



RESEARCH PAPER

**Studying the Impact of Social Media on Pakistani ESL Students'
Writing**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of social media on Pakistani ESL students' writing; they used different types of writing (formal and informal) on Facebook and in class settings. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of 35 questions in five sections. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed among the B.S. (English) students and faculty members of Govt. College & University Lahore and the University of Lahore to collect the data. Facebook was used as an independent and writing as the dependent variable. The SPSS analysis, English assessment test, and the Facebook group were selected for this study to investigate the impact of social media on Pakistani ESL students' writing. The descriptive results showed that Facebook has an impact on Pakistani ESL students writing. The future research should be focused on students' writing improvement using other social networks sites with different research designs.

KEYWORDS English Writing, ESL Students, Facebook

Introduction

Today, social media has changed the lives of people and students. It plays a vital role in solving everyday problems using information and communication technologies globally. Language learning is also affected by social media (e-mail, Facebook, Twitter) as a source of communication (Ralston, 2012). Social media has spread all around the world. The current study only focused on social media as Facebook, and many students are connected with Facebook. The topic of this study relates to Social media's impact on Pakistani ESL students/learners and their writing. This paper includes a statement of the problem, research questions, and objectives of the study, a literature review, a theoretical framework, and a research methodology with a proper conclusion.

Social media has become a basic need for every person, especially students. (Muzaffar, Chohdhry & Afzal, 2019). Its use may damage their English writing skills. Many studies have explored how it improved students' English learning. So, studying how social media can be used in ESL learning environments was necessary. Only a small number of studies have explained that social media can destroy students' English writing; however, they have no concrete study to support their argument. Social media, as a broad field, never cover up quickly. The present research discussed only Facebook to understand the impact of social media on Pakistani ESL students' writing.

Literature Review

Social media is an umbrella term. Social media covers different forms of media. It is known as a broader term, including different categories and SNSs as a type of social media (Davis III et al., 2012). Drury (2008) describes social media as "online resources people use to share video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humor, opinion, gossip, and news." People can quickly learn through activities and practices. Social media provides a learning platform as "activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media (Safko and Brake, 2009). In this modern age, social networking has spread worldwide and has become an international trend. Haque explained in 2014 that 15.4 million people were using Facebook, representing 8.5 percent of the total population (survey report, 2014). Social media's latest application offers learning and intellectual growth (Baird & Fisher, 2005). The opportunity has provided to improve learners' societal skills and dig out their helpful abilities to cooperate using social media (Baird and Fisher, 2005). Most university students used Facebook regularly, which is helpful for those familiar and comfortable with it (Davis, 2010). Mark Zuckerberg is the founder of Facebook it was launched in 2004 and mainly used to create contact between students (Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). As Rosen (2011) stated, students can use SNSs to achieve their academic purpose. Above 90% of students at 4-year colleges informed that they were Facebook users (Harvard Institute of Politics, 2011). As Schechter (2011) states, Students are allowed to directly access the Facebook from mobile and direct sources about learning and receiving school information. Students can respond to teachers who can facilitate discussions by posting comments related to the curriculum. Facebook is informal; every person can share information freely. According to Wu et al., (2011), Students can share their opinions and thoughts in an easy and relaxed way; they are more confident had no fear of depression by using Facebook. According to White (2009), a former study has found that students' motivation and effort is improved via Facebook. Motivated students express their opinions because they engage in different contacts and become motivated to participate in academic activities. According to Kabilan et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus et al., 2012 and Muzaffar, et al. 2020) students had a positive role in language learning because online connections with friends could build their confidence.

Furthermore, as McCarthy (2010) stated, Facebook supports eliminating many hurdles for students. Despite the merits of Facebook, there are demerits of Facebook in English writing noted by some learners' interviews (Shih, 2011). Facebook is being used for informal than formal learning (Madge, Meek, Wellens & Hooley, 2009). A significant problem is investigated inappropriate use of language, grammar, and spelling is negatively affected by online discussion (Gonzalez, 2003). She proposed that online communication often becomes an informal conversation that produces incomplete sentences and the use of short phrases, so it negatively impacts academic writing. Sometimes, students cannot identify both styles using Facebook and writing in class settings. Facebook writing, like short text, abbreviations, and punctuation, makes students habitual, and academic writing is also disturbed because this writing style is dominant among English language learners. Learners become habitual in an informal style and may adopt formal writing tasks (Yunus et al., 2012). Students use informal than formal writing styles, so Facebook is unsuccessful in improving students' writing (Selwyn, 2009). Generally, social network sites are the informal learning platform, and their informal writing is misunderstood in a writing class.

Material and Methods

The researcher used a descriptive research design. The researcher conducted a quantitative study through a questionnaire. The population of this study was Gov. College & University Lahore and the University of Lahore. The study consisted of two hundred samples. Primary data was gathered through a designed closed-ended four-Likert scale and English writing assessment test in quantitative analysis and Facebook group for qualitative analysis. Data was analyzed through SPSS software version (16.0). The researcher has mainly focused on identifying the impact of social media (Facebook) on Pakistani ESL students' writing styles and performances.

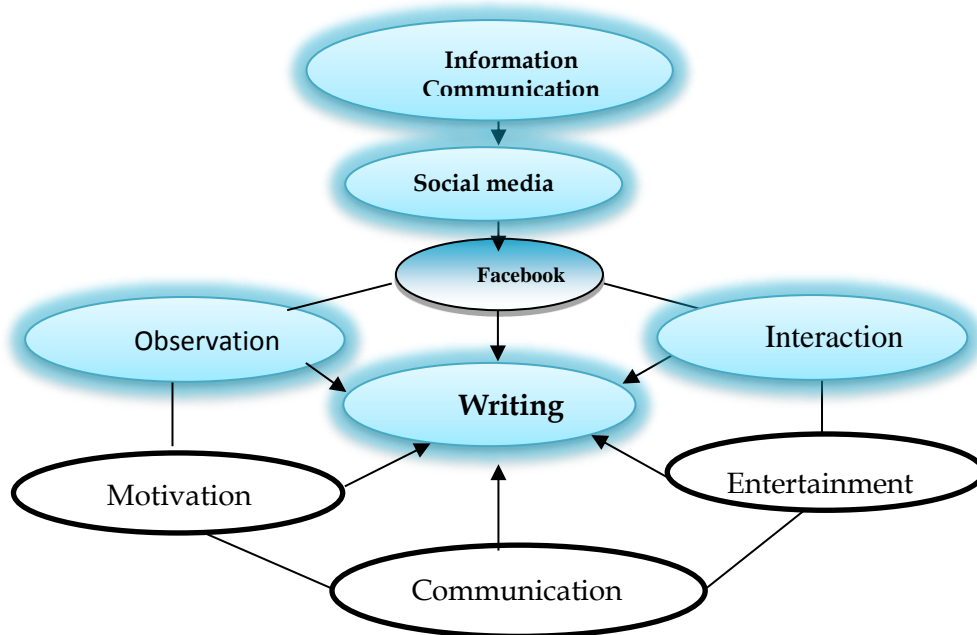


Figure No. 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure no. 1 shows the framework based on Vygotsky and Bandura's socio-cognitive approach to explaining dependent and independent variables. Writing as the dependent variable to measure independent variables social media as Facebook with sub-variables (observation was measured by four proxy measures, motivation, communication, interactions, and last one is entertainment).

This research target population was 4 years B.S. degree programs (English Literature) offered by different universities. The sample was 200 University of Lahore and Gov. College & University Lahore students.

Results and Discussion

The results were structured into three divisions. Firstly observation, the second English Assessment Test, and the third was Questionnaire; these tools were decided for data analysis. This study aimed to observe the impact of Facebook on students' writing in both environment Facebook discussion groups and class settings.

This analysis was used to answer the research questions. The next mainly concentrated on data observation through writing. Dualistic results are offered (a) F.B. used an eclectic writing style, but informal remained more commonly used than formal writing. Students also used informal with formal in class writing, and (b) Facebook destroyed students' writing.

Qualitative Analysis through Observation

In this study observation was gathered through Facebook online group discussion that was analyzed qualitatively. Researcher created a closed group for research purpose and observed the writing behavior of the students they were used mixed writing but a large number of students used informal writing than formal. Mostly students are used phonetic spellings for text on Facebook like a student used DA for "the" bt for but and wz for was. Some specimens were taken to analyze the observational data. Above all the styles of writing learners used in Facebook group. Not only entertainment but also Facebook used for proper learning environment. The writing were used informal than formal. The 40 participants were selected from Facebook group who have almost the same writing behavior with rest of participants were described in following table no. 1.

Table No. 1
Students' Writing Styles in Facebook Group

No. of Students	Formal Writing	Informal Writing
1	-	I
2	F	I
3	-	I*
4	F	I
5	-	I*
6	F	I
7	-	I
8	-	I
9	-	I
10	F	I*
11	-	I
12	-	I
13	F	I
14	-	I*
15	-	I*
16	-	I*
17	F	I
18	-	I
19	F	I
20	-	I*
21	-	I*
22	-	I*
23	-	I*
24	-	I*
25	-	I*
26	-	I*
27	-	I*
28	-	I*
29	-	I
30	-	I
31	F	I
32	-	I
33	-	I
34	-	I
35	-	I
36	F	I
37	-	I*
38	-	I*

39	-	I*
40	-	I*

Learners used formal and informal writing styles in Facebook group given symbols are also explained in details are as follows:

Table 2
Writing Symbols

Symbols	
N represents	Nil
F represents	Formal Style
F* signifies	except one all formal style
I* denotes	informal and roman English

Facebook data that was observed in a special online discussion group researcher observed the mixed writing behavior that were presented in above table 4.1. Table 1 showed that the learners used both writings on F.B (formal and informal). Table 1 shows the variation between levels of participation in Facebook writing. Almost **twenty one** students in which 20-30, 34, 35, 37-40 used informal writing, 20-28 students used informal (Roman English), 31,36 used both types (F.I.) writing on Facebook. Other **twelve** students in which 8, 9,11,12,14, 16, 18, used informal writing on Facebook, 13, 17, 19 used both type of writing (F.I.) and only 10 used (F.I.*). Finally, **seven** students 1-7 used informal, 3, 5 used (I*) and 2, 4, 6 used both types of writing (F.I.) As regards Table 1, it can be seen using F.B., S1 used informal writing such as:

S1: (1) "Yes i want to improve my English" (a comma is omitted after yes, "I" in lowercase and full stop also omitted here)

S1: (2) "thanks" (first letter should be Capital letter "Thanks")

S1: (3) A trip of Bhurban. That was OWSM. (It should be Awesome not "OWSM").

S1: (4) The words plz, gr8 used. (The right words are please and great). S1: (6) Hamza is "Coming" (the verb coming should be in lower case and there is no use of full stop).

S1: (7) Yes without Vocabulary we can't speak ENGLISH fluently, and can't dlvr our message. (A comma after yes is missed, except E all letters of ENGLISH and vocabulary must be in small letter and the spellings of dlvr should be "deliver"). Mostly, S1 used informal/roman English in Facebook writing. Student S1 used informal writing through Facebook.

S4 also used informal regularly than a formal style by using Facebook it can be seen here:

S4: (1) Em fi9. Nd 2 much busy wih my family (There should be "I'm fine" not **Em fi9** and not "**Nd**" and too for "**2**" and correct spelling of with not **wih**).

S4: (2) wht ab8 u (first letter capital, spellings of **wht ab8 u** is wrong and also omitted end mark. It should be what's about you?)

S4: (3) Thanx (wrong spell of **Thanx** "thanks" and omitted end mark).

S4: (4) u mean 2 say (u **mean 2 say** used short forms).

Many students used informal writing than formal writing on Facebook in which some are explained here. The next section will explained quantitative analysis through English Assessment test that was based on class writing.

Quantitative Analysis through English Assessment Test

Researcher conducted an English assessment test that was consisted of 10 answer questions to check ESL students' class writing from 40 students. Using Facebook both mixed writing styles were used and it was impacting their class writing where learners are strictly bound to use formal writing but learners used both styles in two different learning situations. English assessment test was marked and presented in tables. Some specimens were also used are as following:

Table No.3
English Assessment Test Scores

Students	Marks
1	11
2	17
3	17
4	8
5	16
6	15
7	16
100/7=14.2	100

The researcher designed an English assessment test to observe the ESL students' writing in class who were using social media. In this assessment, **seven** students performed well than others but they have some spellings mistakes.

Table 4
English Assessment Test Scores

Students	Marks	Students	Marks
8	12.5	14	10
9	11.5	15	12
10	13	16	13
11	4	17	13
12	12	18	14
13	11	19	14
139.5/12=11.26		139.5	

These were 12 students out of 40 performed well but they used formal writing in test except some mistakes and mostly wrote very short sentences.

Table No. 5
English Assessment Test Scores

Students	marks	Students	marks	Students	marks
20	9	27	12	34	10
21	10	28	11.5	35	4
22	11	29	11.5	36	11
23	8	30	11	37	10
24	10	31	12	38	7

25	10	32	4	39	19
26	11	33	15	40	7
214/21= 10.19					214

These were 21 students out of forty they performed neither good nor bad. They used mostly mixed writing in their English test.

Above all discussion, some specimen were used those were easy to judge that social media has an impact on Pakistani ESL Students' Writing instead they were used formal writing in class. S1 also performed in class writing (11 points out of 20). In addition, he omitted the use of punctuation, spelling of visited, physically and choose, their, and lowercase i use in class writing is considered informal style (see figure no. 2). Therefore, Facebook informal writing may be used in class writing by students.

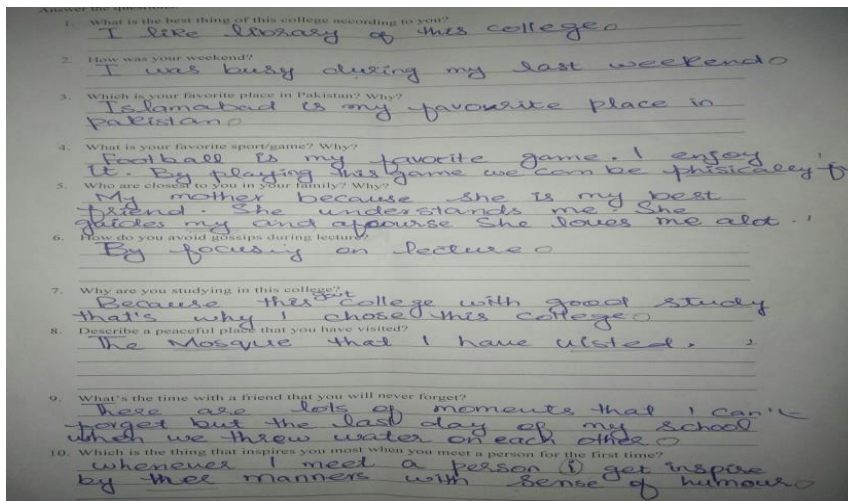


Figure 2 S1's Class Writing (English Assessment Test)

The use of informal writing on the F.B may adopt formal writing in class. There is some selective specimen are shown in figures. Students may be performing not well in class writing who were habitual and commonly used informal style through Facebook. Such as S4 used informal regularly than a formal style by using Facebook though, the common use of informal writing on F.B by S4 has an impact in his class test. Student got (8 scores) in English Assessment test writing having both formal and informal styles.

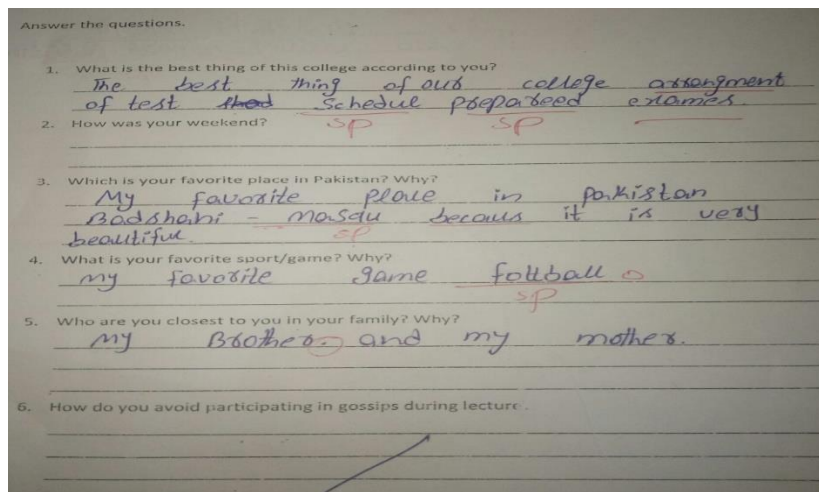


Figure 3 S11's Class Writing (English Assessment Test, 4/20)

Above all writing evidence has explained F.B users also used informal style in class writing for instance S11 see appendix (f, g, h, l) instead of using F.B certain students did not adopt informal style in class writing (S1,S4) further see appendix (a, b, c). In summary, the large number of students (n = 40) used an informal writing on F.B see appendix (m to s). Of those 40 students, thirty one students never used formal writing on Facebook. Approximately 90% of the participants used informal writing on Facebook. To note on the degree of formality of students' writing in a classroom, in spite of grammatical errors and other issues with organization, students either used improper or informal writing styles for the class writing. When students' writings on the Facebook they were compared with their class writing, it was evident that students have not distinguished between the two types of writing in the two different learning environments. This finding reflects on the social cognitive theory that considers how people think and how their thinking affects their behavior and their performance in the environment (Bandura, Vygotsky). Students perceived the Facebook writing platform as an informal learning tool and therefore they used informal writing, as opposed to the formal class writing in which they were used informal and formal writing. Since there was a mixed use of informal and formal writing on the Facebook platform but it is also impacting on class writing

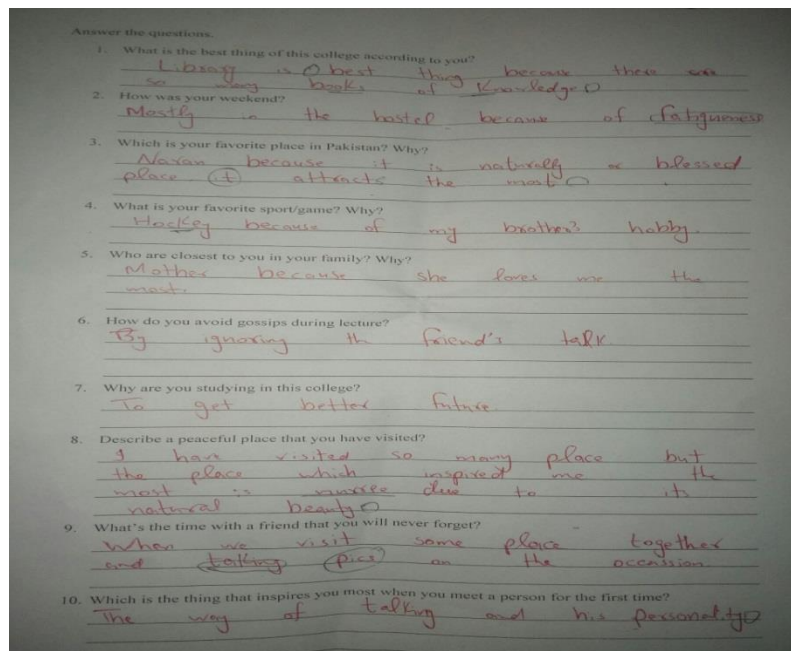


Figure 4 S4's class writing (English Assessment Test) (8 out of 20 points)

Similar to S4, student S11 used an informal type of writing on Facebook more often than a formal type of writing, but she earned 4 points for her in class writing. She made mostly errors such as S11 omitted end marks, improper use of capitalization, and spelling mistakes etc. It can be seen in figure no.3.

Quantitative Analysis through Questionnaire

In this section quantitative analysis is presented through Questionnaire. The Questionnaire was developed to investigate the students' perception about social media such as Facebook impact on their writing. It consists of 35 closed ended questions and its proper analysis is as follows:

Table 6
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.914	35

In this section quantitative analysis is presented through Questionnaire. The Questionnaire was developed to investigate the students' perception about social media such as Facebook impact on their writing. It consists of 35 closed ended questions and its proper analysis is as follows:

In the above table no. 6 reliability statistics described that value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.914 which showed that the Questionnaire is reliable.

Table 7
Descriptive Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
behaviors	200	1	4	1.94	.911	.831
comments	200	1	4	2.30	.914	.836
Ideas	200	1	4	2.44	.866	.750
Learning	200	1	4	2.30	.962	.925
confidence	200	1	4	2.52	.967	.934
motivate	199	1	4	2.34	.890	.792
Excited	200	1	4	2.40	.936	.875
Outside	200	1	4	2.43	.943	.889
discussion	200	1	4	2.42	.909	.827
interaction	200	1	4	2.48	.897	.804
Friends	200	1	4	2.72	.898	.806
Styles	200	1	4	2.67	.941	.886
entertainment	200	1	4	2.48	.935	.874
Read	199	1	4	2.56	.961	.924
Chatting	200	1	4	2.55	.976	.952
Fear	200	1	21	2.60	1.592	2.534
Improve	200	1	4	2.42	.974	.948
Positive	199	1	4	2.51	.999	.999
Status	200	1	22	2.68	1.695	2.872
negative	199	1	4	2.62	.913	.833
Freely	200	1	4	2.40	.997	.995
Correct	200	1	4	2.36	.956	.914
English	200	1	4	2.47	.987	.974
informal	200	1	4	2.56	.995	.991
Both	199	1	4	2.53	.989	.978
Peers	199	1	4	2.53	.920	.846
Trained	200	1	4	2.54	.923	.852
Imitate	200	1	4	2.50	.940	.884

Stress	200	1	4	2.66	.870	.757
Enhance	200	1	4	2.49	.940	.884
Faster	199	1	22	2.79	1.683	2.831
Impact	200	1	4	2.73	.895	.801
Destroy	200	1	4	2.66	.995	.989
cellphone	200	1	4	2.71	.970	.941
online savings	200	1	4	2.78	.987	.974
Valid N (list wise)	191					

The entire variables were measured from the accounting values and they were measured concurrently. Here data of 200 respondents of University of Lahore and Gov. College University Lahore were incorporated for under discussion. They were asked different questions through questionnaires. The responses of the respondents are as follows. The descriptive statistics showed that 2.79% respondents replied that technology advancement makes students' motivation and learning faster and major mean values showed very good results. There were 2.34% respondents showed that Facebook motivates the students to learn more English writing techniques. The respondents replied that through online, students get mail, text messages and other academic information, so it saves time mean values showed 2.78% that are good results. Similarly, 2.30% respondents replied through the comments I learn new English words, so Facebook is valuable. There were 2.73% respondents satisfied that new media technologies impacting on oral and written communication except mean values of learning showed 2.30% that Facebook is a source of interaction with peers that is helpful both in English learning and writing it is not sufficient. Facebook is a platform to communicate with foreign friends that increase students' confidence level to talk in English it is good because its 2.72% mean value is good. Similarly respondents replied that they spend time on Facebook to observe the writing behavior of others is not sufficient because its mean value is 1.94% it is not good.

The high variance was found the variable of status is 2.872 and low in the variable of ideas is .866. The standard deviation of status is 2.872 which showed a lot of variation between Facebook and students' writing and the lowest values of standard deviation was found in the variable of better ideas which showed less variation that is .866.

Conclusion

The existing study discovered the impact of Facebook on Pakistani ESL students' writing and results showed that negative impact on students' writing because social media writing have changed the students' formal writing. Facebook encouraged students' informal writing as using short forms, emoticons, abbreviation and poor sentences than improve them. It is not show creativity as students have no information about where and when use of formal and informal writing is appropriate. Informal writing is completely unacceptable in class writing. As knowing that Pakistani ESL Students' written communication was already poor. Even a large number of students did not get good marks in their English test. Even Facebook was helpful to improve their English written communication but not in formal English environment. Evidently, the bad impact of Facebook on Pakistani ESL students' writing has become a main threat among university students. Among students a meaningful interaction was hindered Facebook (closed group) in an informal environment. Facebook used improperly it can be useless to enhance knowledge. It can be helpful to share knowledge for student by using Facebook properly. Students' views exposed that Facebook was not a suitable source for learning because it

was badly impacting their writing. In educational settings technology can be seen as an ambiguous sword. As Liu (2010) stated that the improper use of technology can be harmful and take away students from learning. Consequently, using Facebook cautious planning is required for educational purposes. All efforts must be made to help students write accurately whether Facebook or class writing. To draws further exploration about impact of informal on students' formal writing and its causes to lead informal while formal writing is opened the door by this current study.

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