

# **SOCIAL NETWORKS AND STUDENTS' ORTHOGRAPHY**

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**Abstract.** The paper studied spelling and technical errors of students on social networks (facebook, twitter, e-mail). Social networks have over the last decade become the primary means of communication, which have more than ever made real the idea of "one world - one village". Their usage is in the most part based on language, i.e. on the writing itself and reading of the same as its most complex parts. New aspects of the use of writing, which exclude handwriting, are already using some new writing platform, such as keyboards, smart - touch surfaces, etc., provide new opportunities for redefining, as well as challenges for the writings. This paper aims to give a modest contribution in this direction.

*Keywords:* social media, social networks, spelling, errors, students orthography

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## **Introduction**

Social media and social networking are not new concepts, in different forms they exist for ages. Social media and social networking is a simple act of

observance and/or strengthening the existing circle of friends and/or acquaintances and expanding of their circle. In this manner a new network of friends and acquaintances is introduced via the already existing one which encourages the formation of networks of individuals and creating communities. One of the modes in which social networks can be explored (e.g., in the classroom) is the sociometric method developed by J. L. Moreno in 1934 which indicates that these concepts are not new (Kušić, 2010). Online social networks can be defined as a web based service that allows individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and use their own list of links and lists of other links within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). One of the main activities on the social networks is the language one, in addition to the use of symbolic communication (in the form of *likes* and *smileys*), and definitely writing on a variety of platforms (keyboard, touch) is the most common and the most significant activity to be used on platforms such as facebook, twitter, viber, WhatsApp, and various e-mails and the like.

Vuković et al. (2015) state that writing is a complex human ability, and the most complex form of linguistic activity as well. The act of writing itself involves knowledge, skill and art of proper graphic design of the letters. Writing is attained by learning and is conditioned by the level of development of motor, visual, auditory, intellectual and language functions. Vuković et al. (2015) continue and state that: mastering the skill of writing is preceded by a relatively long way of development of the graphomotoric capabilities. It can be said that the specific skills necessary for writing are acquired by a child through drawings, as one of the main forms of expression. Children at the age of 18 months up to two years begin to scribble and initially do not adhere to the surface on which they draw.

With the development of motor skills and eye-hand coordination, a child gradually masters the surface on which it draws. Miletić & Novaković (2009) on the importance of spelling emphasise that: „spelling belongs to the

methodology of written expression and due to the connection to grammar, belongs to the methodology of language in a narrow sense and hence combines grammar teaching to teaching oral and written expression. The task of teaching spelling is to master [...] orthographic norms, spelling function cognition and differentiation of spelling and other language facts.“

The main motivation for this research was to examine the spelling of the future higher education graduated citizens and to do so not in a handwritten form, but in the new forms of writing, on different platforms, such as the keyboard or the touch screen. Hence to discover what sort of difficulties in terms of spelling this new form of writings can cause. This writing, thanks to the social networks, is increasingly replacing the handwritten writing model, and puts the spotlight on (personal) technology written manuscript, thus tendencies like those in Finland to completely rule out handwriting out of the school programs.

### **Social networks**

Social networks have in recent years changed not only the manner of communication and commerce, but the techniques and styles of learning, expression and research as well. The world records an increase in the use of interactive presentations which are adaptable to all platforms, populations and ages. Interesting are the surveys which confirm that, when it comes to education, on the social networks there are no emphasised age and population differences. For example, it is interesting that Serbia with 2.7 millions of open accounts on Facebook, is by far the first in the region. Social networks, such as we know them today, are a direct product of the first services such as the e-mail (the forerunner of the social networks), web forums and online diaries or blogs. After the first blogging system, there was the *Friendster*, which marked a milestone in the development of the social networks. The following steps are *My Space* and *Facebook*, and this is the moment when the social networks massively penetrated into every segment of life, field or area.

The importance of social networks in the region and the world is drastically increasing, in this or some other form, and it should be followed closely and one has to be ready to welcome a growing number of innovations that accompany this dynamic and exciting market. The main advantage of social networks in terms of achieving business connections is in shortening the process of getting to know the candidates and the employers. An individual has the opportunity to present its work capacity more completely, to quickly and easily obtain recommendations and present the broader business circles in which it operates. The employer, on the other hand, uses the social network to present its business relationship, to interact with similar companies, technical expertise, and, finally, recruit personnel from selected, well-defined groups.

### **Research methodology**

#### *The corpus and the research conduct method*

The research was conducted by random sampling, i.e., all sorts of business texts (queries, requests, proposals submitted by the students - henceforth respondents, towards the lecturers - henceforth researchers) arriving to the researchers in a period of several months, were collected in one place in order to form their corpus. The research eventually resulted in a corpus of 24 respondents, 45 texts, where the total corpus included 2,452 words. The texts were taken from the social networks (without prior knowledge of the respondents, and thus to achieve the ethical moment, the names of the respondents whose texts have participated in the creation of this corpus will not be mentioned) and pasted in a Word document. Office Word package gives the possibility of counting the number of the words in a text. The very research on the corpus is linguistic, specifically orthographic and technical, where it is compared to the orthographic norm.

### *Time and place of the research*

The place where the research was implemented is two-dimensional, first, on the social networks: Facebook, Twitter and e-mail, and second, respondents whose texts entered the corpus were students of the University "Ukshin Hoti" in Prizren, which has the status of a public university which within its system has lectures, besides in Albanian, in Bosnian and Turkish, and courses: basic program (pedagogy), pre-school program (pre-school pedagogy) and information science. The research was conducted during the months of October, November and December 2016.

### *Respondent's age and language*

The language of the corpus texts is Bosnian, and the respondents come from the education in Bosnian from the abovementioned University and the aforementioned streams. The age of the respondents was not specified, but it can be logically concluded that it spans from 18 to 22, i.e., they belong to each study group (I-IV).

## **Results and discussion**

Based on the processing of the corpus texts, a series of errors that have occurred were discovered. In general, on the basis of the analyzed corpus, errors encountered while writing texts on the social networks, can be divided into two large groups:

(A) Spelling - language errors:

- Primarily spelling errors: Capital instead of small letters / small rather than capital letters

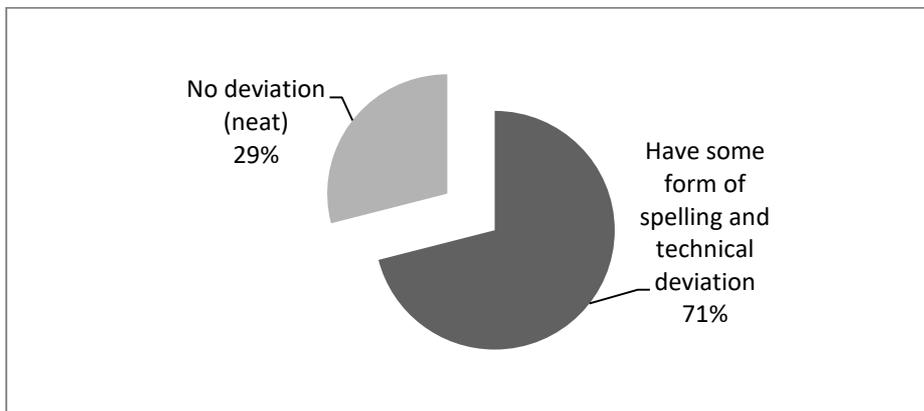
- Spelling and grammar errors: declination errors/ conjugation errors/synthesized writing

(B) Spelling -technical errors:

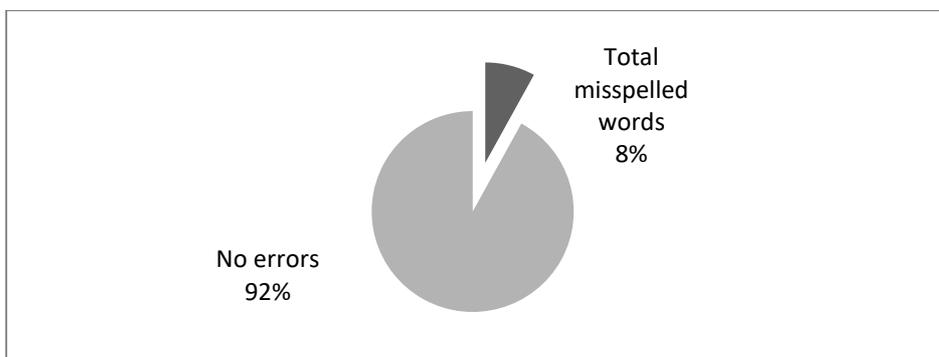
- Primarily punctuation errors: omission of commas/substitution of punctuation marks/
- Primarily technical errors: not recording checkmarks / recording of the grapheme *dj* instead of *đ* / punctuation mark after space.

Out of the total number of the respondents (N = 24), among 29% of them, i.e., within their texts were not found any errors. On the same sample of respondents, among 71% of them were found some of the aspects of spelling errors, or more precisely, there are some of the 11 different types of errors. Expressed by proportion, we see that over two thirds of respondents made some form of error during writing texts on social networks, while about one third of the respondents did not do that (Fig. 1). Miletić & Novaković (2012 in their research within the Croatian language upon the frequency of errors refer that: students of all grades have misspelled in 21.1% of the cases. They had, on average, the same number of errors. Out of 11 words each student on average misspelled two words. The differences are minor: 5th graders misspelled 20.7% of the words and the 6th graders a little bit more (22.37%). The least errors made the seventh graders - 18.18%, while the 8th graders made the largest percentage of errors - 23.37%.

On a sample of 2,452 words obtained through correspondence on social networks, a research on the prevalence of errors has been conducted and this resulted in a fact that 8% of all the words in the said sample are connected with some of the errors, i.e., such is the percentage of the misspelled words. The rest of the 92% of the words in the corpus has been properly written (Fig. 2). This means that this 8% of errors was distributed among 71% of the respondents, while among the other 29% there generally were not any errors in the analyzed corpus.



**Figure 1.** Prevalence of spelling and technical deviations on social networks

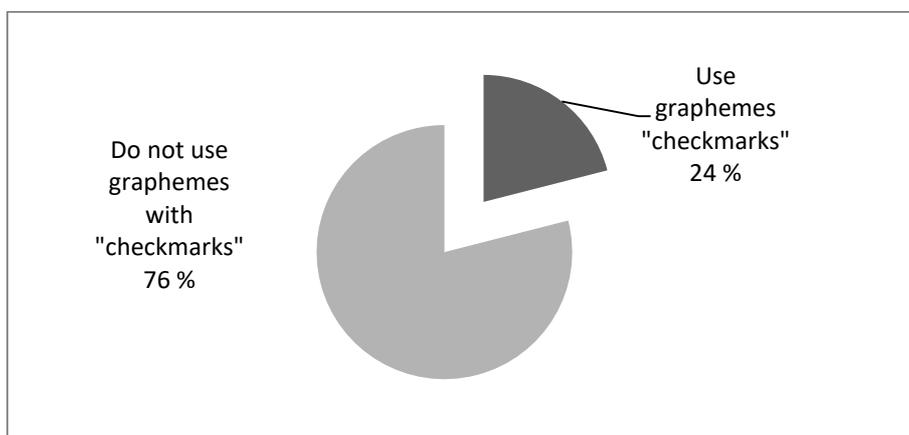


**Figure 2.** Total number of misspelled words on the entire sample

We researched the use of the so-called checkmarks on certain graphemes (such as *č, ć, š, ž*), in order to examine the writing habits (because the use of the alphabet that supports the aforementioned graphemes requires additional "efforts" of installation and activation of the mentioned fonts on computers and smartphones). The results showed that 24% of the respondents used graphemes with checkmarks during writing while 76% does not (Fig. 3).

Table 1 shows all the types of errors that have occurred in the corpus when students were writing on the social networks. Out of the total number of errors, 41% of them are accounted for spelling and language errors, while a larger number of them 59% were spelling and technical errors. The biggest error which can be seen in both groups was "omission of the comma", which

represents 26% of the total errors of the types of errors (100%). Halilović (1996) on this punctuation mark states: „Comma is a punctuation mark that, for easier reading and better understanding of the text, defers passages of a different character and to a different extent independent. Generally it is worth not to separate by commas mutually closely related words, sets of words and sentences. It is important to properly mark in the writing (in speech this is pause) the border between the individual parts, because the meaning often depends on this border.“



**Figure 3.** Prevalence of respondents who do (not) use graphemes with checkmarks

From this we can see that this IP<sup>1)</sup> character is a character of sense, and that on this basis it is realized, thus the reasons for these mistakes should be looked for in it. Errors such as "small letter instead of capital" and "IP sign after space" occupy 14% each of the total number of the same. In the case of primary school age, spelling errors for small and capital letter are frequent. Miletić & Novaković (2009) on case-sensitive errors state information for concrete examples: „in the name Marija Jurić Zagorka, where the nickname is fused with the name and became its integral part, are common errors. Of the fourteen pupils, 24% had misspelled the name [...] Often there is error in this group of words where we would not expect an incorrect capitalization: *euopljanin*

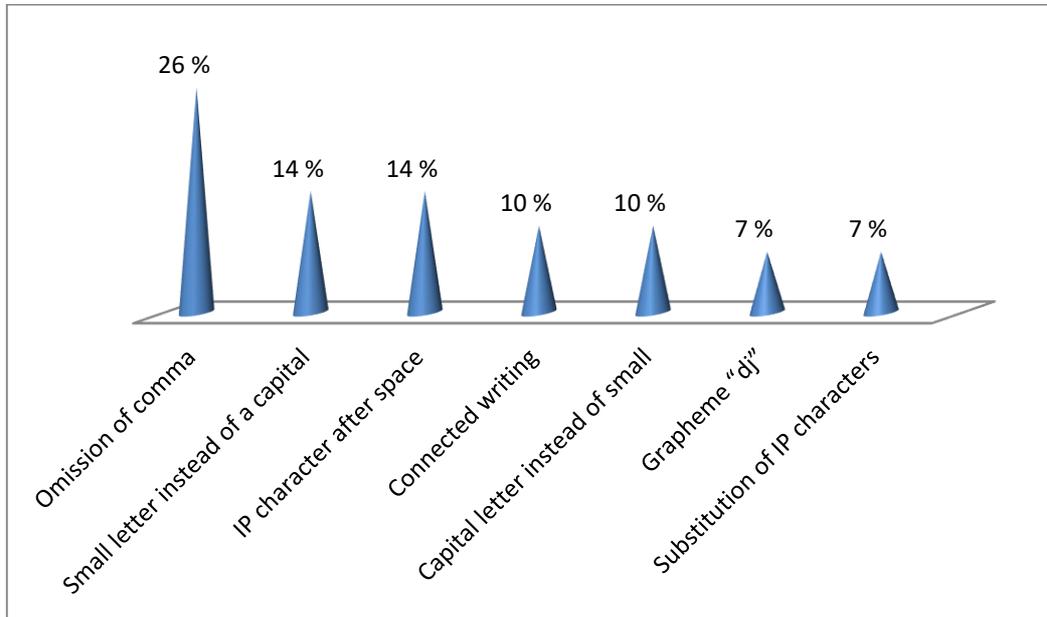
(European), is written by 20% of the pupils, *slavonac* (Slavonian) 18%, *splićanin* (from Split) 15% and *hrvat* (Croat) 12%. Worrying is the fact that most are wrong the 8th graders: even 50% of them writes *euroljanin*, 64% *zagorac* (from Zagor) and 36% *slavonac*.”

Incorrectly are written multi-member names, where the pupils write the first or the second member with a small letter: Donji Miholjac mistakenly writes 22% of the pupils, the 5th graders most often as donji Miholjac (33% of the pupils in the fifth grade), and the 6th graders and 7th graders write it as *Donji miholjac* (31% of the pupils in the 6th graders and 21% of 7th graders). We hence realize that the problem of capitalization is quite an expressed occurrence among the school population, and as we see it continues even later. Among other errors in our research, the lowest percentage of 2% we have with errors of the sort "potential (*bi* instead of *bih*)", "ommission of space after IP character" and "ommission of full-stop".

**Table 1.** Types of errors and their distribution in the corpus

Types of errors	Spelling and language errors	Spelling and technical errors
Omission of comma	-	26 %
Small letter instead of a capital	14 %	-
IP character after space	-	14 %
Connected writing	10 %	-
Capital letter instead of small	10 %	-
Grapheme “dj”	-	8 %
Substitution of IP characters	-	7 %
Case ending errors	5 %	-
Potential ( <i>bi</i> instead of <i>bih</i> )	2 %	-
Omission of space after IP character	-	2 %
Omission of full-stop	-	2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>41 %</b>	<b>59 %</b>

Here is a graphic presentation on the types of errors and their mutual differences where the same can be seen in Fig. 4.



**Figure 4.** Graphic display of the types of errors and their distribution in the corpus

### Inventory of some of the spelling errors

**Use of the grapheme *dj* instead of *đ*:** *Dodjem* (I: 8)<sup>2)</sup>, da *dodjem* (I: 10), *Djulizara* Srđanovic (I: 16).

**Case ending errors:** Šenaj je imala 12 *igračke* (I: 3), treba igračkaka. Profesore ja sam kuci u *Crnu Goru* (I: 8).

**Omission of comma:** Profesore (,) Šenaj je imala (I: 1), zapisali 10(,) jer ja (I: 1), ja sam pogresila(,) jos 2 (I: 1), Unapred Hvala(,)Amir (I: 4), Da(,) slazem se (I: 7), u Crnu Goru(,)tako da necu (I: 8), da prijavim ispit kod vas(,)samo jedan imam (I: 2), samoo da vas pozdravim(,)lep provod (I: 9), pozz(,) svako dobro (I: 9), nemam ni poruku sacuvanu(,)tako da se (I: 12), Postovanje profesore(,)evo ja sam (I: 22).

**Omission of full-stop:** uradila tabelu Svako dobro (I: 22).

**Substitution of punctuation marks:** u mojoj *torbi molimvas* (I: 1), Profesore. Kako ste. Kako je (I: 9), samo drama jel..hvala puno (I: 9).

**Punctuation mark after space:** torbi ..(I: 1), pogresila(\_).Sabina (I: 1), ne mogu(\_),dal (I: 2) Srdanovic(\_),imam (I: 16), iz predmeta igre i igracke(\_),posto nisam (I: 17) na neakreditovanom(\_),a inace (I: 18).

**Omission of space after punctuation mark:** javljam pod ovim *uslovima, nadam se* (I: 3).

**Potential 1. (bi instead of bih):** i *bi* zelio (I: 4).

**Capital letter (instead of a small):** Postovanje *Profesore* (I: 4), Hteo *Bih* da vas (I: 4), ja sam *Prosvetni* radnik (I: 4), slazem se Nekad sam posmtrao (I: 7).

**Small letter (instead of capital):** ispitu iz predmeta *igre i igracke* (I: 3), Unapred Hvala Amir (I: 4), svoju knjigu. *ne* vjerujem (I: 7), da te pozdravim. *svako* dobro (I: 7) vas predmet *vjestine* Akademskog ucenja (I: 16) iz predmeta igre i igracke (I: 17).

**Connected writing:** *molimvas* (I: 1), *moze dase* pomogne (I: 4), zelio *dase* upoznamo (I: 4), *netreba* da nosimo (I: 9).

### Similar studies

Branković (2014) comments on the specialized software Symbols Research, which is based on the logic model and a research tool that offers new possibilities in the field of empirical communications research. The authors analyze communication on the social networks in a given time and social space, where the software has a task to automatically identify the requested contents, in real-time period sorts them out and makes basic checking, then notices certain regularities and gives analytical findings.

In their paper, the authors Stamenković & Vlajković (2012), present a study analysis of the language identity in communication on the social networks in Serbia. In the corpus gathered from the users' profiles from several cities were isolated and analyzed the language elements typical to certain areas.

In his work Vljaković (2010), states that analyzed was the influence of the English language on the Serbian in communication on the social network Facebook on orthographic, lexical and grammatical level. The influence of the very medium on which the communication takes place as well as the effects of speech from other areas of Serbia were analyzed. In the mentioned paper, all the linguistic elements are counted and then their number is expressed as a percentage, in order to in this way reveal what is it that characterizes the linguistic identity of the population, such as the southern Serbia on the Internet.

Lawton (2013) presents a model of the type of artificial intelligence as it is made to mimic the human brain. Operators on the software monitor the efficiency of the so-called symbol table, the instrument for identification, classification and evaluation of contents. They continuously control its sensitivity and efficiency, during the course continuous research process they enter corrections and then these corrections are applied as a rule for future content processing, thereby improving the material continuously and actively assessing communication on the social networks. Since language and communication are constantly changing, the authors state that the software which is based on artificial intelligence can not be considered finished and complete, or more precisely, it is flexible and subject to continuous finishing and improvement.

### **Conclusion**

This paper provides a current research related to spelling and technical errors of students on the social networks (facebook, twitter, e-mail). These three services are selected because of their use in a large part is based on language or on the writing and reading the same, as its most complex parts.

From the research it can be concluded that the new forms of using writing exclude handwriting and that are used some new writing platforms such as keyboards, smart touch screens and the like, and consequently provide new opportunities, redefinition, but challenges for writing as well. With this research we have given a modest contribution in this direction, through suggestions and

in regard of an overview of the current situation and the comparative analysis with a focus on the existing studies.

#### NOTES

1. IP – punctuation
2. I – respondent, : number - refers to the number of the text of the respondent within internally composed corpus

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