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The Impact of Social Media Use on English Language Proficiency and Learning Experiences of University Students

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ABSTRACT

English is an international language that has been used in communication around social media and any online platform; hence every university student studying as a second language (ESL) or to meet certain academic and work requirements (ESP) needs to learn the language. This is a study that examines how the use of social media affects a person in the acquisition of the English language and the course of learning among students in the university. It will also create awareness to learners about the need of taking part in the activities in the English language via the use of social media in order to improve their interest and knowledge in the English language. The research adopted a descriptive and experimental quantitative research design that utilized 50 participants that consisted of 25 ESP learners, of NCBA&E Bahawalpur, and 25 ESL learners, of Government College of Women University Bahawalpur. A well-developed questionnaire was used to collect data to determine the perceptions of students regarding the usefulness of social media in language acquisition. The experiment lasted more than eight weeks, a teacher led the English language acquisition activities with the help of different social media platforms, and the results were determined with the help of SPSS. Findings showed that, 28% NCBA&E learners and 28.3% Government Women University learners were in agreement that engaging social media activities increased their vocabulary, whereas 33.4% and 29.8 % of the learners noted they recorded improvement in their four core language abilities. Also, 32.4 % of NCBA&E students and 31 % of learners in the Government Women University staff said that their pronunciation was improved because of using social media. The results illustrate that social media influences positively on the acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and basic language as it adds immense value to the English language acquisition of ESP and ESL students in the university setting.

Introduction

The use of digital communication in all forms is creeping into the lives of university students nowadays. Social media platforms are one of the many technologies that have come up to play significant roles in the teaching and learning process of language such as English. The active participation of students in the learning process can be achieved by their increased interest in studying which is achieved by engaging them in a platform they are accustomed to use frequent use of (Shamim, 2017). Most of the students in Pakistan experience difficulties in mastering English since it is also learning as a secondary language in schools and colleges, and conventional classroom instructions do not follow the requirements of students. The teaching of English in a normal set-up is normally done in a traditional format and classroom time is also usually limited to one or two hours and does not provide scope of interactive learning. As the development of the technological sphere is gaining the momentum, so does the role of social media in education, so the sphere of teaching language is no exception, as educators wonder what opportunities social media can offer in teaching languages. Social media tools may be an effective means to develop English language skills since they provide interactive scenarios when learners will be motivated to use their language skills in a real situation. The importance of digital learning, as well as the possibility of using social media to achieve success with teaching English to university students, could be the beginning of new possibilities to enhance the English language acquisition and study process of the university students.

Social media plays an important role in teaching English

English language teaching and learning in present-day classrooms has emerged to be an effective instrument of social media. The ability to access authentic language material and real-life communication by using such apps and sites as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp or Instagram is easy natural; teachers can reach their students even outside the classroom. Such sites present practical ways through which ESL and ESP learners can use to interact with English on a daily basis. Hardly a day goes by without exposing the students to English and posts, videos, live, and interactive discussions are present (Aamir & Suleiman, 2011). Social media assists English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers to share resources, engage in conversations as well as motivate the students to contribute to learning activities more practically and in an appealing manner.

Social Media version of Flipped Learning

As social media continues to increase in popularity, the practice of teaching is evolving to become less teacher-directed and more face-to-face and student-mined learning methods such as flipped learning. With the flipped classroom model, online tools are used to present lesson content outside class, allowing students the sense of control within the learning processes. Through YouTube channels, Facebook groups among other social media forums, the learning materials can be shared easily by the teachers. This gives learners an opportunity of accessing lectures, videos, and reading materials at home and the time in the classroom is freed to be used in practicing, discussion, and problem-solving (Koethler, Mishra, Akcaoglu, & Rosenberg, 2013). Social media therefore helps in flipped learning as it gives easy access to both the teacher and the students and also makes learning more collaborative and flexible to the ESL students.

Social Media in the Context of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

The concept of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is also changed due to the emergence of social media. Mobile technologies also help learners to revise their language skills at any time and any place since the beginning of 2000s (Crompton, 2013b). Social media has become an important role in MALL because it has provided simple-to-operate applications through which

students enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Using the social networking websites, learners are able to engage in discussion groups, and like pages sharing language tips, watch English tutorials, and touch base with native speakers. They are also able to use social media to access podcasts, internet-based articles and live webinars and help learners extend their vocabulary as well as improve pronunciation in realistic situations (Burston, 2013).

From CALL to MALL: The transition with social media

Previously, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) relied on learning grammar, vocabulary, spelling among other skills through regular programs using computers (Beatty, 2010). Today, it has been noted that with social media, MALL has grown to be a significant extension of social media and students have got a dynamic platform of encountering English in real life. In contrast to CALL activities in the early times, the social media allows for learning the language in the natural course of the everyday process with references to the real-time activities and communication with the worldwide community. This trend has transformed the composition of knowledge in the university students learning English because they have greater possibilities to control the course of learning and gain confidence to apply it in real conditions.

Problem Statement

With social media, studying the English language has gained a dominant role through which students get a chance to learn through listening, talking, reading, and writing. Since social media is becoming a regular communication tool among learners, the value of using the social media in improving English proficiency and adding more value to the educational life in the university setting also should be known. This paper examines the attitude of university students to the social media usage in English learning, the role of the attitudes of teachers and learners to social media use in language learning. As the educational sphere is developing, the use of social media in the teaching of languages should be investigated to promote self-governing and productive learning.

Research Questions

1. What is the importance of social media when it comes to learning the English language in a university level?
2. What are the English language learning practices that students undertake using social media platform?
3. How do university students feel regarding employing social media in enhancing their knowledge of English language proficiency?

Research Objectives

1. To sensitize the learners on the significance of social media in the learning of English language in the university.
2. Previews were required in order to make learners aware of English language learning activities that can be found on social media.
3. To determine the views of university students concerning the usage of social media to enhance the level of English language proficiency.

Study Significance

Social media has made a dramatic change in the 21st century and has taken root in the lives and activities of all students changing teaching and learning processes all over the world. The research will assist instructors to know about the proper execution of English language learning activity through social media sites. Such activities may assist ESL and ESP learners in terms of their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. With the ever-growing interconnection in the

world, social media as a learning tool is getting popularity in language learning. The current trend of research on the use of social media in English learning appears scarce in the university academic level and thus, this paper will focus its attention in bringing out the possible positive use of the social media in the learning of English and hence guiding future researches on the same topic.

Literature Review

Social media and its Significance in English Instruction

The social media networks have risen as a useful teaching device in university-level English. Through such platforms as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp the process has been made easy and more interactive to help in teaching skills in listening speaking, reading, and writing. Social media allows students a continuous resource of language materials and provides them with an opportunity to practice their English, which enables them to be motivated to practice English during their normal day (Cheung, 2012). Social media maintains resources secure with no chances of losing them and accessible to learners with the availability of cloud storage and platforms history and hence a sure guidance to continuous learning (Cui, 2008).

Comparison of E-learning and Social Media based Learning

An e-learning and a learning that is based on social media are both beneficial in a language learning process. E-learning was always associated with learning on formal platforms on the internet whereas social media allows learning real time through an informal environment. E-learning is a predecessor of bringing technology in learning, and the concept of social media-based learning is an interactive and advanced version of it. Social media sites due to their innovative functionality enable flexible and interesting provision to students (Winter, 2006). The students may take their equipment's anywhere and thus can learn the language skills without any limits, at anytime and anywhere (Keegan, 2005).

The social media helps to engage in any activity such as vocabulary learning, practicing idioms and even engaging in a discussion using messages and posts. Such activities will sustain the learners and be involved actively in acquiring the English language in a cooperative learning setting (Chaka & Ngesi, 2010). Social networking platforms enable world connectivity that helps in learning languages and the learning process is efficient enough to help teachers identify new ways of incorporating technology in the teaching of English language.

SMM as Components of MALL

The mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) emerged in the early 2000s giving students the flexibility to learn English through mobile equipment (Cavus, 2009). Social media have now become part and parcel of MALL, as they accommodate listening, speaking, reading, as well as writing activities (O4mall, 2003). Social media encompass videos, discussion forums, podcasts, and interactive learning materials, among others (O4mall, 2003; Brown, 2003). In Pakistan, social media is progressively being incorporated in the English classrooms that provide learners with numerous tools to master English.

Building Listening and Speaking with the help of the Social Media

Listening and speaking is the basis of learning the English language and successful oral communication. Social networking tools offer a flexible way to develop these skills with these examples being real-life resources such as YouTube videos, podcasts and live sessions so as to develop their pronunciation and listening comprehension (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). The ability to speak is also achievable as the learners may use voice messages and live sessions to train their

pronunciation and learn to be confident about speaking in real life situations and enhance their sociolinguistic competence.

Building the Reading Skills with the Use of Social Media

Social media is an accessible and variable means of reading practice. Posts, articles, and discussions can be read thus enabling the student to enhance reading skills (vocabulary and reading comprehension) (Wang, 2013). Now that reading materials are provided online, learners are able to access instructions to assignments and presentations whether through the internet on their smart phones; therefore, one will tend to read more and more to make it a daily ritual (Huang, 2011; Grab, 2013).

Learning how to write using Social Media

The communication of academic and professional life can be supported by writing skills. Learners also have the opportunity to practice writing in the social media platforms through posts, comments and messaging and would be able to express his/her ideas in a better and correct manners (Chaka, 2009). Posting, interacting in forums, etc lead the students to correct their grammar, sentence formation and enhancing their vocabulary and there is provision of immediate feedback (Oyinloye, 2009).

Learners' Attitude

Social media have been regarded by students as a resourceful learning tool in learning English, where students use them in learning English vocabulary, communications, and the usage of language in a flexible environment (Begum, 2011). It promotes secondary learning whereby students have a constant access to English materials and can get to build their capability in listening, speaking, reading, as well as writing (Kennedy, 2008).

Teachers' Attitude

ELT teachers are aware of the possibilities of social media as the means of language learning and utilize social media to promote learner participation and independent learning in students (Al-Tameemy, 2017). The educators have the opportunity to control the interactive activities with the help of the social media so that students stay motivated practicing the new language skills both outside and inside of the classroom. The effectiveness of the learning process depends on the positive attitude of teachers on making use of social media in teaching English language.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current study is a response to analyzing the influence of social media on the levels of English language as well as learning experiences by university learners. Data collection was done by a survey method with an objective of knowing the contribution made by social media in facilitating English learning at the university level. The researchers interviewed ESL and ESP students in order to know what they think of social media as an activity tool used to learn languages in the classroom. The aim of these activities was to help in solving some of the issues that are common in learning and to ensure that students learn to practice English using social media. These activities would last one week, and one hour in a day, so that learners get to engage in English content. The research was a quantitative and descriptive one. A well-designed questionnaire with 25 statements reflecting social media use effectiveness in learning English in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, translation and communication was administered to obtain the opinion of the learners on social media effectiveness in learning English.

The Study Population

In this study, two Universities were identified, Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur and National College of Business Administration & Economics (NCBA&E) Bahawalpur. The study used a total of 50 participants, 25 learners of ESL in Government Sadiq College Women University and 25 learners of ESP in NCBA&E Bahawalpur.

Questionnaire

The research tool applied was a structured questionnaire to produce data out of the participants. The questionnaire survey was done in the classroom and learners were given an opportunity to give their view about how the use of social media affects the learning of the English language. The responses assisted in ascertaining the use of the social media platforms to enhance the level of English proficiency and participation of the learners in the learning process.

Explanation and Data Analysis

Data was analyzed and processed using SPSS (Version 14) to identify how social media use affects the level of English language acquisitions and learning experiences of students in universities.

Table 1: The opinion of ESP and ESL learners that the use of social media built up vocabulary

University Name	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	T	Avg (%)
NCBA&E	ESP learners	50	2.83	4.000	0.298	6.437	28.3
Govt. Women University	ESL learners	50	2.80	4.577	0.324	6.435	28.0

Explanation

Table No.1 reveals the interpretation of the responses of ESP and ESL learners to the statement according to which, the use of social media contributes to the development of vocabulary in the English language learning process. The standard deviation of ESP learners in NCBA&E was 4 whose mean response rate was 28.3 and ESL learners in Government Women University Bahawalpur were 28.01 with standard deviation of 4.577. The T-score was 6.437 which showed that it was a significant result and p-value was 0.000 which showed that there was a significant difference in the response of the learners.

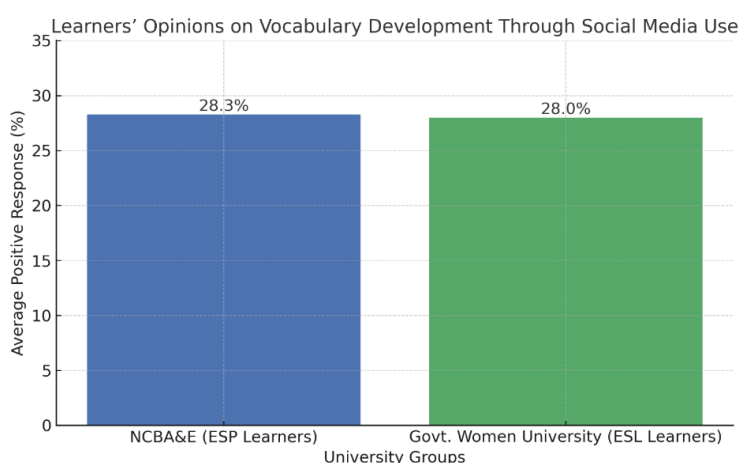


Figure No.1: It shows that 28.3% of ESP learners and 28.0% of ESL learners agreed that using social media helped them develop vocabulary. This indicates that both groups found social media useful for improving their English vocabulary during learning activities.

Table 2: Analysis of ESP and ESL learners’ opinion that “Learning English through social media makes learning easy”

University Name	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	T	Avg (%)
NCBA&E (ESP learners)	50	3.34	2.178	0.262	2.53	33.4
Govt. Women University (ESL learners)	50	2.98	2.050	0.340	2.52	29.8

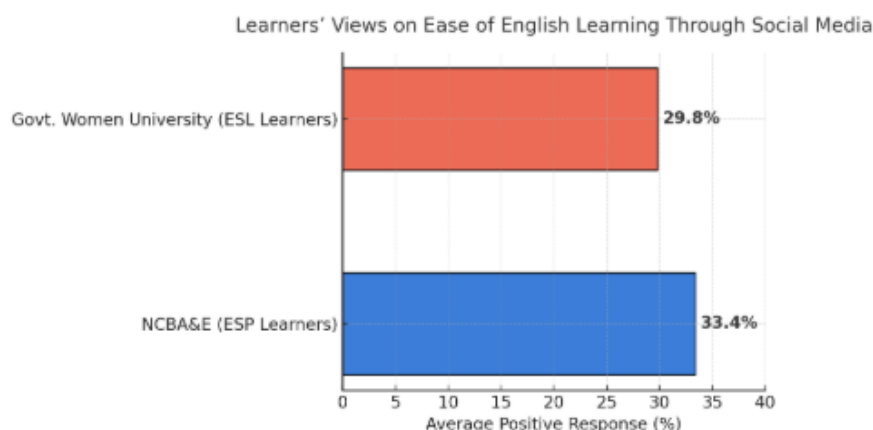


Figure No.2: shows that 33.4% of ESP learners and 29.8% of ESL learners agreed that social media makes learning English easier. This highlights that social media helps simplify English learning for university students, making it more engaging and accessible.

Table 3

Learners’ Views on Social Media Improving Their Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skills

University	Group	Participants (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T-value	Average Positive Response (%)
NCBA&E Bahawalpur	ESP Learners	50	3.34	4.50	0.22	5.43	33.4%
Govt. Women University Bahawalpur	ESL Learners	50	2.98	4.63	0.19	5.46	29.8%

Table 3 shows that 33.4% of ESP learners and 29.8% of ESL learners felt that social media helped them improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This indicates that social media plays a valuable role in supporting English language skill development among university students.

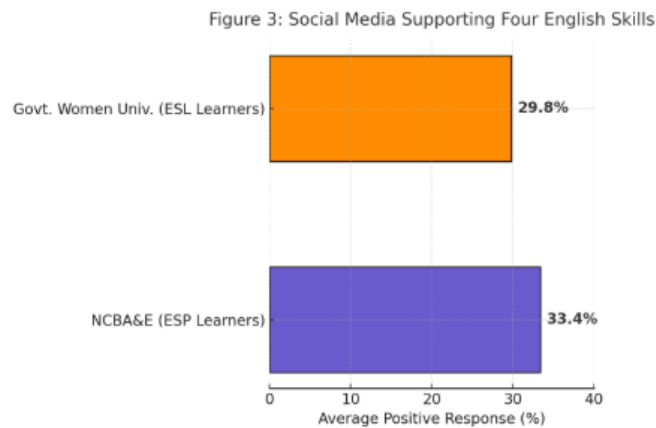
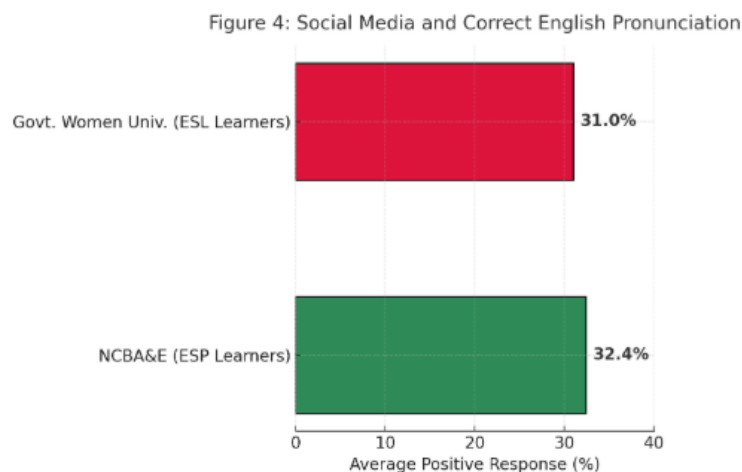


Figure No.3 shows that ESP learners (33.4%) and ESL learners (29.8%) found social media helpful in improving their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, highlighting its positive role in supporting English learning at the university level.

Table 4

Learners' Views on Using Social Media to Improve English Pronunciation

University	Group	Participants (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T-value	Avg +ve Response (%)
NCBA&E Bahawalpur	ESP Learners	50	3.34	2.45	0.32	0.16	32.4%
Govt. Women Uni Bahawalpur	ESP Learners	50	3.10	2.43	0.31	0.25	31.0%



As presented in Figure No.4, this number of those ESP learners and ESL learners who believe social media tools support their learning and allow improving their pronunciation in English is 32.4 per cent and 31.0 per cent respectively, it can be stated that social media tools assist the learners in practicing and mastering speaking at the university level.

Conclusion

In the era of online everything, English is implemented in most variants of social media, so it is commonplace to address the needs of ESL and ESP students to acquire sufficient levels of this foreign language to be applied to both academic and social dimensions of communication. In this study, the conclusion is that social media practices play a major role in the growth of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other four main language skills among the university students. The use of social media in the experience of both ESP and ESL learners in English language acquisition has had its positive sides in encouraging the two learners on their way to gaining a better sense of language acquisition in an interesting and convenient manner.

Findings

1. 28.0 % of the ESP learners in NCBA&E and 28.3 % of the ESL learners in Govt. Women University agreed that the utilization of social media helps to develop vocabulary in English. There was a statistically significant distinction in these responses.
2. From the population of ESP, 33.4 % of respondents claimed that the usage of social media platforms assisted them to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in English. This difference was significant as proved by the statistical analysis.
3. Similarly, 33.4 % of ESP learners and 29.8 % of ESL learners believed that the social media activities increased their knowledge on the overall English proficiency in all four skills. This was depicted as being statistically eminent.
4. A percentage of 32.4 of the ESP students and 31.0 of the ESL students felt that talking socially using social media enabled them to learn to speak English in a better pronunciation. The difference in the responses here was also found significant and thus there is the influence of social media to polish spoken English.

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