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Role of Social Media in Teaching Writing Skills at BS Level: An Analysis

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Abstract

New social media trends have lately emerged as a result of globalization. Social media has a wide range of effects on people's lives. Certain elements fade with each successive development, while others become the standard. Literacy evolution undoubtedly coincides with the introduction of new technology. Writing is a challenging and complicated process. It takes some critical expertise to make it apparent and acceptable. Social media was first blamed for this occurrence and hypotheses were developed regarding how modern technology can affect students' academic writing processes directly or indirectly. Chinese society is not an exception, as Wechat and other social media platforms are increasingly being used, particularly in the everyday interactions of BS-level students in China. The goal of this study was to distinguish between texting and formal writing and to make the learners aware of the value of writing in their personal and educational lives. This study aimed to identify students' opinions regarding formal essays, particularly those seen in exam papers, as well as the functions of social media and how they can affect their formal writing. The current study also sought to investigate the phenomena of texting and its detrimental impact on students' academic writing. According to the study, the causes that lead pupils to use texting in writing are a lack of concentration, forgetting the form of some phrases and unconsciousness. The collected data were statistically and qualitatively examined. At the end of the investigation, the researchers' conclusion with comments and recommendations was also summarized.

Key Words: Social media, impact, analysis, writing skills, evolution.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy has evolved continuously throughout history and the creation of the written word. Certain elements fade with each successive development, while others become the standard. Literacy evolution undoubtedly coincides with the introduction of new technology. The emergence of the printing press in the fourteenth century prompted an increasing need for literacy as the written word became widely available and a vital component of society. In a nutshell, literacy was driven by technology. This was the standard for many years since the printing press made books, newspapers, and other publications easily and economically available to the general. Literacy did not change again until the twentieth century. When computer technologies advanced, words travelled faster between humans, and communication blossomed. When the Internet came into play, the entire face of literacy changed. Individuals were reading online rather than merely reading books, newspapers, and magazines. As internet technology has advanced over the last quarter-century, new communication modes have emerged. Literacy has become defined by tiny morsels of text on the Internet and cell phone texts, which appear to have replaced the days of sitting down to read big novels. According to a 2009 University of Alabama study, "text messaging has undoubtedly provided our society with a quick means of communication, eliminating the need for capitalization, punctuation, the use and knowledge of sentence structure, and the detail that distinguishes good statements from great statements" (Text messaging, 2009). Literacy is now defined by the technologies employed to transfer and communicate it. An email's language differs from that of a text message. Though formal writing exists in the twenty-first century, it may not be the same formal writing that existed 50 years ago. But nothing is significantly different from traditional writing. "OMG ['oh my god/goodness/gosh'], LOL ['laugh out loud'], FYI ['for your information'], IMHO ['in my humble/honest view'], and BFF ['best friend forever'] were all included to the Oxford English Dictionary this year (2011). It's worth noting that the article announcing these changes also claims that "the term OMG has been traced back to 1917, while LOL used to mean "little old woman" back in the '60s" (Savov, 2011). According to History.com, the use of the abbreviation OK entered the American vernacular through a publication in the Boston Morning Post in 1839. OK is an acronym for "all correct," a popular slang misspelling of "all correct" at the time. The article goes on to highlight how educated teenagers at the time "misspelt words purposely, then

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abbreviated them and used them as slang when conversing to one another" ("OK enters vernacular," 2011). Hence, in some ways, today's youth's "text speak" is not a novel phenomenon. Still, changes are occurring; even though they are almost cyclical, as with the growth of any new technology, elements will be rendered obsolete, and new standards will be established. While improvements in literacy and technology affect the broader public, there appears to be much discussion about whether they are useful or detrimental to adolescents, particularly their academic achievement. According to a Pew Research Center research from last year, "almost three-quarters of teen cell phone users (75%) have unlimited texting" (Lenhart, 2010). As new technology and schools of thought emerge, there will always be skeptics typically of the older generation—who will presume that if they can make do without particular technologies or literacies, the younger generation can also. This mistrust stems from a widespread belief that the standard for written English is deteriorating. In his article Student, Reading, and Writing, published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Professor George Williams (2011) writes, "At every school where I've taught, I've been assigned first- or secondyear writing courses to teach, and at every one of these schools, someone from another department has expressed dismay at their students' inability to write and has asked me what in the world we are teaching students." Whether or not the standard for writing is lowering, it is apparent that a shift in literacy is taking place. This transition is visible in college English classes, which now emphasize the writing process rather than grammar. This is based on the idea that pupils obtain the necessary grammar skills in high school English classes. Although a rather contentious issue, evidence increasingly shows that rigorous grammar education has little beneficial influence on student writing. This is not a novel idea; for example, Patrick Hartwell (1985) examines research on the subject and concludes that "formal grammar education has little effect on the quality of students' writing nor on their capacity to avoid an error." With college campuses increasingly incorporating technology, such as campus-wide laptop programs at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, writing classes may emphasize the medium rather than the "meat" of the message. Today's technological diversity allows for a wide range of literacy variations. Modern technology has tugged children from elementary school to college in multiple directions. In her article, College Students Lead in Internet Use and Tech Gadgets, Study Finds, Jie Jenny Zou (2011) notes that "Regardless of educational background, young adults ages 18-24 were generally much more likely to be Internet users, engage in social media, and own Web-

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enabled devices like laptops and smartphones." The text in terse, even cryptic language, read long print texts, browsethe Internet, and continue to write formally. Texting and instant messaging writing styles are nearly different languages than traditional formal writing. Some websites will translate text-speak into Standard English, such as www.lingo2word.com. In certain ways, a student who is fluent in both writing styles could be considered bi-lingual. While it is difficult to determine whether evolving literacy as a result of technology helps or hinders college students, it is undoubtedly fascinating to study the implications of technologies on the evolution of reading and to write in today's culture.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of technology, primarily text messaging, and social media use, on the capacity of BS level students to produce a formal essay. While multiple studies have been undertaken with elementary and secondary school students, there is a distinct lack of study on higher education and the effects of various technologies on literacy and the ability to write formally.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study's primary objectives were based on the research's background:

- 1. Establish the causes and conditions affecting students' poor written skills.
- 2. To document students' present writing communication abilities.
- 3. Determine the strengths and limitations of the texting strategy during its implementation.
- 4. To adapt and reproduce what kind of activities are possible using social media.

1.3 Research Questions of the Study

The current study answered the following questions:

- RQ1. What are the students' habits in using social media?
- RQ2. Does texting improve the written skills of the students?
- RQ3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of applying social media strategy at the BS level?
- RQ4. What are the factors which lead significant decrease in students' written skills?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research aims to look for any links between students' texting and social media habits and their ability to compose a formal essay. This study will ideally provide insight into the current level of literacy for BS level students by showing patterns linked to texting and social media habits and writing abilities. This research should help future first-year students' English instructors and course curricula by providing a more in-depth understanding of students' literacy and reading and writing habits.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Implications of Texting and Social Media

There is no doubt that texting, in conjunction with web 2.0 technology, is altering literacy. Nonetheless, it appears that this is not always to harm society. In her article Literacy and Text Messaging, Kate Baggott (2006) states, "There is just much more pressure to know how to read than in the past when it comes to conversation, shopping, or job" (p. 1). People are continually reading, whether it is for leisure reading of big novels, tiny morsels from a website, an email message for work, or tiny brief text messaging. Baggott also discusses youngsters and texting, quoting associate professor Eric Paulson, who says, "students can text 'IMHO' on their mobile phones, writemy view is' in a school essay, and read "I believe that your scar hurts when Lord Voldemort is near you" (p. 1).

As proven by this example, changing literacy implies the maintenance of various literacies. The discernment and critical thinking skills required are crucial to pupils as they develop their linguistic skills and enter the "real world."

Whilst texting appears to have no harmful effects on literacy, texting and technology give an infinite diversion to easily distracted pupils. In his article Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction, Matt Richtel (2010) elaborates on this trend, citing the Kaiser Family Foundation's finding that "half of the students from 8 to 18 are using the Internet, watching TV, or using some other form of media either "most" (31 percent) or "some" (25 percent) of the time that they are doing homework" (p. 2). Is the younger generation skilled at multitasking, or are there some unintended consequences to this technological boom? Richtel (2010) highlights how, while literacies are not inherently harmed, grades are as students struggle to manage their virtual and real worlds.

2.2 The Nature of Writing

Daniels and Bright (1996: 2) state that "language is a natural product of the human mind, while writing is a deliberate product of human intellect, language continually develops and changes without the conscious interference of its speakers, but writing can be petrified or reformed or adapted or adopted at will." They made a clear distinction between spoken and written language. The spoken language predated the written language for an extended period. People were exclusively interested in spoken language while talking with one another, especially in the twentieth century, and focused mostly on the oral approach, believing that this was the genesis of

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written language. As a result, for many years, writing was neglected. Many linguists, including De Saussure and Chomsky, have accused neglect in language training.

One of the reasons for this blatant disregard is that writing is difficult to teach and learn. According to Hess (2001), writing is the most difficult of the four talents to master and the most difficult to teach in such schools. "Creating a cohesive, fluent, extended piece of writing is perhaps the most difficult thing to achieve in language," writes Nunan (1999: 217). Most native speakers will never master it. "The challenges for second language learners are enormous, particularly for those who go on to university and study in a language that is not their own." He believed that this operation is difficult for many people to achieve in both first and second language, while Byrne (1998: 1) states that "writing requires some conscious mental effort."

To generate a decent piece of writing, some abilities must be learned. Furthermore, in the past, focusing on applied linguistics and applying scientific linguistic ideas to the spoken language resulted in a neglect of the written one. The fact that written language is the orthographic representation of spoken language aided in increasing interest in the latter.

The writer must apply writing skills to create a correct, intelligible paragraph or sentence. Nunan (1989) stated that writing cannot be limited to a pen and paper. Teachers, on the other hand, are required to grade their students. Formatting, topic, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling are all important aspects of writing. Although spoken languages predate written languages, and many spoken languages do not have written forms, both are language skills requiring the same level of interest.

2.3 Social Media and Literacy Instruction

Incorporating social media into the classroom is controversial among experts, yet new study shows an increase in acceptance. According to Jia, Snow, and White's study on the perspectives of using technology and social media for literacy instruction, "teens, including many language minority students with diverse literacy skills, are true believers in technology and play an active role in contributing to the mainstream teen culture fueled by technology influence" (2015). The survey also indicates that teens learn and embrace social media and technology significantly faster than adults. Even among low socioeconomic pupils in urban settings, it appears that students are quite amenable to using technology in the classroom for literacy and already have the basic skills to do so.

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Similarly, even without regulated use in the classroom, social media has been shown to improve the literacy abilities of adolescent English Language Learners. Social media encourages communication in their native language (which improves their foundation abilities) and English Language Learners' reading, writing, and communication skills in English (Stewart, 2014). For teachers who are opposed to using social media because their pupils cannot utilize it strictly academically, a big study in Denmark discovered that students were successfully able to use the social networking site Facebook without teacher management both in and out of the classroom. Aaen and Dalsgaard (2016) study reveals that "students integrate the personal, social lives with academic homework in one area within the Facebook groups. This conclusion contradicts the current studies on Wechat by showing that students are uncomfortable with the merging of social life and school work" (p. 172). They also discover that over 50% of the posts in the student-led Wechat groups were directly related to schoolwork (with many others simply being school-related posts about school events, etc.), demonstrating that students can independently lead a Wechat group with peers and effectively use it for academic work.

Similarly, Greenhow and Lewin's study concluded that utilizing social media academically "helped to shape the learning activities; thus, aspects were self-determined as they mostly worked in groups" (2016, p. 17). Students are taking ownership of their learning and contributing to the creation of the work they finished, resulting in a strong sense of agency. Nonetheless, the use of social media for academic objectives is still controversial. According to one review of the literature on the subject, "recent studies have pointed to how teachers' and institutional use of social media platforms like Facebook can contribute to 'context collapse,' where previously clear hierarchies and modes of interaction between teachers and students are challenged and sometimes re-formulated" (Selwyn &Stirling, 2016, p. 4). Because students connect so intimately on social media, the boundaries of teacher-student relationships can become unclear. Furthermore, research has indicated that the amount of information and communication provided

by social media and the Internet might push struggling readers further behind, since they lack the literacy skills required to participate effectively on digital platforms (Alvermann& Harris, 2016). The research and viewpoints on using social media for academic purposes with students appear to be strongly contested. Because current research reveals both pros and disadvantages about social media usage and its impact on teenage literacy development, I am looking for comments from both students and teachers. One area on which academics agree is the need to improve

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pupils' literacy skills, especially new and multimodal literacy practices (Jia et al, 2015; Aaen&Dalsgaard, 2016; Bulut et al, 2015; Wendt, 2013). Because of the Common Core, educators must find a method to include reading education into their subject matter. These classes should also focus on their "new literacy" development. With social media being such a powerful factor in teenage life, my research intends to determine how students and instructors feel about social media, its effects on ALD, and whether they believe it can be used academically to help enhance adolescent literacy abilities across the board.

Furthermore, while there have been studies on urban teens (e.g., Jia et al, 2015), less study has been done on rural/suburban adolescents' opinions on social media and literacy. The intricate social, intellectual, and emotional functions of media and popular culture in the lives of young people cannot be ignored or trivialized by educators. To reach today's learners, educators must be sensitive to their students' cultural experiences, which they have through television, movies, YouTube, the Internet, Facebook, music, and gaming. The first thing we'll notice as we learn more about our pupils' choices is how different they are from ourselves. Regarding media and technology, every two years brings a fresh set of changes to their daily lives. Even though we are only a few years older than our pupils, there may be significant differences due to the quick evolution of technology tools. That is why educators must stay current on the daily media and technological choices pupils make at home (and at school). Children are immersed in television and technology from before breakfast to bedtime and beyond. They're texting, listening to music, updating their social media sites, and playing video games simultaneously, cramming 200 hours of media and technology each month.

Contrary to common belief, most youths aged 12 to 19 do not forgo movies and television in favour of the Internet; when they go online, they update their Facebook accounts and watch YouTube videos but do not create films, blogs, podcasts, or computer programs. Twitter, for example, is used by only 8% of teenagers. Despite the media's focus on youth and internet media, television shows and movies continue to be important sources of enjoyment in the lives of young people. According to a Nielsen research published in June 2009, only around 3% of the 100 hours per month that youths spend watching television is spent online. Teens watch more television than ever, up 6% in five years. Teens spend roughly one-third less time online than adults, using the Internet about 11 hours per month compared to adults, who spend 29 hours online. Before cable television and internet video streaming gave us a 500,000-channel cosmos,

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it was simple for instructors in the twentieth century to include discussions about popular TV shows into the classroom. After all, there were only three or four networks. Discussions regarding mass media arose naturally due to shared exposure to celebrities, politicians, athletes, and singers at the time. Of course, teachers can still share their viewing experiences with their pupils. For example, many teenagers and teachers enjoy American Idol. Teens and teachers can both watch sports and local and national news.

But, students' media worlds today are frequently very different from the tastes of educators, parents, and other adults. Teachers and students both "use the Internet," but have distinct online experiences. Teachers, for example, frequently use the Internet to check email or search the online for information about their careers, health, or interests. Teens use the Internet for socializing or enjoyment, typically by playing games, viewing videos, searching for and listening to music, and engaging with friends via social networks such as Facebook or MySpace. Despite the importance of digital media and technology in children's and young people's life, research suggests that 80% of teens have little to no interaction with parents or other adults concerning their media and technology use. As a result, most young people have little opportunities to engage in serious dialogues with adults about the complicated mix of entertainment, sociability, and information that is a significant part of everyday life. But, we will obtain most of our information and entertainment throughout our lives from digital media, mass media, popular culture, and technology. Shouldn't students be given meaningful opportunities to assess and evaluate how these messages and experiences function in modern culture?

As more and more media is expressed digitally, the categories for classifying media types have gotten hazy. An audio book, for example, represents the merging of print, sound, and digital media types. Online social media combine characteristics of mass communication as well as interpersonal contact. Every day, it seems, new digital media materials and applications are released that pique the curiosity of K-12 educators. That's because a wide network of designers and creative experts are developing a plethora of new tools for internet media in the hopes of changing the world or simply striking it rich (by creating the next Face book, Wikipedia or even just a new puzzle video game for the cell phone, like Angry Birds). Several of these new gadgets have immense educational potential. For example, Voice Thread (www.voicethread.com) allows users to comment on photographs collaboratively. Jing (www.jingproject.com) is a software application that allows you to create a digital file of still or moving images on your computer

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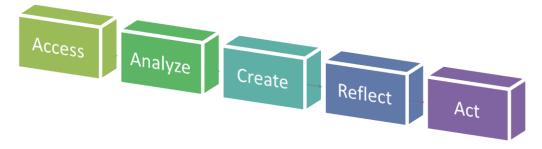
screen. Every week, new items and services for use at home are offered. Being the first to adopt a new technology tool is a particular fixation for some educators. This bears little attraction or interest for many people.

Nevertheless, because we utilize many different media daily, most individuals have a love-hate relationship with print, visual, auditory, and digital media and technology. These points of view stem from our roles as individuals, parents, educators, and citizens. Moreover, because our attitudes toward media and technology will certainly influence our judgments about employing media in the classroom, we must reflect on our beliefs and attitudes and determine what is most important to us.

Because media and technology are essential to students, they have much to say about it. Some are employing genres and formats that many teachers and parents are unfamiliar with (web comics, discussion boards like 4chan, and fake Wikipedia sites, for example). Some teenagers will have considered media and technology's beneficial and harmful roles, but others will take it all for granted. Teachers and students define their beliefs when encouraged to reflect on their perspectives to prioritize the elements of their relationship with print, visual, aural, and digital media. Such reflection is an important aspect of engaging in today's society, and it is the first step in digital and media literacy education pedagogy.

2.4 Essential Dimensions of Digital and Media Literacy

The essential dimensions of digital and media literacy include the following elements:



- **1.** Access:Finding and sharing appropriate and relevant information and using media texts and technology tools well.
- **2. Analyze:** Using critical thinking to analyze message purpose, target audience, quality, integrity, credibility, point of view, and potential effects or consequences of messages.
- **3.** Create: Composing or generating content using creativity and confidence in self-expression, with awareness of purpose, audience, and composition techniques.

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- **4. Reflect:** Considering the impact of media messages and technology tools upon our thinking and actions in daily life and applying social responsibility and ethical principles to our identity, communication behavior, and conduct.
- **5. Act:**Working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace, and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national, and international levels.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The investigation was descriptive. For data collecting, the quantitative method was deemed appropriate. The study population included all students from China. The study's sample consisted of 200 BS 1st semester students enrolled in Spring-2021 from three departments. For each item, the researchers calculated the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation for descriptive analysis. SPSS was used to evaluate the replies (17 versions).

4.RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Q#1: Do you use social media in your daily life?

Sr. No.	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
	Strongly Agree	33	16.5	
	Agree	37	18.5	
1	Undecided	43	21.5	2.95
	Disagree	60	30.0	
	Strongly Disagree	27	13.5	
	Total	200	100.0	

According to the data presented above, 16.5% of those polled highly agreed, 18.5% agreed, 21.5% were indecisive, 30% disagreed, and 13.5% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.95 does not support the assertion. As a result, 43.5% of respondents disagreed with the assertion.

Q#2: Do you think that social media has a positive impact on learning process?

Sr. No.	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
	Strongly Agree	79	39.5	
	Agree	40	20.0	
2	Undecided	18	9.0	3.53
	Disagree	33	16.5	
	Strongly Disagree	30	15.0	
	Total	200	100.0	

According to the data, 39.5% strongly agreed, 20% agreed, 9% were undecided, 16.5% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. The assertion was supported with a mean score of 3.53. As a result, most respondents (59.5%) agreed with the statement.

Q#3: Do you encourage your students to interact through social media?

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Sr. No.	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
	Strongly Agree	57	28.5	
	Agree	52	26.0	
3	Undecided	18	9.0	3.38
	Disagree	56	28.0	
	Strongly Disagree	17	8.5	
	Total	200	100.0	

According to the data 28.5% of the respondents were strongly agreed, 26% agreed, 9% undecided, 28% disagreed, and 8.5% strongly disagreed. The means score was 3.38 supported the statement. So the majority 54.5% of the respondents were agreed about statement.

Q#4: Do you implement texting to practice writing skills?

Sr. No.	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
	Strongly Agree	63	31.5	
	Agree	37	18.5	
4	Undecided	48	24.0	3.45
	Disagree	34	17.0	
	Strongly Disagree	18	9.0	
		200	100.0	

According to the research, 31.5% highly agreed, 18.5% agreed, 24% were indecisive, 17% disagreed, and 9% severely disagreed. The assertion was supported with a mean score of 3.45. As a result, most respondents (50%) agreed with the statement.

Q#5: Teaching writing skills through social media makes learning everlasting.

Sr. No.	Options	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
	Strongly Agree	55	27.5	
	Agree	52	26.0	
5	Undecided	27	13.5	3.41
	Disagree	51	25.5	
	Strongly Disagree	15	7.5	
	Total	200	100.0	

According to the research, 27.5% highly agreed, 26% agreed, 13.5% were indecisive, 25.5% disagreed, and 7.5% severely disagreed. The assertion was supported by a mean score of 3.41. As a result, most respondents (53.5%) agreed with the statement.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the survey's conclusions, texting has become a need among students, whether for academic or personal reasons. Texting between students involves several languages, but English is gaining popularity, as it has become the second most utilized language for Wechat talks after

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Chinese. In contrast, 82% of students utilize abbreviations and acronyms while texting for various reasons. Some students use acronyms to save time, while others use them to make texting easier. Most students seek to entice others by using abbreviations while texting because it is trendy; nevertheless, research findings revealed that the most common reason for using abbreviations is to save time and facilitate communication. Texting is a phenomenon that saves students time and effort that would otherwise be lost trying to locate the acceptable forms of words; nonetheless, most students think that texting hurts their academic writing. Participants stated in their questionnaire responses and based on observations that texting has transferred some undesirable behaviors into formal essays and paragraphs, students have become reckless when writing academically. They begin to disregard the norms and form required to produce a significant piece of literature. Also, they make spelling errors that are common when texting.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Everywhere, social media is becoming an intrinsic and fundamental aspect of life. We chat users, especially Chinese users, are increasing by the day. They devised a novel method of messaging each other in different languages such as English. The current study investigated the harmful impact of social media on BS students and informal writing mistakes made by English language students in China. The current study was designed to seek answers to the research questions posed about the phenomenon of social media.

There has been an attempt through the two study instruments to find some of how BS level students make mistakes while writing formal essays, one of the reasons for these blunders being the harmful impact of texting on them. Indeed, when texting, students write as they speak, disregarding academic norms such as capital letters, grammar, etc. Students' lack of importance became a habit when writing in class. It is widely acknowledged that social media play an essential part in students' everyday lives, both personally and educationally, because they promote interaction between people from all over the world. Yet, this study demonstrated that there is another aspect of social media that can have a negative impact on students' educational careers.

7. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations are made for students based on the findings of this study to distinguish between writing when texting and writing in class, a clear distinction should be made. Students should differentiate the two forms of writing from each other, as the first is merely used to

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engage with friends and various people while gaining time. On the other hand, the second should be written clearly in an academic style while adhering to the norms (punctuation, grammar, coherence, etc.) that distinguish the two styles. Students can join several English study groups on Facebook because they use it almost daily. They can learn to officially connect with other members in these communities without utilizing abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, etc. This will aid in the development of their writing abilities. The researchers advised them to differentiate between texting and writing in class. Social networking sites and texting have become essential in an age of globalization and technical advancement. The current study opens up the door for other researchers to conduct additional research on texting among students and the factors that encourage them to use it while academic writing. In this way of learning, instant instructor response is quite beneficial. It is strongly advised. It ensures that the learning process continues throughout the day. It is advised that institutions increase the number of teaching and learning resources in the classroom, such as books and media. These amenities are critical for both the teacher and the pupils during the teaching and learning process.

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