The Influence of Social Media on Shona Language and Academic Writing in Zimbabwe

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the influence of social media on the Shona language and academic writing in Zimbabwe. It specifically identifies the effects of social media on changes in the Shona language and examines the negative impact of social media language on academic writing. The study utilises Digital Ethnography (DE) and observations as its methods of data collection. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory was employed as the theoretical framework for the study. Findings reveal that social media has facilitated syntactic, phonological, orthographic, lexical, and semantic changes in the Shona language. The results also indicate that these changes affect students' academic writing skills, thereby posing new challenges and concerns that teachers and students must navigate. It was observed that the informal nature of social media language leads to a loss of formal tone, poor grammar and spelling, and reduced clarity in students' academic work, weakening the overall quality of their submissions and resulting in lower grades. The study concludes that social media has revolutionised the way people communicate, and languages are no exception. It is also concluded that the changes in the Shona language reflect the casual and spontaneous nature of social media communication, where users emphasise brevity and informality over grammatical writing. We recommend that educators be aware of these effects and provide guidance to students on the importance of maintaining formal language in academic writing, as well as how to differentiate between social media language and academic language, using each in its proper context.

Keywords: social media, language change, academic writing, Shona language

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1. Introduction and Background to the Study

Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that facilitate the immediate sharing of information (Gretzel, 2018). According to Kumar and Nanda (2019), social media encompasses any online communication tool that allows users to rapidly create content, distribute information, and interact with others. Broadly, social media can be defined as a set of interactive technologies that enable the creation, dissemination, and exchange of information, ideas, and other forms of expression among virtual communities and online networks. Popular social media platforms in Zimbabwe include WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube. These platforms have revolutionised the way people communicate, interact, and share content (Duong, 2020). Users can engage with one another through comments, likes, shares, and messages (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). They also enable users to create and share their own content, such as texts, images, videos, and livestreams (Enwereji et al., 2024), and allow users to connect with others who share similar interests, backgrounds, or demographics (Hayes, 2022).

Social media has profoundly impacted modern Zimbabwe, influencing how people communicate, access information, and interact with each other. It has become an essential tool for business

professionals to market their products, enabling them to reach both national and international audiences, thus supporting Perifanou's (2021) argument that social media facilitates business and e-commerce. Furthermore, social media has emerged as a vital tool in public relations for many companies and institutions (Olanyinka, 2019), enabling them to build their brands, enhance their reputations, and communicate with their stakeholders. In Zimbabwean politics and activism, social media has played an important role, allowing people to mobilise, organise, and raise awareness about political issues (Mutsvairo and Sirks, 2015). Given this background, social media has proven to be an invaluable tool for human survival in Zimbabwe.

However, concerns about privacy, mental health, and the spread of misinformation have also arisen. Linguistically, social media significantly influences language change, affecting how people communicate, express themselves, and even think. Communication on social media has a considerable impact on various linguistic levels, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Crystal, 2011), particularly among the younger population. Nurasia et al. (2023) note significant language changes due to social media use. Language contact and convergence occur on social media as different languages or dialects influence each other's grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Hinrichs, 2012). This happens as users interact with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds, leading to language exchange and borrowing. Consequently, language blending occurs as users combine elements from different languages to create new expressions. Such trends raise concerns about declining communication skills and correct language use (Nurasia, 2023).

Young people in Zimbabwe use social media to create and share new language forms, thereby facilitating changes even in indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele. The network effects of social media facilitate the rapid spread of new language forms created as users interact and influence each other. Moreover, social media algorithms can facilitate language evolution by amplifying certain language forms, making them more visible and increasing the chances of their adoption by users (Gillespie, 2014; Bakshy et al., 2012). Thus, language contact and convergence, as well as the spread of new phrases and words and the evolution of grammatical structures, are evident on social media.

Social media has impacted language use on its platforms and has also affected language use in the academic arena, particularly among students of the younger generation. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X have become integral to people's daily lives and have influenced how students write academic works. Consequently, this has posed new challenges and concerns for both students and teachers, resulting in very poor writing habits. Therefore, this paper examines how social media influences the evolution of the Shona language, including the spread of new words, phrases, and grammatical structures, and how these changes negatively affect students' academic writing skills.

2. Literature Review

Several studies related to the current problem have been conducted by different scholars across the globe. One such study was carried out by Luhulima et al. (2024), which focused on language change on social media, particularly on YouTube podcasts. The study explored how certain grammatical categories, such as pronouns, verbs, and adjectives, convert into specialized forms exclusive to the social media environment. Their findings suggest that language changes and evolves over time. Luhulima et al. (2024) conclude that earlier eras featured distinctive words or abbreviations restricted to particular communities or groups, whereas today, global trends and social developments contribute to new language variations and the formation of new terms due to language mixing.

Another study conducted by Omoera and Aiwuyo (2018) examined how social media affects the English language writing abilities of undergraduate youths, where English is the language of mass communication in Nigeria. This study revealed that most youths adopt a distinctive variety of English that does not align with Standard English (SE) or the commonly spoken Nigerian variant

known as Pidgin English (PE). Furthermore, the study indicates that most of the written English produced by these youths in classes and examinations is intelligible within informal peer contexts, yet appears substandard in the formal academic writing environments for which they are being trained. The study concludes that this trend poses significant challenges to the development of effective and proficient writing skills among Nigerian youths, particularly in formal settings (Omoera and Aiwuyo, 2018).

Al-Jarrah et al. (2019) examined students' perceptions of social media, focusing on its ease of use and their attitudes toward utilising it for academic activities. Their findings indicate that social media significantly contributes to the development of English writing skills at the school level. In a related study, Nwala and Tamunobelema (2019) analysed the language used on Facebook and found that the platform is saturated with cyber slang, acronyms, morphological shortenings, initialisms, contractions, and neologisms. The study observed that Facebook writing diverges from conventional standards, allowing users to represent words in any form they deem appropriate. Furthermore, the study revealed that the platform's flexibility, time-saving nature, and user-friendliness contribute to its widespread appeal. However, it was concluded that Facebook use has negative implications for language learning, as its informality and deviation from standard writing norms are considered counterproductive to educational goals (Nwala and Tamunobelema, 2019). Ehtsham et al. (2023) investigated the negative effects of social media and WhatsApp messaging on students' formal writing by assessing their English narrative essay skills. The study revealed that a prevalent use of abbreviations, misspellings, overly simplified expressions, and the substitution of symbols or shortened forms of full words were more frequently employed by male students than female students. The researchers argue that the language used diverges from traditional spelling and grammatical rules, attributing this trend to students' habitual use of WhatsApp, which they tend to replicate in academic writing. The study concluded that the linguistic terms used on social media and WhatsApp by most students have a detrimental effect on their formal writing skills. Hence, the current study aims to examine how social media also influences changes in indigenous languages, specifically Shona, and how it negatively affects students' academic writing skills.

This research is necessary for both social media users and language teachers, as it equips them with knowledge of how social media influences language change and affects academic writing skills. This knowledge helps them utilise proper language in the appropriate context, enabling users to distinguish between social media language and academic language. Additionally, this research aids linguists and teachers in understanding how language changes due to technological innovations such as social media and how these changes affect communication and writing in academic settings. This understanding will assist teachers and researchers in developing effective language education practices in Zimbabwe and encourage the appropriate use of language depending on context.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study utilises the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1962), which explains how new ideas, technologies, and innovations spread and are adopted by communities and individuals. In essence, the theory elucidates the rate at which these new concepts and technologies gain traction. At its core, the theory encompasses key components such as innovation, adoption, diffusion, and social systems (Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is transmitted over time through specific communication channels among members of a social system. He identifies several key elements that influence the spread of a new idea which are, the innovation itself, the individuals who adopt it, the means of communication, the time frame and the broader social system in which the diffusion occurs.

Using this theory, social media platforms and their associated language features can be considered innovations that users adopt. Users then integrate social media language features into their online interactions on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, X, TikTok, and Instagram. Here, social media is viewed as a channel for the diffusion of language innovations. Diffusion, then, refers

to the spread of social media language features through online social networks, thereby influencing language use and change. The social system can be viewed as the online community and social networks on social media platforms, which shape language use.

The theory can be applied to language contact, as social media facilitates interactions between people from different linguistic backgrounds, leading to language convergence and change. Moreover, it can be applied to language diffusion, as the platforms enable the rapid spread of language features such as slang, acronyms, and abbreviations, to mention a few. Application is also possible in terms of language adaptation, whereby users modify language features to suit their online communication needs, resulting in language change and evolution. This theory helps to explain how language features spread rapidly and are adopted on social media platforms. Therefore, it is appropriate due to its stated commitment to examining language change on social media, including the roles of innovation, adoption, and diffusion.

4. Methodology

This is a qualitative study since it aims to explore how social media facilitates language change. We utilised Digital Ethnography (DE) to collect data. Digital Ethnography is a qualitative research method that integrates traditional ethnographic techniques with digital technologies to explore online communities, cultures, and user behaviours (Pink et al., 2016). DE involves immersing oneself in online environments such as social media platforms, online forums, and virtual worlds to gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics, norms, and practices of online communities. According to Hine (2020), this method draws from traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interviews, and content analysis but adapts them to the online context.

Using this method, we collected data from natural settings by observing conversations on social media platforms, specifically WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. DE enabled us to gather data concerning social media's influence on language evolution, including the spread of new words, phrases, and grammatical structures. It also provided greater anonymity, as it allowed us to observe online behaviours and interactions without influencing the users (Murthy, 2013).

Furthermore, we utilised non-participant observations to examine how students are writing their academic work, aiming to gain insights into the linguistic errors they make that are attributed to social media use. Non-participant observations were employed because they allowed us to maintain objectivity, ensuring we did not influence the behaviour or actions of the participants (Flick, 2014), and they provided rich, raw data concerning the issue under study (Silverman, 2013).

5. Findings and discussions

This section presents and discusses the data gathered for this study.

5.1 Syntactic changes

It has been observed that social media use has resulted in syntactic changes. Syntax can be defined as the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language. The informal tone of social media has led to a shift away from formal language structures, with an increased use of contractions, colloquialisms, and fragmented sentences (Kirkup, 2010). Social media has prompted a relaxation of traditional Shona grammatical rules, resulting in shortened sentences. Users are now intentionally omitting letters in words and even combining these shortened words to form sentences, which leads to very informal and grammatically incorrect constructions. This situation arises from users' need for speed and efficiency in online communication (Wisam et al., 2022). Shortened sentences allow users to convey messages quickly and require less typing. Consequently, users, especially the younger generation, are now utilising non-standard sentence structures and punctuation. Below are examples of such syntactic changes in the Shona language:

Syntactically incorrect sentences	Syntactically correct sentences	Translation
Ndikuda keke rerakanyorwa pamusoro	Ndiri kuda keke rinenge rakanyorwa pamusoro.	I want a cake which is written on top.
tetakuita vashoma pabasa	Tinenge tava kuita vashoma pabasa.	Our numbers are decreasing at work.
kuf kaf	Kufa kana kufenda.	To die or to faint.
Ndozvandanazvo izvozvi	Ndizvo zvandava nazvo izvozvi.	This is what I have for now.
Nikuuyako	Ndiri kuuya ikoko.	I am coming there.
Nanchida kt aende kumba	Ndanga ndichida kuti aende kumba	I wanted him/her to go home.

Social media has also influenced changes in word order. Shona is essentially an SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) language (Chimhundu, 2018). However, social media has led to a relaxation of traditional word order rules. It has introduced new structures, such as VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) and OSV (Object-Subject-Verb). These new word orders are likely influenced by languages such as English, as social media facilitates language contact. For example;

Syntactically incorrect	*Syntactically correct*	*Translation*
abuditsa Jah Prayzah nziyo (VSO)	Jah Prayzah abuditsa nziyo.	Jah Prayzah has released a song.
Kubasa ndiri kuenda (OSV)	Ndiri kuenda kubasa.	I am going to work
akatandaniswa mukomana kumafaro (VSO)	Mukomana akatandaniswa kumafaro.	The boy was chased away at a party.

These findings correlate with the views of Luhulima et al. (2024), discussed in the literature review section, whose study examined language change on social media. They argued that language change is a permanent modification of a language's features and usage over time, impacting various elements such as pronunciation, vocabulary, meaning, and syntax. The extensive use of social media, where interaction occurs with many people from different linguistic backgrounds, influences how users employ language in writing contexts. In other words, the way a social media user writes is influenced by their interactions with peers on these platforms. This aligns with Akhmedova's (2024) argument that the rise of social media has not only created new jargon but has also influenced language structure, leading to more informal forms of communication. This is evident as Shona word order is being influenced by languages such as English, since social media facilitates communication between speakers of different languages, leading to language convergence and change. Hence, Rogers' (2003) argument that social media is a channel for the diffusion of language innovations holds true.

Moreover, we also observed rampant use of lowercase letters and a lack of punctuation in social media communication, as indicated in the presented data. These have proven to be common features of social media.Most users employ lowercase letters even at the beginning of sentences. Additionally, people frequently omit punctuation marks such as commas, full stops, and apostrophes, thereby making sentences ungrammatical. All these features reflect the casual and spontaneous nature of social media communication, where users emphasise informality and brevity over grammatical

accuracy. These findings support Rogers' (2003) argument that social media influences the rapid spread of new language features and writing styles. The omission of punctuation marks can be attributed to users' need for fast and immediate communication, as it saves time. Hence, Rogers (2003) argues that users adapt language features to suit their online communication needs, which leads to language change and evolution.

5.2 Lexical changes

Lexical changes refer to changes to a language's lexicon or changes in a language's vocabulary over time. One of the most notable effects of social media on the Shona language is the rise of new or coined words and phrases, as well as changes to the already existing ones. This is in line with Nelkoska (2020), who notes that social media has resulted in neologisms. Shona social media users have created new words and phrases. Below are examples of new words and phrases;

New words and phrases	Meaning
Wadii	How are you doing?
Pakatsvuka	The situation is bad.
Pakaipa	The situation is bad.
Mahwambi	The situation is bad.
Takaenda takaenda	We are done.
Kungwavha-ngwavha	Hustling.
Kudhara ikoko	I don't want.
Zvaendwa	It is finished.
Madedido	The situation is bad.

Examples of changes in existing words:

Incorrect word	Correct word	Translation
Tyoro	Chikoro	School
Nokuda	Ndinokuda	I love you.
Madii?	Makadini?	How are you?
Souru	Sekuru	Uncle

The Shona language, like any other language, including English, which is recognised for many functions, has also been transformed by social media users. What we used to regard as standard Shona and its variants (dialects) has seen some of its words changed through frequent social media use, as illustrated in the table of examples above. These findings are consistent with Omoera and Aiwuyo's (2018) study, which revealed that Nigerian youths have adopted a distinctive variety of English that does not align with Standard English (SE) or the commonly spoken Nigerian variant known as Pidgin English (PE). The words above cannot be found in the standard Shona lexicon.

Social media has also resulted in the use of acronyms instead of complete words. For example;

Acronym	Complete word	Translation
pkp	Pakaipa	The situation is bad
nhy	Nhai	Is it true

kt	Kuti	Is it?
cy	Seyi	How?
nkt	Nekuti	Because
hr	here?	Is it?
kp?	kupi?	Where?

From the above examples, it can be seen that social media has had a significant impact on the lexicon of the Shona language, leading to the rise of new words and phrases, changes to existing ones, and a rampant use of acronyms. These acronyms can contribute to language degradation, as they simplify complex concepts and ideas (Panjaitan and Patria, 2024). However, despite their effects, they facilitate instant and faster responses on social media by saving time. Social media emphasises real-time responses, which may have contributed to the shortening of Shona words into acronyms for efficiency. This aligns with the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 1962), which suggests that users adapt language features to suit their online communication needs, resulting in language evolution and change. In a bid to save time while chatting, the acronyms created lead to language change as they spread rapidly across social media channels. Hence, social media is indeed a tool for the diffusion of language innovations (Rogers, 2003).

5.3 Phonological and Orthographic changes

Social media has influenced changes in sound patterning in the Shona language. The phonological patterning of Shona is characterised by the CV (Consonant-Vowel) syllable structure (Chimhundu, 2018). However, foreign sounds and sound patterns have been introduced into Shona through social media. This is due to the fact that social media has led to language contact, allowing people from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate, which has resulted in the borrowing of foreign sounds and sound patterns into Shona. The adaptation of foreign sound patterns into Shona has led to incorrect spellings. According to Akabuike (2025) and Panjaitan and Patria (2024), social media has led to changes in spelling, with an increased use of non-standard spellings and a decreased use of traditional spelling norms. In line with this assertion, Rogers (2003) argues that social media facilitates the rapid spread of language features through its platforms. This is true in the case of Shona, where social media has resulted in the emergence of new spelling conventions and a relaxation of phonological, grammatical, and orthographic rules. Besides the use of abbreviations and acronyms mentioned above, social media has influenced the use of intentional misspellings, wordplay, and incorrect sound patterns. Below are examples of phonologically incorrect words that have been introduced into Shona;

Incorrect sound patterns	*Correct word*	*Translation*
ha**nk**u	Hangu	Me
xamwari	shamwari	Friend
ha**nt**i?	handiti?	Is it?
zva**ncu**	zvangu	Mine
mchembere	muchembere	An old woman
mu**x**e	Mushe	Nice
mscana	Musikana	Girl
ma**qwiqwi**	makwikwi	Competition

| mu**l**ume | Murume | Husband |

From the above examples, it can be observed that foreign sound patterns now exist in social media Shona. The sound patterns and sounds that are bolded are not permissible in Shona due to its CV syllable structure; therefore, consonants do not follow one another. Moreover, the sounds "q", "x" and "l" do not exist in Shona. All these patterns have been introduced into Shona through social media, resulting in orthographic changes and incorrect spellings. These sounds and sound patterns are permissible in languages such as Ndebele, Zulu, and Sotho, and their emergence in Shona may be attributed to language contact facilitated by social media.

5.4 Semantic changes

It has been observed that some Shona words no longer hold their original meanings on social media. There has been an emergence of new meanings and changes to existing Shona words. Below are examples of original Shona words that now hold other meanings on social media;

Shona word	*New meaning*	*Original meaning*
ndafa	I laughed	I am dead
ndachema	I laughed	I cried
usatifendere	Do not be dramatic	Do not faint
huchi	Interesting/ beautiful	Honey
miswa	Reprove	To be stopped
mhuri	WhatsApp/Facebook group	Family
Kugohwa	To die	To score

The examples above demonstrate that social media has redefined the way people interact online and has given rise to a new generation of users who are more creative and flexible in their use of language. The words presented are original Shona terms, but they have assumed new meanings on social media, reflecting the users' creativity. These new meanings are informal adaptations of the original words.

5.5. Negative effects of social media use on academic writing

Social media's effect on academic writing is highly significant. In the previous section, we discussed its impact on the syntax, semantics, phonology, orthography, and lexicon of language. It is important to note that social media has not only affected language use on its platforms but has also influenced language use in the academic arena. Social media platforms have become fundamental components of people's daily lives and have an impact on the way students write academic work. This aligns with Nwala and Tamunobelema's (2019) view that social media platforms are saturated with cyber slangs, acronyms, morphological shortenings, initialisms, contractions, and neologisms, and their usage has affected formal English language writing. Consequently, social media has posed challenges and concerns for both Shona students and teachers, resulting in very poor writing habits, as discussed below.

5.5.1 Loss of formal tone

A formal tone is a prerequisite in academic writing (Gabi, 2022). This is because academic writing must convey authority, credibility, and respect for the subject under discussion. The most detrimental effect of social media on academic writing is the blurring of the lines between formal and

informal language use. Social media emphasises informal communication (Ehtsham et al, 2023), which is being transferred to academic writing. The syntactic changes discussed above are influencing academic writing, resulting in poor sentence construction. These syntactic changes have also blurred the lines between spoken and written language, as students now write as if they are speaking. For example, students are using colloquial language, informal words or slang, and fragmented or non-standard sentence structures mentioned in the previous section in their academic work. They may also shorten words and sentences and omit punctuation marks in their essays, thereby compromising clarity and academic professionalism. Furthermore, capital letters at the beginning of sentences are often omitted. All of this can be attributed to social media addiction. This supports Kern's (2014) assertion that shortened sentences can become habitual for students who frequently use social media. Students, especially the younger generation, spend most of their time socialising on social media, which has adversely affected their academic writing skills and language use. This aligns with Sefrianus and Made's (2024) argument that language use on social media also influences the youth's formal language skills. Therefore, the distinction between social media language and academic language has been blurred, leading to challenges in learning the Shona language.

5.5.2 Poor grammar and spellings

It has also been observed that lexical changes occurring in social media Shona are resulting in poor grammar and spelling. This aligns with Esteron (2021), who asserted that social media perpetuates ungrammatical language use. Students are now incorporating new or coined words from social media into their academic work. These words have not yet been included in the Shona dictionary, and therefore, they cannot be used in academic writing as they are considered slang or informal. Academic writing is formal and precise; thus, it requires the use of formal language (Gabi, 2022; Swales and Feak, 2012).

Students are also including acronyms in academic writing because they are accustomed to using them on social media. These acronyms are very informal and can lead to confusion, reduced expressiveness, and limited understanding on the part of the teacher. Furthermore, phonological and orthographic changes have resulted in ungrammatical sentences in academic writing. Misspellings and foreign sound patterns have become common in students' academic work, thereby compromising the quality of their submissions. These errors can create barriers to communication between individuals from different backgrounds (Garcia, 2024). Misunderstandings are likely to occur between teachers and students since they have different backgrounds. Teachers use social media sparingly, and some are not on social media at all, which may hinder their understanding of the new words that students are incorporating into their academic work. Consequently, language use on social media has negative impacts on students' literacy skills, leading to a decline in academic writing proficiency.

5.5.3 Ambiguity and reduced clarity

It has been observed that language use on social media has resulted in increased ambiguity and reduced clarity in academic writing. The semantic changes discussed above are also being incorporated into academic writing. Social media has blurred the line between semantically correct and semantically incorrect words. The meanings of words mentioned in the previous section are semantically extended and can be very ephemeral, leading them to be considered street lingo. Because academic writing is formal, these new informal meanings should never be incorporated into academic works. However, students frequently socialise using these semantically extended meanings on social media, which they then transfer to academic writing (Sefrianus and Made, 2024), resulting in misunderstandings between them and their teachers. Therefore, it cannot be denied that social media use poses challenges in understanding across generations and among people from different backgrounds. These misunderstandings arise from the ambiguous nature of the words, as they still hold their original meanings in other contexts, while the new meanings they acquire on social media

are often slang and unclear. Academic writing is expected to be clear (Gabi, 2022). Consequently, a lack of clarity can lead to students scoring lower marks.

6. Conclusion

This study has provided valuable data concerning language use and change, as well as how language is modified in online contexts. The advent of social media has revolutionised the way people communicate, and languages are no exception, having undergone changes facilitated by social media. This study has examined the effects of social media specifically on the Shona language and academic writing, demonstrating that social media has significantly influenced language evolution. It has shown that social media is indeed a tool for the diffusion of language innovations (Rogers, 2003), facilitating the spread of new words, phrases, and grammatical structures.

The findings indicate that social media has influenced syntactic, lexical, phonological, orthographic, and semantic changes in the Shona language. These changes reflect the casual and spontaneous nature of social media communication, where users emphasise brevity and informality over grammatical accuracy. It has also been observed that these changes caused by social media are negatively affecting students' academic writing skills, posing new challenges and concerns that both teachers and students must navigate. It was noted that students are now incorporating informal language into their academic work. Furthermore, social media use is resulting in ambiguity, reduced clarity, and poor grammar and spelling in students' submissions. Writing grammatically incorrect sentences on social media has become habitual, and this habit extends into academic writing, thereby lowering academic standards and professionalism. Indeed, social media has facilitated the creation of a new generation of individuals who are more relaxed about adhering to correct grammatical, orthographic, syntactic, and phonological rules. This culture is undermining the quality of students' academic work, resulting in lower grades.

Based on these findings, language teachers and educators should continually educate students about social media language and its effects on academic writing to ensure that students understand the importance of maintaining a formal tone in their academic work. Educators should be aware of the negative effects of social media language and provide guidance to students on how to differentiate between social media language and academic language, using each in its appropriate context.

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