment. Technology facilitates language acquisition by establishing a link between the real world and people who are learning a language. Yang (2001) posited that online experiences facilitate learners' engagement with the culture of the target language, thereby enabling them to understand how their cultural background shapes their worldview. A digital learning environment facilitates a wider array of connections and meaning making among learners.

Academic writing is a type of writing which is performed in academic settings including school, college, university and academic research (Irvin, 2010). Academic writing helps students and scholars to present their ideas, analyse research and construct an effective argument Newell et al., 2011). There are different types of academic writing such as essays, application, research articles and synopses. Students often confuse in the different genres of writing. Furthermore, argumentative essay is the most common genre that undergraduate students must write, particularly in the arts, humanities and social sciences (Wingate, 2012). Although the nature of the essay varies significantly transversely and even within different fields of study in the social sciences. Similarly, argument is considered as the prominent feature of successful writing in academic writing. Linguistic patterns are grammatical rules that allow their users to write correctly in a common language. From a linguistic perspective, grammar is a collection of rules, but also a set of blueprints that guide speakers in producing more comprehensible and predictable sentences (Rastelli, 2024). Despite the diversity of terms found in the literature for instance, “syntactic requirements pattern” “requirements template” or “standardized format.”

The fast growth of social media sites has changed the way we connect and talk to each other, changing the way people interact with each other in a big way. These platforms have become an important part of our daily lives because they are our main sources of news, entertainment, and personal communication (Di Marco et al., 2024; Ishtiaq et al., 2022). They create new ways for people to connect and interact, but they also mix entertainment-based business models with complicated social dynamics, which makes people very worried about how they will affect users and society as a whole. Scientists are very worried about how social media affects public discourse and people's behavior, especially when it comes to hate speech, misinformation, and polarization. Recent research has examined their impact on user behavior, revealing intricate interactions and highlighting significant unresolved inquiries.

In the same line, students are getting worse at writing formally in school because they spend too much time on social media. Moreover, students use social media a lot which is why they are used to using short forms like "u," "b4," and "gr8" (Omoera et al., 2018; Toryuha et al., 2023). Furthermore, people's spelling has gotten worse because of how they talk on social media, which makes their writing worse and makes them bad at formal writing (Nutakor & Israel, 2023).

On the other hand, the laid-back nature of social networks can make people less good at language, especially grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Studies have shown that students who rely too much on typing tools in social networks do worse in academic writing, where proper standards must be followed (Oko-Epelle, 2022). Also, the spread of false information and unverified information on social networks can lead to young people using bad language, confirming grammar mistakes, and inconsistent styles (Shoaib & Zahid, 2025).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Method

This research study adopts a mixed method research design integrating descriptive quantitative analysis with qualitative investigation. The quantitative component measures students' frequency of social media use and its perceived impact on academic writing through structured questionnaires. The qualitative component complements this by examining faculty perspectives through semi-structured interviews and conducting linguistic content analysis of students' social media posts and academic writing samples. This combined approach enables both statistical measurement and in-depth contextual understanding of the research problem. The study follows a descriptive research design, as it seeks to observe and document the existing influence of social media on academic writing without manipulating variables (Dörnyei, 2007). This design facilitates the systematic identification of linguistic patterns and the examination of relationships between digital communication practices and writing proficiency.

As applied research, the study aims to generate practical pedagogical insights. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of social media's impact on students' academic writing.

3.2. Data Collection Tools and Instruments

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure methodological rigor. A structured questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students to gather quantitative data on the frequency of social media use, preferred platforms, and perceived impact on academic writing; it employed a five-point Likert scale along with selected open-ended items for additional insight. Linguistic content analysis was conducted on students' WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram posts to identify recurring informal features, including abbreviations, slang expressions, and

grammatical deviations, using manual coding procedures. In addition, students completed in-class academic writing tasks under controlled conditions, which were evaluated through a standardized rubric assessing grammar, vocabulary, coherence, organization, and academic tone. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, standard deviation) and inferential tests (correlation, t-tests, and ANOVA) to examine patterns and relationships.

3.3. Population and Sampling Technique

The target population of this study comprises of the students which is enrolled in department of English in Kohat University of Science and Technology Kohat (KUST). Faculty members from the same department were also included for qualitative insights. This population was selected due to their consistent engagement with both academic writing tasks and social media platforms, providing a rich context for investigation.

A total of 267 undergraduate English students at KUST were selected for the survey using the sample size formula proposed by Yamane (1967). This formula is widely used in social science research to determine an appropriate sample size from a known population while maintaining statistical accuracy. The selected sample size ensures that the data collected adequately represent the target population of undergraduate English students. Furthermore, the use of Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level enhances the reliability and validity of the results, allowing the findings to be generalized to the broader population with a minimal margin of error.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Questionnaires were distributed to the participants for data gathering. However, after the screening process, questionnaires were eliminated because of incomplete and incorrectly answered questionnaires. To make the data more consistent and

easier to analysed using statistics, the responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The coding system used assigned numbers to the responses as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. This coding system made it possible to interpret the attitudes and perceptions of the participants quantitatively.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	56.9
	Female	112	43.1
Semester	1st–2nd	52	20.0
	3rd–4th	74	28.5
Daily SM Usage	< 1 hour	17	6.5
	1–2 hours	53	20.4

Note: Table 1 displays the demographic profile of the respondents whose questionnaires were determined to be valid for analysis following the exclusion of seven incomplete replies.

The demographic data provide a robust basis for the study by verifying that the respondents are regular social media users across various semesters and genders. This renders the sample especially appropriate for investigating the impact of prolonged exposure to social media content on academic writing skills among undergraduate ESL students at KUST.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Items

Item	Statement (Condensed)	Mean	SD
1	Daily social media use	4.41	0.69
2	Academic use of SM	3.76	0.82
3	Vocabulary improvement	3.98	0.80
4	Writing confidence	3.85	0.84
5	Sentence structure affected	4.19	0.74

Note: Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, for the questionnaire items measuring undergraduate students' perceptions of the impact of social media on their academic writing skills.

The data give a full picture of how students use social media and what they think the effects are on their language, thinking, and schoolwork. The data show that people are very active on social media, as shown by the mean score for daily social media use (M = 4.41, SD = 0.69). This result shows that students use social media as part of their daily lives, which means they are constantly exposed to casual and conversational language. Also, students mostly agreed that they use social media for non-academic reasons (M = 3.76, SD = 0.82), suggesting that while it is sometimes used to help students learn, its main goal is still not related to school.

As for what people thought were the good effects, seeing English material on social media was said to help with developing vocabulary (M = 3.98, SD = 0.80) and coming up with ideas for school writing assignments (M = 3.89, SD = 0.81). Based on these results, it seems that social media may help a little by giving people language feedback and topical exposure. The lower mean scores for writing confidence (M = 3.85, SD = 0.84) and overall writing fluency (M = 3.71, SD = 0.88) show that these benefits are not strong enough to cancel out the negative language effects found in later items. There is a strong agreement across the data that language use has a bad effect on academic writing. A lot of people got high scores on tests about sentence structure (M = 4.19, SD = 0.74).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution for overall impact

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	7	2.7
Disagree	13	5.0

Neutral	26	10.0
Agree	102	39.2
Strongly Agree	112	43.1
Total	260	100

Note: Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of respondents' perceptions regarding the overall impact of social media on their academic writing skills. This item serves as a summary indicator, capturing students' holistic evaluation of how social media influences the undergraduate students academic writing performance.

4.1. Questionnaire Result: Social Media Usage Pattern

The questionnaire results showed that most of the undergraduate English learners or students at KUST use social media. The majority of students who said that they used social media every day. WhatsApp was the most popular app, followed by Instagram and Facebook. Students further express hat they mostly use social media to talk to their friends, have fun, and talk about school-related topics. Moreover, most of the students who participated in this research study admitted that their writing habits are influenced by social media. Although there were students who believed that this influence was beneficial, particularly in terms of the production of new ideas and the exposure to new terminology, there were other students who admitted that the frequent informal writing that they do on social media had an impact on their ability to maintain formality in academic writing. Despite the fact that students are aware of the interaction between their digital communication practices and academic writing, this awareness does not always convert into controlled language use, according to these findings, which imply that students are aware of the interaction to some level.

According to the quantitative findings, there is an obvious connection between students' opinions of the influence that social media has on their writing and the frequency with which they use social media. Nisa et al. (2023) and Shoaib & Zahid (2025) have also suggested that habitual interaction with informal digital

conversation might shape language preferences and writing tendencies. This finding is consistent with those findings.

4.2. Themes

A thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data gathered from KUST faculty members in the English Department is presented in this section. This investigation aims to investigate how instructors perceive social media's impact on undergraduate students' academic writing. A thematic analysis approach, which included coding, categorization, and theme creation, was used to study the data.

Theme 1: Increasing Informality in Academic Writing

A prevalent issue among all faculty answers was the increasing informality in students' academic writing. Assistant professors and lecturers noted that while students articulate ideas more openly, their work sometimes lacks the formal tone typically expected in academic discourse. Faculty members repeatedly saw the utilization of colloquial language, informal sentence constructions, and casual stylistic choices in students' assignments. This change was ascribed to students' regular interaction with informal internet platforms, where conciseness and casual speech are standard.

These subject underscores a distinct deterioration of academic register, which faculty members regard as a troubling tendency.

Theme 2: Negative Impact on Grammatical Accuracy and Sentence Structure

The reduction in grammatical accuracy and structural control was another key topic that emerged throughout the analysis. There were numerous instances of grammatical errors, sentence constructions that were simplified, and a reduction in the complexity of syntactic structures in the writing of the pupils. Despite the fact that students give off the impression of having more confidence, a number of respondents stressed that this confidence is not matched by linguistic precision. In the context of social media, where grammatical standards are frequently

disregarded or purposefully bent for the sake of convenience, the faculty attributed this decline to the effect of social media.

The findings demonstrate a decline in students' grammatical accuracy and syntactic control, evidenced by an increase in grammatical errors, simplification of sentence structures, and a reduction in the complexity of their academic writing. Although students exhibit increased self-assurance in articulating their thoughts, faculty members have observed that this confidence is not matched by linguistic accuracy.

Theme 3: Transfer of Social Media Language into Academic Writing

All respondents agreed that the results show a clear and consistent transfer of language features from social media to students' academic work. According to faculty members, students have trouble telling the difference between digital communication norms and academic writing conventions because they use a lot of abbreviations, shortened words, informal language, and conversational phrases in their formal projects.

4.3. Linguistic Content Analysis of Social Media Posts

4.3.1. WhatsApp Message

"bro srsly aj ka lecture was sooo boring 😭 sir just kept talkin n talkin, no slides no nothing. i didnt even get wht he was sayin abt discourse 😐 skipped last 20 mins, brain was DONE fr btw r u comin uni tmrw or nah?? lemme knw asap 👍 " (Students 1).

"cant believe i miss the lecture today…
feeling bad but also chill…" (Student 2)

"i forget to submit my homework today…
feeling so stressed but also calm…" (Student 3)

"just chillin at home bro 😎

nothing much to do lol" (Student 4)

4.3.2. Instagram Caption

"late night walk hits diff fr 🌙 too much goin on in my head rn cant even explain wht im feelin lol life isnt easy but we movin 💪 just vibes, no stress (or maybe lil stress 😅)

#chillin #mood #idk" (Student 1).

"rain starts again and streets looks wet…

i watch it from my window feels peaceful…" (Student 2)

"tried new cafe this morning…

coffee tastes amazing but service were slow…" (Student 3)

"grabbed some munchies 🍕

tastes awesome fr" (Student 4)

4.3.3. Facebook Comment

"ngl this post makes sense 💯 students nowadays r addicted to sm wayyy too much nobody cares abt books or proper writin anymore evrything is shortcuts n copy paste stuff teachers blame us but system also messed up tbh. just sayin 🤷" (Student 1).

"new update of the app confusing…

i think they change everything i know…" (Student 2)

"people walks fast in the city now…

i think everything change too quickly…" (Student 3)

"match was lit 🔥

team played super good fr" (Student 4).

In this part of the paper, researcher provides a linguistic analysis of university students' social media posts. The analysis includes: The use (or lack thereof) of

punctuation substitutes; the use of informal abbreviations/slang; inconsistent use of verb tenses and number agreement; lowercase writing; and the use of emojis.

Informal Punctuation and Ellipses Usage

A recurring feature across several posts is the use of ellipses ("…") instead of full stops. This pattern is particularly visible in the responses of several students for instance, "cant believe i miss the lecture today…" (Student 2) and "i forget to submit my homework today…" (Student 3).

In these cases, ellipses function as a discourse marker indicating pauses or reflective tone rather than grammatical completion. This creates a conversational effect similar to spoken language. However, In academic writing, punctuation helps establish clear structure and end sentences; thus, using ellipses in place of full stop reflects informal digital writing habits. Student 4, on the other hand, uses short, simple sentence patterns, whereas Student 1 uses longer, loosely formed sentences with little formal punctuation control.

Abbreviations, Slang, and Informal Lexical Choices

Most frequently or mainly use of digital abbreviations and slangs are particularly in student response such as "srsly," "wht," "abt," "rn," "fr," "ngl," and "tmrw." These forms demonstrate speed-oriented communication and strong alignment with online youth discourse. Similarly, student 4 use informal expressions for instance, "chillin," "lol," "lit," and "fr," reflecting conversational and peer-group language. Students 2 and 3 use less or fewer abbreviation but the word they choose are still informal and conversational. Overall, these slangs forms improve emotional tone and relatability while reducing lexical formality when compared to academic standards.

Tense Inconsistencies and Subject–Verb Agreement Errors

The grammatical inconsistencies can particularly be found in the responses of Student 2 and Student 3. Including:

"i miss the lecture today…" (Student 2) – tense inconsistency

"streets looks wet…" (Student 2) – subject–verb agreement error

"i forget…" (Student 3) – incorrect tense usage

"service were slow…" (Student 3) – incorrect verb agreement

"people walks…" (Student 3) – subject–verb agreement error

The aforementioned errors indicate mitigation of grammatical monitoring and affect of spoken language structures.

In contrast, student 4 reveals less grammatical errors but maintains informal lexical and structural simplicity. Moreover, student 1, grammatically competent, shows orthographic and informal structure rather than major agreement errors.

Lowercase Writing and Orthographic Informality

Furthermore, lowercase writing is consistently observed in the responses of all four students, particularly the uncapitalized pronoun "i." Hence, this feature appears in the students 1, 2, and 3 responses and reflects common social media traditions where speed and convenience are prioritized over orthographic accuracy. In the same line, the lack or absence of proper capitalization mitigates textual professionalism and diverts the nature of writing from academic writing norms, where capitalization is essential for clarity and formal presentation.

Emoji Integration and Expressive Features

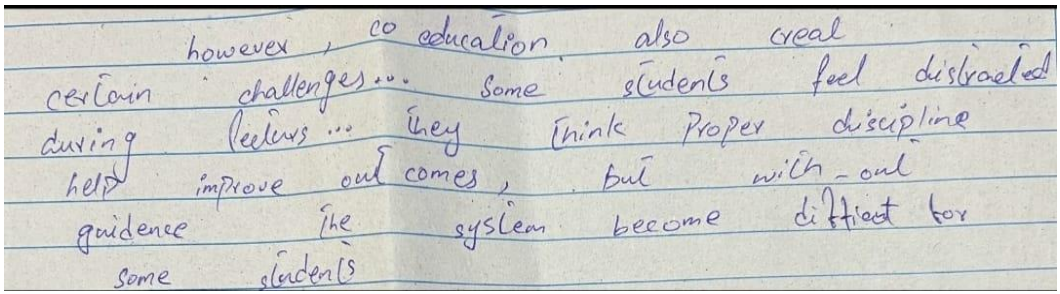
The use of emoji is especially found prominent in the posts of Student 1 and Student 4, where emojis function as emotional intensifiers (e.g., 😭, 💪, 😎, 🔥). Furthermore, these visual symbols substitute descriptive language and strengthen expressive tone. Moreover, using emojis are effective in informal digital contexts but they are generally inappropriate in academic writing because meaning must be conveyed through structured linguistic expression.

Analysis of Students Academic Writing

Student 1

"Despite these benefits, co-education also has certain disadvantages that cannot be ignored. In some cases, students feel distracted by of unnecessary social Pressure and attention, which affects they concentration in class. Many learners think that mixed classrooms sometimes make it hard to stay focused, esp when personal issues are already goin on in their minds. Some students even say stuff like teachers r more busy managing behaviour than teaching properly, which is kinda frustrating tbh. Instead of focusing fully on studies, students may end up worrying abt how they look or how others see them, which is defo not ideal" (Student 1).

The academic writing sample submitted by Student 1 shows good organization and knowledge of essay shape. However, the use of informal elements within the third paragraph (abbreviations, slang words and phrases, conversational style, and non-traditional sentence structures) negatively impacted grammatical accuracy and compromised the academic level. The student demonstrates an ability to construct a well-structured academic work; however, the analysis supports the notion that social media can occasionally contribute to inappropriate use of informal language in formal writing when writing an opinion or evaluation.

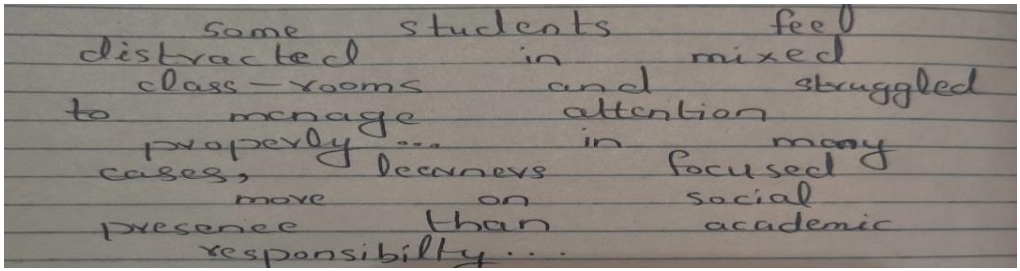


Student 2

The academic writing example of Student 2 shows generally good organization yet substantial issues with grammar and formality. For example, she used verbs

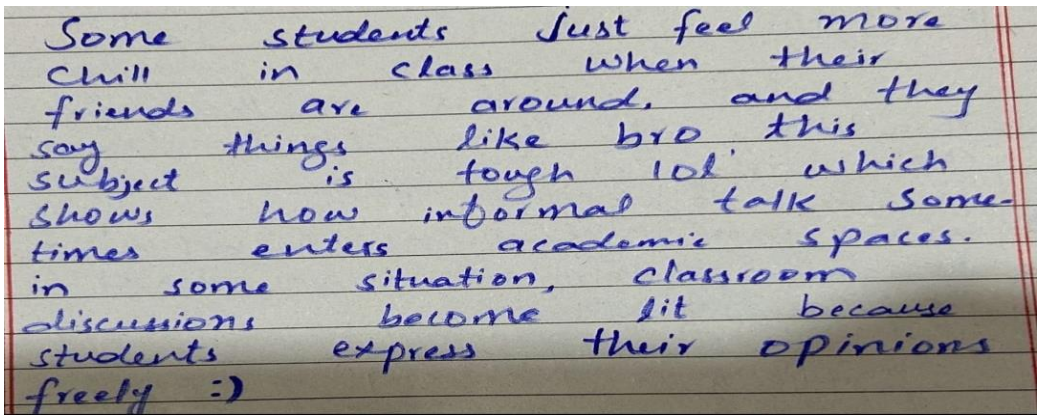
inconsistently between past and present in paragraph 3, wrote in lower-case letters, and had ellipses for grammar--all indicative of her typical use of social media; thus, resulting in reduced grammatical correctness and formality and moderate scores for both.

Student 3



The academic writing sample of Student 3 demonstrates strong structural organization but considerable weaknesses in grammatical accuracy and academic tone. The third paragraph contains tense inconsistencies, subject–verb agreement errors, lowercase writing, and ellipsis-based punctuation. These features closely mirror patterns observed in the student's digital communication style. As a result, grammar and tone received lower ratings from both evaluators.

Student 4



The essay demonstrates strong structural organization, maintaining a clear four-paragraph format with a well-defined introduction and conclusion. Vocabulary

usage is generally appropriate and sufficiently academic in three of the four paragraphs. However, the second paragraph contains informal features including colloquial expressions ("chill," "bro," "lol," "lit," "fr"), emojis (🔥 😎), and lowercase writing, which significantly reduce grammatical accuracy and academic tone. The presence of lowercase sentence beginnings and conversational lexical items lowers the grammar and academic tone scores. Nevertheless, coherence remains moderately strong because the paragraph still maintains topical unity despite informal intrusions.

5. Conclusion

The research has shown a strong negative influence of social media on the written work of undergraduate students taking the English specializations at KUST. Most notably, students' grammatical, academic tone, and formal writing errors were negatively and largely affected by informal language on social media. Additionally, students were unable to consistently follow academic writing conventions because of the use of informal language on social media, which has blurred the lines between informal and formal registers. The results also support the Digital Language Change Theory, as the use of digital communication environments for long periods of time has changed the way we communicate and influences all aspects of our language use across the different contexts where we communicate. The students at KUST have developed digital language practices through their social media use that have encroached on their writing, creating a hybrid form of language use that is not in compliance with academic standards.

However, the data also indicates that social media is not necessarily harmful to academic writing. Social media has the potential, when used consciously and critically, to provide students with opportunities to share ideas, work collaboratively and therefore, expose themselves to different language styles. The problem does not lie within the use of social media, but rather in the lack of teacher

and student awareness regarding the necessity of separating informal from academic language practices.

6. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, teachers should explicitly address the distinction between informal digital language and formal academic writing to enhance students' awareness of register variation and improve writing control. Second, universities should strengthen academic writing instruction through dedicated courses or workshops that focus on grammar, academic tone, and structural coherence. Finally, rather than discouraging social media use, institutions should integrate digital literacy into the curriculum, guiding students to engage with digital platforms responsibly while maintaining academic writing standards.

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