

READING AND WRITING: AS THE TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE FACEBOOK INTERACTIONS AMONG TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS

Shehu Ladan

Department of Languages
State College of Legal and Islamic Studies, Wamakko, Sokoto
shehuladan16@gmail.com

Mubarak Bala

Department of General Studies
Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto
balamubarak25@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading and writing are two language skills that significantly influence Facebook interactions. Nowadays, writing is a more effective and prepared medium for Facebook interactions in conformity with reading, which gives users the courage to combine the two by going through the text and making their inputs in the comment section. People found it interesting to use English and their native languages to express their thoughts and feelings in response to an event or situation. Interaction becomes an integral form of communication that allows people to express their thoughts and feelings using writing or other language skills. Through the conceptual method, this paper discusses possible developments and the importance of writing in interactions with detailed analyses of how people interact and share their feelings about life-related issues using the Facebook application. Facebook is a typical application that connects individuals to interact and share feelings using their grammar and vocabulary skills. These two variables of reading and writing are the main focus of this paper as they are seen more often and inspire Facebook users to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The study results showed that reading and writing skills provide structure and relevance to the information needed to be conveyed. Also, a high level of English proficiency can be observed through careful selection of words and other elements of grammar. The study suggested, among other things, that for effective conversations to occur, Facebook users should be conscious and consider it as if they are talking live to their friends, colleagues, and relatives. This is the only thing that can help them to be meticulously alert about their expressions and the skills to be put in writing.

Keywords: Reading, Writing, Facebook, Interaction

INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing skills are essential for effective communication in a literate society. It is a structured communication system with grammar and vocabulary (Robins, 2000). It is the



secondary means of communication by which humans convey meaning via writing skills. Most human languages have developed writing systems that allow for the sounds or signs of language. Human language is featured by its cultural and historical diversity, with significant variations observed between cultures and across time. Human languages possess the property of productivity and displacement, which enable the creation of an infinite number of words that develop into sentences and paragraphs and the ability to refer to objects, events and ideas that are not immediately present in the discourse (R.H. Robins, 2000). Human language relies on social conventions and is acquired through learning processes.

Alex Shashkevich (2019) explains that reading, writing and speaking are integral to everyday life, where language is the primary tool for expression communication. Studying how people use language, what words and phrases they unconsciously choose and combine – can help us better understand ourselves and why we behave the way we do. Linguistics scholars such as Labov and Lyone seek to determine what is unique and universal about the language we use, how it is acquired, and how it changes over time. They consider language as a cultural, social and psychological phenomenon.

However, social media has become inevitable in our daily activities or lives, as most people choose to keep in touch with one another through some form of social media platform. Social media has completely changed the way we communicate with one another and has made the world a more miniature village. While communicating with people in some parts of the world was once mainly limited to electronic mail, nowadays, it is much easier to stay up to date with what is going on a thousand miles away from where one is living. This certainly has a long-reaching impact on our social and daily lives. Increased use of social media has helped many people acquire some language skills quickly.

According to Espinoza (2015), this is because, through social media channels, people get to make friends with men and women from other parts of the world and start picking up bits and pieces of their languages. In the early 2000s, numerous academic experts, Alhazmi & Rahman (2013) and Al-Tamimi et al. (2008), predicted that social media would be the next big thing in language learning. Most students learn languages more comprehensively through social media sites, similar to, if not more traditional, traditional means of academic learning. Such social media sites include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and so forth. Today's younger generation uses social media in almost everything, whether discussing fashion trends or playing games. Keeping with such trends, educational institutions must emphasize language teaching, which can be achieved via social media by encouraging students to learn language through means that they enjoy.

Additionally, interest in learning is critical in recording success in the targeted objectives. Moreover, if there is one thing that makes learning fun, it is through the trends of the present-day social media. Even with the significant shift from physical to more virtual classroom engagements, most tools for online learning come with social packages to capture the minds of the learners and, at the same time, arouse their interest in the accomplishment of the learning objectives.



So, this paper picked a particular interest in one of the popular social media platforms (Facebook) to find out what role reading and writing skills played among the users of the selected social media in their interactions.

The Basic Concepts of Reading and Writing Skills

Reading and writing skills are two language phenomena that have the abilities that enable you to express your thoughts coherently and communicate with others. These skills provide structure and relevance to the information you wish to convey to the recipient. Reading and writing have essential language competency. While communicating, people usually use a combination of these skills simultaneously. Similarly, writing is the summary output of reading, understanding and interpreting, which requires reading skills. Here are the two language competencies that can help improve how you communicate.

Writing

According to Nunan (2003), writing is both a physical and mental act. It is about discovering ideas, thinking about how to communicate, and developing them into statements and paragraphs that will be used to present your thoughts in the form of text using the proper structure and flow of information (Hamid, 2004). Writing includes changing the format and tone of the text as per the target audience. Choosing the correct vocabulary, medium, and outline for what you wish to convey can ensure your writing is exciting and delivers the intended message. Writing grammatically accurate text, using short sentences and researching comprehensively are ways to make your text more impactful. Writers must select the most advantageous medium for their writing. Each type has a different level of difficulty, determined by its objectives. Writing is a process and also a product. The writer creates, plans, writes various drafts, revises, edits, and publishes a product. The audience reads a product.

Reading

In her book *Anthropology of Poetry for Young People*, Rohani Ariffin (1992:1) defines reading as a highly personal activity mainly done silently. Smith (1973) defines reading as communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver.

In the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, reading is said as:

"Perceiving a written text to understand its contents. This can be done silently (silent reading). The understanding that results is called reading comprehension.

Saying a written text aloud (oral reading). This can be done with or without Understanding of the content."

For a person to be able to read, there is a need for other skills to support the reader while reading. Reading is a mental process, so it needs other skills to be integrated, such as listening, speaking and writing. According to Chitravelu et al. (1995), reading is not a single skill we use all the time in the same way; it is a multiple skill that is used differently with different kinds of tests and fulfills

different purposes. This was earlier stated by Thomas and Loving (1979), who alleged that reading is a communicative skill along with listening, speaking, writing and thinking.

Furthermore, reading skills help understand different texts, their context and inference. These skills are crucial for improving your overall literacy skills as they can help enhance your vocabulary, expression, analysis and communication. For instance, reading different text forms carefully, such as letters, messages, notes, memos, emails and reports, can help prevent miscommunication in your personal and professional relationships. Finally, being attentive and focused while reading can also help you interpret the meaning of the text effectively and retain the information for a longer duration.

The Importance of Reading and Writing Skills in Communication/ Interactions

Communication is the cornerstone of human interaction, allowing us to express ideas, emotions, and information with one another. In the modern world, reading and writing are used extensively in academic, professional and social settings. He is reading and writing work in similar ways. Reading improves your writing style and flow. Writers learn to perfect their craft by taking inspiration from other writers. It is only possible to be a good writer if you read. Acclaimed author Stephen King (2007) is said to carry a book with him wherever he goes. He even reads while eating.

Reading can make you a better writer and speaker. Customizing your reading can take you a step ahead and help you achieve your objectives. Choosing the appropriate reading skill will enhance the reading process and help you achieve your goal. However, you can use extensive reading skills if you wish to read for pleasure, as on social media like Facebook.

Reading enhances our lives in several ways:

a. Exercising your mind

One core reason for reading is that it engages various parts of your brain. When you read, you exercise your comprehension and analytical abilities. It fires up your imagination and stimulates the memory centers of your mind. It helps you recall information and stabilize your emotions.

b. Finding Yourself

One of the advantages of reading is that it helps shape your identity. When you read, you decide who you want to become. You borrow bits from fictional characters you hold dear. For example, reading Sherlock Holmes can inspire you to become a detective or more observant and analytical.

c. Keeping calm and entertained

Reading can cheer you up when you are down, motivate you when you are sad, and even keep you company when everybody else is busy.

d. Helps master a language



Reading is one of the best ways to learn a new language or master a known one. Also, when you learn through stories, you learn much faster. Learning about words through context is one of the most organic ways to understand their meaning and improve your vocabulary. This also helps gain knowledge about colloquial terms.

e. Connecting with others

Reading can be a great conversation starter and help bond with new people. Readers can have multiple stories or topics to discuss and quickly become the center of attention due to their knowledge. Their ability to objectively critique issues Also makes them popular. On the other hand, as stated by Ernest Hemingway (2020), writing can only be effective when it accommodates certain ingredients that stir the emotions and interests of the readers, among which include:

- 1. Eliminating ambiguity:** Effective writers choose words and sentence structures without room for misinterpretation. This skill is invaluable in social interactions, legal documents, scientific research papers, and business reports, where precision is paramount.
- 2. Organizing ideas:** Communication skills extend to organizing ideas in writing. Skilled writers know how to structure their content logically, ensuring readers can follow the flow of information quickly. This is key in essays, articles, and other forms of expository writing.
- 3. Tailoring to the audience:** Whether you are writing for a scholarly audience, a casual blog readership, or a professional report, it is essential to understand your audience's needs and expectations. This also applies to public speaking, especially at professional events.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FACEBOOK

Al-Hij (2015) defines Facebook as an online networking device. Mark Hall (2022) stated that Facebook is an American online social network service part of Meta Platforms. Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovits and Chris Hughes, all of whom were students at Harvard University. Facebook became the largest social network in the world, with nearly three billion users as of 2021, and about half of that number were using Facebook every day. The company's headquarters are in Menlo Park, California.

Facebook impacted individuals' social lives and activities. This type of program is common among people. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), this program enables people to act together and cooperate within its space. It is used for communication among individuals, enabling them to form an open or closed group to join and share their ideas with others.

Access to Facebook is free of charge, and the company earns most of its money from advertisements on the website. New users can create profiles, upload photos, join pre-existing groups, and start new ones. This site has many components, including a timeline, a space on each user's profile page where users can post their content and friends can post messages; status, which enables users to alert friends to their current location or situation; and a Newsfeed which informs users of changes to their friend's profiles and status. Users can chat with each other and send each other private messages. Users can signal their approval of content on Facebook with the Like



button, a feature that also appears on many other websites. Facebook began at Harvard University in 2003 as Facemash, an online service for students to judge the attractiveness of their fellow students. That success prompted Zuckerberg to register the URL <http://www.facebook.com> in January 2004. He then created a new social network with fellow students Saverin, Moskovitz and Hughes at that address.

The Facebook.com launched in February, 2004. Harvard students who signed up for the service could post photographs of themselves and personal information about their lives, such as their class schedules and the clubs they belonged to. Its popularity increased, and students from other prestigious schools, such as Yale and Stanford Universities, were allowed to join. By June 2004, more than 250,000 students from 34 schools had signed up, and that same year, major corporations such as the credit card company Mastercard started paying for exposure on the site. In 2006, Facebook opened its membership beyond students to anyone over 13. In 2007, Facebook launched a short-lived service called "Beacon" that led members' friends to see what products they had purchased from participating companies. It failed because members felt that it infringed on their privacy. In 2008, Facebook surpassed "Myspace" as the most visited social media website. With the introduction of "Live feed," the company also took a competitive swing at the growing popularity of Twitter, a social network that runs a live feed of news service-like posts from members a user follows.

Facebook has become a powerful tool for political movements, beginning with the U.S. presidential election 2008, when more than 1000 Facebook groups were formed in support of either Democratic candidate Barack Obama or Republican candidate John McCain. In Colombia, the service was used to rally hundreds of thousands in protests against the antigovernment FARS guerilla rebellion. In Egypt, activists protesting the government of Hosni Mubarak during the uprising of 2011 often organized themselves by forming groups on Facebook. In February 2012, Facebook filed to become a public company. Its initial public offering (IPO) in May raised 16 billion dollars, giving it a market value of 102.4 billion dollars. In October 2021, Facebook announced that it was changing the name of its parent company to Meta Platforms. The name change emphasized the "Metaverse," in which users would interact in virtual reality environments. The key Facebook statistics: As of 2023, Facebook had about 2.96 billion monthly and 2 billion daily active users (Daniel Ruby, 2023).

Usage of Reading and Writing Skills in Facebook Interactions

Reading and writing skills are so crucial that they enable people to express their thoughts in written form. Facebook is a typical application that connects individuals to interact and share their feelings through using their grammar skills and other exploited forms of technology like audio, pictures, and videos, sometimes by supporting them with writing. This room allows people to feel free to express their thoughts as opposed to traditional classes or a particular gathering where people of different kinds are expected. Bwaidi (2017) stated that students feel shy in a traditional class to participate in front of their classmates to present a particular topic.



These reading and writing skills provide structure and relevance to the information needed to be conveyed. It is expected to combine two language skills while interacting. When used together, they are co-dependent on each other. For example, if reading is an input of the information, writing is a form of output. Reading and writing are two interesting variables attached to literacy (i.e., ability to read and write). Literacy can be found in any language, not only attached to a particular language like English, as some may think. Buba (2012) stated that all languages are entitled to enjoy the privilege of literacy, provided they have a system of writing.

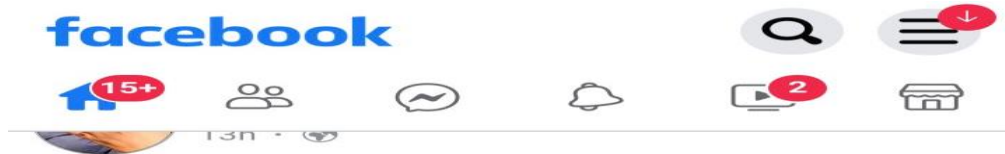
Now, let us examine some Facebook posts to ascertain the level of reading and writing skills demonstrated in their interactions. However, permission was sought from the users whose interactions were sampled and analyzed, which was purely for academic purposes.

- i. Some posts show a high level of English proficiency through careful selection of words and other elements of grammar. Many people devote themselves to writing to show how good they are at responding to an event or a particular situation. This dimension has been captured in the screenshot of the post below.



The post above adheres to English grammar rules by meticulously arranging words in an orderly manner. Punctuation marks are used appropriately, and tenses are carefully used in response to the event. This shows his level of English literacy by exhibiting his writing skills.

- ii. Another post here deals with someone's lifestyle regarding her birthday, death, and relationship or friendship. The person has skills in carefully expressing her thoughts and feelings in writing, which can only be understood by people who have attained literacy and knowledge of the language by reading the text. Below is the dimension of these expressions captured in the screenshot.



On birthdays, death, and friendships

On birthdays 😊 .

I am supposed to be 30-something today but I feel like 50-something years old 😊 . I hate to grow old, I hate to grow old but I am getting older every day and I feel older and some think I look older.

So I don't really like birthdays, from my heart of hearts, not completely though, I love that people tell you how amazing you are. You get gifts, prayers, and all. I love when people say nice things about me, wallahi it makes me happy, I love the attention and I love the alerts more 😂 . The funniest this year was captioned Happy Birthday Matarmu in the narration(you know when they call you matarmu, it's a lie, you're not the one 😂😂😂🙏)

Thank you guys, you made my day.

On Death.

On Death.

Apart from getting old, I don't want to die, I am scared of death 😞. It's inevitable but I don't want to die.

Don't send me roses while I'm dead, I need to know that I am loved and appreciate it.

Everybody has good things to say about you but you have to die first.

Allah ka kyautata qarshen mu.

On friendship.

Sometimes I feel I am not a good friend but I try to maintain it irrespective.

Social media has contributed to the decay of friendships or rather fake friends as they say it.

Maintaining friendships is hard these days, it entails sacrifices and compromises.

Not everyone is replaceable.

When I call you my friend, I mean it, relationships (friendships) are a great deal for me and I chose my cycle carefully.

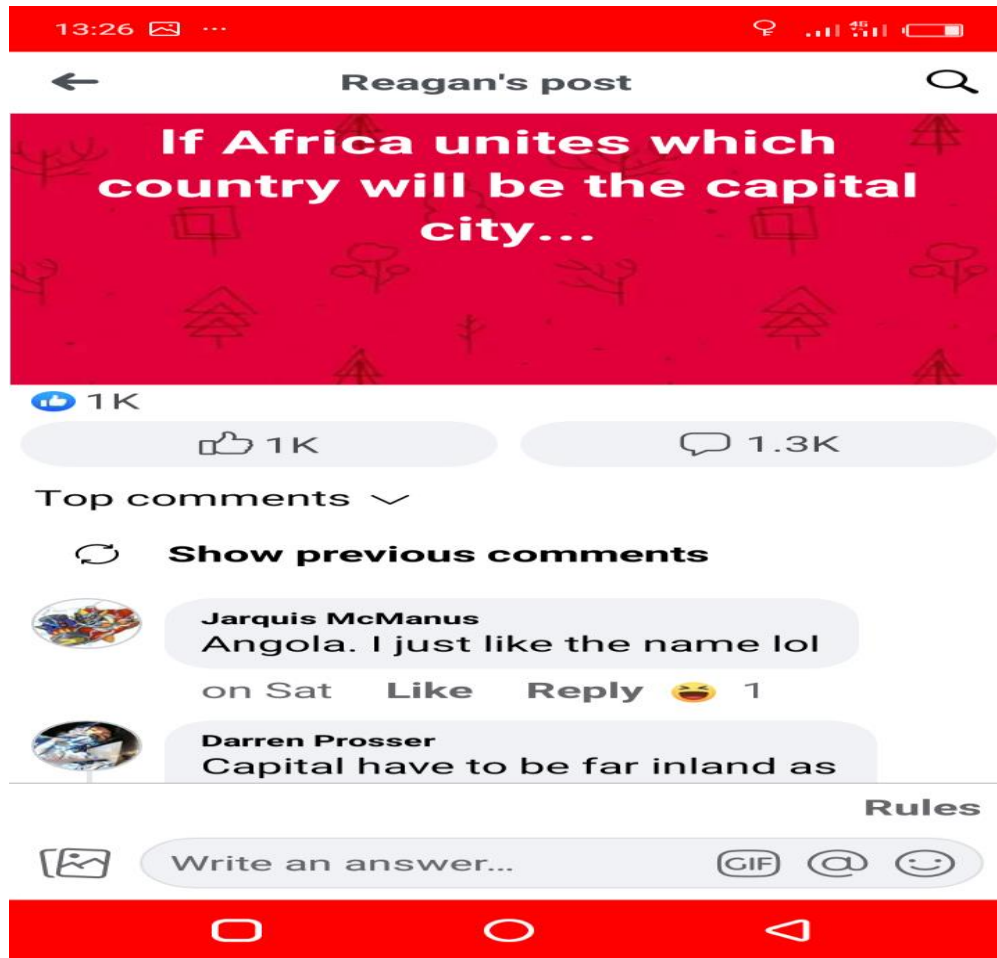
Friendship means accepting the person you chose, the person destiny gave you with their flaws, it means dropping your ego.

Some friends are more than family.



These expressions above show that the person is literate enough to express her feelings so interestingly about how she usually feels on her birthday, friendship, relationship, and the agony of death. Some may have other feelings of this kind, but how they put them in writing is what matters because they don't possess the skills.

- iii. Sometimes, you could have a post on your Facebook account that combines the two language skills (i.e., reading and writing) while interacting. Someone will post particular information by engaging in writing, while those who read will respond by inputting it in the comment section. The post with this dimension has been captured in the screenshot below.



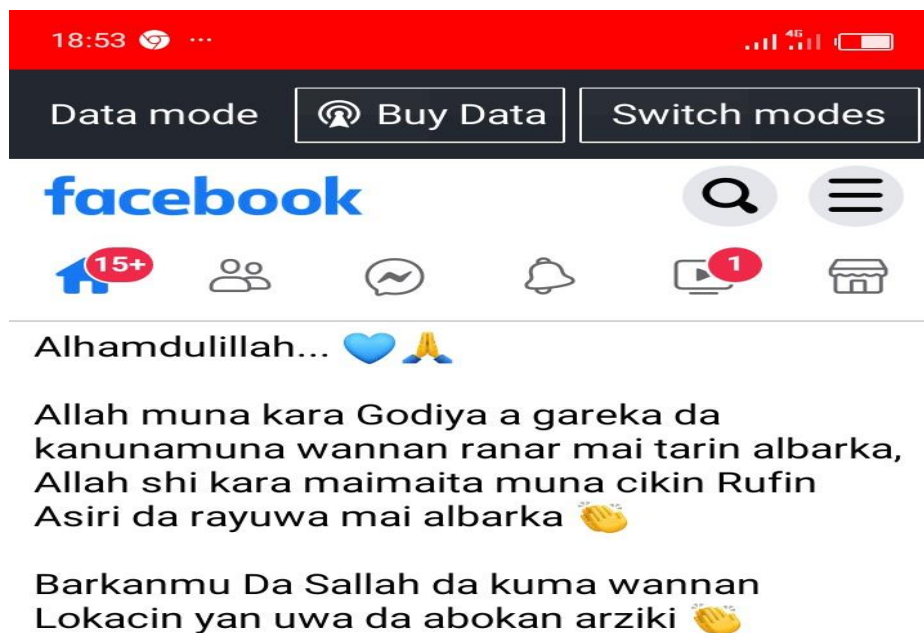
An interesting phenomenon here is how people respond to the question posted. This post shows that two language skills were used. The first is how he put the question in writing, while the other skill is reading by answering the question in the comment section.

- iv. Some people interact and communicate with their Facebook friends by using their native language. This is another exciting aspect where people do not only focus on using the English language when they want to communicate or explain a particular event. Some find it challenging to use this writing skill in their native language, particularly if they are asked to stick to the rules of Hausa orthography. A typical example of this has been captured in the screenshot below.



English Equivalent

May God make it the best decision now that the Sallah celebration has been postponed for another week.



English Equivalent

All praise be to Allah...

Oh God, we thank you more for showing us this blessed day. May God bless us and help us to witness more in good condition and fruitful lives.

Happy Sallah and compliments for the season, my good friends and relatives!

The screenshots above show how the users or participants express their feelings about particular events. Although they tried their best, there were still some rules and violations of Hausa Orthography. For instance, in the first screenshot, two words were supposed to be in separate forms but joined together as if they were a compound or one word. These words are (Yasa and Andage). These should be (Ya+sa and An+dage). Each word is independent here according to its grammatical category. The word "Ya" is a masculine pronoun of the third person singular, then "sa" is an infinitive verb (to put). While the word "An" should contextually be considered as (has been), "has" is an auxiliary verb, and "been" is the past participle of (be). Then "dage" is the main verb "postpone."

In the second screenshot, it is one word that is supposed to be separated into three (3) different words but joined together as one. The word is (kanunamuna). This should be (ka+nuna+muna). The word "Ka" of Hausa is second person singular (you), "Nuna" is an infinitive verb (to show) and "muna" is the first person plural (us), a pronoun used in the object position of the sentence.

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions offer ways for Facebook's users to thrive in their daily conversations and interactions on the Facebook platform. These are:

1. For effective conversations, Facebook users should be conscious and consider their conversations as if they are talking live with their friends, colleagues, and relatives. This is the only way to help them be meticulously alert about their expressions and the skills to be put in writing.
2. They should eliminate ambiguity in their writing by carefully choosing the right words to create the best sentence structures, which leave no room for interpretation.
3. Facebook users should organize their ideas in writing based on the context logically to ensure that readers can follow the flow of information quickly.
4. They should teach the behavior of persuading their Facebook friends by tailoring their needs through writing to keep their interests and expectations alive.

CONCLUSION

Reading and writing have always been considered essential for effective communication as well as the attainment of literacy. Reading and writing skills have a role to play in disseminating information not only in the English language but also in other native languages of Facebook users. Some use their native language, like Hausa, to express their feelings in response. People often use writing to express themselves more effectively and comfortably on social media because it allows readers to go beyond the actual purpose of the product you composed by commenting on it. The study's findings showed how good Facebook users are at using grammatical elements such as word order, punctuation, and tenses. However, some are worthy of improving their use of the correct



forms of words (i.e., Hausa language). Similarly, Facebook is regarded as one of the standard social networks that accommodate billions of users, as it has impacted individuals' social lives and activities.

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