

# Does chatting on Social Networks Foresee Achievement in Writing?

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**Abstract:- Social Networking has played a significant role in the mutation of people's lives socially, economically, and academically. In education, social networks constituted a tool with which teachers and other education professionals facilitated teaching and enhanced learning. In this context, a significant number of studies investigated the impact of using social networks on language achievement in formal education. However, fewer probed the hidden implications it has when used outside of educational settings. This study aimed at investigating the impact of chatting on social networks on students' achievement in writing. The study adopted a correlational mixed-method design that incorporated a questionnaire and an achievement test in writing. The study surveyed 120 students from the English department at Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco. The findings revealed practical implications for all actors in the domain of language education. Moreover, it expected pedagogical impacts that could redirect students' skills towards academic achievement in writing.**

**Keywords:-** Social Networks; Achievement in Writing; Platforms; Chatting.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, more mobile technology is between our hands than at any time before. Smart mobile gadgets are now helping us to do anything and at any time. Platforms like YouTube replaced radio and satellite channels. Besides, online libraries and encyclopaedias substituted bookshelves. Also, social networks superseded letters and even emails. In this context, students' language performance became profoundly affected by the communication channels that different platforms have been offering. The present study narrowed the scope to examine the impact of chatting on social networks on students' performance in writing.

In the past, environmental factors affecting human behavior and life skills were widely investigated. More precisely, in language acquisition /learning, many theories approached the effect of the environment on language development and achievement. This paper used the lenses of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory for language learning to tackle the issue of the role of social networks play, as an environmental factor, in writing skills.

This study was built upon a major central concept of human language development. It tried to fill a research gap that was left untreated. It aimed to test the applicability of Vygotsky's theory with newly emerging environmental factors.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to language development argued that human language behavior does not actuate automatically. However, it is interposed by different artifacts in the individual's immediate environment (cited in Shi, 2019, p. 1059). Vygotsky's view emphasized that psychological mechanisms are not driven by the individuals' internal mediated activities, but the external mediated ones (cited in Shi, 2019, p. 1060). The sociocultural view of the external environment and social interaction missed updating its key findings to nowadays' environment. The outgrowth of new external factors affecting language development was not treated given Vygotsky's theory. In this respect, the present study came to update the validity of the sociocultural theory to second language acquisition and deeply investigate the relationship between new environmental factors and achievement in writing. More precisely, this paper came to treat the impact of interactive platforms on achievement in writing.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the most dominant sources of language input is the extreme use of social networks through ICTs in general and mobile technologies in particular. More precisely, students always find themselves attracted to the full range of options that social networks provide both in school settings or outside of it. They spend more time on social networks than on doing their school tasks. Moreover, their exposure to a variety of authentic language forms, including audio and text, exceeds the amount of language they are exposed to in language classes.

For this reason, there has always been a need for understanding the complicated relationship between social networks and achievement in writing. This study came to divulge the influence and analyze the outcomes. It framed itself within Vygotsky's theory that addressed the impact of individuals' environment on their behavior and performance.

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky states that the environment and other external factors are determining elements in making input meaningful and easy to grasp (cited in Mcleod, 2018, para. 1). Vygotsky's view for language development assumes that language acquisition is more about social and environmental learning labeled the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Cummings-Clay, 2016, para. 8).

The present paper aimed at filling the gap that still exists between a rich literature, which considered the environment a key element in language development, and current research that almost neglects the role of internet in enhancing human linguistic skills.

This research narrowed the scope by focusing on the role of students' usage of social networks in developing writing skills of Moroccan university students. The objective was to draw a linking line between present and past and endow Vygotsky's theory with timelessness features.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To survey which platforms students access the most when they get online and the effect they have on achievement in writing.
- To investigate the relationship between the students' degree of using social networks to chat and their achievement in writing.

### IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- It is expected that the use of particular types of platforms determines achievement in writing.
- It is believed that students who chat more often on social networks achieve better in writing.

### V. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### A. Theoretical Framework of the Study

The most known theory that addressed the impact of the learner's environment on language learning is the Vygotskian sociocultural. This theory did not address language learning as such; however, it presented the foundation for the study of language acquisition and the role of environmental factors in fostering language development.

Vygotsky's theory was very influential in the study of language acquisition, learning, and teaching. It served as a building block for a significant number of approaches. His theory gave much attention to the role of all the different aspects of an individual's environment in the development of his/her language skills. However, today's environment is different from the environment since then. The emergence of social networks as the most potent environmental factor

triggered the thirst of any researcher to test the applicability of Vygotsky's key findings to nowadays' environment.

#### ➤ *Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory*

Vygotsky's theory of social development is still the bedrock of many studies on language development. His view of language development emphasized the crucial role of social interaction in the process of making meaning (Mcleod, 2018, para. 2).

The sociocultural theory studied many aspects of human cognitive development, including arts, language, and learning (John-Esteiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192). His argument regarding the role of the socio-cultural environment in the development of human cognition came to dismiss the approaches that focused on the internal analysis of the individual. In this study, more concern was given to the theory's view regarding the development of language and the influences of the environment on the improvement of linguistic skills. Following the same direction, it aimed at disclosing the impact of the individual's environment on achievement in writing.

In this regard, Vygotsky gave much attention to the interdependence between the individual's social life and the construction of linguistic knowledge. The environment included three main settings: the social interaction, the more knowledgeable other (MKO), and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

#### B. Interactive Platforms and Achievement in Writing

On interactive platforms, mainly social networking websites, users interact either by writing instant messages, commenting on each other's posts, responding to other's comments, or talking to each other online.

Much previous research investigated the influence of social networks on achievement in writing. Purcell (2013) surveyed 2462 advanced placement (AP) and national writing project teachers (NWPT), and the results demonstrated that social networks were factors that shaped students' writing in various ways. The survey showed that interactive platforms on mobile technology became a helping tool not only for improving students' writing but also for teachers to teach writing to students at different school levels (p.4).

The surveyed teachers asserted that social media, texting, and commenting facilitated teens' creativity and expression, widened the audience for their writing online, and encouraged those learners to write in different formats and for varied purposes. The teachers' opinions all agreed that students had more opportunities to write if compared to older generations. However, they said that the style of students' writing changed a lot to include more informal language and expressions. They all agreed that writing interactively on M-tech had a tangible impact on students' writing performance.

The detailed results showed that 96% of teachers agreed that interactive platforms allowed students to share their work with a more substantial audience, 79% believed that interaction through interactive platforms enhanced collaboration, and 78% were with the idea that those platforms encouraged creativity and freed expression. The overall results confirmed that these interfaces created a more significant investment in the compositions that students produce and more integration in the process of their writings (p.4).

The study examined students in three different writing skills: 1) the ability to effectively organize and structure writing assignments. 2) The ability to understand and consider multiple viewpoints on a particular topic or issue. 3) The ability to synthesize materials into a cohesive piece of work. The results revealed that students got the best rating on their abilities previously labeled 1 & 2, but they did not do well on their ability to write cohesive pieces of work (Purcell, 2013, p.5).

The report did not deny the concerns of the teachers about the upshots of writing informally on social networks. They stated that the ambiguity between formal and informal writing seemed to be a real challenge for language learners since they were unable to write to different audiences. However, despite all adverse effects on students' writing, 50% of the teachers agreed that students' usage of social networks made them teach writing easier than before.

The negative influence of social networks on writing skills was also tackled by Vosper (2007), who believed that students' usage of instant messaging and other interactive platforms made them more reliant on technology to write (p.3). She meant that social networks heavily influenced the students' writing performances. They became reliant upon technology in catching up with mistakes while writing instead of forming good writing skills. She said that students shortened words and terminology, which impacted their ability to write formally. She suggested that the best manner to help students is to emphasize the importance of writing correctly and create real environments like pen pal friends (p. 3).

In total incongruence with what Vosper highlighted, Sweeney in 2010 believed that interactive platforms like text messaging and instant messaging made writing more meaningful and more engaging for students. Moreover, she said that the activity of writing took on new importance and contributed to a significant role in the way students communicate and share different posts and expressions (p.123). She said:

The current information and communication technologies (ICTs) are fundamentally changing the ways in which youth today read, write, and communicate; their

writing uses the medium of instant messaging (IM), text messaging or texting, Twitter, and e-mail, as well as shared electronic documents and postings on blogs and social networking sites. The writing itself does not always follow traditional conventions, featuring instead images, audio recordings, and a form of shorthand in which vowels and punctuation are irrelevant and time-consuming to use. (Sweeney, 2010, p.123)

In the quotation above, Sweeney evoked a crucial point, which is the new trend in writing. Writing full expressions and readable sentences were replaced by images, audios, and other forms of shortened language. She added that though some teachers are now very concerned about their students' formal writing, the impact could be an instructional advantage that could help the integration of interactive platforms like social networks into the writing syllabus (Sweeney, 2010, p. 2-6).

Another positive effect was noticed by Bezmer and Kress (2008) who believed that social networks are impacting students' writing in a way which made writing less formal and even sometimes reaches total informality, but it is more focused than before (cited in Sweeney, 2010, p. 5). Their view meant that writing on interactive platforms became more meaningful and helped in transmitting meanings in different ways. Put it differently, since the text which they read changed, the way everybody writes changed as well (Sweeney, 2010, p. 5).

The new writing behavior of social networks users was heavily influenced by the nature of technology interfaces and forms. Rockley in 2001 said, "Information designers play a key role when information types are initially designed. They are responsible for building information models. The design of these models and the accompanying templates are facilitating the writing and assembly process" (p. 8). Rockley showed that as long as the nature and design of these platforms change, the writing behavior and writing skills would change as well. He substantiated how massive could be the impact of interactive platforms on writing.

Another study conducted by Foulger & Jimenez-Silva in 2007 showed that educators think that interactive platforms could give the English language learners (ELLs) a valuable addition to develop their writing skills (p. 01). In theory, Hadaway, Vardell, and Young (2002) set seven teacher practices that could be transferred from the ubiquitous use of interactive platforms to the language classroom. They outlined seven ones: 1) Time, 2) opportunity to write, 3) a reason for writing, 4) a genuine environment, 5) access to role models, 6) a safe environment, 7) useful feedback, and a sense of community (cited in the Foulger & Jimenez-Silva, 2007).

**VI. METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

*A. Research Method*

This paper is a correlational study that gathered and analyzed data according to a mixed-method design. The use of both a qualitative and quantitative method had two main tangible reasons. First, because the qualitative study in the field of applied linguistics is devoted to the identification of behaviors, characteristics of individuals, and their preferences. Second, because quantitative analysis quantifies performance, and the degree or the number of individuals with a given choice (Sabah, 2014, para. 2).

*B. Sample and Sampling Techniques*

The target population of this study was anticipated to include a sample size goal of 120 students from the English department in Meknes, Morocco.

The study adopted stratified random sampling. This method of sampling helped in dividing the population into stratum or subgroups. The strata were formed based on students' university level. With this method of sampling, it was possible to involve a number of individuals who represent the whole population and who were chosen according to certain characteristics and traits. The specific features of the target population were the English department and the university degree.

*C. Measures and Instruments*

The instruments in this research paper were non-observational, and they consisted of a questionnaire and an achievement test in writing.

➤ *A Questionnaire:* It contained two dichotomous nominal questions. The first one integrated three variables representing the three languages that students may use on social networks. The second question aimed at revealing what students usually do on social networks.

➤ *Achievement Test in Writing:* This study opted for using an achievement test to evoke the students' level in this language skill.

*D. Data Collection*

Both the questionnaire and the achievement test in writing were administered simultaneously to facilitate the comparison and the correlation between students' responses to the survey and their scores in writing.

After collection, both data types were filled in the computer software: The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

➤ *One-way ANOVA.* It was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2. It analyzed if all students have the same performance in writing, regardless of the type of platforms or the way they use social networks. The one-way analysis of variance was used to see if there were any statistically significant differences between the means of the three independent (unrelated) groups. The groups were divided based on the type of platform they access the most and the way they use social networks.

**VII. DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

*A. The Impact of Interactive Platforms on Achievement in Writing.*

A one-way ANOVA statistical test was used to analyze the impact of platforms, which students access more often, on the students' achievement in writing. The aim was to see whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of the three independent (unrelated) groups. The three groups were categorized according to the platforms they prefer.

The null hypothesis for H1 stated that access to interactive platforms has no influence on achievement in writing, whereas the alternative hypothesis believes that access to interactive platforms impacts achievement in writing.

	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Between Groups	44,430	2	22,215	4,323	,015
Within Groups	601,268	117	5,139		
Total	645,698	119			

Table1:- One-Way ANOVA descriptive table for the students' achievement and platforms they access the most.

The results obtained demonstrated that the difference between means was significant at 0.015, which means that data should be tracked to know where the difference laid.

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Meknes Writing						
	Meknes platforms	(J) Meknes platforms	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	Audiovisual platforms	Interactive	,2568	,852	-,8748	1,3884
		Text	-1,2590	,060	-2,5583	,0403
	Interactive platforms	Audiovisual	-,2568	,852	-1,3884	,8748
		Text	-1,5158*	,014	-2,7767	-,2550
	Text platforms	Audiovisual	1,2590	,060	-,0403	2,5583
		Interactive	1,5158*	,014	,2550	2,7767
LSD	Audiovisual platforms	Interactive	,2568	,591	-,6873	1,2009
		Text	-1,2590*	,023	-2,3430	-,1751
	Interactive platforms	Audiovisual	-,2568	,591	-1,2009	,6873
		Text	-1,5158*	,005	-2,5677	-,4640
	Text platforms	Audiovisual	1,2590*	,023	,1751	2,3430
		Interactive	1,5158*	,005	,4640	2,5677
Bonferroni	Audiovisual platforms	Interactive	,2568	1,000	-,9010	1,4146
		Text	-1,2590	,070	-2,5884	,0704
	Interactive platforms	Audiovisual	-,2568	1,000	-1,4146	,9010
		Text	-1,5158*	,015	-2,8059	-,2258
	Text platforms	Audiovisual	1,2590	,070	-,0704	2,5884
		Interactive	1,5158*	,015	,2258	2,8059

*Based on observed means.  
The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 5,139.  
\*. The mean difference is significant at the ,05 level.*

Table 2:- One-Way ANOVA Post Hoc Tests for the Students' Achievement in Writing and Platforms they Access

Estimated Marginal Means of Meknes Writing

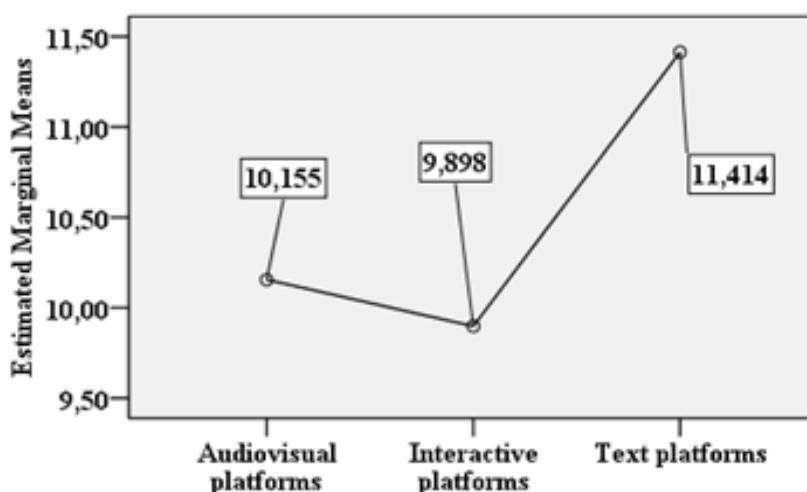


Fig 1:- One-way ANOVA means plot for the impact of MTIs on AW in Meknes.

The analysis of variance between the groups using the one-way ANOVA descriptive tables, the post hoc tests, and the ANOVA means plot illustrated that the variance between groups was mainly due to the text platforms group in addition to some impact from the audiovisual platforms group. That is to say, the subjects within the text platforms and audiovisual platforms populations were statistically different from the subjects in the interactive platforms group. However, the most substantial difference was noticed in the text group. Thus, the statistical variance between groups was not by chance, but it was due to access to text platforms group and audiovisual platforms group. In other words, access to interactive platforms was not a determining factor that raised students' scores in writing.

According to the results obtained, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and adopt the alternative one for H1.

*B. The Impact of Chatting on Achievement in Writing.*

Students were surveyed about what they usually do on social networks, and the results revealed the following.

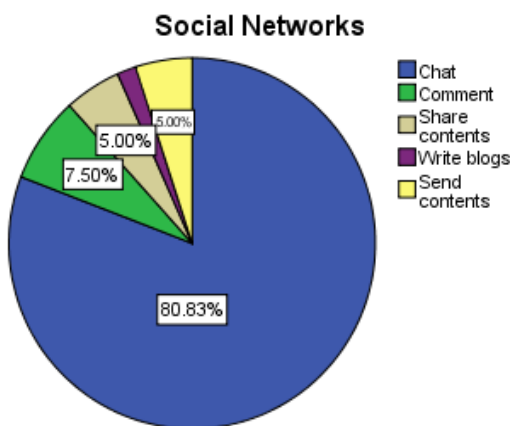


Fig 2:- Pie chart of what students do on social networks.

According to the pie chart above, the most significant number of students spend their time chatting when they access social networks.

A one-way ANOVA statistical test was used to analyze the impact of chatting on the students' achievement in writing. The aim was to see whether there were any statistically significant differences between the means of the groups of students who use social networks for different purposes. The independent groups were categorized according to the nature of their use to social networks.

The null hypothesis for H2 stated that no relationship exists between achievement in writing and chatting on social networks, whereas the alternative hypothesis believes that students who chat more on social networks achieve better in writing.

ANOVA					
Meknes Writing					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.794	4	7.948	1.489	.210
Within Groups	613.904	115	5.338		
Total	645.698	119			

Table 3:- One-way ANOVA for the nature of social networks usage and achievement in writing.

The results of the ANOVA table revealed a P-value of 0.210 larger than 0.05. With a significance level of this size, no relationship of influence existed between chatting and achievement in writing.

For this reason, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and adopt the alternative one for H2.

**VIII. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS**

The theoretical background of this study was based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which vindicates the role of the learner's environment in enhancing the linguistic skills of the learner.

The present study came to retest Vygotsky's theory by analyzing the role of social networks, as a new environmental factor, in enhancing achievement in writing.

The results revealed that no direct positive effect was noticed neither from accessing interactive platforms nor from chatting on social networks. Students were not influenced because it is known that on social networks, students text, comment, and chat with family and friends, which encourages creativity, expression, and fosters students' writing opportunities and writing diversity. However, they tend to write a more informal and non-structured language. They also tend to send emoticons, pictures, abbreviated writing and write in their mother tongue.

Students use interactive platforms a lot, but no clear positive impact has been proven. They resort to their mother tongue, and they do not care about the grammar, spelling, and correctness of the structure. Moreover, they use hashtags instead of linking verbs and expressions, which impact their ability to develop cohesion and coherence.

## IX. CONCLUSION

The present study disconfirmed with Vygotsky's view to the positive influence of learners' environment on shaping their language skills. The usage of interactive platforms did not have any impact on achievement in writing. However, as a study limitation, the investigation of the issue focused more on correlating achievement in speaking and students' behaviors towards using interactive platforms. Maybe future research would probe detailed elements in writing, such as choice of ideas, organization, selection of expressions and words, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

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