



BEYOND LIKES AND SHARES: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA SHAPES VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

Pauline Joy Gelacio Tardaguila
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra16106>
DOI No: 10.36713/epra16106

ABSTRACT

Social media has become a prevalent tool for teaching and learning, enabling students to engage in self-directed learning, collaborative discussions, and feedback exchange to enhance their grammar and writing skills. This study investigates the influence of social media on vocabulary development and motivation for English language learning among second-year English major students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology's College of Education. It employs a Likert scale questionnaire to explore both the positive and negative influences of social media platforms on language learning. The study's findings aim to illuminate how social media can contribute to vocabulary acquisition and foster interest in English language learning.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Vocabulary Development, English Language Learning, Motivation*

INTRODUCTION

The digital landscape has been irrevocably transformed by the rise of social media platforms. These platforms, initially designed for social connection, have become an inseparable part of student life, influencing not only their social interactions but also their academic pursuits. In the realm of language learning, social media presents a fascinating case study – a double-edged sword offering opportunities for vocabulary acquisition and authentic language exposure, while simultaneously posing challenges regarding grammar and formal writing skills.

This research delves into the multifaceted influence of social media on student vocabulary and language learning. We explore how social media's community-driven nature fosters substantive interactions beyond the classroom, promoting the use of authentic language as documented by Al-Jarrah et al. (2019). We examine how platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter provide a wealth of up-to-date content, immersing students in a dynamic learning environment, as evidenced by Al-Rahmi & Othman (2013). Additionally, we investigate how this global connectivity facilitates interaction with native speakers, potentially enhancing cultural understanding and providing opportunities for real-world language practice, as suggested by Bicen, Sadikoglu, & Sadikoglu (2015).

However, we recognize the potential pitfalls associated with the informality prevalent in online communication. This informality, characterized by contractions and abbreviations, can negatively impact students' writing skills, as studies by Abbasova (2016) and Kasuma (2017) suggest. Swan (2017) further highlights the concern that exposure to informal language might lead students

to unintentionally incorporate it into formal writing. This underscores the importance of fostering critical awareness among students regarding the appropriate use of language in different contexts.

Therefore, this research aims to navigate this complex terrain. We seek to understand how social media can be harnessed as a valuable tool for vocabulary building, cultural immersion, and exposure to authentic language. Simultaneously, we will explore strategies to mitigate the potential negative impacts on formal writing skills, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that integrates traditional classroom instruction with the power of social media.

Furthermore, this research will extend the conversation by considering the impact of specific social media platforms. Different platforms cater to distinct communication styles, and investigating how platforms like Instagram or TikTok, with their focus on visual content, influence language learning could provide valuable insights. Additionally, we will explore the role of educators in the social media learning space. Research on integrating social media platforms effectively into lesson plans and guiding students toward responsible and purposeful use is crucial.

By acknowledging both the benefits and drawbacks of social media, this research aspires to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of its influence on language learning. Our findings will inform educators and students alike, empowering them to leverage the potential of social media to enhance vocabulary acquisition and language learning while mitigating its negative effects on formal language skills.



Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of social media platforms has sparked debate about their impact on language learning. While some argue social media fosters vocabulary acquisition and exposure to authentic language, others express concern about its potential to negatively affect formal writing skills due to informality. This research investigates the specific influence of social media on the vocabulary and language learning of second-year English major students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST).

This research will answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does social media use influence the vocabulary development of second-year English major students at NEUST?
2. In what ways does social media usage contribute to the language learning experience of these students?
3. What percentage of second-year English major students at NEUST utilize social media platforms as a tool for language learning?
4. How effective are different social media platforms as tools for language learning among second-year English major students at NEUST?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ever-growing presence of social media platforms has sparked a critical discussion regarding their impact on language learning. While some argue social media fosters vocabulary acquisition and exposure to authentic language, others express concerns about its potential to negatively affect formal writing skills due to informality. This research delves into the multifaceted influence of social media on the vocabulary development and language learning experiences of second-year English major students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST).

Social Media as a Double-Edged Sword

Social media platforms offer unique affordances for language learning. Their community-driven nature facilitates meaningful interactions beyond the classroom walls, promoting exposure to authentic language used by native speakers (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Studies suggest social media can be a valuable tool, providing access to a wealth of up-to-date content (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013) and facilitating interaction with native speakers, potentially enhancing cultural understanding, and providing opportunities for real-world language practice (Bicen, Sadikoglu, & Sadikoglu, 2015).

However, the informal communication style prevalent on social media presents challenges. Exposure to contractions, abbreviations, and slang may negatively impact students' formal writing skills (Abbasova, 2016; Kasuma, 2017). Swan (2017) highlights concerns that students may unintentionally incorporate informal language into formal writing due to frequent exposure. This underscores the importance of fostering critical awareness among students regarding the appropriate use of language in different contexts (Boonkongsan, 2012).

Vocabulary Development and Social Media

Research suggests social media can be effective in vocabulary development. Khan et al. (2016) found social media to play a significant role in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' vocabulary at the university level. Learners benefit from exposure to a variety of vocabulary used in academic, business, and technical texts on social media platforms (Khan et al., 2016). Additionally, repeated exposure to new words through interaction and reading on social media can contribute to incidental vocabulary learning (Kasuma, 2017). However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential limitations. Learners may encounter inaccurate forms of language on social media, highlighting the need for educators to guide students toward reliable sources and promote critical evaluation skills (Kabilan et al. as cited in Kasuma, 2017).

Platform-Specific Learning Strategies

The effectiveness of social media for language learning can vary depending on the specific platforms used. While platforms like Facebook and YouTube offer exposure to written and spoken language, platforms like Instagram with a focus on visual content might require different learning strategies. Further research is needed to explore how the affordances of various social media platforms influence language acquisition processes (Balakrishnan & Lay, 2016). For instance, investigating how learners engage with visual content on platforms like Instagram and how educators can leverage these platforms to promote vocabulary development and language learning would be valuable.

The Role of Educators in the Social Media Learning Space

Integrating social media effectively into language learning requires careful consideration. Educators play a crucial role in guiding students towards responsible and purposeful use of social media platforms. Research on effective strategies for incorporating social media into lesson plans and promoting critical language awareness can be beneficial (Boonkongsan, 2012). Studies exploring how educators can guide students in navigating the informal language environment of social media while using it to enhance vocabulary development and language learning are warranted.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the influence of social media on the vocabulary and language learning of English major students. A survey research design was chosen due to its ability to collect data from a large sample of participants, allowing for the potential generalizability of the findings to a broader population (Mertler, 2018).

Sample and Sampling

The study focused on a sample of 50 English major students enrolled at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. Purposive sampling was utilized, where participants were selected based on their specific characteristics relevant to the research question – in this case, being English majors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).



Instrument and Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was developed using Google Forms to collect data on students' perceptions and experiences regarding social media's influence on their vocabulary and language learning. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections:

1. Demographic Information: This section gathered basic information about the participants.
2. Social Media and Vocabulary Development: This section explored students' perspectives on how social media impacts their vocabulary acquisition through a series of questions.
3. Social Media and Language Learning: This section investigated how students perceive social media's influence on their overall language learning experience.

Both sections 2 and 3 utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure student responses.

The use of a questionnaire aligns with a deductive approach to research, where existing theories about social media and language learning are tested through data collection (Beiske, 2002; Winters, Winters, & Amedee, 2010). The structured format of the questionnaire facilitates the collection of reliable and quantifiable data for statistical analysis.

Formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^K \sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_X^2} \right)$$

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative study investigating the influence of social media on the vocabulary and language learning of English major students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST). Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to a sample of 50 students. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- a. Social Media and Vocabulary Development: This section explored students' perceptions of how social media impacts their vocabulary acquisition.
- b. Social Media and Language Learning: This section investigated how students perceive social media's influence on their overall language learning experience.

Both sections utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Quantitative analysis was conducted on the collected data. To enhance clarity and facilitate comprehension, the results are presented in both a textual summary and through the use of graphical representations.

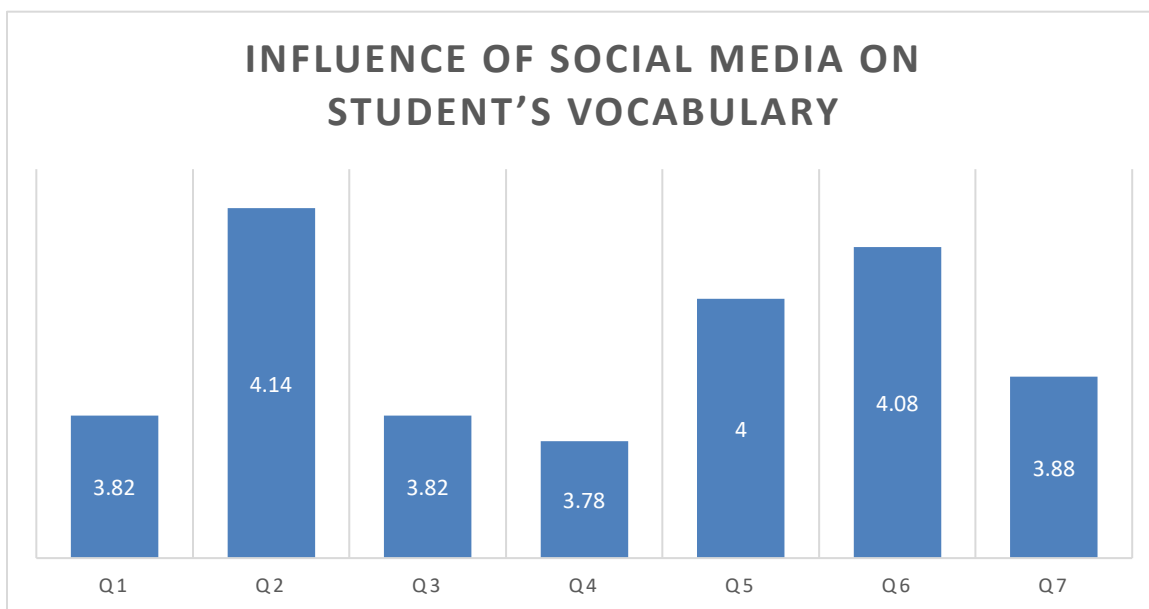


Figure 1: Mean Scores for Influence of Social Media on Student's Vocabulary

The findings related to social media's influence on vocabulary development are encouraging. The highest mean score (4.8) was obtained for question 6: "Social media helps me to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words and words that are difficult to understand." This suggests a strong agreement among students that social media can be a valuable tool for comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Similarly, question 2: "I use social media to improve my knowledge about new terminologies or vocabulary words in English," yielded a high mean score of 4.14 (agree), indicating that students actively utilize social media platforms for vocabulary learning. Furthermore, question 5: "Social media helps to broaden my vocabulary," received a mean score of 4.0



(agree), supporting the notion that social media exposure can contribute to vocabulary expansion.

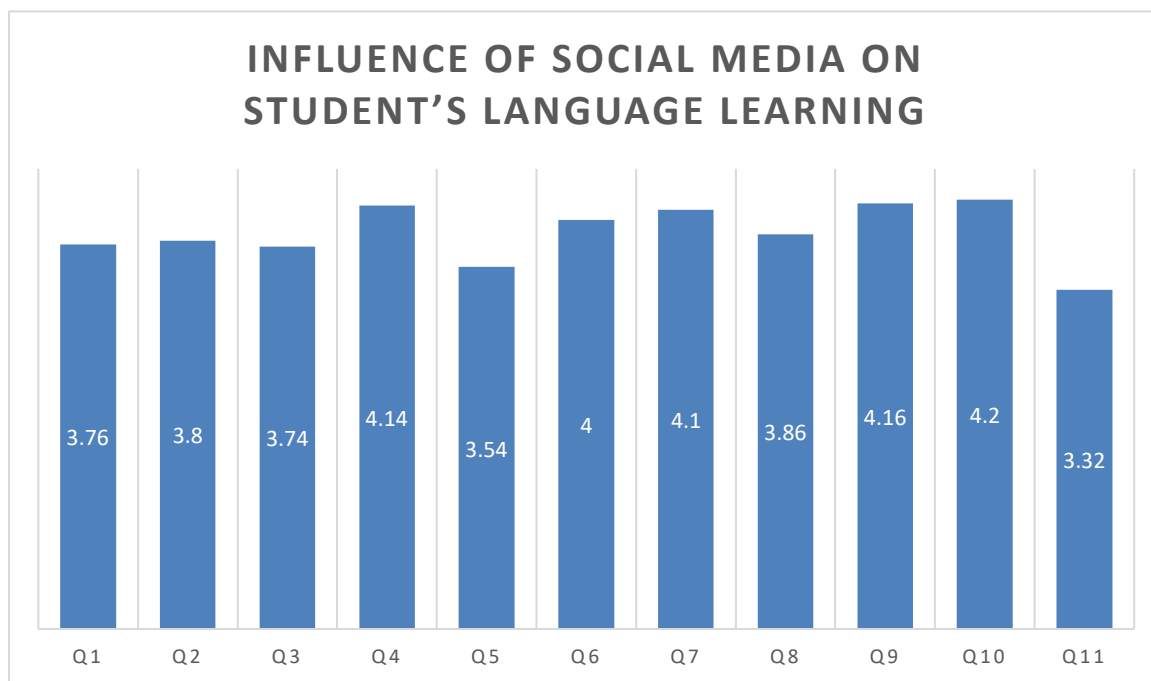


Figure 2: Mean Score for Influence of Social Media on Student's Language Learning

Figure 2 presents the mean scores for student responses regarding the influence of social media on their language learning experiences. The scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The highest mean score ($M = 4.2$) was obtained for question 10: "I am learning a lot when I watch some techniques on enhancing my use of grammar." This suggests a strong agreement among students that watching social media content focused on grammar techniques is beneficial for their learning.

Question 9: "I follow the pages and accounts of influencers promoting language learning," yielded a mean score of 4.16, indicating agreement with the statement. Similarly, questions 4: "I am learning a lot when I see posts about grammar," and 7: "I followed people on TikTok that has grammar and language learning contents," both received mean scores around 4.1, falling within the "agree" range.

DISCUSSION

The survey results obtained from 50 English major students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) provide support for the initial hypothesis. The findings reveal a significant influence of social media on both vocabulary development and language learning experiences among the participants. These results suggest that social media platforms can be valuable tools for learners seeking to enhance their language skills.

Furthermore, the study's findings align with existing research in this area. For instance, Abbasova (2016) highlights how social

media interaction contributes to improvements in learners' vocabulary and literacy skills by providing opportunities for engaging with the target language in a dynamic context. Similarly, the current study demonstrates that a majority of students agreed that social media has a positive influence on their vocabulary and language learning. This suggests that the effectiveness of social media extends beyond traditional teaching and learning methodologies, offering benefits for independent vocabulary acquisition and language development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study investigated the influence of social media on the vocabulary and language learning experiences of English major students. The findings, aligned with previous research (e.g., Abbasova, 2016), demonstrate that social media can be a valuable tool for language development. A significant portion of the participants (50 English majors at NEUST) reported that social media positively impacts their vocabulary acquisition and language learning.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential drawbacks associated with excessive social media use. These include cyberbullying, decreased family time, and physical health concerns like body fatigue. Therefore, promoting a "think before you click" approach and encouraging responsible social media use is essential.

The current pandemic situation (COVID-19) highlights the potential of social media for bridging geographical distances and



facilitating continued learning. The results of this study suggest that incorporating social media platforms strategically can enhance vocabulary development and language learning experiences, particularly in remote learning environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends the following:
Social Media Integration for Language Learning: Educators and institutions can explore strategies to integrate social media platforms effectively into language learning curricula, maximizing the benefits for vocabulary acquisition and language development.

Responsible Social Media Use: Educational programs promoting responsible social media use can be implemented to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate social media platforms safely and productively.

Balance and Breaks: Strategies to encourage healthy social media habits should be promoted, including taking breaks to prevent physical strain and maintaining a healthy balance between social media use and other aspects of life.

By implementing these recommendations, educators and learners can leverage the affordances of social media to enhance language learning experiences while mitigating potential negative consequences.

REFERENCES

1. 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.
2. Al-Rahmi, W. M., & Othman, M. O. (2013). *Evaluating student's satisfaction of using social media through collaborative learning in higher education. International Journal of Advances in Engineering & Technology*, 12(4), 1906-1911.
3. Alassiri, A. A. A. (2014). *Usage of social networking sites and technological impact on the interaction-enabling features. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(7), 127-134.
4. Asad, S. A. A., Mamun, M. A., & Clement, C. K. (2012). *The effect of social networking sites to the lifestyles of teachers and students in higher educational institutions. International Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 12(1), 18-23.
5. Abbasova, M. (2016). *The Impact of Social Networks on the Students' English Language in Azerbaijan. International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts*.
6. Bicen, H., Sadikoglu, S., & Sadikoglu, G. (2015). *The impact of social networks on Undergraduate students learning foreign language. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174, 1204-1210.
7. Boonkongsaen, N. (2012). *Factors affecting vocabulary learning strategies: A synthesized study. Naresuan University Journal*, 17(2), 117-128.

8. Butler, S., Urrutia, K., Buenger, A., Gonzalez, N., Hunt, M., & Eisenhart, C. (2010). *A review of the current research on vocabulary instruction. National Reading Technical Assistance Center, RMC Research Corporation*.
9. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.)*. Sage Publications.
10. Farjami, F., & Aidinlou, N. A. (2013). *Analysis of the impediments to English vocabulary learning and teaching. International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 23(2), 189-202.
11. Ford-Connors, E., & Paratore, J. R. (2015). *Vocabulary instruction in fifth grade and beyond: Sources of word learning and productive contexts for development. Review of Educational Research*, 85(3), 821-862.
12. Hairrel, A., Rupley, W., & Simmons, D. (2011). *The state of vocabulary research. Literacy Research and Instruction*, 50(2), 132-157.
13. Haddad, R. H. (2016). *Developing learner autonomy learning in classroom: How and why can it be fostered? Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 228, 226-231.
14. Hasannejad, M. R., Bahador, H., & Kazemi, S. A. (2015). *Powerful vocabulary acquisition through texts comparison. International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 4(4), 121-127.
15. Khan, I. U., Ayaz, M., Khan, S., Shah, S. F., & Ullah, M. (2016). *Facebook effect on enhancement of English learners' writing approach at university level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, K. Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 2(1), 1-10.
16. Kasuma, S. A. A. (2017). *Using Facebook for English language learning: The differences among gender and ethnicity. Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 2(1), 177-193.
17. Kabilan, M. K., et al. (2010). *Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education? Internet and Higher Education*, 13(4), 232-238.
18. Mertler, C. A. (2018). *Introduction to educational research (8th ed.)*. Sage Publications.
19. Moody, S., Hu, X., Kuo, L., Jouhar, M., Xu, Z., & Lee, S. (2018). *Vocabulary instruction: A critical analysis of theories, research, and practice. Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, Texas A&M University*.