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Exploring College Students' Perceptions of Facebook Usage and Academic Writing: A Quantitative Study Among Language Education Students

Dayang Mersiana A. Sabtula[1], Geanky E. Orozco-Malinao, MAELT[2], Rolando J. Malinao, MAED[3], Ramnaser S. Lukman, MAED[4]

[1]Student, College of Education, Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Sanga-Sanga, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines
[2]Associate Professor V, Integrated Laboratory School, Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines
[3]Assistant Professor IV, Integrated Laboratory School, Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines
[4]Instructor I, Integrated Laboratory School, Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines

Email of Corresponding Author: geankymalinao@msutawi-tawi.edu.ph

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Abstract

This study examined Facebook caption exposure and perceived academic writing skills among Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students at Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, Philippines. Anchored in New Literacy Studies and Constructivist Learning Theory, the investigation employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design involving 53 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a modified, researcher-developed Likert-scale questionnaire measuring Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing competence in content, language use, and vocabulary. Weighted means and the Kruskal–Wallis test were used for statistical analysis. Findings revealed a moderate extent of Facebook caption exposure (M = 3.43) and a great extent of perceived writing competence (M = 3.79). Among the writing dimensions, language use obtained the highest mean (M = 3.85), followed by content (M = 3.79) and vocabulary (M = 3.72). The Kruskal–Wallis test indicated no statistically significant difference in the reported comparison involving Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing skills ($p = 0.07$), resulting in the non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings emphasize that Facebook caption exposure alone does not establish differences in perceived writing competence and that structured academic instruction remains essential. The study recommends guided social media writing activities, responsible digital engagement, and further research incorporating direct writing assessments. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), the study highlights the relevance of digital literacy to language education. Its educational sustainability implications include informing instructional practices, supporting responsible technology integration, and strengthening institutional efforts to develop academic writing competence among prospective English teachers.

Keywords: Academic Writing; Facebook Captions; Language Education; Perceived Writing Skills; Social Media Exposure; Sustainable Development Goal 4

1. Introduction

Social media has transformed students' communication and writing practices, with Facebook providing opportunities for informal expression through caption writing. Creating and reading captions involve vocabulary selection, sentence construction, and idea organization, which may contribute to writing development (Martínez Lirola, 2022). For Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) major in English students, writing competence is essential for academic success and future teaching responsibilities. Although Facebook-based educational activities have demonstrated benefits for writing development (Martínez Lirola, 2022), limited research has examined students' independent exposure to Facebook captions and its relationship with perceived writing skills. This study addresses this gap by examining Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing competence in terms of content, language use, and vocabulary among Language Education students.

Facebook provides an accessible environment for informal writing, allowing students to express ideas, interact with others, and practice language skills (Martínez Lirola, 2022). However, existing research has examined general Facebook usage and academic performance (Manzoor & Ahmed, 2024). Less attention has been given to caption exposure as a specific digital writing experience. Examining this practice is particularly relevant to BSEd-English students, whose academic and professional preparation requires effective content organization, language use, and vocabulary. Recent research on ESL students also documents the relevance of Facebook-based writing experiences to formal and informal English writing (Nisa et al., 2023).

Facebook offers opportunities for collaboration, idea generation, and informal writing practice (Martínez Lirola, 2022), although excessive engagement may cause distraction, reduced concentration, and informal writing habits (Malapajo & Velasco, 2025; Manzoor & Ahmed, 2024; Kadirhan & Yildirim, 2025). Students' perceptions of these experiences vary, with some recognizing benefits for vocabulary and expression and others identifying challenges involving grammar and academic formality (Malapajo and Velasco, 2025; Alhajjaj et al., 2025). Facebook engagement may provide opportunities for writing practice and language development (Martínez Lirola, 2022). Nevertheless, social media interaction does not necessarily improve writing proficiency without structured educational experiences (Pham et al., 2025). Parrella, Leggette, and Redwine (2021) further observed that digital engagement may strengthen students' awareness of differences between informal and academic writing. Research also indicates that Facebook-based activities can improve writing achievement, reflective expression, vocabulary, and confidence (Almansour and Kurt, 2022; Putri and Aminatun, 2021; Alhajjaj et al., 2025). However, excessive social media engagement may contribute to reduced concentration (Manzoor & Ahmed, 2024). These findings demonstrate that Facebook engagement presents both opportunities and challenges for perceived writing development. Students' perceptions of social media as a resource for English writing have also been examined in recent EFL research (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

International studies recognize Facebook's potential to support reflective writing and collaborative learning while highlighting concerns regarding excessive usage and academic performance (Almansour and Kurt, 2022; Manzoor & Ahmed, 2024; Kadirhan & Yildirim, 2025). In the Philippines, digital literacy is increasingly recognized as an important component of functional literacy (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025). Zarate (2025) identified social media benefits for collaboration and vocabulary alongside concerns about syntax and informal writing. Likewise, Tenaja and Oco (2023) associated Facebook engagement with creative writing, while Barredo and Cadapan (2022) highlighted opportunities for idea generation and challenges in grammatical accuracy. Rabongue, Santos, and Medina (2024) also reported improvements in vocabulary and grammar through Facebook-based language activities. Locally, the study involved 53 BSEd-English students at Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, comprising seven first-year, seven second-year, 18 third-year, and 21 fourth-year students. Their experiences provide an institutional perspective on Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing competence.

The study is anchored in New Literacy Studies (NLS), introduced by Brian Street (1984) and developed by James Paul Gee (1996), and Constructivist Learning Theory, associated with Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. NLS views literacy as a social practice shaped by context, purpose, and audience, while Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, and interaction. Together, these perspectives explain how Facebook caption engagement may contribute to students' awareness of language and writing practices. The conceptual framework identifies Facebook caption exposure as the independent variable and perceived writing skills, measured through content, language use, and vocabulary, as the dependent variable. A researcher-developed survey questionnaire was used to examine students' self-reported perceptions rather than directly assess actual writing performance.

Previous studies have investigated structured Facebook learning activities and general social media engagement (Martínez Lirola, 2022; Manzoor & Ahmed, 2024). However, students' independent exposure to Facebook captions and its association with perceived writing competence remain insufficiently explored. Conflicting findings concerning vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and writing formality further justify this investigation (Zarate, 2024; Alhajjaj et al., 2025). Accordingly, the study aimed to determine students' extent of exposure to Facebook captions, assess their perceived writing skills in content, language use, and vocabulary, and examine whether a significant difference exists between Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing skills. The null hypothesis states that no significant difference exists between these variables. The investigation was limited to 53 BSEd-English students and their self-reported experiences, excluding direct writing assessments and other social media platforms.

The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by examining digital literacy experiences relevant to academic writing and language education. Understanding students' perceptions of Facebook caption exposure may inform instructional strategies that support content development, language use, vocabulary, and responsible digital engagement. Its findings may also provide insights for strengthening literacy education among prospective English teachers.

The study contributes to educational and digital sustainability by examining how informal social media engagement relates to students' perceived writing competence. Its findings may assist educators in understanding digital writing practices and developing appropriate literacy initiatives. At the institutional level, the research may inform curriculum planning and future investigations into social media and academic writing. By emphasizing responsible digital engagement, the study supports continued efforts to integrate relevant digital literacy experiences into teacher education.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design to assess students' exposure to Facebook captions and their perceived writing skills in terms of content, language use, and vocabulary. This approach facilitated the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Facebook caption exposure served as the independent variable, while perceived writing skills represented the dependent variables. Weighted mean and the Kruskal–Wallis Test were employed to describe responses and determine significant differences among groups.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography (MSU–TCTO), specifically within the College of Education in Sanga-Sanga, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. The institution provides higher education opportunities to students in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents comprised 53 BSEd-English students enrolled at MSU–TCTO. These students represented different year levels within the program and provided self-reported information regarding their exposure to Facebook captions and perceived writing competence in content, language use, and vocabulary.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of BSEd-English students across year levels. This technique allowed the inclusion of respondents from different academic levels and supported the collection of diverse student perspectives (Sevilla et al., 2007). The final sample consisted of 53 students.

2.5 Research Instrument

A modified, researcher-developed survey questionnaire was used to measure students' exposure to Facebook captions and their perceived writing skills. The instrument employed a Likert-scale format, with responses ranging from Low to Very Great Extent, to quantify students' experiences and self-assessments. Its sections addressed Facebook caption engagement and perceived writing competence in content, language use, and vocabulary. Content referred to the clarity, relevance, and organization of ideas; language use covered grammar, sentence structure, and conventions; and vocabulary concerned appropriate word selection and expression. The instrument assessed perceived competence rather than actual writing performance.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was secured from the College of Education before data collection. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, and voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were ensured.

Questionnaires were administered over three days: undergraduate BSEd-English students were surveyed on the first day, third-year students on the second day, and first- and second-year students on the third day. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, organized, and forwarded to a statistician for analysis and interpretation.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied to the collected data. The weighted mean determined the extent of Facebook caption exposure and students' perceived writing skills in content, language use, and vocabulary. The Kruskal–Wallis Test was used to examine significant differences in Facebook exposure and perceived writing competence among student groups, consistent with nonparametric statistical procedures (Garcia, 2019).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards by obtaining institutional permission and informed consent before administering the questionnaires. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the research objectives. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout data collection and analysis to protect participants' identities and responses.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Extent of College Students' Exposure to Facebook Captions

The findings revealed that students' exposure to Facebook captions ranged from moderate to great extent, with mean scores between 2.55 and 3.96. The grand mean of 3.43, interpreted as Moderate Extent, indicated that students regularly encountered Facebook captions without reporting consistently high exposure. The highest indicator recorded a mean of 3.96 (SD = 0.88), while the lowest obtained 2.55 (SD = 1.08). These findings suggest that Facebook captions form part of students' everyday digital communication, providing opportunities for informal writing engagement. This supports Malapajo and Velasco (2025), who reported that moderate social media exposure may influence students' expressive practices without overwhelming academic writing. Similarly, Tenaja and Oco (2023) identified Facebook as a widely used platform associated with creative writing skills, emphasizing its relevance to informal literacy development. A recent Facebook writing-activity study further illustrates the educational relevance of guided short-form English writing, although its intervention findings are not directly comparable with the present survey (Adi Kasuma et al., 2024).

3.2 Students' Perceived Academic Writing Skills

Students reported a Great Extent of perceived writing competence across content, language use, and vocabulary, with an overall mean of 3.79. Language use received the highest mean (3.85), followed by content (3.79) and vocabulary (3.72). These results reflect students' positive self-assessments of their writing abilities despite exposure to informal Facebook captions. These findings may be considered alongside research on Facebook-supported academic writing (Martínez Lirola, 2022).

3.2.1 Perceived Writing Skills in Terms of Content

Content obtained an overall mean of 3.79, interpreted as Great Extent. Individual indicator means ranged from 3.49 to 3.98, indicating that students generally perceived themselves as capable of developing, organizing, and expressing ideas effectively. This finding relates to research examining Facebook as an environment for writing practice and idea sharing (Martínez Lirola, 2022).

3.2.2 Perceived Writing Skills in Terms of Language Use

Language use recorded the highest overall mean of 3.85, interpreted as Great Extent, with individual indicator means ranging from 3.57 to 4.23. This indicates that students positively assessed their ability to apply grammatical structures, sentence construction, and appropriate language conventions. The result may be considered alongside research on Facebook-supported writing practice (Martínez Lirola, 2022). Likewise, Parrella, Leggette, and Redwine (2021) found that social media engagement may increase students' awareness of differences between informal and formal writing, helping them recognize appropriate academic language conventions.

3.2.3 Perceived Writing Skills in Terms of Vocabulary

Vocabulary obtained an overall mean of 3.72, interpreted as Great Extent, with individual indicator means ranging from 3.51 to 3.94. Although vocabulary received the lowest mean among the three writing dimensions, students generally perceived themselves as capable of selecting appropriate words and expressions. This finding relates to Putri and Aminatun (2021), who examined students' perceptions of Facebook-based writing practice. Similarly, Zarate (2025) identified social media as a potential contributor to vocabulary growth, writing productivity, and collaboration, although informal writing practices may also introduce grammatical and syntactical challenges.

3.3 Significant Differences in Facebook Caption Exposure and Perceived Writing Skills

The Kruskal–Wallis Test yielded a p-value of 0.07, exceeding the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the result was not statistically significant, and the null hypothesis of no significant difference was not rejected. The findings did not establish a statistically significant difference in the reported comparison involving Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing skills. This result is consistent with Parrella, Leggette, and Redwine (2021), who reported that social media use did not negatively affect students' perceived writing abilities but increased awareness of differences between informal and academic writing. Similarly, Pham et al. (2025) emphasized that social media facilitates communication and collaboration without necessarily determining writing proficiency. However, Zarate (2025) identified both positive contributions to vocabulary and collaboration and challenges involving syntax and informal writing habits. Likewise, (Martínez Lirola, 2022) highlighted Facebook's potential for writing practice, peer interaction, and idea sharing, which may support academic writing development (Martínez Lirola, 2022). These findings indicate that students' perceptions of writing competence may involve factors beyond Facebook caption exposure, including formal instruction and academic learning experiences.

3.4 Educational Implications of Facebook Caption Exposure

The findings indicate that students experienced moderate Facebook caption exposure while reporting a great extent of perceived writing competence. The absence of a statistically significant result suggests that the study did not establish a measurable difference in the reported comparison. These findings support considering Facebook as a supplementary environment for writing practice rather than a replacement for structured academic instruction. The results highlight the potential value of integrating digital literacy, responsible social media engagement, and guided writing activities into teacher education programs. Educators may encourage students to distinguish informal captions from formal academic writing while strengthening content organization, language use, and vocabulary. This is consistent with the Philippine Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025), which emphasizes the relevance of digital literacy to functional literacy development. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of balancing informal digital communication with structured academic writing instruction. Facebook-based peer-comment research likewise provides a basis for considering structured feedback and revision activities as supplementary writing practices (Pham & Luong, 2023).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students at Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography had a moderate extent of exposure to Facebook captions (M = 3.43) and a great extent of perceived writing skills (M = 3.79) in terms of content, language use, and vocabulary. The Kruskal–Wallis Test revealed no statistically significant difference between Facebook caption exposure and perceived writing skills ($p = 0.07$), exceeding the 0.05 significance level; thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. These findings suggest that exposure to Facebook captions alone does not establish significant differences in students' perceived writing competence, which may also be shaped by classroom instruction, reading habits, academic experiences, and language proficiency. The study emphasizes the importance of formal instruction and continuous writing practice in developing academic writing competence.

Teachers are encouraged to integrate guided social media writing activities into instruction to connect informal digital expression with academic writing conventions, emphasizing grammatical accuracy, appropriate vocabulary, and formal language use. Students should practice responsible Facebook engagement and use caption writing to develop idea expression, vocabulary, and creativity while maintaining appropriate writing standards. Future researchers are encouraged to include larger and more diverse student populations, examine additional variables such as grammar proficiency, writing anxiety, academic performance, and social media usage frequency, and employ mixed-methods or experimental approaches to investigate the effects of Facebook caption writing on actual writing performance.

The study was limited to 53 Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students from the College of Education at Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography, restricting the generalizability of the findings to other academic programs and institutions. It relied on self-reported perceptions collected through a survey questionnaire rather than direct assessments of actual writing performance. Furthermore, the investigation focused exclusively on exposure to Facebook captions and perceived writing skills in content, language use, and vocabulary, excluding other social media platforms and potential factors influencing writing competence. Consequently, the findings describe students' perceived abilities and the reported statistical comparison but do not establish a causal relationship between Facebook caption exposure and academic writing proficiency.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The researchers declare no conflict of interest, and no external funding was reported for this study. The researchers acknowledge the voluntary participation of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students and the

institutional support of Mindanao State University–Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography. The study employed non-invasive methods through survey questionnaires, with informed consent obtained from all participants and due consideration for their privacy and confidentiality. No personally identifying information was disclosed in the presentation of the study.

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