



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS : A CROSS- SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The impact of social media cannot be ignored in building the vocabulary of ESL learners as they encounter challenges due to limited exposure to authentic language usage and contextual learning opportunities. understanding the role of motivation and engagement in social media-based vocabulary learning is vital for optimizing language learning experiences. Our study aims to build upon these valuable insights and give a comprehensive understanding of social media's impact on vocabulary acquisition in English as a Second Language. The study used an online survey tool with questions developed from a thorough literature review, a total of 370 Pakistani adults in undergraduate or post-graduate programs from various institutes of the country participated. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and opinions of participants were quantified and presented as tables and bar charts. The results signify a high vocabulary acquisition via social media, a high language learning interest, and more agreement with positive impacts than negative impacts regarding the use of social media in the ESL context. Universities of Pakistan must incorporate social media and social networking sites into their teaching strategies and curriculum with a focus on corrective feedback that encourages the L2 learner to fully immerse in authentic English Language experience.

Keywords: *ESL Learner, L2 Learning, Social Media, Social Networking Sites, Vocabulary Acquisition.*

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Abbreviations

ESL	:	English as a Second Language
L2	:	Second Language
SM	:	Social Media
SNS	:	Social Networking sites
UG	:	Undergraduate
PG	:	Postgraduates

1. Introduction

Over the last few years information technologies and social media have influenced human life to a great deal. The various forms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and WhatsApp have boosted social interaction and sharing of information among students. According to (Thorne, 2010) social media applications allow users to cross the boundaries of their countries, connect and express themselves globally. After the improvements in communication around the globe, English has emerged as a lingua franca that makes effective English language proficiency, a necessity. According to (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2004) a person requires to understand 90 to 95 percent of the total words in a given text to understand it and 99 percent coverage of the total words would lead to an almost complete comprehension of any text. (Thornbury, 2002) argues that the learners will not be able to improve their language learning despite spending a great deal of time studying grammar unless they learn more vocabulary and phrases as they can say very little with grammar, but one can easily communicate through words.

Young people today spend more time with gadgets for entertainment and pleasure rather than learning and doing tasks. Internet services make it easier for them to access social media wherever they are. (Dornyei & Otto, 1998) considers motivation as a key factor that affects the rate and success of L2 and that the most famous individuals need

motivation to accomplish long-term goals. Furthermore, he argues that high motivation can make up for many deficiencies in one's aptitude and learning conditions. He explains that if students think that there is a good opportunity to accomplish the task and they can have a greater incentive value, they will have a higher value of positive motivation.

Ferdig (2007) highlights that social media, with its interactive nature, plays a crucial role in the language learning process. The teaching is only effective if it is taught favorably and effectively. If a teacher employs a method or approach of teaching that doesn't meet the level and comprehension of the second language learners, then the second language acquisition cannot be utilized appropriately. Communicative language teaching is the best method. Multimedia elements such as images and videos are known to enhance comprehension and retention (Godwin-Jones, 2019).

Shahid (2016) asserts four points on the nature of words and many meanings including the fact that apart from extremely technical phrases, no two arguments across languages take a similar range of meanings so the literal translation is not accurate and may result in twisted meanings. Another problem is that there are relatively certain words in English that have a single meaning, for example, the term table has 91 different definitions. The context in which a word is employed determines its meaning. Several studies highlight the benefits of utilizing social media as an instrument to attain language but they also have realized the numerous disadvantages that can hinder to achieve the language learning objectives. Social media certainly have many positive effects on ESL learners. For example, it helps improve their motivation as well as encourages them to work with their classmates. Throughout the world, social media is an integral part of this generation and they can share their ideas and information. However, this development also creates some problems for ESL learners as it exposes them to informal language abbreviations and slang. It also can present inaccurate vocabulary usage.

1.1. Problem Statement

. The traditional methods of language instruction may not suffice to meet the dynamic and interactive demands of contemporary language learning. Social media on the other hand offers learning platform for real-time interaction. Now all over the world, modern and latest methods are being introduced for education. So, the use of social media in the education sector has become an integral part. By exploring the relationship between social media and vocabulary acquisition, the present study intends to delve into the effects of social media on vocabulary learning among ESL learners.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded on the framework of Vygotsky's social constructivism. According to the social constructivist model, students have to participate actively in their learning process to ensure effective language development. Social constructivism promotes interaction between individuals in society. (Vygotsky, 1987) reported that cultural and social realms play an important part in intellectual development. Vygotsky claimed that learning through meaning, instead of learning by facts, results in a much higher cognitive development (Au, 1998). Based on his notion this study was conducted to demonstrate the usefulness of social networking applications in the English vocabulary learning process.

3. Literature Review

Over the years, it has been observed that social media has been gaining a lot of attention from higher education to explore how technology can provide exciting opportunities to students, teachers, and the institutions as a whole (Manca, 2020). This has particularly gained attention during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased utilization of social media and remote learning applications by schools and universities around the world (Ravindran et al., 2022). It has largely been viewed as a positive step towards the integration of social media into the instructional design used by universities (Muftah, 2022)

According to a study, the impact of Facebook on language learning, reveals its potential to facilitate peer interactions and promote vocabulary acquisition by providing a more accessible means to connect with people from around the world (Omar et al., 2012). Not only learners but ESL teachers have also been benefitting from the multitude of features offered by Facebook (Al-Jarf, 2021). This includes in-depth peer-to-peer interaction, communication and support groups through resource sharing and discussions on professional development.

Vocabulary is the basic language aspect that must be mastered before mastering English skills. The use of multimedia elements, including images, videos, and audio, within social media, has been found to enhance vocabulary learning (Alharthi et al., 2020). (Stockwell, 2022) highlighted the effectiveness of multimedia annotations in promoting vocabulary retention. Multimedia-rich platforms like YouTube have also been identified as valuable resources for ESL learners, offering authentic language input and contextually rich content (Godwin-Jones, 2019)). In addition to providing a user-generated database of

videos, YouTube also helps to introduce cultures from around the world thereby adding diversity and originality to the English language experience (Dizon, 2022). Its easy accessibility makes it useful for both ESL educators and learners who cannot afford to study abroad but want to engage in authentic English language experiences from the comfort of their homes.

Instagram presents a fun alternative way of learning and sparks interest in developing vocabulary because it also uses pictures that can trigger students to learn and know more about English (Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020). Several Instagram accounts provide information related to English and this can be a reference to add to students' vocabulary and improve their listening skills.

(Gon & Rawekar, 2017) state that WhatsApp has become a new and convenient platform for teaching. It is one of the widely used social networking apps that allows sharing information in the forms of photos, videos, and voice messages. Special features available in WhatsApp can boost students' dynamic participation in ESL classrooms and inspire them to get involved in purposeful activities (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013)

Social media's informal and interactive nature has positively impacted motivation and engagement in English language learning. (Reinders & Wattana, 2015) emphasized this aspect of social media, highlighting the ability to foster learner autonomy and engagement. Surprisingly, this also results in a positive feedback mechanism where more motivated learners are also more likely to actively engage with vocabulary-related content on social media, thereby further enhancing their vocabulary acquisition (Zhao et al., 2022)

Despite the numerous benefits of utilizing social media for vocabulary development, there are certain challenges and limitations. One significant concern is the authenticity and accuracy of language used on social media platforms. Given that social media often includes informal language, slang, and abbreviations, there's a risk of ESL learners being exposed to incorrect or inappropriate vocabulary usage (Alnujaidi, 2017).

4. Methodology

Quantitative research has always been the most useful method to obtain numerical data from a large group of people and enables statistical analysis to be performed giving a more objective and scientific view of the problem.

This study used a survey method to investigate the role of social media in vocabulary development among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. 370

students were selected through non-probability purposive sampling from various universities of Pakistan at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The students/graduates were enrolled in degree programs/had jobs that used English as the official language. They also needed to be users of any of the social media applications namely, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Finally, participants who mentioned English as their first language and/or have any type of learning or physical disability affecting their ability to effectively communicate were excluded from the study. Participants from the same institute as the researchers themselves were excluded from the study to prevent bias.

4.1. Research Tool

A closed-ended questionnaire was adapted from (Khan, 2016) as well as (Zainal et al., n.d.) after an extensive literature review using an online survey tool. It comprised only 20 questions divided into four small sections. The first section provided an information sheet about the research and gained informed consent before proceeding to the next section. The second section assessed vocabulary acquisition through social media in the ESL context. The third part looked at language learning engagement exhibited by these individuals on social media. Finally, the last section explored the views of participants regarding the positive utility or negative consequences of using social media as a tool for ESL Learning. The responses were quantified using a 5-point Likert scale with the options Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

4.2. Sampling Approach

The sample size was calculated using the online sample size calculator tool. Population size was determined by using Google. Pakistan's total adult population was approximated by using Wikipedia statistics (238.5M) and then the percentage of adults using social media was noted from recent surveys on Google (31.5%). The population was determined using this percentage method and entered into the calculator with a confidence interval of 95 % and a 5% margin of error, which revealed the size to be a minimum of 332.

Non-probability convenience sampling was used and the survey was distributed by using social media applications (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram) so that it only reached users who were active on those platforms. Students from various universities were targeted and postgraduates were also approached via this method. Participants belonged to various departments and academia but were all ESL learners.

SPSS version 25 was used to run the descriptive analysis for each Likert scale item on the questionnaire and in this way mean, mode, and standard deviation were obtained. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was run to check the internal reliability of the questions on the research form. Bar charts were generated for each of the responses and reflected the percentages of individuals choosing a certain option.

4.3. Quality Criteria

Only 18+ people were allowed to participate in the research and they needed to be enrolled in a degree program at their university (undergraduates) or doing a job in a workplace that used English as the official language (post graduates). Only social media users were eligible. Any form of physical (sight/hearing) or mental disability was not entertained that could affect English language development. Only participants from outside the Institute of English Studies were eligible to respond to the survey.

4.4. Ethics

Written informed consent was taken from the participants at the start of the survey and the participants had full right to withdraw during the filling of the questionnaire. There was no physical or mental harm associated with the contents of the questionnaire. No personal information was gathered and any data collected was anonymized before statistical analysis. Emails were collected in the study with the sole intention of sending a copy of the participant's responses and the findings of the final published research as part of the debriefing process. Study complies with the Declaration of Helsinki for conducting studies on human subjects. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab by the director of English Studies. (#D/2660/Eng: 22/11/2023).

5. Results

Online survey tool responses (n=370) were extracted and transcribed on an Excel sheet and all the 5-point Likert Scale item responses were replaced with their corresponding numbers i.e., Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5. Internal reliability of the research tool was checked by running Cronbach's Alpha test which is considered reliable if the value is > 0.70 or 70%.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.856	20

Descriptive analysis was used and frequencies (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, etc.) were generated & infographics were obtained for every question item in the form of tables and histograms. Results are divided into 4 parts: Vocabulary Acquisition, Language Learning Interests(engagement), and Positive & Negative impacts of social media.

Vocabulary Acquisition					
	I am repeatedly exposed to new words and phrases on social media.	When I don't know what a certain word means on social media I go search it up on Google	Followers on social media use words of high-level to express themselves.	Social Media helps me apply new words of English in the right context.	Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram help me enhance my English language skills
Mean	3.81	4.20	3.18	3.54	3.56
Std. Deviation	.879	.853	1.056	.951	.981

Table 4.1 Vocabulary Acquisition

Most of the respondents (70.8%) believed that they are repeatedly encountering novel words and phrases through the use of social media, and almost all of the respondents (87.8%) search these up on Google when they wish to know their meanings. Even though most social media users believe that their experience on the internet adds to their vocabulary, they are divided when it comes to the level of complexity of these words, with a significant proportion (27%) choosing to be neutral. This may reflect the current English language competence of individuals and people who are in different stages of their vocabulary development on the internet. Some people may find some words to be complex while for many, their usage is common practice at their institute/workplace. Many people (62.2%) agree that social media provides a good platform to assimilate new words and this helps them refine their language usage. However, almost one-fifth of the population seems to remain doubtful and 17% disagree with the notion entirely. Overall, a vast majority

(60.5%) believed that Facebook, YouTube, and apps like Instagram help them improve their English language skills with only 17.1% disagreeing with the statement.

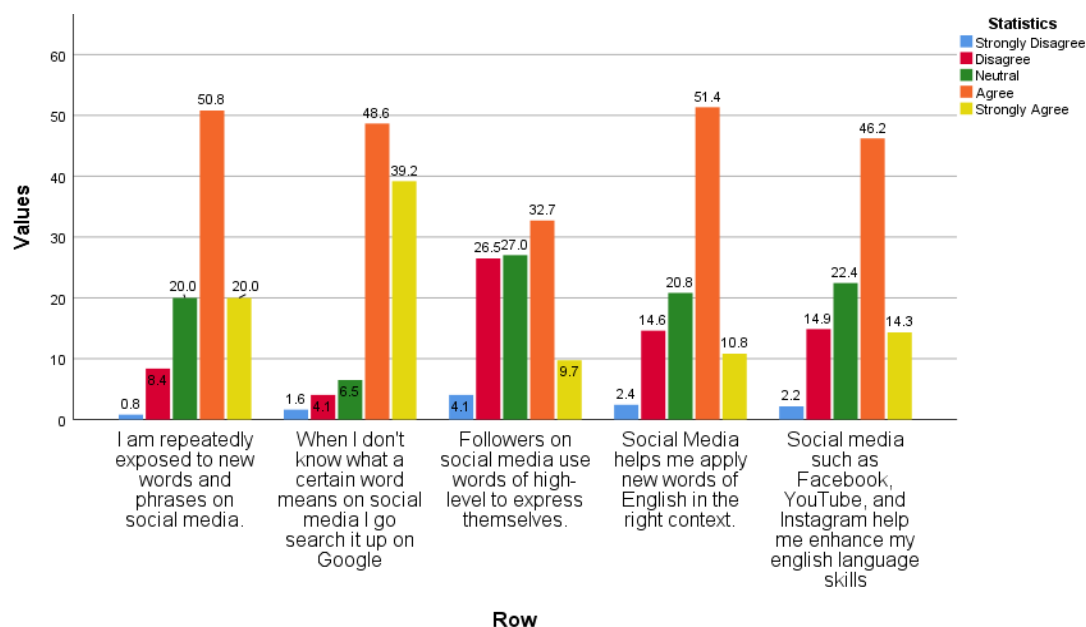


Fig 4.1.: Vocabulary Acquisition

Language Learning Interest							
	Social media is a fun platform to practice English language	The use of social media has helped me write better English.	The use of social media has motivated me to use English more frequently	I am simply using English because most people on social media use English.	I had to put effort into expressing myself in English on social media.	There are more opportunities to use English on social media rather than in my own classroom/workplace.	Through social media, I can interact with other English speakers from around the world.

Mean	3.48	3.32	3.54	3.18	2.82	3.51	3.97
Std. Deviation	.946	1.032	1.028	1.113	1.093	1.042	.768

Table 4.2. Language Learning Interest

The level of interest in learning the English language was gauged by asking the respondents questions that confirmed an active role in acquiring or using words on social media. Some of these questions (4,5,6) were asked inversely to cross-verify their level of motivation and drive. Most (58.1%) of the people find social media fun or engaging to practice their language skills online but about one-fourth of the population remained neutral. Interestingly, when it comes to writing skills, only about half (52.2%) of the population agreed that social media helped them to write better and the rest of the sample either disagreed or maintained that it had no effect. This is mainly due to an unfiltered source of content on online apps and an informal means of expression that does not add any value to formal English writing that new language learners focus on in the early stages of their vocabulary development. Many (61%) reported that they are using English frequently in real-life contexts due to social media usage and the experience has been encouraging. About half of these people are not internally motivated to use English on social media platforms (49.2%), suggesting a ‘bandwagon’ mentality with a mean score of 3.18. This is understandable since some may be externally driven to interact in English because everybody else is also communicating in English. Communicating in English is also mandatory due to the demands imposed by the HEC and/or their professions. Despite this, 34.6% of these people are using English because they genuinely have an intrinsic desire to learn the language. For most (47.5%), English is a difficult language to execute on social media and only 33.5% believe that it was comparatively easier. Despite this, the majority of people are still trying to interact on the internet in English. And a large proportion 61.4% believe that there are far more opportunities to practice their English language skills online than even in their workplaces and institutions. It is not a surprise since English is mostly a second or even third language for Pakistanis and people find it much easier to converse in their mother tongue despite English being the official mode of communication in most setups. About 20% disagreed with this notion as well, suggesting that not everyone faces this difficulty and therefore Working and Institutional environments differ greatly and there might be ample opportunities to enhance language learning. Almost all the respondents (81.3%) agree that social media allows them to

communicate with other English language users from around the world, giving them diverse exposure to and proving their interest in the English language.

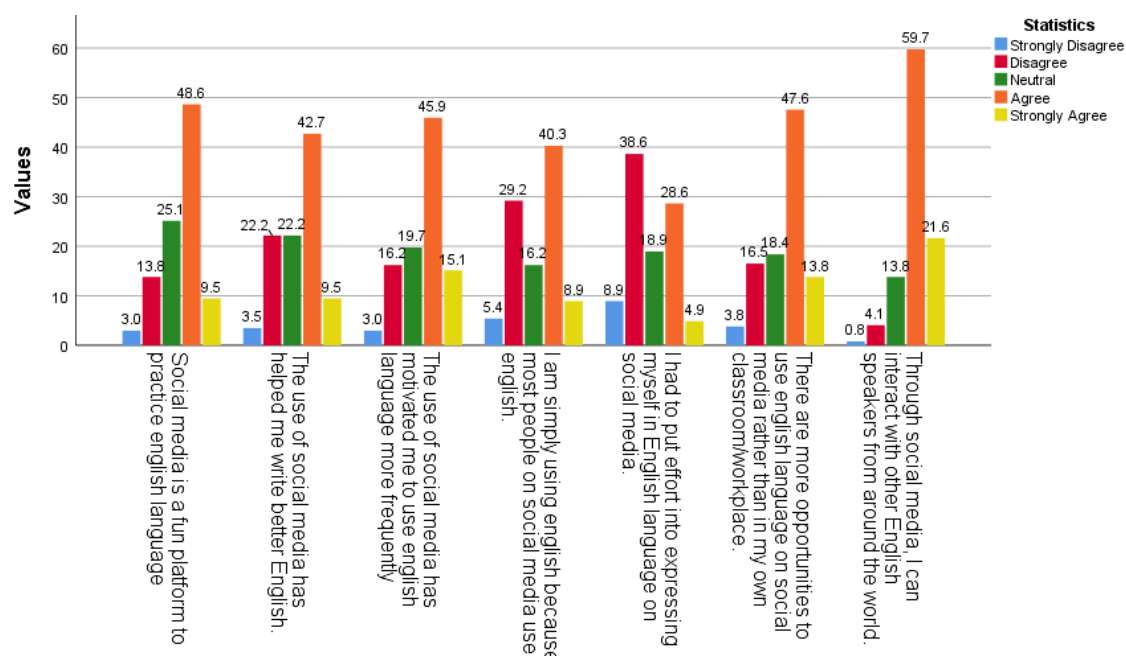


Fig.4.2: Language Learning Interest

Positive Impacts of Social Media				
	Social media has provided me with proper grammar usage.	I am exposed to authentic and meaningful English learning materials (via videos, posts, captions, and tweets) when using social media.	I learned lots of new phrases and words through social media without having to read many books or going to the library	When I made mistakes on social media, other users/friends corrected me to improve my English.
Mean	2.85	3.36	3.42	2.69
Std. Deviation	1.075	.970	1.051	.995

Table.4.3 Positive Impacts of Social Media

There seems to be a significant difference in the opinion of ESL Learners when it comes to proper usage of grammar on social media. More people disagree (44.3%) with this statement than agree (31.9%). This strengthens the view that not all content on social media is suitable for formal English writing and that users often learn and unlearn correct

grammar because of the large number of colloquialisms and contractions on the internet. This question was asked to verify the previous study's claims that social media has a positive influence on English grammar usage. It is clear now that the answer is still dubious however more in favor of the negative picture. Almost 55% of people believe that they are indeed exposed to authentic and meaningful material on social media in the form of videos, posts tweets, etc. Social media provides a huge variety of content that can help in gaining a more holistic experience and exposure. One of the greatest merits of learning English from social media is that it can be done from the comfort of one's home and this is reflected in the responses as well. 58.9% of the respondents agree that social media has increased their access to English vocabulary and eliminated the need to read books or go to the library. Another question that was tested in the study is whether social media users correct other users when they make mistakes, resulting in a regular feedback mechanism that helps improve other users' language skills. It appears that there's another divide with the majority (47.8%) being against this statement and a significant proportion (28.6%) of the population being neutral about it. Only a minority (23.5%) of individuals believe that other users help them correct their mistakes online, which goes against earlier studies that reported a good Samaritan behavior.

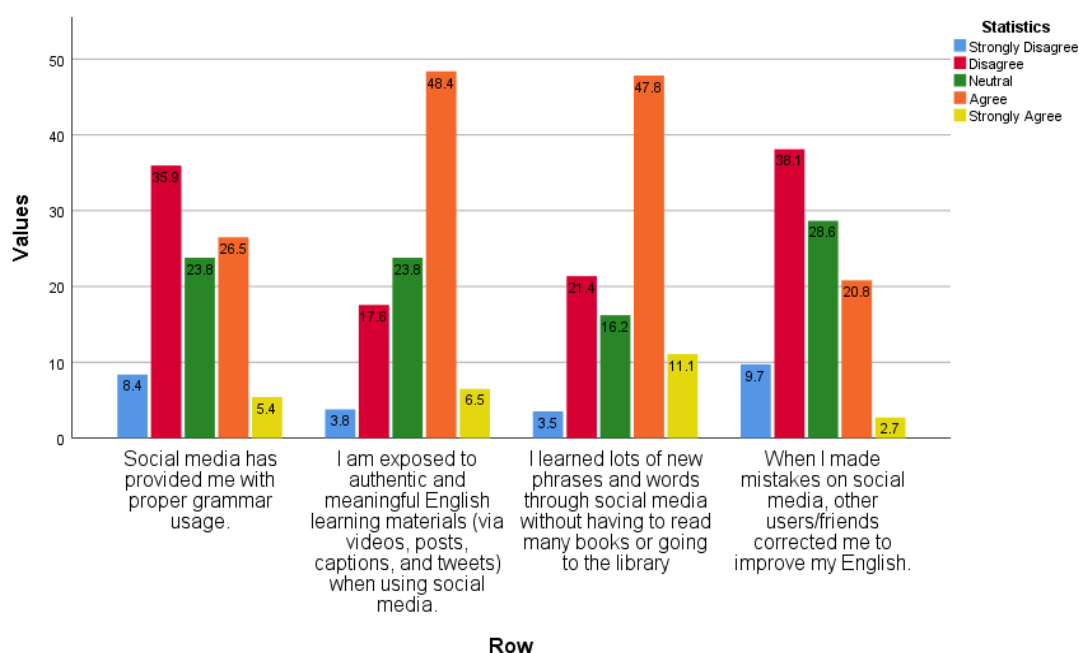


Fig 4.3: Positive Impact of Social Media

Negative Impacts of Social Media				
	I am anxious/doubtful when using English Language on social media.	Social media gives a lot of non-credible English information	The use of Internet slang such as LOL, ROFL, BTW etc. on social media affects formal writing of students.	The use of informal contractions such as 'gonna', 'whatcha' and 'gimme' negatively impacts English speaking and writing skills.
Mean	2.61	3.48	3.97	3.89
Std. Deviation	1.080	.878	.938	.972

Table.4.4: Negative Impacts of Social Media

A vast majority (55.9%) of individuals voted against the notion that they are anxious when using English on social media. The highest score for Strongly Disagreed (13.2%) was also obtained for this question. This goes to show that most people are not afraid of expressing themselves on social media regardless of the difficulties they face online. It is easier for them to interact online than in real life. This goes against previous studies where this was a major negative impact of social media use. Our study shows an opposite trend to this question. One of the disadvantages of using social media is that there is still a lot of noncredible content that most people end up learning from. This was supported by 56.8% of the respondents and unfortunately, this will continue to be a problem for new English as a Second Language Learners. Most of the participants in the study (78.7%) also agree that internet slang which is highly prevalent on social media negatively impacts formal English writing. A similar proportion of people (75.4%) have reported the same problem with English writing and speaking regarding informal contractions e.g., LOL, ROFL, etc.

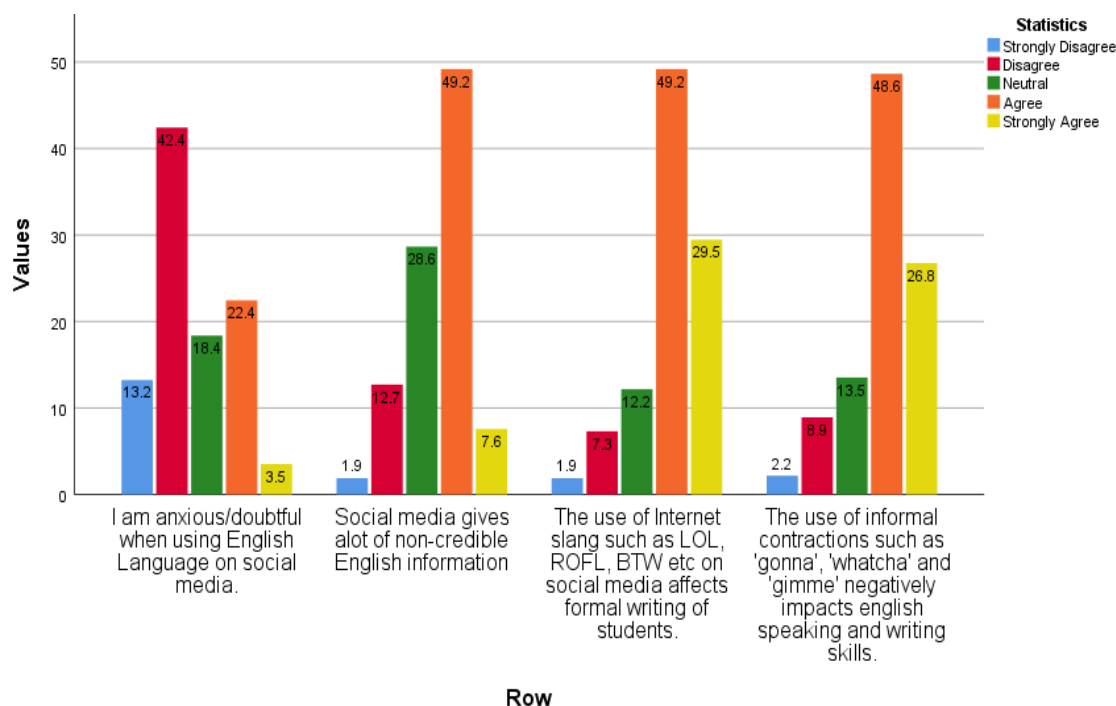


Fig 4.4: Negative Impacts of Social Media

6. Discussion

Globally, students have not been performing well in the English Language in any country where it is not a first language. This is supported by studies showing that all major facets of language competence i.e., vocabulary, writing, reading, speaking, and listening are affected (Alharthi et al., 2020). This difference may be a result of outdated teaching methods, cultural differences, or a general view of English as a foreign language. Whatever the case, the integration of new technology has made it possible to use social media as an effective tool and has helped bridge some gaps in other countries where exposure to English was minimal or culturally unestablished.

Since vocabulary is the first building block in language learning, it is particularly why the first part of the research tool focused on vocabulary acquisition. Most of the participants agreed that social media is an extremely useful tool to expose oneself to more English words. Their active pursuit of finding definitions and meanings of these words as adult learners on search engines like Google proves their ongoing vocabulary development. These types of 'discovery strategies' are used to receive the initial information about new words and to understand their lexical meaning. Facebook and

Instagram in particular have shown majorly an English-oriented interface helping ESL learners to increase their word stock; and this is a well-recognized fact (Kabilan et al., 2010). The difference of opinion between users regarding the level of complexity of words used on these social media can be explained in terms of a difference in the stage of vocabulary development of individuals on the internet. Even though social media is largely accessible to people who are already have good English language understanding, it is still a starting point for many new language learners. Hence not all Pakistani students feel these words are easy to digest even though they may belong to the same education level (Kamran & Mansoor, 2017). This study also gathered data from Adult ESL learners from various backgrounds/disciplines and thus has produced a more holistic picture of the population and therefore varying levels of agreement among social media users. Social media has helped students to assimilate better according to this survey, which is comparable to Abbas et al (2023) which has also drawn upon Alghasab & Alfadley, (2018) study.

As in Hsu et al (2015), social media are perceived as ‘fun’ tools for adult learners in the ESL context due to their highly engaging and interactive interfaces. This means that not only is the use of social media productive for an individual but also an enjoyable experience that increases their motivation. ESL students believe their writing skills are boosted by using social networking sites (SNS) as was the case in (Yunus et al., 2012) as well. However, most learning on social media is classified as incidental learning i.e., results from other academic or non-academic related activities, happening through interaction, problem-solving, repetition, and observation, and unintentional and unplanned types of learning. They may pick up wrong information that is largely informal and unregulated which might affect their writing ability negatively. People are more likely to use English if they use social media as entailed by earlier studies (Kreishan & Abbadi, 2022) which also confirm a higher frequency of words used by undergraduate ESL students from Jordan. Some of the earlier studies suggest that a ‘bandwagon’ mentality exists that pressures the average social media user to converse in English, interpreting it as a negative predictor of intrinsic motivator of learning English. However, it must be remembered that the word ‘bandwagon’ is not easily understood in a Pakistan context, forcing the researcher to adapt the statement to a more culturally accepted sentence. Respondents did not have a unanimous opinion on this and a significant percentage admitted that they are externally motivated to learn English, which is understandable since it is a requirement in most higher education institutes and workplaces in the country. This doesn't mean that they are not intrinsically motivated as 29.2% still believe that they are learning regardless. It is worth noting that the mean score is even lesser (3.18) than the original study by (Zainal et al., n.d.) which showed 3.7, meaning Pakistani ESL learners are still intrinsically driven. Most students don't feel burdened by the use of the English

language online and don't need to put too much effort into using social media in general. It is an easy tool to develop vocabulary according to the respondents with a mean score of 2.8 on the question-they disagree they had to put in too much effort which is consistent with (Khan et al., 2016). There are more avenues to use the English language online than in universities or at work and this is reflected in the results as well. And a large proportion 61.4% believe that there are far more opportunities to practice their English language skills online than even in real life. It is not a surprise since English is mostly a second or third language for Pakistanis and people find it much easier to converse in their mother tongue despite English being the official mode of communication in most setups of the country.

Four positive impacts reported by earlier studies were tested in an attempt to ascertain the opinions of Pakistani SM users who have studied English as a second language. The majority of the Pakistani undergraduates/postgraduates in the present study do not believe that social media has provided them with proper grammar and this is the opinion of the majority (44.3%). This is because the content on social media is largely informal and contextual. The differences between online text and the corrected grammar versions is confirmed by the extensive work of (Baldwin et al., 2013): 'How Noisy Social Media Text, How Diffrent Social Media Sources?'- a worldwide analysis of corpora on social media using English Resource Grammar (Copestake & Flickinger, 2000), a broad-coverage HPSG-based grammar. Despite this, the materials on the internet are still helpful and the participants agree that most videos, captions, and tweets add value to their learning experience. This further enhances the view of (Liu, 2010) and others suggesting that learners are satisfied by using these applications for their English learning. The convenience with which social media provides a sea of information with real-life context cannot be denied and eliminates the cumbersome need of going through books in the library/classrooms. However, when it comes to feedback being provided by other social media users, the results contradict other literature as most of the subjects Disagree/Strongly disagree when it comes to proper feedback on mistakes they make online (Guardado & Shi, 2007). An impressive systematic review conducted by (Elboshi, 2021) shows the importance of Corrective Feedback when it comes to English Language learning, the main obstacles to which are students' reluctance, fear of sharing writing online, and their sensitivity to being criticized publicly.

Anxiety is a common issue with new language learners in an ESL context but does not seem to be the case with most Pakistani adults using social media in this study. There is a lot of literature supporting that increased access to social media for language learning purposes has a positive effect on anxiety (Aydin, 2018). The new generation of adults is well acquainted with social media regardless of their level of English competence and

hence, they do not feel out of place when surfing the internet to learn more words or interact with other English natives. This negative impact has thus been tested and found to contradict earlier studies by (Genç & Aydin, 2011) which showed increased written/spoken anxiety levels caused in various contexts for ESL learners. One of the other drawbacks of social media that was investigated was the plethora of non-credible information in general (Alrubaian et al., 2019) and ESL context in particular (Clark & Araki, 2011) that makes it harder for new learners to absorb useful information. This goes on to show an almost unanimous agreement by the respondents that content learned from such social media (Abbreviations and contractions) affects formal English writing (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2019), something that ESL learners place a lot of their focus on.

7. Conclusion

There has been a lot of work done on the impact of social media and social networking sites that have explored the utility of the Internet in the context of English as a Second Language. However, the current research has focused on the cognitions of Pakistani undergraduates and postgraduate students in an ESL context which has substantiated some claims from earlier research and contradicted others.

The present study shows that vocabulary acquisition of most Adult ESL learners using social media is excellent. Their Language Learning interest albeit extrinsically driven is high and they are motivated to use social media for language learning purposes. Generally, the participants view social media as positive rather than negative and are eager to use it for their language learning needs.

7.1. Critique of Research Design

The research utilized a quantitative method which is known to be extremely useful for studies that aim to generalize results to a larger population. It is more convenient via online survey tools in this era and eliminates the need to collect data via hard copy which is comparatively cumbersome and does not generate preliminary results. Moreover, it had the added advantage of ensuring the quality criteria were met (by only reaching students who use social media apps via social media apps).

The sample was collected by convenience sampling method using web-based applications e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Instagram, etc. This was a non-probability technique and hence participants in the study did not have an equal chance of getting selected. There is a possibility that these students further distributed the forms amongst their circles leading to a snowball effect which is another form of non-probability sampling

and hence targeting individuals with certain characteristics that set them apart from the general population. This study is hence only generalizable to social media users that are of a certain education level and not indicative of the opinions of people using social media without a formal degree/education in the adult populace. Since the age gap has not been controlled for Postgraduates, the level of social media competence may likely act as an extraneous variable. People from various disciplines and academia were targeted at giving a wider range of opinions and excluding students from the same university thereby preventing researcher bias. The reliability of the questionnaire items was checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was considerably high (85.6%) but the internal validity of the research tool i.e., how well the tool measured what it intended to measure may be improved.

The ecological validity of the study is high due to the nature of the setting in which social media users find themselves learning the English language i.e., the Internet. The usage of Google Forms is highly prevalent amongst most undergraduates and postgraduates of the country for dissertation purposes and this is how they are usually approached adding realism to how this study was also conducted.

7.2. Recommendations

Universities of Pakistan must incorporate social media and social networking sites into their teaching strategies and curriculum with a focus on corrective feedback mechanisms that encourage the L2 learner to fully immerse in authentic English experience. An increased exposure to other English speakers from around the world whether in an academic setting or spontaneous will help build robust listening and speaking skills. Similarly, online interaction with good peers who provide corrective feedback will help hone their writing and reading skills. Teachers should train students to provide proper feedback to each other and help build an environment online that is conducive to their language development.

7.3. Future Directions

There is a paucity of good research from Pakistan on L2 Learning and technology in education and this should be explored by future researchers perhaps by a mixed methods design. Similarly, if more quantitative works need to be produced on social media and its effect on L2 Learning a larger sample size should be considered and the study should be supported/funded by HEC or higher authorities as it is for the collective benefit of the nation because we rely heavily on English as an official language and need to keep progressing further through technology.

More research is needed to focus on the opinions of Pakistani teachers on the hurdles they face while incorporating social media into their language classes and whether or not their concerns are understood by higher authorities. A qualitative study might perhaps give better and more holistic information from both students and faculty in higher education. It is very important to explore all possible hurdles and come up with sustainable solutions as social media is a growing phenomenon and if we do not incorporate it effectively in the education sector students will continue to use social media solely for recreation and resort to non-authentic materials on the internet. There have already been many dropouts from intermediate and college levels due to cognitive overload and outdated methods of teaching. And since it is established that in Pakistan, the learning of English is mainly by non-academic experiences and social media it is crucial to integrate the two to facilitate learning.

7.4. Declarations

- Availability of Data: The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.
- Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.
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- During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to shortlist studies from countries that are not a part of commonwealth countries where English is a first language. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the publication's content.

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