| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Social Media Platforms as Pedagogical Tools in Language Acquisition

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| **ABSTRACT**

Social media has livened the digital world with its numerous modern features in communication, media sharing, and entertainment elements. As a part of the continuous search for effective and efficient ways of instruction, this review aimed to describe social media as a pedagogical tool in language acquisition. The methodology used was patterned to Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) approach to reviewing the literature. Fifteen (15) research articles published in online journals were reviewed to describe the effectiveness of social media when utilized as a pedagogical tool in language acquisition. Results of the review showed that social media is primarily used for communication, collaborative learning, and extension of learning practice. Writing skills and vocabulary are the primary skills developed in using social media platforms such as Facebook which is the most frequently used app for language learning. Participants of the studies show a positive attitude toward the integration of social media into language acquisition. In a conclusion, various social media apps and sites exhibit promising influence on language learning not only in formal education but as well as the extension of instruction outside schools.

1. Introduction

The advent of technology integration into education has been more progressive than ever due to the onset of the pandemic in a couple of years. Social interaction plays a critical role in language acquisition (Lytle & Kuhl, 2017). Thus, this poses conflicts in the current educational setup in the Philippines and other countries that are still implementing limited face-to-face classes and/or distance learning due to the onset of the pandemic. Physical interaction may be taken out of the equation temporarily which paved the way for the adaptation of other modern ways to continue providing quality education to learners such as blended or online learning modalities with the use of social media.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education welcomed more than 24 million formal basic education learners at the start of the school year 2021-2022 who are mostly enrolled in printed or digital modular learning, online learning, and/or blended learning modality.

Primarily, the use of printed modules was used as learning materials, and broadcast media through televisions and radio were used for the delivery of instruction. Then, integration with the communicative features of various social media platforms and online learning management systems that are accessible to both teachers and learners were utilized for a blended learning approach (use of printed/digital modules and online teaching) in teaching and learning.

In a study conducted by K. P. Ariantini et al. (2021), results showed that integrating social media into English language learning has a positive impact on students' language skills, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling, motivation, as well as creative

and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Dr. M. S. Yadav (2021) mentioned in his research the related and overlapping categories of social media: Instant Messengers, Social Networking Sites, Social News, Media Sharing, Wikis, Blogging, Micro-Blogging, Emailing, and Apps of Podcasts, Audiobook, and other learning programs. Yadav added that social media apps may be synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.

With these repertoires of social media features, it is the objective of this scoping review that covered 15 research articles to explore the answers to the following research questions:

1. What features of social media support language acquisition theories?
2. Which language skills are developed through social media platforms?
3. What are the most used social media platforms as a pedagogical tool in SLA?
4. How do L2 learners perceive social media as a pedagogical tool in SLA?

It is also the aim of this scoping review to guide future researchers in filling in the research gaps in the discussion of the influence of social media as a pedagogical tool in language acquisition.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Social Media
Zafarani et al. (2014) opened their book with the statement, "With the rise of social media, the web has become a vibrant and lively realm in which billions of individuals all around the globe interact, share, post, and conduct numerous daily activities." Truly, the development and innovation brought by the 21st century revolutionized the way people communicate, share, and exchange information. The age of social media bloomed and continued to expand, and almost all members of all existing generations are exposed if not active users of at least one social media app. According to dataportal.com, the Philippines has 89 million social media users which are equivalent to 80.7% of the total population in January 2021. There was an increase of 22% of users from the previous year which we can only assume has the pandemic as one of the factors.

Dr. Meenakshi Sharma Yadav (2021) listed in his research article with the title, "Role of Social Media in English Language Learning to the Adult Learners", the related and overlapping categories of social media:

1. Instant Messengers that include WhatsApp. Facebook, Messenger, Skype, Google Meet, Zoom, IMO, and Tango
2. Social Networking Sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn
3. Social News that includes Flipboard, Play Newsstand, BBC News, etc.
4. Media Sharing such as Youtube, Instagram, Flicker, and Intranet
5. Wikis with Wikipedia, Emojipedia, and online dictionaries
6. Blogging like WordPress, Google Blogger
7. Microblogging such as Twitter and Telegram
8. Emailing for Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo, and hotmails

Furthermore, social media sites and apps may be classified into two:

a. Synchronous Communication tools that enable users to communicate and collaborate in real-time like Messengers and Social Networking Sites which are mostly used for audio calls or audio-video conferencing.
b. Asynchronous Communication tools that allow users to collaborate over time. Examples of these tools are emailing message boards found in Google Classroom and even messenger apps. The second language is learned incidentally and directly from second-language speakers of different cultures via emails (Derakshan, 2015).

2.2. Social media as a Tool for Language Acquisition
In a study conducted by Hamadeh (2020), it was concluded that social media can be used to facilitate Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as both students and teachers have shown interest in its utilization in the classroom. Social media provides interactive communication and educational properties that modernize education.

Focusing on language skills, social media facilitates the English learners in learning new words and phrases to improve their writing skills while pedagogically sound utilization of social media contributes to increasing students' motivation in writing, strengthening their awareness of audience and authorship, and promoting writing development. (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019).

2.3. Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is defined by Lourdes Ortega (2016) as "the scholarly field of inquiry that investigates the human capacity to learn languages other than the first, during late childhood, adolescence or adulthood, and once the first languages have been acquired." In this scoping review, the research articles reviewed from online journals covered English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language.

2.4. Notions that support Second Language Acquisition (SLA) using social media

To contribute to the ongoing discussion on the impact of social media on second language learning, Cabrera (2018) mentioned the following theories:

2.4.1 Input Hypothesis.

Krashen (1992) stated that we acquire language by understanding messages, that 'comprehensible input' (CI) is the essential environmental ingredient in language acquisition. The acquirer must be open to the input and that input needs to contain 'i+1', an aspect of language that the acquirer has not yet acquired but that he or she is ready to acquire. In browsing through social media updates or timelines, users are exposed to information that was selected as processed by the algorithm and as well as the settings preferences of the users. There is no limit to the variety of information, but filtering topics is possible.

2.4.2. Affective Filter.

As cited by Lin in 2018, Krashen (1982) points out that in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), many key factors of learners' success in language learning should be associated with the student's emotional condition. That is, a language learner's passion for participating in the class and confidence from the instructor's positive reinforcements can decide the accomplishment of their SLA. This is supported by the findings of 8 out of 15 research articles reviewed. Results showed that research participants expressed a positive attitude, interest, and internal motivation, and perceived English learning activities as 'fun while integrating social media in the instruction of SLA.

2.4.3. Social Constructivism.

Social constructivism is a learning theory advocated by Lev Vygotsky in 1968. The theory states that language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality. Vygotsky asserted that language and culture play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world (Akpan, et al., 2020). In this modern age, participating in the digital world is part of our culture. Internet connectivity is not only limited to communication equipment but covers home appliances and computers. Thus, it is almost close to impossible to avoid social media which is a part of the Internet. In fact, in a study by Desta et al. (2021), social media allows the respondents to use English skills (macro and micro-skills) inside and outside the classroom or simply in the real world. Indeed, social media expands the opportunity for L2 learners to practice their target language in the form of homework and simply, interaction outside the classroom.

2.4.4. Computer-generated Instructions.

Computer-generated simulation and activities are encouraging opportunities for the learners to boost the use of the target language (Ranalli, 2008 as cited by Cabrera 2018). A study confirmed the effectiveness of blending learning that involved video-based blogs in ESL learning and the findings are as follows: 1) video-based blogs were effective in learning public speaking; 2) Blogging helped improve students' enunciation, facial expressions, posture, and gestures; 3) students also learned blogging and using multimedia software through interaction; 4) Students were able to correct their mistakes from time to time by watching the video repeatedly; 5) The students learned how to work by himself/ herself through self-evaluation and within a group through peer feedbacks and reviews (Shih, 2010). Moreover, internet tools help L2 learners to accelerate learning by being updated and self-directed in their respective language acquisition journey while computer media is useful to guide passive learners in learning English (Derakshan, 2015). This goes to show that social media when integrated with the proper application of pedagogy have a positive effect on the teaching and learning process whether inside or outside the four corners of the classroom.

2.4.5. Web-based Learning.

The design of Web 2.0 allows anyone to publish and share in a more interactive way (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007 as cited by Cabrera 2018). For example, Youtube is used by many not just as a video-sharing site but as a venue for interaction and community-building for both native and non-native language users. This ability of the users to "collaborate, create and share" is essential in language learning (Lomicka & Lord, 2009 as cited by Cabrera 2018).

3. Methodology

The methodology applied was based on the scoping review methodological framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) The following keywords were used to find suitable sources: language acquisition, social media, and English language acquisition. Sources found via the analysis were derived from Google Scholar, ERIC, various online journal publications, and Research Gate.

The search was mainly focused on research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and related studies about the use of social media and its impact on learning the second language. The fifteen research articles and studies included in this review covered the following criteria: 1) research articles that tackled the use of social media as a tool in English language learning; 2) studies and articles that discussed the role of social media in developing English language skills; and 3) research articles that cover the influence of social media to language teaching in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

4. Results and Discussion

This scoping review covered 15 research articles and studies that passed the criteria of discussing how social media influences SLA in terms of being used as a pedagogical tool. Results showed that social media provides features such as collaborative learning in the form of media sharing, real-time or asynchronous communication in instruction. Learners are exposed to authentic language materials produced by either native speakers themselves or various L2 speakers from different cultures. Moreover, interaction and practice of L2 are expanded beyond the four corners of the classroom.

Language skills (both macro and micro-skills) are directly and implicitly developed. Writing skills and vocabulary development are the two most frequently enhanced skills followed by English grammar, pronunciation, reading, speaking, pronunciation, and even creative and critical thinking skills. These language skills are mostly developed by using Facebook which is the most frequently used social media app in SLA. Facebook is followed by Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Lastly, L2 learners have exhibited a positive attitude, motivation, and interest in using social media in L2 instruction. This is evident in 8 out of 15 research articles reviewed.

5. Conclusion

This scoping review aimed to describe social media as a pedagogical tool in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) upon reviewing 15 research articles and research. It was found that social media is mainly used for collaborative learning through interaction and media sharing, and communication and practice in and outside of the classroom. Writing skills and vocabulary building are the most developed language skills as L2 learners learn new words and apply them to contexts that they are exposed to. Facebook is the most used social media platform as a tool for enhancing learners' SLA. Lastly, most of the participants in the research articles reviewed expressed positive responses in terms of their interest, motivation, and attitude in learning English using social media.

In a conclusion, social media is showing promising results when integrated or utilized in the instruction of SLA. However, it is highly suggested that future researchers conduct more studies designed to concretize how social media can contribute to language acquisition in lower levels or younger learners as well.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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