

Impact of social media on English Language Learning among Undergraduate EFL Learners: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract: This review paper examines the existing literature on the impact of social media on English language learning for undergraduate EFL learners. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the impact of social media on the acquisition of English language skills by EFL learners. A narrative review was done, analyzing data from two online databases, namely Google Scholar and Science Direct, covering the period from 2018 to 2022. The findings indicate that various social media applications have a positive influence on EFL students' ability to learn English as a foreign language. However, a few research studies also uncovered a detrimental effect of social media on young learners worldwide, particularly in Pakistan, concerning English language learning. This study work intends to investigate and synthesize existing studies, theories, and findings in this field by conducting a narrative literature review on the impact of social media on English language learning among university EFL learners. It will advance knowledge of the possible advantages and difficulties of incorporating social media into language learning environments and offer guidance to educators, researchers, and policymakers on how to improve English language instruction for undergraduate EFL students. Based on this comprehensive review of the available literature, it is recommended that further research be conducted to focus on the negative impact of social media on English language learning, particularly in Pakistan where limited research has been done in this area. Additionally, it is suggested that future research in this field adopts a mixed-method research design, as there is a research gap in terms of methodology in the existing literature review.

Keywords: Modern Technology, social media, English Language Learning, EFL learners

1. Introduction

According to Chau (2021), due to continuous advancements in science and technology, humanity has become more prosperous and advanced. The development of modern technology has improved the standard and efficacy of teaching second languages (L2). Francis (2017) states that technology has brought a new level of unbounded integration into daily life, making it simple to have access to vast amounts of data. The current generation of students has developed with technology constantly advancing around them. In the process of this quick and innovative development of modern technology, social media has grown to be an especially important technological component. It is currently essential in most areas of life, particularly in educational systems, it is the most significant.

People communicate with one another through different social media platforms, including Facebook, blogs, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and others, to share their ideas and knowledge. Technology's rapid advancement has enabled the development of quickly expanding social media tools, which students are increasingly using in social and academic situations (Slim & Hafedh, 2019). Language is the main tool used for communication. It is a means by which we exchange thoughts and ideas with one another. There are many languages which are spoken throughout the world. Every country has its own official language, as well as several regional dialects that its residents can comprehend and use. The importance of English cannot be limited or disregarded because it is the most widely spoken language in the world (Ilyosovna, 2020). According to Getie (2020), people believe that English is the universal language. Despite being a foreign language, it is important to everyone. Most people on earth can read, write, speak, and understand English. People from all around the world can converse and feel a part of the global community because this language exists. Since English is the most frequently written language and the language used in all fields, Al-Jarrah, et al. (2019) claim that learning English language is crucial for communicating on social media. Almost four hundred million people speak English as their first language, making it the most frequently spoken language in the world. It is also the official language of fifty-three nations. It is very essential to learn the English language to communicate with each other through platforms of social media.

We are social animals, thus, to survive in the world, we must interact with one another. The world is more accessible than ever and offers amazing opportunities for the exchange of knowledge because of the swift development of technologies, particularly social media (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). Using social networks is necessary for the current information technology era. Technology is now more significant than any other component of modern living due to the way individuals use social media apps in their daily lives. People, especially young people, use a variety of applications in their daily lives to stay socially connected to one another (Ittefaq, et al., 2022). Social media is a platform that enables users to connect with people who share their interests, characteristics, or connections in real life or in their field of work to build social networks or relationships (Akram & Kumar, 2017).

According to Siddiqui, et al. (2022), English is the most spoken language in the world. The significance of English in the modern world cannot be ignored or disregarded. Learning English requires perseverance and consistent work. In today's globalized world, people constantly adopt recent technology, data, lifestyles, languages, and other things. Younger generations now incorporate digital social media into every part of their lives. They think the online social media trends they are following are up to date, and if they stay with them, people would like them. Even so, digital social media has an impact on language learning for young people nowadays. Children today engage with people frequently through digital social media, thus whether on purpose or unintentionally, they are embracing this language learning trend. It is undeniable that the development of the internet and the proliferation of social media platforms has led to a sharp rise in the number of new textual formats, including blogs, tweets, Facebook posts, LinkedIn profiles, and others. Yet, as English is the most extensively used language online, social media has altered how people use it (Rao, 2019). Social media offers numerous advantages or opportunities for general English learning. The most important aspect and barrier to language learning, nevertheless, may now be their few dangers and traps. These online social media platforms could also be beneficial for giving users access to current information, a considerable amount of language input, communication with native speakers, and first-hand learning (Amin, et al., 2020).

Like other countries of the world, there is also a significant impact of social media on English language learning in Pakistan. According to Dar and Khan (2015), English is being utilized increasingly

on social media in Pakistan, where it is the primary language of communication. Speaking, reading, writing, and listening are just a few of the critical English language skills that learners still struggle with, even though English has been a crucial part of Pakistan since its independence. Due to the difficulties, students encounter in developing English competency outside of the classroom, English language learning among EFL undergraduates is a topic of significant importance. Their ability to learn a language is hampered by a lack of exposure to real-world language situations. Social media presents a potential solution to this issue because it has become part of people's daily lives. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube give EFL students the chance to interact with content in the English language in a more genuine and natural way. Much research has examined how social media affects language learning, emphasizing its potential advantages. Li and Wang (2020), for instance, discovered that social media use had a favorable impact on English language proficiency among undergraduate EFL learners by increasing their language exposure and facilitating interaction with native and proficient English speakers. Similarly, According to Liaw (2018), social media platforms encourage self-directed learning and increase cultural awareness through exposure to a variety of content and interactions with people from various cultural backgrounds.

Every area of modern life is evolving, including communication, trade, information sharing, education, and business. Apps for social networks have a positive impact on foreign language learners' capacity to study and improve their English in Pakistan. Social media's powerful tools have an impact on education in general and especially English language acquisition in Pakistan (Khaliq, et al., 2022). In social media, which has exploded, a lot of content is produced, shared, bookmarked, and networked, due to its simplicity, speed, and reach, social media is quickly influencing how individuals speak in society and forming trends. EFL students in Pakistan utilize social media, which affects their academic performance and study habits (Kausar & Awan, 2019). Even after ten or twelve years of formal schooling, most of the Pakistani students are still unable to show that they have a command of the English language. One of the numerous elements that contribute to this shortcoming is the use of traditional teaching techniques in second language (L2) classrooms (Khan & Maroof, 2021). According to Khan and Khan (2016), English is taught as a required subject in Pakistan. Several challenges, issues, and difficulties are encountered by English-language learners in Pakistan. One of the fundamental issues with learning English in the country is the examination system, which is exacerbated by students' weak English foundation and proficiency, large class sizes, passive learning, difficult, time-consuming, and extensive literature-based curricula, the ineffectiveness of English teachers, and outdated teaching methods.

Even though English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Pakistan have had a lot of difficulties learning the language, it is still important for them to use English in their online communications. It is difficult to deny or discount the influence of social media on the learning of the English language. To enhance their vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, lexical diversity, communication skills, grammatical usage, etc., today's students extensively use apps for communication, both intentionally and unconsciously (Khaliq, et al., 2022).

2. Materials and Methods

The primary data source for this research, which reviews and discusses articles on the effect of social media on English language learning for undergraduate EFL learners, was journal articles from the online databases Science Direct and Google Scholar. Several keywords, such as modern technology, social media, English language learning, and EFL learners, were used to access the websites and search for articles for the years 2018 to 2022. Many of the sources were gathered using the "snowballing" technique by looking through the reference lists of previously used sources. The goal of this study was to review the most recent and updated literature; therefore, research articles published prior to 2018 were removed. The search results were downloaded, carefully read, and analyzed with the goal of discovering how social media effects English language learning among EFL learners around the globe, particularly in Pakistan.

3. Findings

Two online research databases were used to download the latest research articles to review to achieve the objectives of the study. Numerous articles were reviewed and analyzed to focus on the effect of social media on English language learning. The findings of the study are as under:

3.1 Effect of social media on English Language Learning on EFL learners around the Globe

An experimental research study was conducted titled as “The effect of technology-assisted language program on vocabulary learning among EFL students at the tertiary level” by Hasan, et al. (2022) in Bangladesh. It was found that social media, particularly WhatsApp applications improve the vocabulary of EFL learners. In India, Rezaul, et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study titled as “Social Media and Learning of English Language: A Study on the Undergraduate Students of Assam, India”. The results of the study showed that students use social media to study new things and get added information. The conclusion is that social media is crucial and contributes to the growth of all the students' English language abilities. To study the language and advance their ability, the students may be urged to actively engage in using social media in English. Bulnes, (2022) examined through a quantitative research study in the Philippines where the effects of social media on Filipino undergraduates' English language acquisition were examined, it was discovered that Facebook is the most popular social media network used by EFL learners in the Philippines. More than an hour a day of social media use, mostly for chatting with friends, was reported by students. Social media usage ought to be undertaken carefully as there were both positive and negative effects on undergraduates' learning of the English language.

Al-Khalidi and Khouni (2021) conducted a quantitative study in Oman entitled “Investigating the Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms (SMPs) in English language teaching and learning from EFL students' perspectives”. The findings of the study revealed that most of the participants passionately believed in the benefits of social media platforms for advancing educational goals and improving their English language skills. For TESOL teachers and administrators, the study has produced a set of consequences and suggestions. Nuri, et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the pedagogical effects of some social media platforms on Iraqi Kurd EFL learners. The study emphasized social media's strong effects on English, vocabulary, and spelling development. The major goal of the study was to determine how social media impacts Kurd EFL learners' English language learning, word selections, and spelling. The data of the study were gathered from 96 Kurdish students studying English at various academic institutions by using a questionnaire. It was discovered that Kurdish EFL students make wonderful use of social media sites for a variety of goals, one of which is improving their English language. The findings indicated that social media could help students learn and practice new vocabulary; however, it has a negative effect on their academic writing and spelling abilities. Under the impact of social media, Kurdish EFL learners frequently use abbreviated forms.

A case study entitled “Social Media and its Influence on Vocabulary and Language Learning: A Case Study” was conducted by Zainal and Rahmat (2020) to seek the influence of social media on English vocabulary development among students in public and private universities in Malaysia. The researchers employed quantitative methodology for the study. The objective of the study was to examine how social media affects students' ability in learning the English language. The study also looked at the effects of social media platforms on language learning, both good and bad. The research found that social media stimulates the enthusiasm of English language learners in studying a new language. Altam (2020) conducted a quantitative research study in India to investigate the impact of social media on English language learning on Yemeni EFL learners. The title of the study was “Influence of social media on EFL Yemeni learners in Indian Universities during Covid-19 Pandemic”. The research study examined how Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp were used to influence English language acquisition. According to the research, students spend more time using social media to learn English, and listening is a skill that is much improved through social media use. Additionally, findings indicated that utilizing social media encourages students to learn unfamiliar words, practice them, and reduce potential spelling mistakes. According to the findings, the most popular social media site for learning the English language was YouTube.

According to Rao (2019), vocabulary is one of the elements needed to improve the four English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students should be creative in using a variety of ways of learning and teaching to motivate students to learn vocabulary. An effective method that may be employed is social media. English is becoming increasingly important in Algeria, according to

Rao, (2019) conducted a critical study in Algeria entitled "The Impact of Social Media on Learning English: A critical study in English Language Teaching (ELT) Context". The study revealed that social media is an effective strategy for increasing student engagement since EFL students find it to be a fun and effortless way to acquire unfamiliar words. They can learn new vocabulary while also having fun. Al Arif (2019) at Jambi University in Indonesia conducted an explanatory research study. The study was entitled as "The Usage of Social Media for English Language Learning: An Exploratory Study of EFL University Students". The data were gathered by the researcher via surveys and semi-structured interviews. Ten students were interviewed in addition to the sixty-seven individuals who answered the questionnaire. The results showed that students utilize a variety of social media applications, particularly Facebook and Instagram. As a result, the students spent more time on social media than they did using it to study English. Participants, however, exhibited favorable attitudes towards the use of social media in learning English. The students believe that social media is crucial to their development as English language learners. Additionally, it encourages students to use social media to develop their English language skills. Instagram is the social media platform that Jambi University students who are enrolled in the English Study Program most frequently use to practice their English at home.

A qualitative research study was conducted by Erzad and Suciati (2018) entitled "Social Media for Improving Students' English Quality in Millennia Era". Thirty EFL learners participated in the study from English Education Department in IAIN Kudus. The findings of the study revealed that the social media applications frequently used by the students include YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Line. All four skills of the English language could be strengthened with these social media tools. Ismail and Shafie (2018) claimed that university students frequently utilize social networking sites in their daily lives for a variety of activities, including enjoyment, networking, and education. Ismail and Shafie (2018) conducted quantitative analysis on students at Selangor and Negeri Sembilan public universities in Malaysia. The findings of the study showed that most respondents picked up some useful English lines or images from social networking sites, as well as paid attention to the sentence structures and accents while watching videos on those sites. The participants of the study also believed that social networking sites provided them with the best informal learning opportunities for vocabulary and listening skills.

3.2 Effect of social media on English Language Learning on EFL Learners in Pakistan

In Pakistan, there are very few research studies available to focus on the impact of social media on English language learning on undergraduate EFL learners. Khaliq conducted a mixed method research study, et al. (2022) in south Punjab, Pakistan. The title of the study was "Role of Social Media Applications to Learn and Improve the English Language: A Study at University Level in South Punjab, Pakistan." The main purpose of the study was to examine the role of social media applications to learn English as a foreign language by EFL learners in Pakistan. The findings of the study supported social media's beneficial effects on English language learning and the results of the study led to the recommendation that to improve English language learning, social media, and technology must be incorporated into pedagogical methods.

Ali (2021) conducted an experimental research study, entitled "Exploring the effects of Instagram as a mobile-assisted language learning tool on EFL learners" in Lahore, Pakistan. The aim of the study was to evaluate Instagram's effectiveness as a mobile-assisted language-learning medium for EFL students in Pakistan. Instagram is a well-known social media app. The performance of the learners in the experimental group and the controlled group showed a noticeable disparity in the post-test findings after data analysis using SPSS. The pre-test results, however, were identical. This illustrated how important Instagram is for learning the English language. The findings showed that Instagram may be effectively employed in EFL scenarios to obtain worthwhile results.

The study titled "The role played by Facebook in developing students' English language skills" was conducted in Chitral, Pakistan by Bacha, (2020). The purpose of the study was to examine perceptions of students on Facebook use as a well-liked social media platform in relation to learning English as a foreign language. Also, the nature of Facebook and usage strategies have been looked at extensively. Using a questionnaire, data were gathered from sixty-five undergraduate students. According to this research, using Facebook helps EFL learners develop their various English language skills effectively.

The study concluded that students are optimistic about the benefits of utilizing Facebook for English language acquisition. Facebook may be used to discover new things in addition to communicating and exchanging information.

According to Awan and Kausar (2019), many students utilize various forms of social media to stay informed and connected to the global community. The use of social media affects students' academic performance. Awan and Kausar (2019) conducted a quantitative study in Vehari, Pakistan. The title of the study is "Impact of using social media on academic performance of students at graduate level: Evidence from Pakistan". The findings of the study revealed According to the study's results, students utilize social media as a study aid, yet it has a negative impact on their academic performance.

Hina and Kouser, (2018) a qualitative study entitled "A Study on the Negative Effects of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on Students' Language in Pakistan". The study looked at the detrimental effects that social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter have on students' English language learning. This study examined the frequency of usage of these websites and its detrimental effects on Pakistani students of various ages as they learn the English language as a foreign language. Via corpus analysis, the data were gathered and examined. The findings of the study demonstrated how social networks harm students' ability to learn English as a foreign language.

4. Conclusion

Briefly, it was found through this deep review of the literature that different social media applications are being used by EFL learners to learn the English language throughout the world. Most of the studies revealed that social media applications have a positive effect on English language learning by undergraduate EFL learners. There are very few research studies which focused on the negative impact of social media on English language learning on undergraduate EFL learners. In Pakistan, not much research has been done to shed light on the impact of social media on English language learning on undergraduate EFL learners even though Pakistani undergraduate EFL learners use different tools of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. in their academic and social interaction. The available research studies in the Pakistani context revealed that social media tools have both positive and negative effects on undergraduate EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language in Pakistan.

Furthermore, this narrative review of the literature suggests that more research should be conducted on the negative impact of the applications of social media on English Language Learning among EFL learners. It is also recommended that the methodology gap should be fulfilled by future researchers as a mixed method research design should be used to investigate the effect of social media on English language learning on EFL learners around the globe, particularly in Pakistan.

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