# Analysis of the Influence of Digital Communication Behaviour on Secondary School Learners' Writing Tasks: Implications for Functional Approach to Teaching English

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**Abstract**

Today, English is considered the international lingua franca dominating sectors of commerce, recreation, education and technology. This means that people are challenged to learn and acquire the linguistic and equally important, the socio-linguistic competencies in order to cope with all aspects of life. The 21$^{st}$ century which ushered technology in the foreground of information and communication has caused to English what many consider a linguistic revolution or anarchy. The digital ways of communication and access to information have been the greatest contributors to this belief that technology has heavily affected the way young people speak and write English.

There was, therefore, need to investigate the influence of digital communication behaviour on secondary school learners' writing tasks in Kitgum District in Uganda. The theory that informed the study was Dell Hyme's (1971) 'Sociolinguistic Competence Theory', which advocates for language users to be linguistically and sociolinguistically competent in communication. Survey questionnaire responses helped in selection of the sample. The descriptive case study design employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and later making meaning of data in tables involved description of numbers, substantiated with descriptive texts. The study sample consisted of 120 Senior Three students and 12 teachers of English from three schools. The findings showed that whereas the students used the different ICTs in their everyday lives, their use of English structures and vocabulary were not influenced by the ICTs. Their written communications were effective but inappropriate to contexts of use, but other factors, other than ICTs and its modes of communication were noted. However, the study revealed that students are not linguistically and sociolinguistically competent in their writing, due to deviance, carelessness and input errors. Therefore, the study recommended that school administrators and teachers should sensitise students and improve teaching and learning of English.