



Scrolling to Success: Exploring Teachers' Views on Social Media's Influence on English Language Learners

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Abstract: *This qualitative study aims at exploring the impact of social media on English language learners' linguistic competence, motivation, and anxiety. There are ten numbers of people, chosen for this study which includes University level professors and teachers. Responses are collected from the information gathered from the different participants by the use of written interviews. In addition, the information which is used in this study, sheds light on the positive and negative impacts of social media in learning of English language and to underscore future strategies to integrate it in curriculum for university students. Most participants agreed that social media is an effective tool for language learning, and students showed a discernible increase in their understanding and use of English language skills. The results give us blatantly optimistic results in language learning with social media usage, even though the paper advocates for more research and analysis in other disciplines.*

Keywords: *Communication, EFL/ESL learners, Mobile-assisted language learning, Social media, Technology.*

Introduction:

This paper is based on the widely accepted belief that learners of English as a second language, or foreign language (ESL/EFL), have fewer opportunities for authentic L2 interface and lack linguistic competence in the language (Sharma, 2021, 2022 and 2023; Yadav and Sharma, 2023). This is done on the presumption that it will give students access to offline and online resources for learning English through social media (SM) networking sites and give them chances to use the language outside of the classroom. The goal of the study is to investigate how ESL students in Indian colleges feel about using social media to improve their English. It also aims to investigate the extent to which SM enhances motivation and lessens anxiety in learners.

Today's technology has revolutionized every industry, permeated people's lives, and altered their views on the use of technology in social interactions. People now have access to social media platforms, which are cutting edge technological features. Barrot's (2022) research indicates that this field of study has grown significantly over the past years and is likely to do so in the years to come. Teachers and students use SM in their routine, social and academic interactions but without any wider attention and thought to exploit it further for integrating in teaching and learning process. New vistas in language learning and teaching are made possible by social media tools, particularly Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (Zheng, Ismail, Heydarnejad, 2023). The technological generation, which includes millennials and Gen Alpha, is known for its heavy reliance on social media and its extensive use for personal gain. Nevertheless, there are benefits and drawbacks to social media use that require more in-depth study in academic settings.

Now days, in teaching, social media plays a crucial role for yielding the information to learners. After, Social media, education is not limited to one group or community rather it has reached to even common people. It connects the whole world as one and enable us to get any information beyond time and place in seconds. Consequently, SM usage has made education learning and teaching easy beyond the classroom settings for everyone. The better living and life style, better revenues and prospects and increased access to electronic gadgets and internet connectivity have brought several benefits to all. Earlier education was limited to the one particular group or community. But, now the scene has changed, even a rickshaw wala, is becoming IAS. So, we can say that with the development of social media, information reached very fast from one person to another.

There are various sites or apps are available for the people. Just for the small information, there are many apps are available. There are many options for the users. There are many apps, such as – Facebook, Instagram, twitter, blog, hashtag and many more. With the help of these apps communication has become faster and easier. With the help of these apps, users use short form of writing. Means, in a short time, they want to make the reader to understand the matter. For this, they take the help of abbreviation and emogies and even technical words. So, in this way many new words have also added in the dictionary. These are new technological words. For example- NSFW, Open source, Ping, clickbait, GIF, etc. There are many new words because of the use of Hinglish. As a result, with its massive usage and the flow of information, many new words have been added in English language. Understanding the earlier relevant works that emphasized the significance of social media usage for young language learners is essential to laying a solid foundation for the current study on social media usage.

Literature Review:

This paper focuses on the purpose of research for learning a language. There are many theories given by different writers. There are various studies which deal with the use of social media with its availability specially for the young language learners (Lin et al., 2016; Sharma, 2019) in language learning. These media include- You Tube and Flickr to share the visual materials where as Linkedin and Face book are the sources of social networking. Wikipedia, Twitter, and blogging focus for the development of knowledge (Balakrishnan and Lay, 2016).

In the views of Lin et al.(2016), social media gives the users the possibility of communication and information but it also can be shared with different users all over the world. It has been said that the use of Facebook is, everywhere in terms of educational purposes. People use Facebook to share pedagogical matter. In addition, Chartrand (2012) revealed that students who use little time for learning language can be encouraged by the use of internet so that they can update themselves with the use of language. Balakrishnan (2015) explores about the effect of those style about their intentions for using social media for learning the language. The researcher has found from their studies that this phenomenon of using social media has been gaining momentum among universities students. Balakrishnan and Lay (2016) have given importance to the teachers for the for spreading the awareness of learning style of language and its impact on social media usage. Further, researchers give their views on the Social Learning Theory (SLT), points out that leaning is most effective when learners interact with one another in groups and participates in small study groups as compare to the lecture given in the classroom. Some scholars argue that this theory has become popular with the use of social media and mobile phone technology (Bandura, 2002; Gong et al., 2014; Mishra and Sharma, 2023).

Khan and Iyer (2009) has cited that learners prefer to study independently, on self-paced work according to their interests. Besides, they also learn practically and with the help of social media which can give them the possibility to design the study schedule as per their needs. Because, most of the students are extrovert, so

they don't concern about the anonymity. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the facilitator for yielding and exchanging the information and these sites can exploit the students as well.

In the views of Harting, Facebook, is a kind of pragmatic information provider which is a development tool for learners. He further states that writing and sharing of the posts with their classmates will effectively nuances between target language and native language expressions. Similarly, the function is also used by Reinhardt and Ryu's have attempted Korean learners' socio-pragmatic awareness by relying on Facebook. Facebook provides the students with an authentic communication where they can produce appropriate inter-culture. Zheng, Ismail, Heydarnejad (2023) opined that the introduction of new issues and the spread of new technologies inside the educational system can upset students' psychological balance. Additionally, several researchers have promoted the use of social media in academic settings (Everson et al., 2013; Greenhow and Robelia, 2009; Roblyer et al., 2010; Sharma, 2019). The paper seamlessly navigates through the research objectives, methodology, data collection, and discussion after providing sufficient background information on the study's topic and prior relevant literature.

Research Methodology

Research Objectives

1. To research how social media affects the linguistic competence of English language learners
2. To look at how social media affects the motivation of language learners
3. To investigate how social media affects the anxiety that EFL students have when speaking a second language

Research Design:

Many factors were kept in mind for choosing a research design for this study. The opinions and views were collected from the participants to discuss about the each of the aspect of research objectives. This study is based on the in depth analysis of "how" and "why" of the social media's impact in learning of English language in real world setting. It also focuses on SWOT matrix for enabling the researchers to explore-strength, weakness, opportunities and threats and it was used and utilized in this study because of its effectiveness.

Sampling:

The people for this study were English language teachers working at various universities across different states of India. These were the direct users of English language via social media. In this study, purposive sampling in qualitative research was used. Participants were selected because of their capability in social media for providing the right information in English language learning field. The sample of this study, included ten participants working at different Universities who are well versed and expert in this field.

Data Collection:

The data for this study was collected through a written interview with the participants individually. The researcher contacted the participants in person. The participants were asked to fill the written interview form by email or by other WhatsApp. The answers were submitted by the participants in a week to the researcher. The respondents are given names as A, B, C ... I, J to maintain their privacy. And, this is how, participants were given enough time to think and answer the questions and were able to give the answers.

Data Analysis:

The analysis of data was based on themes during this study. To make sure about all of the concepts of the study were included and all the research questions were answered, a SWOT analysis was utilized for filling out.

Discussion:

A SWOT analysis method was used for analyzing the study. There are some positive as well as negative impact of social media.

Positive Impacts:

As we have already discussed that we exchange the information very fast globally irrespective of time and place. Several apps help in learning English language since these apps provide auto correction facility that detects the error and rectify the mistake. After reviewing a number of studies, Barrot (2021) conducted a qualitative analysis and identified the seventeen most widely used social media platforms. This information provided compelling evidence of the beneficial effects of social media as a setting for language instruction and learning. Here is the response of a few respondents who opined positive outcomes of SM usage.

“Most of the university learners use different social media platforms and share information on topics covered, assignments and solutions to their problems.”

“Students get exposure to authentic English language content through social media platforms which allows learners to engage with various forms of written and spoken English, such as posts, comments, videos, and podcasts.”

“Social media provides an informal and interactive environment where learners can practice English language skills without the pressure often associated with formal learning settings.”

“Engaging in conversations with peers on social media platforms provides opportunities for authentic communication, allowing learners to practice real-life language use, reducing their shyness and anxiety and enhance their motivation.”

“Social media exposes learners to diverse cultures and perspectives, helping them develop a deeper understanding of English-speaking cultures and societies.”

“Social media platforms host a vast array of language learning resources, including language learning communities, educational content, language exchange groups, and tutoring services, which can support learners in their language acquisition journey.”

“Interactive features such as likes, comments, shares, and follower counts can reduce their anxiety and motivate learners to actively participate in language learning activities and engage with English language content on social media.”

“Learners can tailor their social media feeds to follow accounts and join groups that align with their language learning goals and interests, allowing for a personalized learning experience. With the help of SM apps, one cannot feel lonely. WhatsApp, Snapchat are the medium through which we can chat unlimited. So, one cannot feel isolated or depressive.”

“Engaging with social media platforms enhances learners’ digital literacy skills, including their ability to navigate online communities, critically evaluate information, and communicate effectively in digital environments.”

“Social media provides opportunities for learners to connect with other English language learners, educators, language experts, and potential language exchange partners, facilitating collaboration and support in their language learning endeavors.”

Language learning is easy to access with the help of these apps. For example- Facebook, Twitter, Blog, etc. We can express ourselves easily. There are many academic writing blogs where we can share the information. There is also the availability of You Tube. This is most effective for learning a language. By seeing and hearing, we can understand a lot related with our topics. Just for one topic, there are many options available for the learner and he can opt for the best one as per the need. Facebook, is the easiest way to make friends worldwide and for sharing the information. Students can get motivation by sharing and caring through different apps. By posting their pics and status and stories, youngsters get motivated which enhance their personality. Brick (2011) discovered that instantaneous feedback is the primary benefit of social networking sites. Due to the lexical and grammar-related topics covered on Facebook and Instagram, learners can get quick feedback during in-person interactions. Additionally, students are asked to compile a list of words related to productive skills.

Overall, when used effectively, social media can serve as a valuable supplemental tool for English language learners, offering a rich, anxiety free and dynamic environment for language acquisition, motivation and cultural enrichment. Some respondents, though, expressed concern about how young learners might use social media, saying it might compromise their learning goals.

Negative Impacts:

Social media is boon as well as bane. It depends on the learners; how does he take it. So, if one uses social media in appropriate manner, it can be positive also. While social media can offer numerous benefits for English language learners, a few respondents have underscored some potential negative outcomes associated with its usage.

“Social media platforms can easily become a source of distraction, diverting learners’ attention away from their language learning goals and tasks. Besides, it spreads misinformation, including inaccurate language usage, grammar, and spelling since exposure to incorrect language forms may lead to confusion and reinforce language errors.”

“Some social media content may feature inappropriate language use, including slang, abbreviations, and offensive language. Exposure to such content can negatively influence learners’ language acquisition and usage.”

“Excessive use of SM may lead to social isolation and reduced face-to-face interaction, limiting opportunities for real-life language practice and communication. In addition, constant exposure to curated and idealized representations of language proficiency and fluency may lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem among learners who perceive themselves as less proficient.”

“Social media usage entails privacy risks, including the potential exposure of personal information and interactions to unintended audiences, which may make some learners hesitant to engage openly in language learning activities.”

“Excessive reliance on SM for language learning may discourage learners from exploring other, more diverse learning resources and methods, leading to a narrow and limited language learning experience. Moreover, the pressure to perform and communicate effectively in English on SM platforms may exacerbate language anxiety among learners, hindering their willingness to engage in language practice and communication.”

“Spending excessive amounts of time on social media can lead to poor time management and neglect of other important aspects of language learning, such as structured study, practice, and reflection.”

Against the backdrop, it’s important for English language learners to approach social media usage mindfully, balancing its potential benefits with the awareness of its potential drawbacks, and adopting strategies to mitigate negative outcomes while maximizing the constructive effect on their language learning journey.

Future Prospects:

In light of this, the study demonstrates how incorporating social media into education can reveal trends, offer distinctive viewpoints on learning, and facilitate group discussions. It also offers fresh research that enables students to get error-free output for their academic assignments and peer feedback. By finding new sources of knowledge, resources, partners, and research opportunities, students can advance in their academic careers (Sharma, 2022). Furthermore, the SM usage by students makes it easier for them to connect with educators, researchers, and other learners, as well as to shape the direction of their field. Including social media within the lessons and assignments can help students appreciate the wonders of modern technology and explore new ways to meet their learning goals. Moving forward, it is imperative for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to collaborate in developing comprehensive frameworks that harness the benefits of social media while addressing its challenges. This may involve the implementation of evidence-based strategies to promote mindful social media usage, the creation of educational resources that leverage social media platforms effectively, and the provision of professional development opportunities to support teachers in integrating digital technologies into language instruction.

Conclusion:

The results of this study, taken together, provide insight into the complex effects that social media have on English language learners as observed by educators. While acknowledging the potential benefits such as increased exposure to authentic language input, opportunities for informal learning, increased motivation and low anxiety, and access to diverse resources, teachers also express concerns regarding the negative outcomes associated with social media use, including distraction, misinformation, and privacy risks. Further, the nuanced understanding provided by teachers underscores the importance of adopting a balanced approach to integrating social media into English language learning contexts. Educators play a crucial role in guiding learners to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, fostering critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and effective communication strategies. Ultimately, by harnessing the potential of social media in tandem with traditional pedagogical approaches, educators can empower English language learners to thrive in a digitally mediated world, equipping them with the language skills, cultural competence, and digital literacy necessary for success in the 21st century.

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Citation: Devi. Dr. S., (2024) “Scrolling to Success: Exploring Teachers’ Views on Social Media’s Influence on English Language Learners”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-2, Issue-1, February-2024.