



RESEARCH PAPER

An Investigation of ESL Students' Perceptions on the Use of Social Networking Applications to Increase Motivation and Vocabulary Development

Sheeza Tufail ¹ Dr. Iram Rubab*² Dr. Sabboor Hussain ³

1. MS Scholar, Department of English, Govt. College Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Govt. College Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of English Govt. College Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

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***Corresponding
Author**

iram.rubab@gcwu
s.edu.pk

This study examines the influence of social media on English vocabulary growth and motivation enhancement among ESL students in public and private institutions in Pakistan. This study is descriptive in nature. In this regard, data was gathered through the convenience sampling technique by using a questionnaire from 400 students, 200 males and 200 females, of four universities of Sialkot; two were from public sector and two from private sector. Data was analyzed through SPSS by measuring percentage, mean, standard deviation, and individual t-test to demonstrate the gender difference in the participants' views. The findings revealed that social media stimulates language learning interest among English language learners. As well, noticeably it showed that the majority of the ESL learners viewed the significance of social media sources for motivation enhancement and vocabulary development, and consequently, no gender difference was observed in the study's findings.

Introduction

In the past few years, social networking sites have become the primary means of communication. Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Skype, and a slew of other social media platforms serve various communication purposes. However, English is extensively used on social media, these platforms have indirectly benefitted English learners. Furthermore, social media is used as a learning tool. Students may also use social media to share and discuss their academic materials. The development of the Internet has allowed learning to transcend the confines of the traditional classroom setting. Social media provides an ocean of material for boosting language vocabulary in language teaching and teaching (Mohammed, et.al, 2010). Social media usage has also resulted in beneficial impacts such as improved pronunciation and a more extensive vocabulary (Abbasova, 2016). Correspondingly, according to Levy (2009), learners who use various social networking programs to study the English language obtain several advantages in improved fundamental skills, vocabulary growth, grammar, and comprehension.

According to Alqahtani (2015), the vocabulary elements play a crucial part in second language acquisition, and hence, a lack of vocabulary knowledge hinders effective communication. Furthermore, researchers (Gu, 2003; Marion, 2008; Nation, 2011) concluded that mastering vocabulary is essential for efficient second language usage since vocabulary improves oral and written communication. English is the global language, and it is continually evolving to keep up with technological advancements.

Social media sites like Facebook and others play a significant part in learning English as a second language. Learners benefit from social media in various ways, including increased motivation and the development of social skills. According to Dhanya (2016); Namaziandost & Nasri (2019) research, learners can improve their language abilities due to the many channels that social media has provided. Furthermore, social media allows learners to engage in a meaningful, real-time, ongoing genuine dialogue on these social networking sites (Belal, 2014).

Undoubtedly, social media is a part of our lives, and opinions on its effectiveness in improving and broadening English skills are mixed. This study aims to determine the impact of social media on university students' English vocabulary development and minimize anxiety levels. This research also underpins the gender-based views of ESL learners regarding the significance of social networking sites for vocabulary and confidence development. In this regard, following questions have been generated:

- How far do social networking applications assist and motivate students to improve their vocabulary skills?
- What is the significant difference between the male and female ESL learners' views regarding using social networking applications for confidence and vocabulary development?

Literature Review

Social media is an Internet-based technology that many individuals use to communicate and access information that helps them grow, enhance, and share their knowledge (Gaytan, 2013). Social networking is quickly becoming a significant source of entertainment and education. Various social media platforms provide a variety of features and services.

English is the global language, and it is continually evolving to keep up with technological advancements. Social media sites like Facebook and others play a significant part in learning English as a second language. Learners benefit from social media in a variety of ways that increase their motivation and social skills. Research executed by Dhanya (2016), Namaziandost and Nasri (2019), demonstrated that the learners can improve their language abilities with the diverse variety of innovative platforms. Furthermore, social media allows learners to engage in a meaningful, real-time, ongoing genuine dialogue through its multi-faceted features. (Belal, 2014). According to Rahmat (2019), providing a favorable learning environment encourages active learning is one of the strategies to stimulate language learners; that sounds incomplete without using social media. When students use social media as an English learning tool, such as Facebook, they study the language with the opportunity of collaborating with people from all over the globe (Rouis et.al, 2011).

Social media substantially influence learners' language learning. The most striking findings of social media's influence on language learners is connected with learners' enhancement of confidence, attitude, and motivation. Learners claimed that participating in social media platforms has instilled a more positive attitude toward learning English since these platforms provide elements that allow them to enhance their language skills (Kabilan et al., 2010). Learners are exposed to a broader variety of texts through social media, particularly, Facebook and Twitter. Learners will not only be able to examine and read various written pieces published by other users, but they will also be kept up to speed on global current events through Twitter. According to Al-Rahmi & Othman (2013), students' engagement is better through the usage of social media in the classroom because of adequate and up-to-date material.

Bicen et.al, (2015) demonstrated that social media had good benefits on learning a foreign language. On the other hand, Masood, Rubab & Jabeen (2019) revealed the negative impact of technology on academic writings of students because of informal usage of the English language and use of abbreviations and short forms. However, Abbasova (2016) & Kasuma (2017) discovered that utilizing social media had a detrimental impact on writing ability. Social media networks are considered to be good language learning aids. Alharthy & Alfaki (2014), the effects of social media on second and foreign language acquisition demonstrated that learning through social media is more successful than conventional learning. Learners are exposed to the most contemporary word use styles via social media. In addition, social media informs students about the usage of words in a correct real-life setting. Similarly, learners will obtain an enormous amount of new phrases and words without having to read numerous books or travel to the library, and the development in vocabulary would improve learners' overall language proficiency (Khan et.al, 2016). Moreover, people all across the globe have benefited from the development of social media, which has allowed them to remain connected via online engagements. This kind of interaction allows students to engage in meaning-making activities with unique material and native speakers. Learners are also exposed to a wide range of discourse functions which help them to enhance their language skills. This aided in the creative distribution of language play and the development of critical literacy (Kasuma, 2017).

Learning vocabulary is one of the most challenging and essential aspects of learning a language. Mastering vocabulary will aid second language speakers not just in comprehending messages but also in producing meaningful statements. According to Haddad (2016), Farjami & Aidinlou (2013), learners indirectly develop vocabulary by speaking, listening, and reading. The learner's previous experiences and background information also make an impact on vocabulary growth (Hasannejad et.al, 2015). Social media is also a very effective tool to enhance the vocabulary of the English language. According to Linse (2006), the text available on different platforms of social networking applications as WhatsApp, Facebook & Twitter help EFL learners to learn a variety of expressions which are more crucial than learning the part of grammar as the essential requirement to learn a language. Khan et al., (2016) asserted that innovative platforms serve a magnificent part to enhance the English language vocabulary at the university level. Yu et.al, (2010) explained that various means of online media and, more specifically, online social networking sources provide the basis for independent and self-prompted learning.

According to Wang & Vasquez (2012), social media is beneficial for language learning because it gives a motivational and cooperative learning environment that enhances consciousness among its listeners. Lin, Warchauer & Blake (2016) asserted that learners' enthusiasm increases while interacting on social media. They also stated that learners' ability to interact with native speakers expands through social media and learners improve in listening and speaking skills as compared to reading and writing skills with these tools. Carmean & Haefner (2002) stated that social networking sites grow the second language learning process more sociable, student-centered, and pleasurable with little pressure. A study was done by Warschauer (2000) also revealed that the use of social media platforms makes the learners more eager to join in a more participative discourse with less concern. However, due to the novelty of instant assistance, Waters (2009) further underscored the usefulness of online networks in the language learning process. The usage of media is not only playing a critical role for learners, but it is also necessary for English language instructors as they may benefit from social media by adding variation in the techniques of teaching, styles and it is also a source to know about new terms. As well as, the instructors also attend the various online workshops and seminars connected to English language teaching to university-level students with an innovative method. Instructors could acquire help from online

portals and then employ these ways in education to educate their learners in a realistic style (Aydin, 2012).

Olaleke et al (2015) asserted that social media utilization increases learners' capabilities via interaction with instructors and learners. Primarily, social media provides an online platform to the learners for discussion, which assists and increases learners' encouragement. Moreover, social media permits learners to discuss the same topic simultaneously within a virtual framework; learners can construct on discussion and establish links through multiple ways (Frye et al., 2010). This accelerates the possibilities of learners' learning than in the conventional classroom settings.

Several research studies over the previous decades highlighted the significance of social media and other social networking platforms to learn the English language. However, little study has been done on ESL students' perspectives about the efficacy of different networking apps in the vocabulary and motivation development for English language learning in the Pakistani context. The purpose of this research is to understand what ESL students at GCWUS, UMT, USKT, and GMC Sialkot believe about the value of innovative platforms to boost their confidence level and vocabulary development.

Material and Methods

The researchers utilized a quantitative approach for the current study. Quantitative research relies on numerical data gathering and analysis to explain, forecast, characterize, or regulate interest factors (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The quantitative technique was employed to address the research questions in this study through survey. In this regard, ESL students from two public and two private universities of District Sialkot participated in this study. Convenience sampling was used to choose the study's sample. The quantitative data was collected from 400 male and female BS 5th & 7th-semester learners of the English Department. Data has been collected by using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire derived from Alghasab & Alfadley's (2018) study. Based on a literature review and the present research aims, changes to the questionnaire were made. It was separated into two sections, one with demographic information and ten items related to vocabulary growth and confidence development.

Results and Discussions

In survey-based research, the selection of Items is critical to achieving the desired results. The internal consistency of the scales is often used to assess the suitability of the items in a category. Validity and reliability are two essential aspects of psychometric research. Using Cronbach's Alpha constants and SPSS software, the researcher assessed the reliability of the learners' choice for social networking platforms to acquire the English language.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Cronbachs' Alpha	No. of items
.888	10

The following descriptive statistics was performed to illustrate the views of ESL learners regarding the utilization of social networking applications to boost the confidence and vocabulary development. The mean and standard deviations were taken into consideration to analyze ESL views.

Table 2
Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire

No.	Statements	Frequencies					Mean	Std. Deviation
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
1	Users may learn new vocabulary in English by using social media.	33	36	64	187	80	3.61	1.14
2	Students' vocabulary grows as a result of repeated exposure to the English language on social media.	35	35	70	177	83	3.59	1.16
3	Social media gives more exposure and versatility in acquiring new vocabulary development.	42	42	56	164	96	3.57	1.25
4	When learning English Vocabulary via social media, words may be stored more effectively in the long-term memory.	39	40	47	178	96	3.63	1.22
5	The usage of social media is very beneficial in the development of English language vocabulary.	46	50	56	159	89	3.48	1.28
6	The use of social media sources helps me to improve the grammatical structure and vocabulary of a language.	35	65	60	188	52	3.39	1.16
7	I follow online pages on social networking sites to learn the vocabulary of the English language.	45	44	60	182	69	3.46	1.22
8	I focus on the syntactic structures, style during listening and viewing audio & videos via online networking tools.	32	70	69	180	49	3.36	1.14
9	Social networking applications made me more interactive and confident communicating in English with my instructors and peers.	29	57	61	184	69	3.51	1.14
10	Social media is a source of getting quick feedback which helps me to timely diminish my language flaws.	33	67	58	172	70	3.44	1.19

This questionnaire contains 10 items. Item 4 scored the highest mean score 3.63 with the std. deviation of 1.22. Item 1 'Users may learn new vocabulary in English by using social media', scored the 2nd top score 3.61 with the std. deviation of 1.14. While item 2 scored third highest mean 3.59 with the std. deviation 1.16. Item 3 scored 4th position with a score of 3.57 and std. deviation 1.25. Likewise, item 9 'Social networking applications made me more interactive and confident communicating in English with my instructors and peers' achieved the 5th rank with the mean of 3.51, Item 5 scored the 6th rank with a value of 3.48 and std. deviation 1.16. Correspondingly, item 7 'I follow online pages on social networking sites to learn English language vocabulary' scored the 7th highest value 3.46 with the std. deviation 1.22. Similarly, item 10 scored the 8th position with the value 3.44 and std. deviation 1.19. Item 6 'The use of social media sources helps to improve the grammatical structure and vocabulary of a language' scored the 9th position with 3.39. Finally Item 8 focuses on the syntactic structures, style during

listening and viewing audio & videos via online networking tools scored the lowest mean score with the value of 3.36 and std. deviation 1.14.

The following table demonstrates the gender based differences in the views of ESL learners regarding the usefulness of social networking applications for enhancing motivation and vocabulary development.

Table 3
T-Test Application to Demonstrate the Gender Based Differences among ESL Learners

Item	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	Sig.	T-Value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Item 1	Male	145	3.2138	1.36517	.008	-1.193	-1.487	398	.234
	Female	255	3.3686	1.17612					
Item 2	Male	145	3.0966	1.23785	.789	-1.324	-1.487	398	.186
	Female	255	3.2627	1.18951					
Item 3	Male	145	3.2138	1.31332	.075	-2.658	-1.487	398	.008
	Female	255	3.5608	1.22122					
Item 4	Male	145	3.2207	1.22740	.755	-.179	-1.487	398	.858
	Female	255	3.2431	1.19534					
Item 5	Male	145	3.0000	1.33853	.075	-.2.143	-1.487	398	.003
	Female	255	3.2784	1.19584					
Item 6	Male	145	3.1931	1.25442	7.628	.006	-2.605	398	.010
	Female	255	3.5059	1.09354					
Item 7	Male	145	3.3241	1.30108	3.964	.047	-1.743	398	.082
	Female	255	3.5451	1.16921					
Item 8	Male	145	3.1034	1.27325	15.477	.000	-3.242	252.95	.001
	Female	255	3.5059	1.03813					
Item 9	Male	145	3.4138	1.18196	1.728	.189	.1.364	398	.173
	Female	255	3.5765	1.12638					
Item 10	Male	145	3.3241	1.32226	9.828	.002	-1.487	259.86	.138
	Female	255	3.5176	1.11481					

The above table of individual (T-Test) figured out the gender-based distinction in the views concerning the role of online networking sites for improving vocabulary and motivation. Item 1 $t(398) = -1.487, p = .234$ showed no significant difference. In the Item 2 $t(398) = -1.487, p = .186$ showed no prominent difference. Item 3 $t(398) = -1.487$ showed no significant difference. Similarly, in the item 4 $t(398) = -.179, p = .858$ and the item 5 $t(398) = -2.143, p = .003$, item 5 showed significant difference because the p value of item is less than 0.05. Item 6 $t(398) = -2.605, p = .010$ showed no significant difference. Correspondingly, item 7 indicated $t(398) = -1.743, p = .082$ no significant difference was observed. In the item 8 the $t(252.952) = -3.242, p = .001$ significant difference was observed in the Perceptions of ESL learners across gender group as $p < 0.05$. Whereas in the remaining item 9 the $t(398) = -1.364, p = .173$, and the item 10 $t(398) = -1.487, p = .138$ and no significant difference was found.

Discussion

English is the global language; and because of its globalization, it is extensively utilized in almost every facet of life. English is utilized in business and medicine, but it is also extensively used in our educational system as a medium of instruction in higher education and as a compulsory subject at the elementary level. Because social media has been playing an increasingly essential role in molding public attitudes and building society, social media sources have gained popularity in this period. However, in the academic arena, many social media sources are being leveraged to enhance student education. Consequently, the present research was carried out to analyze the perceived utility of online networks in English learning among Pakistani ESL learners.

This research aims to demonstrate how internet networks may assist students in learning English at the university level in Pakistan. According to the findings, ESL students had a generally positive view regarding using online networks to enhance their vocabulary development in general. A growing number of university students are turning to online networks such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Edmodo, among others, to share ideas and engage in other online activities. Social media is considered a cutting-edge platform for English learners to express themselves honestly because of its unique capacity to be accessible instantly. According to the research findings, when students utilize social networking sites to engage with their teachers, their motivation improves and their self-confidence grows. To enhance their English language abilities, instructors may urge their pupils to apply this sort of strategy. It is worth emphasizing that the results of this research, in addition to demonstrating that social networking apps may assist in the acquisition of English as a second language, are pretty significant.

One of the critical investigations in this research was that ESL learners acquire the English language via social media, which was one of the answers to the first research question relating to the research. The researchers discovered that their confidence levels increase when students use social media applications to communicate with their instructors and peers. The researchers also discovered that social media can improve vocabulary by following different pages and interacting with others on the Internet through this platform. According to the research findings, EFL learners saw social media as a source of immediate feedback that may help them improve their language skills. The findings of this study supported two significant findings found in the literature: first, the widespread use of innovative tools among ESL learners, and second, the importance of online networks in improving language skills, vocabulary, and motivation.

Former researchers' (Warschauer and Grimes; Melkote and Liu, 2000; Wang and Vasquez; Li 2017) assertions about the importance of online networks in the language learning process were validated by the members' perspectives. Furthermore, participants in this research had positive views on the efficiency of social media in increasing language skills, which coincided with Kalasi's (2014) and Obar's (2015) researches results. This study also revealed that ESL students believe social media plays a critical role in vocabulary development and motivation. This conclusion corroborated the findings of Melkote & Liu, Castaneda (2011) Khan et al., and Kabocha & Elyas' (2018) research.

In light of the T-test application regarding the use of social media for motivation and vocabulary development across gender groups, no remarkable variance was perceived between the views of males and female learners as the p-value was above 0.05 in all items except in item 8 in which $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion

This research explores the peculiarities of innovative platforms in the ESL learning process. According to the survey results, the majority of university students had good attitude towards social media apps in the context of ESL and stated that new platforms might play a big part in the English language learning phenomena. Consequently, social media may be a feasible technique for boosting ESL learners' language acquisition processes. Social media, according to the respondents, is a beneficial and effective medium for learning English. Social networking programs provide several opportunities for communication integration, collaboration promotion, vocabulary enhancement, and information sharing. According to this research, the utilization of innovative platforms favorably improved learners' acquaintance, approach, and learning success.

Recommendations

The study's primary goal was to determine the impact, advantages, and downsides of using social media on English learners' language vocabulary skills and confidence development. Based on the outcomes of this research, it can be concluded that social media piques students' interest in language acquisition. The administration of institutions may take into account collaborative learning via social media. Instructors may include social media into the language learning process to make it more interesting for students. Few respondents believed that social media had no use of vocabulary and confidence development. To make social media more trustworthy platform for English learning, learners may want to be more cautious when selecting reading content. Future research should incorporate other data collection techniques, such as a larger sample size of respondents from various areas of study and more institutions. Future research may potentially develop more precise data collection methods to back up the results' validity. Collecting responses from high school students, who are also highly exposed to the Internet and social media, is another subject for future study. Future research might focus on each of the study's sections independently.

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