

Investigating the Effect of Social Media on EFL Students' Written Production: Case of Third-Year EFL Students at Tlemcen University, Algeria

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Abstract

The combination between technology and education has given birth to a new form of assessment called: e-assessment. The latter assesses learners using different digital means one of which are social media. The present study investigated the impact of social media, as being one aspect of e-assessment tools, on EFL students' written production. It tried to highlight the nature of this impact, enquired about the reasons behind their writing difficulties, and explored whether these errors were caused by social media or not. This research work relied on a case study that consisted of 31 third-year undergraduates and 22 English teachers at the department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. The data were gathered through the use of two questionnaires administered to both learners and instructors plus two writing tasks, one assigned on social media and the other in the classroom. Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively through error analysis. After identifying the different errors produced by the students, the findings revealed that a relationship existed between learners' use of social media and their writing issues. Their intensive use of social media led to a significant decrease in the writing level of the learners who have developed a new form of writing that includes linguistic habits which reflect the informalities often found on a social media environment, and do not necessarily follow the norms and rigours of the English language. They have become unable to distinguish between the formal and informal context to the point that certain linguistic aspects have become fossilized.

Keywords: Error analysis, fossilization, linguistic deficiencies, social media, writing

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