

The Use of Social Media in Learning Communication Skills in English for College Students

Farhath Anjum

Assistant Professor, Dept of H&S, Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology

Email: farhath.anjum@gmail.com

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Abstract: Students' English communication abilities have changed with the advent of social media. This study aims to explore the potential of social media communication platforms for the English communication skills of college students. This study employed a school-based experimental design for a period of eight weeks with 60 undergraduate students, where the influence of social media on students' communication skills (fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence) was assessed. Data was obtained through pre-test, post-test, and peer interviews in addition to discussion forums. Considerable enhancement of both oral and communication skills was noted, where social media, with the right mentorship, fosters improved student engagement, vocabulary breadth, and pragmatic usage of the language. Thus, the study proposes the need to incorporate social media in teaching English language communication skills.

Keywords: Digital Learning, Language Fluency, social media & Vocabulary Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global communication disruption brought about by the digital ecosystem continues to influence communication in the 21st century. College students spend a substantial amount of time engaging with social media sites. For students in India (particularly in the semi-urban areas), social media provides a way to improve English fluency and practice language skills in a low-pressure, informal context since students often face conditions of limited exposure, anxiety in the classroom, and a lack of practice of language skills beyond textbooks.

Social media also provides students with new and engaging opportunities to write and use language in ways that go beyond classroom use. Students use language communication skills in several contexts, such as when they participate in social media debates and exchange voice messages. This type of skills development often goes unrecognized, so teachers can help students realize the extent of their social media participation. Students can also formalize their practice of social media use in educational contexts. This is what makes social media use invisible in education and the pedagogy of communication to help students.

With the advancement of technology, there is a difference in what is taught in English classrooms and what the students actually need to know. Furthermore, there is a huge gap regarding what students use digital platforms such as social media for versus what they can use them for. They can use it

to improve their language skills. This is why the purpose of this study is to see if incorporating social media purposefully within English teaching can help develop the students' communication skills and competencies.

The aims of this study are as follows:

- To evaluate the effect of guided social media activities on English communication skills.
- To measure improvements in vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence.
- To analyze students' perceptions of social media as a language-learning tool.
- To identify effective strategies for using digital platforms in college English classrooms.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The availability of technology that can immediately be integrated into teaching practices has changed the way students can learn a language. This is why many studies have been conducted in order to understand the implications of social media as a teaching tool in English language education. *Blattner and Fiori (2009)* describe how social presence and meaningful discourse on Facebook provide an opportunity for learners to interact in genuine situations. They argue that social presence on Facebook fosters the alleviation of communication apprehension that learners typically experience in the classroom. Concerning this, *Kabilan,*

Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) indicated that the sense of community and opportunity to write for real-world purposes motivated learners of English to use Facebook.

Al-Jarf (2013) explained the benefits of Twitter in learning vocabulary retention through micro-writing and hashtag discussions. The nature of the medium, which requires users to write within specified character limits, can assist learners in being more concise in their writing. Concise writing is an essential skill, especially for academic and business purposes.

In digital literacy, communication competence is being integrated more and more, as explained by Benson (2015). Learners today, he continues, should be able to navigate through different digital environments, understand and interpret various online texts, and engage in asynchronous discussions, which illustrates that digital literacy is directly linked to the knowledge of a language.

Ahmed (2018) in his study of WhatsApp found that students are more likely to participate in discussions when there is a group chat and they do not feel they are being watched. The conversational flow taking place in the group increases the informal learning of students, fosters peer support, and enhances conversational ease.

Hussain (2021) mentions how learners use YouTube to get better pronunciation and listening skills. He explains that learners are able to use the audio-visual material to get the natural patterns of speech.

While there is an abundance of literature reporting how social media is effective in language learning, there is also a considerable lack of literature concerning studies that utilize certain experimental procedures to determine how improvements occur over time. Additionally, there is a shortage of Indian studies focusing on students from semi-urban colleges. This research intends to fill these gaps by implementing an organized social media intervention and measuring its outcomes.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1. The Study Design

This study incorporates a quasi-experimental design that consists of two groups:

- E-Experimental Group, which consists of 30 students who are provided with a structured social media instructional activity.
- C-Control Group, which consists of 30 students who are provided with traditional in-person teaching without the use of any digital social media.

The students who were part of the groups were enrolled in a first-year undergraduate course in English and Communication Skills. The groups were similar in age and background, as well as similar in their communication skills.

3.2. The Duration

The intervention of the study was for eight weeks, and there were two teaching sessions each week that included both traditional classroom teaching and the teacher-led digital activity.

3.3. The Tools and Instruments

The following tools were created for the collection and analysis of the data:

- A pre-test and a post-test to measure the participants' vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence.
- Self-Reflection Surveys, which provided a five-point Likert scale to measure the responses.
- Social Media Activity Logs, which aimed at measuring the students' completion of the assigned digital tasks.
- Peer Feedback Rubrics, which were used to assess the students for their spoken presentations, documented posts, and their writings.

3.4 Approach

The intervention occurred in four phases:

- **Phase 1 (Weeks 1-2): Viewing and Orientation:** The students were presented with an academic type of YouTube and Instagram use. Teachers selected playlists with items focusing on pronunciation, storytelling, and English conversation for daily use. Students mimicked shadowing techniques to gain fluency.
- **Phase 2 (Weeks 3-4): Conversational Interaction:** For the purpose of managing dialogue, WhatsApp groups were made. Students were encouraged to use voice messaging and text for daily topics such as "My challenges to learning English" or "Describe one of your favorite inventions."
- **Phase 3 (Weeks 5-6): Writing and Presentations with a Professional Focus:** The students were to post on LinkedIn summaries of short stories, talks of inspiration, or activities of a college. Professional tone, coherence, and clarity in written English were practices that the students learned.
- **Phase 4 (Weeks 7-8): Production and Peer Assessment:** On a designated topic, students made short speeches in English (60 – 90 seconds). Constructive criticism was the focus of the videos that were shared with peers. The issues of content organization, expression, and pronunciation were emphasized.

3.5 Analysis of Data

To assess the level of improvement between the pre and post-test scores, quantitative data were applied with the use of paired sample t-tests. Interviews, comments, and reflective surveys made up the qualitative data, which were to be analyzed through thematic content analysis.4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Quantity Analysis

Parameter	Pre-Test Mean (E)	Post-Test Mean (E)	Pre-Test Mean (C)	Post-Test Mean (C)
Vocabulary	56.4	82.1	55.8	61.2
Fluency	52.7	80.6	51.3	59.1
Pronunciation	60.1	85.4	59.7	62.0
Confidence	54.3	88.7	53.9	64.8

4. INTERPRETATION

The experimental group showed bigger developmental differences ($p < 0.05$) on each parameter than their control group counterparts. The greatest improvement was in confidence. This correlates to the theory that cognitive social media is beneficial to users because it may alleviate performance-related anxiety and embolden self-expression. Vocabulary improvement is also attributable to motivational factors and user engagement from peers. The social media platform also served as a user motivational tool to exposure from captions, subtitles, and conversations daily.

4.1. Qualitative Observations

Student reflections and classroom observations yielded four main themes:

- **Confidence and Anxiety:** Students remarked on a greater comfort level with communicating in English and felt responsive to peers in English. They appreciated the lack of real-time feedback and criticism.
- **Language Exposure:** Students benefited from exposure to unmediated performance models of speech on YouTube and Instagram.
- **Expression:** Students demonstrated greater engagement with content that was personally relevant, humorously relatable, or a free storytelling medium - designed task videos, memes, and social media reels.
- **Community Learning:** WhatsApp debates and interactions on LinkedIn fostered a feeling of community. Feedback from peers was respectful and encouraging.

4.2 Student Reflections: Sample Statements

- Captions helped me articulate my thoughts. Sentence formation was a challenge for me, but practice helped me improve.
- Copying short videos helped me learn pronunciation. It was enjoyable, and I didn't feel like I was studying.
- Participating in discussions on WhatsApp gave me the freedom to speak spontaneously. I was not afraid to express myself because we were all learning.

The statements above provide additional evidence for the positive effects of structured digital engagement.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study illustrates the positive impact of digital engagement on the students' English communication skills. Students expressed appreciation for the social interaction that was skillfully woven into the digital engagement, as well as the subsequent opportunities for creative expression and the sense of community that was fostered.

5.1. Key Conclusions

- Social media solves the divide between formal and informal academic English.
- Informal communication and interactions among peers can help in developing a student's confidence.
- Using audiovisual aids can help with fluency and pronunciation.
- Prolonged engagement in a task can help in the natural acquisition of new vocabulary.
- Students are equipped to take their learning into their own hands, rather than passively receiving instructions.

5.2. Recommendations

Digital literacy should be included in English courses.

- Learning outcomes must reflect the learning activities that teachers have tailored using digital tools.
- Communication outcomes must contain digital exchange components.
- Teachers need training in the pedagogy of social media.
- Enhanced social media for Millennial learners using AI remains to be researched.

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