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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Abstract: Today social media has become an indispensable part of life. People, mainly teenagers are using the internet and electronic gadgets for different purposes, such as interacting, chatting, blogging, and just watching reels in order to relax. However, not all people know the role of social media in learning languages. The most spend even hours there, which can turn into the waste of time, if only not used appropriately. The intensity of using English social media content impacts positively on students' skills, especially on listening, and speaking – the ones most students find difficult. Hence, social media is needed to be a learning media type for English learners, as it makes the process both interesting and effective. In this paper, a handful of literatures were reviewed to find the positive aspects of the social media in language learning. The researchers also highlighted the accidental benefit of the internet, as teenagers chat with foreigners through online platforms, like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and LinkedIn. The review would conclude that the presence of social media is kind of an extra stimulus for people to learn and communicate in foreign languages.
Keywords: the internet, language, social media, strengths, weakness, media.

Introduction

In the rapid evolution of the internet, and technologies, fast-growing social media tools are widely being used by students. Apart from giving a chance to unwind minds, or earn money, the internet playing much important role in language learning and improving students' language skills. Therefore, it is time to analyze the role of social media and explore its both – advantage and disadvantage sides.

Social media is basically a media which is used through various electronic devices and rechargeable devices like mobile phone, computer, tablets, and so many other ways to facilitate the people while sharing their ideas with others in an easy and systematic way. It is used mostly for communication and awareness around the world (Kaplan Andreas and Michael, 2010).

Social media has been persistently changing the way people spend their free time and even the way they learn a new language. If learners are exposed to content in English or in any others, it also can be considered a practice. With the expanding prevalence of different web-based social networking sites and other related stages, researchers and scholars from various fields (Bhatti, Shaheen, Akram, & Rehman, 2020). To continue considering it an area of concentration the role of social media should be investigated further. Language instructors and professors specifically have seen the effect of the internet on students. When learners are interested in studying – learning languages through social media, it enhances study consistency. Because even without a language learning goal, they still use the internet, but when it comes with double benefit then it makes students more committed and determined.

However, social media comes with its negative sides as well as the positive. The internet is considered an extra method of learning languages, while many people may rely solely on social media, for example, to learn English, which might result in disappointment at the end. People may

watch reels, listen to podcasts, or follow English-speaking bloggers for improving their speaking skills. But only exposure to English environment cannot teach a whole language to anybody, it requires effort, dedication and much time. However, is the appropriate guide is given, and learners know how to use social media effectively, the goal of learning languages can be achieved in a relatively shorter period of time.

So far wide scope of social media platforms is being used by many. For instance, Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) found that freshmen mainly used social media about an hour daily to socialize with friends. This shows what potential social media has as a method for online learning. Ranked in the top 20 countries with the most social media users, the social networking site is now an essential aspect of daily life. Apparently, social media are highly likely to prove advantageous to students should it be capitalized on as part of the learning process.

Methodology

The present critical study is systematic, and objective analysis and controlled observation that leads to the development of using social media as a language learning tool resulting in the predictions of events based on descriptive and evaluative research methodology. The deductive reasoning, personal experience, mass-opinion, and scientific inquiry in this research explore the descriptive

correlational, explanatory, and exploratory objectives to acquire the new knowledge and updated information with step-to-step

social media role in language learning

Literature review

The theoretical framework of this ethical and relevant research is to explore the gaps and shortcomings with the existing working in its research field that needs to be fixed to address the problems learners may come across. Social media is a set of websites, web links, and any internet-based platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, Messenger, Skype and many more apps related to language teaching-learning like British Council, Duolingo, EDMODO, iSpeaker, Podcasts which have been becoming viral and continuously visited sites. Due to this popularity the idea of social networking and language learning become the concern of many instructors and professors. Language learners can get any information or knowledge by just one click on social media.

Previous studies have discussed the pedagogical potential of SM. For example, Cerda and Planas (2011) concluded that social apps such as Facebook are beneficial because they promote interaction, online discussions, and group work, especially for students who hesitate to participate in face-to-face activities. A meta-analysis conducted by Wang and Vasquez (2012) suggests that one of the most important benefits offered by Web 2.0 apps is their ability to create a cooperative learning environment. In these studies, however, Wikis and Blogs were the most commonly investigated technologies (e.g., Parmaxi, Zaphiris, & Ioannou, 2016), with little or no attention given to SM (Wang & Vasquez, 2012). The current study contributes to the understanding of the effectiveness of social media and language-teaching based applications by examining most recent and popular platforms.

The benefits of online platforms – social media – in learning languages:

Given that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram are the most popular and most-used programs. We consider pedagogical implications of these sites on language learners and instructors.

Facebook

Wang and Vasquez (2014) investigated the effects of Facebook use on language learning, as they examined the quality and quantity of Chinese-speaking English as a Second Language (ESL)

learners' writing performance when using this platform. The authors reported a significant difference in quantity of writing between the treatment group using Facebook and the controls, but not in quality. They concluded by recommending the use of Facebook for activities outside the classroom so that learners can improve their writing.

Facebook's pedagogical impact on English learners is also investigated. For example, Ekoc (2014), created a special Facebook page to see how EFL learners are willing to interact with each other, and answer the questions raised by their peers on teachers. The results showed that significant number of individuals participated, interacted more actively than others. This led researchers to advocate and even encourage the use of Facebook, because it provides opportunities and a source of extra input and boosts students' both writing and speaking skills.

Twitter

The role of Twitter in L2 learning has also been investigated in the CALL literature (e.g., Borau et al., 2009; Hattem, 2013). Newgarden (2009) reviewed its use in an ESL context and concluded that the potential of Twitter lies in its accessibility, reachability, and connectivity, creating an environment in which students feel part of the L2 community, and in which they can shape their identities as L2 speakers and negotiate for meaning beyond the boundaries of the classroom (Nouf Aloraini & Walcir Cardoso, 2020). Additionally, Hattem (2013), for example, found that using Twitter in an English grammar course yielded many positive outcomes: it helped students notice targeted grammatical features, enhance long-term memory capacity, promote positive learning attitudes, and improve grammar skills while aiding them in the process of proceduralization. In addition, it has been observed that the pedagogical use of Twitter can help students improve their language not only in formal settings (e.g., teacher-directed), but also in informal ones (Rosell-Aguilar, 2018).

Instagram

While previous researches investigated the importance of Twitter and Facebook in improving learners' language skills, Instagram also plays a crucial role in this field. To contribute to this area, Aloraini (2018) investigated the use of Instagram as an EFL learning tool by Saudi students, which inspired the conceptualization of the current research. Given that many Saudi EFL teachers post language lessons on Instagram (e.g., explaining the use of an idiom), Aloraini (2018) conducted a corpus-driven study that examined whether two lesson types (one focusing on vocabulary and the other on grammar) affected students' output and the amount of feedback they received (from teachers and peers). Quantitative analysis revealed that vocabulary lessons elicited more output from students. However, in terms of quality (measured by the number of errors), vocabulary- and grammar-related posts were alike, as students demonstrated poor output quality for both. In regard to user feedback, the two lesson types did not differ, as there was little to no feedback provided for these activities (Nouf Aloraini & Walcir Cardoso, 2020).

Discussions

The pitfalls of using social media to learn a new language.

Despite the given positive sides of these platforms, they have some inconvenient parts too, which are informed by users. Firstly, using the internet may distract learners from the real educational settings. As these platforms focus more on maintaining interesting and interactive environment, that students may get used to easily. But formal language classes may not provide such opportunities leading to learners' disappointment. Moreover, Castrillo (2013), reported that students expressed negative opinions regarding the character-size restrictions (now at 280 characters) imposed by Twitter. Students also mentioned that they are easily distracted by

additional features such as instant messaging (Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh, & AbuMelhim, 2014), or become anxious trying to keep up with their peers' posts (Castrillo, 2013).

The following difficulties have been noted in light of socio-constructivist theory and the findings of empirical research: The key to learning facilitation is building up a brand-new foreign language learning challenge that enables students to synchronously communicate online, cooperate, and share knowledge during the entire process (Li, 2018). The platform's style for interaction during the creation of foreign language texts is more inspiring than more conventional group work (Golonka et al., 2014). The findings demonstrate how collaboration and motivation affect students' quality of work, how social media-enhanced platforms promote collaboration and knowledge sharing, and how results improve when students concentrate on solving problems that can be applied to other tasks rather than retaining local surface knowledge that cannot be applied to new contexts (Awal Kurnia Putra Nasution, 2022).

The main goal of this research program is to look into how social media can be incorporated into creating efficient mobile-assisted language learning programs and social media in schools to promote efficient contextual learning experiences in response to the new challenges facing education. With the help of this study, teachers and students will be given a fresh approach to mobile-assisted language learning. A packaged approach with predefined content, which frequently depends on the knowledge of outside academics, is not, in our opinion, a viable long-term answer in developing countries. This project investigates ways to encourage and empower learners in developing nations to participate in social learning environments where they may share ideas and create learning content that is meaningful and relevant to them. It goes beyond the language learning content delivery approach. Social media and smartphone integrations are possible with our digital learning solutions (De-Marcos et al., 2014).

Conclusion

The use of social media, in the form of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram effects positively on students' language learning experiences. Organized interactive tasks and conversations in these platforms, make the journey more engaging. Apart from providing interesting settings, it motivates students to learn new languages. The perceived benefits are an increase in learners' writing, reading, and speaking skills. Integrating the internet, these social apps into traditional classes can prove that learning can be done in fun and exciting way, this will support the success of the learning carried out. The challenges learners faced while using the platforms are few, and can be solved with a structured guide and an appropriate approach. This research shows that, in present day, technology cannot be separated from education, as it plays an indispensable role in language learning.

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