FB Chat N SS Writing (Facebook Chat and Students' Writing)

Harmeet Singh[1], Balbita Kaur[2] & Akmal Ahamed Kamal[3]

[1,3]Faculty of Education Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Malaysia, [2]Straits Scientific (M) Sdn Bhd, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: harmeetsingh@uitm.edu.my

Abstract
Social networking websites are not only famous in Malaysia but all around the world. Schill (2011) stated that social media sites only encourage negative effects. It became so serious that academicians are still researching how these social networking sites like Facebook are affecting students' language performances. In line with those statements, this study focused to find out what were the characteristics of Facebook Chat, to examine the reasons for students to use those characteristics and to find out whether students used those characteristics in their academic writing tasks. The methodology revolved around questionnaires and written work whereby students were asked to answer questionnaires and write essays on three given topics. The respondents for this research were 40 TESL undergraduates from a local public university. Samples were those who had Facebook accounts and were active Facebookers. It was apparent that 42.5% of the samples spent more than 3 hours on Facebook in which 45% of them used Facebook specifically to chat. It was shocking as 50% of the samples agreed that they used Facebook Chat features like abbreviations in their academic writing. Besides that, 55% of them agreed that they were approached or scolded by their lecturers for using those features. As for the written work of the students, a staggering 74% of the essays had Facebook chat features in them. Frequent use of chat language may impact one's ability to communicate effectively in formal settings. Over time, individuals may struggle with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as clarity and coherence in their writing. Furthermore, frequent use of chat language may impact one's ability to communicate effectively in formal settings. Over time, individuals may struggle with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as clarity and coherence in their writing.
Keywords: Facebook Chat, Writing, Social Media, Netspeak, Text-Speak

Introduction
Social media platforms have gained significant popularity among students, offering instant communication and online engagement. However, apprehensions have arisen about the potential negative consequences of social media on students' writing skills. Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, Flickr, Friendster, Hi5, Tumblr, Orkut are some of the social networking sites and among them, Facebook is said to be the most popular. One of the very

attractive features of Facebook is Facebook Chat. Even way before the birth of this chat, issues pertaining to the usage of abbreviations, deliberate spelling errors, g-clippings and many more could be seen frequently on the internet, on blogs as well as in newspapers. One could read statements such as 'I hate texting!' and 'I hate those stupid abbreviations!' frequently in newspapers and on webpages, (Crystal 2008). The issues are not only about the short forms but are also related to students writing as well. It can be seen that most lecturers are complaining that the chat language is ruining students' English as there are many abbreviations like 'n' for and, 'nvm' for never mind, 'h8' for hate, 'd' for the, '5n' for fine and many more in students' academic writing tasks as well as in examination scripts (Weiss, 2008). In one of the reports by one of the biggest examination boards from the UK, it was disclosed that examination answer scripts were flooded with abbreviated words (Henry, 2004). Hence, this study focused to find out what were the characteristics of Facebook Chat, to examine the reasons for students to use those characteristics and to find out whether students used those characteristics in their academic writing tasks.

Literature Review

Social media platforms, including Facebook Chat, have become prevalent in the lives of students, enabling instant messaging and facilitating social interactions. However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential damages that Facebook Chat may have on students' writing skills. Several studies have investigated the impact of Facebook Chat on students' writing quality, language usage, grammar, spelling, and overall academic performance. The findings provide insights into the potential damages that Facebook Chat may have on students' writing skills and shed light on the implications for educators, parents, and policymakers. According to Tsai (2020), frequent use of Facebook Chat has been associated with an increase in grammar and spelling errors in students' writing. The abbreviated and informal nature of chat conversations may contribute to a lack of attention to proper grammar usage and accurate spelling (Wood et al., 2012; Tsai & Li, 2020). This can impact the overall quality of students' written work and hinder their ability to communicate effectively. Besides that, another study suggests that excessive use of Facebook Chat has been found to negatively impact the overall writing quality of students. The rapid-fire and fragmented nature of chat conversations can hinder the development of coherent and well-structured writing (Wood et al., 2012; Oberst et al., 2021). Students may struggle to express their ideas clearly and concisely, leading to a decline in the quality of their written work. Furthermore, the limited vocabulary and colloquial expressions commonly used in Facebook Chat can restrict students' linguistic growth and hinder their ability to express themselves effectively in more formal writing contexts (Wood et al., 2012; Junco & Cole-Avent, 2020). This narrowing of vocabulary and expression may limit students' ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas in a sophisticated manner. According to Oberst (2010), 73% of wired American teens spend a lot of time on social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. Researchers started to research long ago on how these social networking sites like Facebook affect students' language performance but are yet to make a conclusion due to the everchanging nature of technology (Fodeman and Monroe 2009). However, most arguments suggested that it only affected them negatively. In Malaysia, educators are concerned over the declining standards of written language (Muniandy et al, 2010). Students were abbreviating words and phrases and used them in the answer sheets and ignored the fundamental rules of Standard English (Shafie et al, 2007). Netspeak did have a major impact on students' performances and quality of work. This statement can further be validated by the study done by Dansieh in which 82.4%

and 15.8% of lecturers chose the options harmful and may be harmful when asked about the impact of Netspeak on students writing skills (Dansieh, 2011). We can clearly see that this phenomenon is so bad that it is not just affecting school students but also university-level students. What is raising a red flag is as what Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith and Rankin Macgill (cited in Weiss, 2009) said, several educators and observers are concerned that the abbreviated language style of text messaging is inappropriately filtering into official school writing. Prof. Aderanti Adepoju (n.d) while agreeing with this statement also said that for most students, writing complete English during chatting on Facebook was a mere waste of time. Both the young and the old seem to be in a rush to construct complete sentences. In his article, he also stated that students do not write good English even in serious exams like the General Certificate of Education (GCE), which clearly shows how bad the effect of chatting is. In another online article written by Andy Bloxham (2010), it was argued that many educators are not happy with the surge in the number of children who are using text-speak or social networking chat language such as 2moro, msgs, lol and bk. A newspaper article in the USA Today showed that a parent, Carl Sharp saw his son's summer job application whereby it was filled with abbreviations; *"i want 2 b a counselor because i love 2 work with kids."* That was the moment when he decided to stop both his kids from chatting in the social networking sites such as Facebook. Thus, this study concentrates on Facebook Chat characteristics or traits found in students writing. For the purpose of this research, the researcher focused on four of the features that Thurlow (2004) came up with, which are; abbreviations, g-clippings (excluding the end -g letter), number homophones and letter homophones.

Methodology
Questionnaire

The researcher decided to gather the data in two ways. The first was to use questionnaires, which were distributed to all the respondents at exactly the same time. There were eight close-ended questions with a minimum of two and a maximum of three answer choices. There were also two open-ended questions. Since, the respondents were from two different classes, the researcher gathered all the forty respondents during their free time for them to answer it exactly at the same place and time. The questionnaire that was used was adapted from Hezili (2010), Jonathan (n.d), Junila (2012), Rao (n.d) and Davis (n.d). The questionnaire was then edited to best suit the requirement of this particular research.

Essays

The second method was to ask the respondents to write a short essay of at least 200 to 250 words on the given topic. This step was repeated until the students were done writing all three topics. The topics of the essays were; advantages and disadvantages of students using handphones, advantages and disadvantages of students having Facebook and a free topic (students can write about anything that they like). Respondents were not at all allowed to bring back the writing task. They had to complete and submit it on that day itself. This was to avoid the students from using the copy paste shortcut in completing the task. The essays were then analyzed word by word specifically looking for Facebook Chat traits like abbreviations, g-clipping, number and letter homophones as highlighted by Thurlow (2004). The respondents for this research were TESL students of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Puncak Alam campus. Only respondents that had a Facebook account and that were active Facebookers (must be active not just in Facebook merely but also in Facebook Chat) were chosen for this research.

Findings and Discussions
Questionnaires

For this study only students who had a Facebook account and were active Facebookers were chosen. Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire it was found that 17 out of 40 students (42.5%) spent more than 3 hours in a day surfing the social networking site. Only 10 respondents spend 1 hour on Facebook in a day. Based on the survey as well, 18 respondents normally used Facebook to chat with family and friends whereas another 8 respondents normally did group discussions on Facebook. Only 10% of the respondents surfed Facebook to read and reply comments. Besides that, 45% of the respondents chatted very frequently via Facebook Chat. On the other hand, as few as 8 respondents seldom chatted on Facebook. 18 respondents used English very frequently when they chatted on Facebook. The other 18 used it frequently leaving behind only 4 respondents that used English seldomly when chatting on Facebook. The table shows that majority of the respondents that is 57.5% used abbreviations when they chatted on Facebook instead of writing the words or phrases or sentences in full. 8 students on the other hand did both; used abbreviations and wrote in full when they chatted via Facebook Chat. The percentage of respondents who answered yes that they did use abbreviations in their academic writing tasks was a staggering 50%. 7 respondents however were not sure whether or not they have used abbreviations in their academic writing tasks. As many as 22 out of 40 respondents were approached or scolded for using abbreviations in their academic writing tasks. On the other hand, merely 8 respondents were not approached. The remaining 20% of respondents were not sure whether or not they were approached or scolded. The most significant reason for 23 respondents to use abbreviations was due to the influence of SMS Language. However, 10 respondents used abbreviations, as it was easier to write with it. To impress others as well as just for fun were other reasons given by respondents, which had a percentage of 2.5% each. Last but not least, was question number ten; which of the following do you think you have done the most in your academic writing tasks? 23 respondents (57.5%) thought that they indeed used abbreviations in their academic writing tasks. 7 respondents thought that they have done both, used and did not used abbreviations in their academic writing tasks. On the contrary, 25% of the respondents thought they had never used abbreviations in their academic writing tasks.

Students Essays

From the analysis of the student's essays, the researcher categorised all the Facebook Chat characteristics or traits found into a table. In order for the researcher to do so, he first calculated the usage of Facebook Chat traits in each of the student's essays. This was to get a percentage to show how many out of 120 essays had Facebook Chat characteristics in them. Then he calculated the number of Facebook Chat characteristics or traits by looking at the individual traits like abbreviations, number homophones, letter homophones and g-clipping. Only then, the researcher categorised the traits into the table. For Essay A, 20 out of 40 essays had Facebook Chat traits in them and the balance 20 essays did not have any Facebook Chat traits in them. For Essay B, 32 out of 40 essays had Facebook Chat traits in them. On the other hand, for Essay C, Facebook Chat traits were in 22 out of 40 of the essays. The overall number of essays that had the Facebook Chat traits in them was as high as 74 (61.67%) whereas merely 46 (38.33%) essays were clean as they were not polluted by any Facebook Chat traits in them. This data clearly proves that students did use Facebook Chat traits in their academic writing, which answered research question 3 which was to find out whether students used

Facebook Chat characteristics in their academic writing tasks. There was a total of 97 abbreviations, 4 g-clippings, 12 letter homophones and last but not least 22 number homophones. To conclude it can be said that active Facebookers had the tendency to use chat language traits like abbreviations, g-clippings, letter homophones as well as number homophones. A staggering 61.67% of essays had those trains in them. It can be said that frequent use of chat language may impact one's ability to communicate effectively in formal settings. Over time, individuals may struggle with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as clarity and coherence in their writing. Furthermore, frequent use of chat language may impact one's ability to communicate effectively in formal settings. Over time, individuals may struggle with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as clarity and coherence in their writing. The researcher has transferred the Facebook Chat traits found in the essays in Table 1.0 below

Table 1.0

Words resembling the Facebook Chat Characteristics found in the students' essays

Abbreviations	Oredi	Already	Gd	Good	Ppr	Paper
	Oryt	All right	Gf	Girlfriend	Prbz	Problems
	Oso	Also	Gv	Give	Pic	Picture
	Bz	Busy	Hw	How	Rmb	Remember
	Bl	Bill	Hpn	Happen	Reli	Really
	Beta	Better	Hrd	Heard,hard	Skul	School
	Bf	Boy/best friend	Hby	Hubby	Slw	Slow
	Bt	But	Hv	Have	Shd	Should
	Buk	Book	Hrt	Heart	Swit	Sweet
	By	Buy	Hpe	Hope	Sis	Sister
	Bot	Buy,bye	Hs	House	Zzz	Sleepy
	Bro	Brother	Info	Information	Sry	Sorry
	Bak	Back	Net	Internet	Sn	Send
	Belif	Believe	Jz	Just	Sub	Subject
	Chnge	Change	Knw	Know	Txt	Text
	Cam	Camera	Lil	Little	Tz	This
	Cald	Called	Lv	Love,live	Tok	Talk
	Cn	Can	Luk	Look	Tot	Taught
	Cld	Could	Lyk	Like	Tch	Teach
	Cnt	Cannot	AM	Morning	Tc	Take,take care
	Cm	Come	Mil	Mother in law	Thm	Them
	Dwnld	Download	Msg	Message	Ter	There
	Dwn	Down	Msj	Massage	Tym	Time
	Dnt	Dont	Md	Made	Wtch	Watch
	Dip	Deep	Mr	More	Wf	With
	Xtra	Extra	Ntg	Nothing	Wz	Was
	Xzm	Exam	Nvm	Never mind	Wht	What
	Exp	Explain,experience	Nw	Now	Hu	Who
	Enuf	Enough	Nxt	Next	Whn	When
	Fav	Favourite	Ppl	People	Wer	Where
	Fud	Food	Ply	Play	Wl	Will
	Fin	Finish	Plz	Please	Wk	Week,weak
	Gt	Got,get				
G-clipping	Brin	Bring	Getn	Getting		
	Comin	Coming	notin	Nothing		
Letter homophones	B	Be	M	Am	U	You
	C	See	N	And	V	We
	D	The	R	Are	X	No
	K	Okay	S	As,ass	Y	Why
Number homophnes	Ny1	anyone	H8	Hate	Sum1	Someone
	8	Ate,eight	L8	Late,light	10x	Thanks
	B4	before	M8	Might	2nite	Tonight
	4m	From,form	M9	Mine	2geta	Together
	5n	Fine	N9	Night	2moro	Tomorrow
	4	For,four	R8	Right	2	Two,too,to
	4eva	Forever	St8	Straight	1	Want,one
					W8	Wait

Recommendations

First and foremost, this was a small-scaled research. There were only 40 respondents chosen for this research. Besides that, the researcher was only able to look at 4 Facebook Chat characteristics or traits though there were other traits that were equally or more

important that could have been included in this research. Hence, the findings from this research should not be generalized. Moreover, the findings of this research might not be applicable to other respondents of other universities in different parts of the world. As for future directions, other social media platforms like Twitter or Instagram could be examined. Even other elements of research can be incorporated in the future research for example can Facebook be used as a tool to improve students writing skills?

Corresponding Author
Harmeet Singh, Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, 42300, Selangor, harmeetsingh@uitm.edu.my

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