Social Media and Students' Motivation in English Language Acquisition

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of social media on students' motivation and English language acquisition from a psycholinguistic perspective. The main goal is to understand how platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram increase cognitive engagement, motivation, vocabulary retention, and listening skills among students. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data was collected from 30 Universitas Subang students through a triangulation method involving questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observation data to gain comprehensive insight into learning experiences. The analysis was carried out through thematic and descriptive analysis, focusing on main psycholinguistic aspects such as motivation, auditory processes, and social interactions. Findings revealed that social media fostered both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with most students using these platforms to improve vocabulary and listening comprehension. Additionally, the informal language and interactive nature of social media helps students build confidence in language use and develop adaptive strategies for processing accents and slang. In conclusion, social media effectively supports language acquisition by providing an accessible, authentic, and context-rich learning environment, although challenges such as distractions and informal expression remain. This study shows that social media can be an invaluable tool in modern language education, complementing traditional classroom methods and offering flexible and engaging opportunities for learners.

Keywords

Social Media, Students' Motivation, English Language Acquisition

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Introduction

Social media has become an increase in the context of language learning, especially in English language acquisition. According to (Saville-Troike, n.d.)The integration of social media into English language acquisition has a significant area of the research, particularly in understanding its impact on students' motivation and learning outcomes. It is providing unique opportunities for language learners to engage with authentic content, interaction with peers, and practice language skills in informal contexts. (Lai, 2018; Lim, 2023). Research indicates that social media can facilitate vocabulary acquisition and improve language skills through various interactive activities. For instance, students reported that engaging with English-language content on platforms like YouTube and Facebook helped them retain vocabulary more effectively, as they could watch videos with subtitles and engage in discussions (Ariantini et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2023). Moreover, studies have shown that social media encourages collaborative learning, where students can share resources, participate in discussions, and provide peer feedback, further enhancing their language proficiency (Tubagus Zam Zam Al Arif, 2019; Tufail, 2021). The motivational aspects of social media use in language learning are particularly noteworthy. Students often express a positive attitude towards using social media for educational purposes, as it allows them to connect with their interests while learning (Lim, 2023; Wirentake, 2023). This connection can lead to increased engagement and a sense of community among learners, which is crucial for maintaining motivation in language acquisition(Akhter, 2022; Kadek Devi Kalfika Anggria Wardani, 2023). Additionally, the use of social media has been linked to improved self-esteem and confidence in language skills, as students can showcase their progress and receive immediate feedback from peers (Elverici, 2021; Zhou, 2021). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of social media for language learning, as many students turned to these platforms for both educational content and social interaction during periods of isolation (Akhter, 2022; Muftah, 2022). This shift highlighted the adaptability of social media as a tool for maintaining language learning continuity and motivation in challenging circumstances. Studies have shown that students who engaged with social media during the pandemic reported higher levels of motivation and better performance in English proficiency tests compared to those who did not (Akhter, 2022; Muftah, 2022). In conclusion, the role of social media in English language acquisition is multifaceted, encompassing aspects of motivation, vocabulary development, and collaborative learning. The informal nature of social media allows students to engage with the language in a way that feels relevant and enjoyable, which can significantly enhance their learning experience. As educators continue to explore innovative teaching strategies, integrating social media into language learning curricula may prove beneficial in fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment.

The theory of cognitive engagement and motivation through social media is increasingly relevant in educational contexts, particularly as social media platforms become integral to students' learning experiences. Cognitive engagement refers to the mental investment and active participation of learners in their educational activities, while motivation encompasses the reasons

or drives behind students' engagement in learning tasks. Social media can significantly influence both cognitive engagement and motivation, providing unique opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

One of the primary ways social media enhances cognitive engagement is through its facilitation of collaborative learning environments. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allow students to engage in discussions, share resources, and collaborate on projects, which can lead to deeper cognitive processing of the material (Blaschke, 2014; Lau, 2016). For instance, Lau highlights that social media can be utilized to establish Personal Learning Environments (PLEs), which enable students to curate content and engage with peers in meaningful ways (Lau, 2016). This collaborative aspect not only fosters cognitive engagement but also encourages students to take ownership of their learning, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation(Blaschke, 2014).

Moreover, the motivational dynamics of social media use are multifaceted. Students are often driven by both utilitarian and hedonic motivations when engaging with social media for educational purposes. Utilitarian motivations may include the desire to gain knowledge or complete assignments, while hedonic motivations may involve the enjoyment derived from social interactions and the entertainment value of the content (O'Brien, 2010). Understanding these motivations is crucial for educators aiming to leverage social media effectively in their teaching strategies. For example, O'Brien's research indicates that hedonic motivations can enhance user engagement during interactions with technology, suggesting that educators should consider incorporating enjoyable elements into their social media-based learning activities (O'Brien, 2010)

Furthermore, the role of social media in shaping students' attitudes and behaviours cannot be overlooked. Studies have shown that social media engagement can lead to increased feelings of community and belonging among students, which are essential for maintaining motivation (Chen, 2023; Guo et al., 2021; Ni et al., 2020). The sense of connection fostered through social media interactions can mitigate feelings of isolation, particularly among international students or those facing social anxieties (McCarthy, 2010). This communal aspect of social media can enhance cognitive engagement by providing a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing ideas and seeking help from peers.

Additionally, the cognitive engagement facilitated by social media can lead to improved academic outcomes. Research indicates that students who actively participate in discussions and collaborative projects on social media tend to perform better academically compared to those who do not engage as deeply (Junco et al., 2010). This correlation underscores the importance of fostering an environment where students are encouraged to use social media as a tool for learning, rather than merely a platform for social interaction. The interplay between vocabulary acquisition, memory retention, social interaction, and language development is significantly influenced by the use of social media. This relationship is grounded in various theories of language learning that emphasize the importance of social interaction and contextual learning in vocabulary development. Social media platforms serve as dynamic environments where learners can engage with language in authentic contexts, facilitating both cognitive and social dimensions of language acquisition.

Social media has been shown to enhance vocabulary acquisition through interactive and engaging methods. For instance, Arumugam et al. highlight that platforms like Twitter play a significant role in vocabulary development among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, enabling them to learn new words and phrases effectively (Arumugam et al., 2022). Similarly, Pham et al. found that Vietnamese students recognized the value of social media in facilitating vocabulary acquisition by allowing them to learn words through various forms of content, including comments and posts, which aids in contextual understanding (Pham et al., 2023). This

aligns with the theory of connectivism, which posits that learning occurs through the connections made within a community(Namaziandost et al., 2021).

Moreover, the relaxed and socially focused environment of platforms like Facebook can significantly benefit learners, particularly those who may feel anxious or lack confidence in traditional learning settings. Kabilan and Zahar emphasize that the community aspect of Facebook allows introverted students to engage with language learning without the pressure of formal classroom settings, thereby enhancing their motivation and confidence (Kabilan & Tuti Zalina Mohamed Ernes Zahar, 2016). This social interaction is crucial for vocabulary retention, as learners are more likely to remember words when they are used in meaningful, social contexts.

The role of social media in vocabulary learning is further supported by studies examining specific platforms. For instance, Song and Xiong found that WeChat not only increased learners' interest in vocabulary but also stimulated their motivation to learn, demonstrating the effectiveness of social media compared to traditional methods (Song & Xiong, 2023). Similarly, TikTok has emerged as a powerful tool for vocabulary learning, with students reporting positive experiences and improved vocabulary skills through its engaging and visually appealing content (Alghameeti, 2022; Rita, 2023). These findings suggest that the interactive and entertaining nature of social media can lead to better memory retention, as learners are more likely to engage with and recall vocabulary learned in such contexts.

Additionally, the collaborative nature of social media fosters social interaction, which is essential for language development. As learners share their thoughts and engage in discussions, they are exposed to diverse vocabulary and linguistic structures, enhancing their language skills. Research indicates that social media platforms create multicultural environments where learners can acquire new vocabulary and use it communicatively, as noted by Wannas and Hassan (Wannas & Hassan, 2023). This exposure not only aids in vocabulary acquisition but also promotes a deeper understanding of language use in various contexts

Methodology

Research Setting

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of language learners' experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of social media in English language acquisition. The research participants consisted of 30 students who were studying foreign languages at Universitas Subang were business, public and computer students. It is used was teenagers aged 19-24 years using Stratified Random Sampling technique.

Data Collection Techniques

In this research, the data collection used was the Triangulation Method approach, namely combining interviews, observation and document analysis to obtain more valid and comprehensive data.

Tabel .1.1 Clue of Blueprint Questionnaire

No	Aspects	Goal	Questions
1.	Use of Social Media	Knowing the social media platforms that students often use in learning English.	What social media platforms do you use to learn English?
2.	Learning Motivation	Identifying students' motivations for using social media to learn English.	What motivates you to learn English through social media?

3.	Impact of social media	Identifying the influence of social media on students' English skills.	What aspects of your English skills do you feel have improved the most with the help of social media?
4.	Barriers to Learning	Identifying the barriers students face in learning English through social media.	What are the main obstacles you face when learning English using social media?

Results and Discussion

The results of questionnaire data analysis for 30 students, covering the social media platforms that are frequently used, learning motivation, perceived impacts, and the main obstacles experienced by students in learning English using social media are as follows:

Tabel .1.2 The Result of Questionnaire Data

No	Use of Social Media	Learning Motivation	Impact of social media	Barriers to Learning
1	YouTube	Career	Vocabulary	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
2	Instagram	Personal interest	Listen	Distractions from other content
3	TikTok	Career	Listen	Limited time
4	YouTube	Academic	Vocabulary	Difficulty understanding informal terms
5	YouTube, TikTok	Personal interest	Read	Limited time
6	Instagram, YouTube	Career	Vocabulary	Too many distractions
7	YouTube	Career	Listen	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
8	Instagram	Personal interest	Read	Distractions from other content
9	TikTok, YouTube	Academic	Listen	Limited time
10	YouTube	Career	Vocabulary	Too many distractions
11	Instagram, TikTok	Personal interest	Vocabulary	Difficulty understanding informal terms
12	YouTube, TikTok	Academic	Listen	Distractions from other content
13	YouTube	Career	Read	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
14	Instagram	Personal interest	Vocabulary	Limited time
15	TikTok	Academic	Listen	Too many distractions
16	YouTube, TikTok	Career	Vocabulary	Difficulty understanding informal terms
17	YouTube	Personal interest	Read	Distractions from other content
18	Instagram, YouTube	Academic	Vocabulary	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
19	YouTube	Career	Listen	Limited time
20	TikTok	Academic	Read	Too many distractions
21	Instagram	Personal interest	Vocabulary	Distractions from other content

22	YouTube	Career	Listen	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
23	Instagram, YouTube	Personal interest	Read	Too many distractions
24	YouTube, TikTok	Academic	Vocabulary	Limited time
25	YouTube	Career	Listen	Difficulty understanding informal terms
26	TikTok	Personal interest	Read	Distractions from other content
27	YouTube, Instagram	Academic	Vocabulary	Difficult Accents to Understand in the English
28	YouTube	Career	Read	Limited time
29	Instagram	Personal interest	Listen	Too many distractions
30	YouTube, TikTok	Academic	Vocabulary	Difficulty understanding informal terms

Based on the data below that analysis of questionnaire results. Most Used Social Media Platforms that YouTube and TikTok are the platforms most often used by students to learn English. Motivation to learn that Most students are motivated to learn English for career reasons (40%), followed by personal interest (33%) and academic reasons (27%). Next, Perceived Impact that the majority of students felt improvements in aspects of vocabulary and listening skills. While, the main Obstacles that the most frequently encountered obstacles are difficulty understanding accents or informal terms, as well as distractions from other content on social media platforms. Therefore, the results indicate that social media plays a significant role in English learning, especially in improving students' vocabulary and listening skills. The main obstacles to be aware of are challenges in understanding accents or informal terms as well as distractions from other irrelevant content.

Table.1.3 Clue of Blueprint Interview

No	Aspects	Goals
1	The use of social media for Language	students use social media as a means of learning English
2	Motivation for Learning Languages	Knowing their motivation for learning English through social media
3	The Impact of social media on Language Ability	Identify the influence of social media on students' English language ability
4	Obstacles or Challenges in Learning	Obstacles or Challenges in Learning Know the obstacles faced in learning English through social media

Table .1.4 In-depth Interview Results

No.	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6
1	YouTube, and Instagram	English learning on TikTok and Instagram, join on webinars and educational content	Watch educational videos on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok	Educational videos on YouTube, TikTok	YouTube, and TikTok	Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok

2	Jobs	Carrier and academic	Communication	Preparing for jobs	Hobby and personal Interest	Enhance Technology
3	Vocabulary and listening	Vocabulary and listening	Vocabulary and listening	Listening and pronunciation	vocabulary	Reading and vocabulary
4	Difficult to understand accents in videos	Content is too short	Limited time to access content	Distraction from other content on social media	Interruption of advertising and irrelevant content	slang or informal expressions

Based on the results of the analysis above, it can be concluded that. The most used platforms are YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. They access social media mainly to watch videos and follow English-related accounts. English-language content: Students find a lot of English-language content on social media, with content on Instagram and TikTok considered interesting and useful, especially for improving vocabulary and listening skills. There are variations in motivation to learn English among respondents. Students from Business and Finance study programs tend to be motivated by career reasons and academic needs, while students from Computer studies study more because of personal interest. Obstacles faced include difficulty understanding accents, distractions from other content on social media, and a lot of slang or informal expressions. This indicates the need for more relevant content selection for English language learning. The Influence of social media on Language Skills that all respondents reported improvements, especially in the aspects of vocabulary and listening. Computer study program students report that social media also helps improve reading skills.

Discussion

Cognitive Engagement and Motivation through Social Media. From a psycholinguistic perspective, motivation is a crucial factor influencing language acquisition, as it engages cognitive resources that enhance language processing and retention. The data reveals that social media, particularly platforms like YouTube and TikTok, significantly boosts students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by providing engaging and accessible English content. This aligns with psycholinguistic theories, such as the Motivation Hypothesis (Gardner, 1985), which posits that motivated learners exhibit better language acquisition due to increased attention and mental processing. The variety of content available on these platforms offers contextualized and authentic language input, making the learning experience more meaningful and reinforcing the psychological aspect of motivation. 25 out of 30 students indicated that platforms such as YouTube and TikTok enhance their motivation to learn English, primarily due to the engaging, contextualized content these platforms offer. Types of Motivation: Analysis shows that 40% of students are motivated by career goals, 33% by personal interest, and 27% by academic reasons. Career and academic motivation align with extrinsic factors, whereas personal interest reflects intrinsic motivation.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Memory Retention. Psycholinguistic research emphasizes the importance of input frequency and contextual learning in vocabulary acquisition. The findings indicate that students experience notable improvement in vocabulary skills through repetitive exposure to English content on social media. Video-based platforms like YouTube enhance lexical access by enabling learners to link words with visual cues, fostering memory retention. This finding corresponds with the Lexical Access Theory, suggesting that repeated exposure to words

in varied contexts strengthens mental lexicons, making it easier for students to retrieve and use vocabulary in real-life situations. It is show that Repetitive Exposure: Approximately 70% of students reported improved vocabulary skills, particularly through the repetitive nature of vocabulary input on platforms like YouTube. Lexical Access: Visual aids, subtitles, and keyword repetition on videos helped 60% of students retain new vocabulary.

Listening Comprehension and Auditory Processing. Exposure to native speakers' accents, intonation, and speech patterns on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok is instrumental in developing students' auditory processing skills. Psycholinguistic research on auditory processing underscores the role of exposure in enhancing phonemic awareness and auditory discrimination—key factors in understanding spoken language. Although some students reported difficulties with accents and informal expressions, their regular exposure contributes to improved phonological processing over time, allowing them to better recognize sounds, words, and sentence structures, an essential aspect of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) models like the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). It is show that data refers to accents and Intonation: 80% of students highlighted the benefit of listening to native speakers on YouTube and TikTok. However, 50% also noted challenges with various accents and informal expressions. Phonemic Awareness: Frequent exposure to authentic speech patterns contributed to improvements in phonemic awareness and auditory discrimination.

Impact of Informal Language on Cognitive Processing. The informal and often colloquial language used on social media presents both a challenge and an opportunity for learners. Psycholinguistically, informal language can complicate comprehension due to variations in syntax, slang, and idiomatic expressions. Students indicated difficulties in understanding informal terms, which can place a cognitive load on working memory as they attempt to decode unfamiliar expressions. However, consistent exposure helps learners develop adaptive cognitive strategies, such as contextual guessing and inference, enhancing their ability to process natural, conversational English. This aligns with Connectionist Models in psycholinguistics, which suggest that language learning involves strengthening neural connections through repeated, varied exposure to language input. It is show that Challenges with Informal Expressions: 65% of students reported that informal expressions and slang on platforms like TikTok made comprehension difficult, increasing cognitive load. Adaptive Strategies: Despite challenges, 40% of students developed adaptive strategies, such as contextual guessing and inference, to better understand informal language.

Social Interaction and Language Development. Social media's interactive nature allows learners to engage in conversations, ask questions, and receive feedback, supporting the Interactive Alignment Model in psycholinguistics, which suggests that language comprehension and production improve through interaction. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok foster collaborative learning, where students can discuss and share language insights with peers, thus reinforcing language skills through social reinforcement. This informal social interaction promotes active cognitive engagement, which is vital for acquiring language patterns and structures in a way that traditional classroom settings may not facilitate. Collaborative Learning: Around 70% of students engaged in comments, discussions, or peer feedback on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which promoted social interaction in English. Interactive Reinforcement: Students reported that feedback and discussions with peers reinforced their language skills through practical use.

Self-Esteem and Confidence as Psycholinguistic Factors in Language Use. Many students reported a boost in confidence when practicing English on social media, as they could freely experiment with language in a low-pressure environment. Psycholinguistically, confidence and self-esteem are crucial for effective language use, as they reduce affective filters (Krashen, 1985)

that may otherwise inhibit language acquisition. The immediate feedback and peer support found on social media contribute to a positive language learning experience, encouraging students to take risks and engage more actively, which is beneficial for language production and retention. Confidence Building: Approximately 75% of students indicated an increase in confidence when practicing English on social media, appreciating the low-pressure environment. Peer Support and Feedback: Students highlighted that immediate feedback from peers contributed to a supportive learning atmosphere, making them more willing to take language risks.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram play in enhancing students' motivation and capabilities in English language acquisition. Psycholinguistically, social media supports both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning by providing accessible, authentic content that aligns with students' interests and real-world applications. Students reported improvements in vocabulary and listening skills, with platforms offering context-rich environments that strengthen lexical retention and auditory processing. Despite the benefits, challenges remain, including difficulties with accents, informal language, and distractions from non-educational content, which can hinder focus and comprehension.

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