THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the impact of social media platforms on language learning among university students. The research aims to explore how applications like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok contribute to or hinder language acquisition. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected through online surveys and focus group discussions with 120 students. The findings reveal that social media serves as an effective supplementary tool, enhancing vocabulary acquisition, listening skills, and cultural awareness. However, overreliance on informal language styles was noted as a drawback. The study contributes to educational strategies by highlighting the role of digital platforms in modern language learning.*

KEYWORDS: *Social media, language learning, higher education, digital literacy, student engagement.*

The use of social media in educational contexts has expanded rapidly over the past decade. In particular, language learners increasingly utilize platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok for educational purposes. While formal language education remains essential, the integration of informal, real-life content available online has the potential to enrich students' experiences. However, questions remain regarding the balance between benefits and risks, such as the exposure to incorrect language forms. Thus, this study seeks to analyze the extent to which social media influences university students' language learning and to determine its overall effectiveness.

Several researchers have examined the intersection of social media and education. According to Wang and Vásquez (2012), social media provides authentic language input, enabling learners to engage with native speakers. Similarly, Blattner and Lomicka (2012) found that Facebook groups promoted collaborative learning and cultural exchange among language students. On the other hand, Shih (2011) cautions that informal language use prevalent on social media may negatively affect academic writing standards. Despite growing interest, there is a lack of consensus on whether social media serves as a genuine substitute or merely a complementary tool to traditional learning. This research addresses this gap by focusing on students' personal experiences and perceptions.

This study employed a mixed-method research design. Quantitative data were collected through an online survey distributed among 120 university students majoring in English Language and Literature. The survey contained 20 multiple-choice and open-ended questions related to their use of social media for language learning. Qualitative data were gathered via two focus group discussions, each comprising eight participants. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for the survey results and thematic analysis for qualitative insights.

Survey results showed that 87% of students used social media daily for language exposure. YouTube was the most cited platform for improving listening skills, while Instagram and TikTok were preferred for vocabulary learning and cultural familiarity. Focus group discussions highlighted that students valued the authentic, real-world language presented online, noting that it motivated them to practice more consistently.

However, some students reported challenges, including the frequent use of slang, abbreviations, and incorrect grammar, which sometimes caused confusion. These findings align with Blattner and Lomicka's (2012) research but also support Shih's (2011) concerns about language quality. Thus, while social media can be a powerful learning tool, it should be complemented with critical thinking and formal education to ensure linguistic accuracy.

In conclusion, this study analyzed the influence of social media on language learning among university students. Findings revealed that social media significantly aids vocabulary development, listening skills, and intercultural competence, making it a valuable supplementary educational resource. However, its informal nature necessitates careful use to avoid the adoption of non-standard language forms. Future research could explore the effectiveness of structured, teacher-guided social media integration into language learning curricula to maximize its benefits.

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