

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS TO LEARN AND IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STUDY AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN SOUTH PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

Abdul Khaliq*

Assistant Professor, Department of Social & Allied Sciences Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (CUVAS) Bahawalpur
abdukhaliq@cuvas.edu.pk

Ayesha Kanwal

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Social & Allied Sciences Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (CUVAS) Bahawalpur
786.aeyshakanwal@gmail.com

Amir Jamil

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The current study shows how social media has positively affected learning and improving English language among second language learners. Social media, the gift of modern age, has proved to be one of the most important tools that has affected education in general and learning English in particular. The impact of social media on learning English cannot be denied or ignored. Students of the modern world are using various applications like WhatsApp, face book, Instagram, blogs, wikis, YouTube; twitter etc. as a matter of routine. This use of social media is consciously and unconsciously improving vocabulary, reading skill, listening skill, writing skill, lexical variation, communication skills, grammar usage etc. This thing surely leads to various teaching and learning reformations to maximize the process of learning. Pedagogical practices that use social media and modern gadgets as instructional technologies have brought about a considerable shift in learning environment. These gadgets increase automation, motivation and confidence. The learners can learn English language and even can rectify their mistakes without the help of tutor. A mix method approach has been used in the current study to examine the role of social media and social networking in learning and improving English language. A questionnaire was administered to investigate the role of social media in this respect. The Findings of the study confirmed the positive impact of social media on learning English language. On the basis of these findings, it is recommended that social media and gadgets must be incorporated in pedagogical practices to enhance the learning of English.

Keywords: WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, OALD-iSpeaker, Facebook, Wikes.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized the way of living in this modern age. The social media and social networking sites are heavily used by people. Today, all the aspects of life like the way of communication, business, commerce, information delivery, education etc. have been changed. Modern technology and social media are affecting social and educational aspects of our lives. Hence, social media can be exploited to make the second language learners learn English language (Dahdal, 2020).

In Pakistan, English language has got the position of second language .It is used in running the machinery of courts, media, education ‘trade’ commerce, business etc. It has become the need of the day to learn English. The second language learners face a lot of problems while learning English. A second language learner encounters serious hurdles in vocabulary learning, developing speaking skill and making correct sentence structures. These hurdles can be removed and learning process can be accelerated by employing social media tools and gadgets in learning English (Quadri et al., 2017).

* Corresponding Author

In the area of education, social media sites have proved to be an effective source to learn, practice and enhance English language. The youngsters spend almost 12 hours using social media sites and they use English language for communication and sharing information with one another. In this way students get various opportunities to use target language. . Social media is not just the means of fun and recreation rather it has become the platform to share ideas, beliefs and opinions (Kaplan, 2015). Social media has become the source of facilitation for modern users. The users use various gadgets like mobile phones, laptops, tablets to circulate ideas in a systematic manner. So, social media has become the source to educate the people (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This social media has shrunk the world and brought all the knowledge at the disposal of users. Now, no field of life is away from the access of people. New age users have exploited all the distant regions of knowledge and have shared them with others. This sharing ultimately leads to the learning of language that is used as medium for such type of communication. This interest of modern user in social media and technology can be used in educational field for the purpose of learning (Rodriguez, 2011).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of literature review in this study is to explore and address the gaps and deficiencies in the previous studies. Social media sites have become the most beaten path for new age man. Today's learner uses different sites like face book, twitter, Instagram, Skype, messenger for communication. So, this social media has become the part and parcel of modern age student. The learners can access any type of information in just a single click. On seeing this interest in modern technology and social media, many teachers are using various applications to teach the most difficult areas of language according to Pascarella and Terrenzini (1991). Social media has become the most favorite tool of teachers that is widely used for instructions in teaching. Teachers use different modes and apps to maintain relationship with student's. This relationship and connection between learners and teachers through social media has become a good source of enhancing English language (Sharma, 2019).

New age people spend hours and hours on social media and have vast experiences of different sites and applications. Social media has gained so much importance that it has become a necessity for today's professionals. People who are well versed with technology have more chances of employment. Moreover, social media is greatly favoured to be employed in educational field as well (Ball, 2008). A survey was administered in 2007 by marketing firms, like Noel –Levitz and James Tower, and the National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA) and it found that the youngsters prefer to use various social media sites and applications to make contacts with their friends and acquaintances and decide about their admissions in different universities on the basis of availability of internet and social media in those institutions (Livingstone, 2000).

Educational institutions have understood the increasing importance of social media tools, so they are trying to incorporate it in their systems. In July 2008, a survey was done in 158 educational institutions to know about the use of social media in them. Various questions were asked from students to know about their interest in different social media applications and the frequency and purpose of their use. That survey can be used for valuable recommendations for educational institutions (Junco & Cole -Avent, 2008). Then, the second language learners can improve their language with the help of lessons and tutorials available on internet. They can learn various language skills without much effort and expenses. The learners even talk about their learning experiences to others and develop relationship with them (Olga, 2014). Tantarangsee et al. (2017) opine that social media has a very positive impact on learners because it enhances relationship and connections between people. This connection between people is of vital importance to enhance learning. This connection can improve language skills like listening, reading and speaking, so social media can be used for instructional purposes to teach various areas of language like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation (Wu & Wu, 2011), Social media provides a very efficient platform to connect with other language users and this thing positively effects language leanings (Thorne, 2010; Wu & Wu, 2011).

Pedagogical Instructions through the Social Media

The social media users use it for multiple purposes. They share information, photos, videos, documents etc. with others and this sharing becomes the ultimate reason of interaction and communication. In this way a user is connected with the whole universe. This easy access to others can be used for educational purposes. More than half people use social media in the form of different

applications like face book, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. This extensive use of social media poses a threat to conventional ways of living now students do not use books in hard form, rather they search different topics virtually. Social media has replaced the worn out methods of teaching with the advent of technology. Now, distant learning has become very easy because of WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, meet etc. New technology has enabled a learner to connect with distant learners and teachers. The learners can equip themselves with different skills by using information given by social media. It presents correct figures that have been gathered by extensive research. They can even upload their own data on social media for the benefit of others. They can assess their abilities by solving different quizzes and exercises. Then social media tools present new, developed and advanced material for teaching purposes. So, this virtual teaching is highly beneficial for distant learners (Slim & Hafedh, 2019).

Social media plays a vital role in developing basic language skills. The learners can improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing by using different social media applications. The users read different texts and articles to learn new vocabulary and sentence structure. These users can make native speakers their friends and improve their speaking skill by sharing their daily routine activities with them. They can improve their communication skill by using Hello English; Speaker of OALD. They can also join different web pages that teach English language. They can listen to BBC news and other programmes to develop their listening skill and pronunciation. The social media users can improve their reading skill by using Readily, Flip board, Play Newsstand. Writing skill can be enhanced by writing blogs and articles. Then there are some other helping apps like IELTS, TOEFL, JRE, OET, CAE, CPE and PTE to make the learners learn different language skills (Thorne, 2010).

Mobile has become an essential element of our lives. This gadget can prove to be a magical tool in enhancing English language. The users of mobile phone can use different applications and sites to enhance language proficiency. Edmodo is a useful application for mature learners to acquire English. Other Apps, for example, Duo lingo is a gaming application that improves English in addition to provide fun and entertainment. Then there are so many other games present on social media that build ties among players and enhance their language skills (Roblyer et al., 2010).

Social Media Applications

Social media may have different types and forms that can be used by second language learners which are as following:

1. **Instant Messengers:** WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Skype, Google Meet, Zoom, IMO, Tango,
2. **Social Networking Sites:** Facebook, LinkedIn,
3. **Social News:** Flip board, Play Newsstand, BBC News, CNN, HT, TOI, DNA,
4. **Media Sharing:** YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Intranet,
5. **Wikis:** Wikipedia, Emojipedia, online dictionaries,
6. **Blogging:** Word Press, Google Blogger, Blogspot.com,
7. **Micro Blogging:** Twitter, Telegram, 8. Emailing: Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo, Hot mails,
8. Apps of Podcasts by British Council, Audiobooks, Hello English, iSpeaker and iWriter of OALD, Speed Reading, Readerly, Hipboard, Cambly, Duolingo, Netflix, and other Apps of IELTS, TOEFL, JRE, OET, CAE, CPE, PTE

Most of these tools are free of cost and learners can access them quite easily. The usage of these applications is also very easy and comfortable. The learners need not take any help from professionals and teachers. The learners can learn English and then assess their proficiency with the help of different exercise, quizzes and questions available on social media. So these applications can proved to the most beneficial sites if used under the control of parents and teachers. Social media is very vast and dangerous like a roaring sea. It has different types of material available on it that can be accessed easily. Then Social media does not use standard form of language that may be acquired by users. These are some challenges that are posed by social media (Rutherford, 2010)

METHODOLOGY

The current study was conducted at university level students in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The sample size was 150 male and female students from BS programs of The Islamia university of Bahawalpur, Government Sadiq College Women University and Cholistan University of veterinary and animal Sciences Bahawalpur. These 150 students were observed directly and then given a survey questionnaire to inquire the role of social media in learning English language.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was analyzed through SPSS version 25.0 and tabulated as under:

Table No. 1 Opinions of Participants about various Social Media Applications and their Use

Sr. No.	Statement	M	SD
1.	Cambly plays an important role in developing my accent like native speaker	3.32	1.087
2.	EDMODO helps to provide opportunity learning and developing English in group study.	2.74	1.409
3.	Edmodo helps to enhance English through group discussion	4.15	.855
4.	Duolingo social media app helps learning English through fun.	4.22	.839
5.	Duolingo offers visual and interactive tutorials.	3.61	1.020
6.	Emoji helps to learn English and develop English vocabulary through symbols.	2.71	1.256
7.	Emoji helps to learn English vocabulary concepts.	3.69	1.127
8.	Emoji social media apps helps to create expressions.	3.31	1.143
9.	Emoji helps to respond a make understanding.	4.27	.941
10.	Podcast helps to develop spoken through listening skills.	3.05	1.151
11.	OALD I speaker helps to learn new word meaning.	4.08	.839
12.	I use WhatsApp to learn English language.	3.89	1.056
13.	Wikipedia enhances my English language knowledge.	2.87	1.263
14.	Social Media is an easy way for development of English writing skill.	4.12	.809
15.	Students at University level use Social media for English language writing development	4.20	.747
16.	Social media use is not difficult for English learners at University level.	3.69	1.124
17.	The role of social media in English language writing performance development.	4.04	1.047
18.	I make use of social media to disseminate knowledge to my classmate.	3.76	1.072
19.	I use materials gotten from blogging sites to complement what I have been taught in class.	3.89	1.089
20.	Social media is a good place to check class notes or homework posted by the teacher.	4.19	.928
21.	Watch cartoon with English sound track from websites.	4.15	.816
22.	I usually have unlimited access to social media and this has improved my English Language.	4.02	.987
23.	I will not perform well in my academics even if I stop using social media.	3.42	1.280
24.	I engage myself in social media to enhance my English language through comprehension.	4.21	.849
25.	I Use online dictionary to solve linguistic problems.	4.18	1.038
Average		3.75	1.030

The results in Table 1 shows that mostly the learners at university level use social media applications as depicted in above stated table through their means and standard deviation values.

Table No. Error! No text of specified style in document.2 Gender-wise comparison of social media applications to learn and improve English language

Gender	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
Male	3.42	.522	1.447	.000
Female	3.55	.630		

The results in Table 2 illustrate that the present significant difference among male is ($M = 3.42, SD = .522$) & female is ($M = 3.55, SD = .630$) university learners with regard to use of social media application for learning and development of English, with the result $t = 1.447, p < .000$. High mean results of female students are more favourable pertaining to the use of social media for learning and developing English as contrast to male students.

Table No.3 Location-wise comparison of social media applications to learn and improve English language

Locality	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
Urban	3.84	.895		
Rural	3.24	.684	-1.594	.000

The results in Table 3 illustrate that the present significant difference among urban area students is ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .895$) & rural area students is ($M = 3.24$, $SD = .684$) university learners with regard to use of social media application for learning and development of English, with the result $t = -1.594$, $p < .000$. High mean results of urban area students are more favourable pertaining to the use of social media for learning and developing English as contrast to rural area students.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study indicates that social media can help university-level ESL writers improve their craft in a number of ways, including helping students find and use vocabulary that is appropriate for their level of proficiency, being simpler to digest than books and other text materials, and pique students' interest in and motivation for studying English. The study's findings corroborated those of (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019), which found that young college students find social media easier to utilize than books or other text materials while looking for resources on expanding their vocabularies. However, students can use internet media like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, WhatsApp and the like to view visual representations of concepts and improve their written English.

No doubt social media is a useful platform and majority of the students are interested in using it as an educational tool, it may also have harmful effects.so it should be used with care. The social media user's use incorrect spelling and wrong grammatical structure. It is rightly argued that language on internet is not prestigious. The learners may learn slang words and expressions. Then sometimes, these applications may distract students. They may spend more time in futile chatting with friends than for study purposes. They may also access the material not needed by them to enhance the acquisition of language. The learners must be monitored and checked by parents and teachers. Otherwise, this social media may prove to be a disaster for young generation. There must be parental lock on some social media applications so that students may not approach vulgar material present on internet (Rambe, 2011). A lot of learning applications are available on social media. But even till now, they all have not been experimented on large scale. If these applications are to use in educational contexts then extensive freedom should be given to instructor in the selection and use of these applications according to the need of the learners.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the possible gains of social media use in learning English language. Findings of the study show that students were happy and well-motivated by learning through social media sites .This digital world offers different applications and sites that assist learners in learning English language. Social media, no doubt, provides valuable opportunities to new age students in enhancing learning process. Today's learners have wide experience of using different applications offered by social media. These applications positively impact the learning process and improve oral and written competence. So, new age learners do not depend entirely on the instructor to improve their skills. They also take help from technology and social media. Social media has become the part of pedagogical instructions and practices. This digital world has changed the educational experiences of learners. Social media sites have become an efficient tool of teaching learning process. With the help of social media, learners can enhance their listening, speaking, reading and writing skill in more efficient manner. Technology and media have abolished the idea of full time tutor. Then social media is the most suitable medium of instructions while teaching distant learners. Now learners do not rely on classes and hand books to get the knowledge and information. It can be achieved from social media sites in the best manner. It is the need of the time to incorporate various social media sites and applications in educational system. Fruit of technology cannot be questioned anymore. The opportunities provided by social media are numerous. So, the second language learners can show the better performance when taught with the help of social media.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The role of social media in delivering educational outcomes cannot be denied. The efficiency of social media has been assessed in the best manner during the period of Covid 19. Corona virus posed some challenges during the last two years, but social media literacy helped to overcome these hurdles and threats. Social media and its various educational sites mitigated the risk and bad effects of Covid 19. In the future, this study might use a survey of both students and instructors to examine how students' social networks affect their schooling. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the way young adults learn inside online social communities. The study's goal is to examine the significance of social networks in ESLL and the ways in which they are perceived by both adult learners and their teachers through the use of questionnaires filled out by both groups.

REFERENCES

- Al-Jarrah, T. M., Al-Jarrah, J. M., Talafhah, R. H., & Mansor, N. (2019). The role of social media in development of English language writing skill at school level. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 8(1), 87–99.
- Ball, R. S. (2008). Higher Education as Virtual Conversation. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 43(5), 24-34. Retrieved from <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2008/9/higher-education-as-virtual-conversation>.
- Dahdal, S. (2020). Using the WhatsApp social media application for active learning. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(2), pp 239–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239520928307>.
- Junco, R., & Cole-Avent, G. A. (2008). An introduction to technologies commonly used by college students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 124, 3-17.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Kaplan, A.M. (2015). Social Media, the Digital Revolution, and the Business of Media. *International Journal on Media Management*, 17(4), pp 197-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2015.1120014>.
- Livingstone, D.W. (2000). Exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Findings of the first Canadian. *Survey of Informal Learning Practices*. Retrieved from <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/2724/2/10exploring.pdf>.
- Olga, P. (2014). LMS vs SNS: Can social networking sites act as a learning management systems? *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(5), 90-97.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research*. Book. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Quadri, N., Muhammed, A., Sanober, S., Qureshi, M., & Shah, A. (2017). Barriers effecting successful implementation of e-learning in Saudi Arabian universities. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies In Learning (IJET)*, 12(06), 94-107.
- Rambe, P. (2011). Exploring the Impacts of Social Networking Sites on Academic Relations in the University. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 10, 271-293.
- Roblyer, M. D., McDaniel, M., Webb, M., Herman, J., & Witty, J. V. (2010). Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(3), 134–140.
- Rodriguez, J. E. (2011). Social media use in higher education: Key areas to consider for educators. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 7(4), 539–550.
- Rutherford, C. (2010). Using online social media to support pre-service student engagement. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(4), 703–711. http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no4/rutherford_1210.pdf
- Sharma, V. (2019). Saudi students' perspective on social media usage to promote EFL learning. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(1), 128-138.
- Slim, H., & Hafedh, M. (2019). Social media impact on language learning for specific purposes: a study in English for business administration. *Teaching English with Technology*, 19(1), 56-71.
- Tantarangsee, C., Kosarassawadee, N., & Sukwesee, A. (2017). The use of social media in teaching and learning: A case of SSRU's faculty members. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 8(6), 471-476.

- Thorne, S. (2010). The 'Intercultural Turn' and Language Learning in the Crucible of New Media. In S. Guth, & F. Helm (Eds.), *Telecollaboration 2.0 for Language and Intercultural Learning* (pp. 139 - 164). P.I.E. - Peter Lang.
- Thorne, S. (2010). The 'intercultural turn' and language learning in the crucible of new media. In S. Guth, & F. Helm (Eds.), *Telecollaboration 2.0 for Language and Intercultural Learning* (pp. 139 - 164). P.I.E. - Peter Lang.
- Wu, H. J., Wu, P. L. (2011). Learners' perceptions on the use of blogs for EFL learning. *US-China Education Review*, 3, 323-330.