

USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN A NEW LANGUAGE

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Abstract. According to Kapoor et al. (2018), social media platforms (SMPs) are extensively utilized in business, politics, education, and leisure across the globe. However, there is still a lack of studies on the utility of SMPs for acquiring English vocabulary.

Keywords: English vocabulary, a lack of studies, engagement, social media, and educational literature.

Annotatsiya. Kapoor et al. (2018) ga ko'ra, ijtimoiy media platformalari butun dunyo bo'ylab biznes, siyosat, ta'lim va dam olish sohalarida keng qo'llaniladi. Biroq, ingliz tili lug'atini o'zlashtirishda ijtimoiy media platformalarining foydaliligi bo'yicha tadqiqotlar hali ham yetarli emas.

Kalit so'zlar: ingliz tili lug'ati, tadqiqotlar yetishmasligi, jalb etilganlik, ijtimoiy media, ta'limiy adabiyot.

Аннотация. Согласно Kapoor et al. (2018), платформы социальных медиа широко используются в бизнесе, политике, образовании и досуге по всему миру. Однако по-прежнему наблюдается недостаток исследований, посвящённых использованию социальных медиа для усвоения английской лексики.

Ключевые слова: английская лексика, недостаток исследований, вовлечённость, социальные медиа, образовательная литература.

Introduction. The use of social media platforms (SMPs) in language learning, whether via computers or mobile devices like smartphones or tablets, has received a lot of attention in the past ten years. The English language is recognized as the lingua franca of languages (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Fischer, 2013; Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013). However, from a historical standpoint, social media can be seen as a relatively new form of communication because it has only been around for a few decades. Because of this, its effects on language learning have not yet been sufficiently assessed, and there are numerous study gaps in this area (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014; Zourou, 2012).

According to Richards (2015), a number of studies have shown strong evidence that social media has emerged as a preferred learning environment for language acquisition, particularly for those studying English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). Ma (2017) supports Richards's (2015) findings by suggesting that social media usage may have an impact on how language learners acquire a second language. More recently, Puspa (2018) discovered that SMPs improved vocabulary

knowledge utilization more than other technological tools like web-based or CD-based learning platforms. Although 80% of social media users do not speak English as their first or major language, English has emerged as the most common programming language in SMPs (Christison & Murray, 2014).

Since English is the dominant language on the internet, there is a greater variation in how people use it, and native speakers are no longer the only ones who use it. Therefore, cross-linguistic communication in SMPs offers an informal or ad hoc learning environment where EFL and ESL users can explore the conversational aspects of the English language. It has been discovered that various SMPs offer distinct educational advantages and can serve as instruments to promote learning, given the proper direction and assistance (Connolly, 2011).

Since SMPs are so widely available and user-friendly (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2018), they are essential for communication and knowledge sharing (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Fischer, 2013). As a result, they may also make learning vocabulary easier (Schwartz et al., 2013). Due to the hybrid nature of the texts, which combines spoken, written, and oral communication with other multiliteracy elements like sound, color, and symbols, SMPs alter the conditions for language practices of linguistic repertoires. This is one important aspect of SMPs and vocabulary learning that is of particular interest (Cole & Pullen, 2010).

Social media's ability to improve language proficiency has been extensively examined, although its application to vocabulary acquisition has received less attention or is not the main subject of the studies. In order to fill this vacuum, this study examined the literature to look into the possible function of SMPs in vocabulary learning, with an emphasis on the attitudes and behaviors of EFL learners. Many people believe that one of the most important parts of learning a language is expanding one's vocabulary (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000; White & Kim, 2009). For non-native learners, vocabulary is crucial to the development of reading and other language abilities (Carlisle, Beeman, Davis, & Spharim, 1999). Since vocabulary is one of the essential elements that ties reading, writing, speaking, and listening together, studying it aids learners in becoming proficient in their second language and using it successfully in a variety of settings (Grosbeck & Holotescu, 2008). Wilkins (1972) supports this idea by saying, "Very little can be done without grammar, nothing can be communicated without vocabulary" (p. 111).

Vocabulary learning procedures can have a significant impact on whether second-language acquisition (SLA) is successful or unsuccessful (Gu, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2008). It's also critical to understand that exposure to a variety of settings, forms, scenarios, and situations, as well as the frequency of usage, influences vocabulary

acquisition (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2000). But by their very nature, SMPs give consumers a variety of reasons to employ them. There is no universal language discourse, and users' motivations for using SMPs and the social media platforms themselves provide varying contexts, ranging from study to employment or leisure.

SMPs allow students to grow, validate, experiment, and enhance their vocabulary in a variety of contexts, from formal and factual to more informal language (Takac, 2008). Due to the lack of time and space constraints, SMPs are more likely to have these various contexts, circumstances, and scenarios than traditional settings like school environments (Alqunayeer, 2016; Lomicka & Lord, 2016). In this study, these settings will be defined, analyzed, and their many facets described. Both EFL and ESL students learn vocabulary using various methods, such as labeling items (e.g., placing a label with the word "desk" on the actual desk) or using visual aids (a picture is worth a thousand words). Numerous scholars, including Nation (2001), Schmitt (1997), and Gu and Johnson (1996), have tried to classify them. In contrast to Schmitt's (1997) presentation of discovery and consolidation strategies, Gu and Johnson's (1996) taxonomy encompasses metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies. Social, cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies are under the consolidation strategies group, whereas determination and social strategies fall under the discovery category (Schmitt, 1997).

Last but not least, Nation (2001) put forth three primary taxonomies with distinct subsets: planning, sources, and processes.

Social Media. Since social media is still growing and changing quickly, defining it is difficult. Social media used to be restricted to email and other comparable communication methods, but these days it also includes video telephony and has progressed to incorporate avatars in virtual chat rooms and virtual worlds. Researchers have offered varying definitions of social media, despite the fact that there is no universally accepted definition or notion. Social media, according to Dewing (2010) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), are collections of mobile and internet-based applications and services where users can participate in online activities such as content creation, community participation, information sharing, and interpersonal interaction.

According to these authors, individuals can interact with others and send and receive instant messages by creating their own profiles (Dewing, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, users could submit and exchange content in various formats, including text, audio, images, videos, and connections to additional resources (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Since each student has a unique learning style, such as being visual or auditory, these diverse forms may meet their needs and motivate them to advance their language acquisition, including vocabulary.

Conversely, Burke (2013) defined social media as any content—text, images, videos, and other multimedia formats—that people post to social networking sites (SNSs). She went on to say that using SNSs entails interacting with people and building relationships to participate in a community. Burke's description was supported by Cohn (2011), who also noted that while social media facilitates connections, SNSs strengthen them.

In light of these definitions and to prevent misunderstandings, the term "social media platform" (SMP) is used in this paper to refer to any program or website that allows users to create a profile, whether it be private or public, and uses any type of media—text, images, videos, live streaming, or links to other resources—to interact, post, or view. According to Burke (2013), the word "social media" is also used to describe any type of content that may be accessed on SMPs. In order of their initial launch dates, the following SMPs are examined: Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), Facebook (2004), and Twitter (2006):

Facebook. Facebook users are able to engage, communicate, and develop friendships with other users. They can also participate in different communities and cultures and exchange resources and information within networks that they have created (Gonzales & Vodicka, 2010). As of June 30, 2018, Facebook had 2.23 billion monthly active users, having been started by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 (Facebook, 2018).

Twitter. In March 2006, Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams started Twitter. Tweets, which were first restricted to 140 characters apiece but were increased to 280 characters in November 2017, are communications that users post and interact with. A variety of media, including text, images, links, live videos, and video recordings, can be tweeted by users. Twitter (2018) estimates that 336 million people use the platform each month.

Instagram. One site for sharing images and videos is Instagram. Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom started it in October 2010, and in April 2012, Facebook purchased it. The platform offers a variety of filters for editing uploaded images and videos, as well as the ability to tag them with different tags and geographical data. Posts may be shared publicly or just with followers who have been pre-approved. Instagram users have the ability to post, follow, like, and private message other users. Globally, 800 million people use Instagram each month (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2018).

In September 2011, Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown launched the Snapchat platform. Users can upload images and brief films up to 10 seconds long using Snapchat, which is only accessible as a smartphone app. After being stored for a full day, these are no longer accessible.

Social Media and Vocabulary Learning. Articles on YouTube and WhatsApp were not included in the exclusion criteria for a variety of reasons, including their primary functions and methods.

For instance, sharing videos is YouTube’s main function rather than uploading and publishing different kinds of content. To make an account on WhatsApp, users need to have a phone number. They can only communicate with other users who are in the same WhatsApp group or with other users whose phone numbers are saved. Furthermore, because user accounts are private and can only be accessed by phone number, WhatsApp users are unable to search for other users' profiles, whereabouts, and postings, in contrast to other SMPs (such as Twitter and Facebook). As a result, WhatsApp is regarded less as an SNS and more as an instant messaging program. User profiles must be the foundation of social media sharing for a platform to be considered an SNS (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The use of different SMPs for EFL and ESL vocabulary learning has been the subject of numerous research over the past five years (Al-Tamimi, Al-Khawaldeh, Natsheh, & Harazneh, 2018; Al Mubarak, 2017; Indari & Putri, 2018). According to certain academics, SMPs are successful at increasing learner motivation and engagement (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Ventura & Martín-Monje, 2016; Zourou, 2012). Additionally, Ventura and Martín-Monje (2016) discovered that using SMPS had advanced students' vocabulary acquisition. According to this data, SMPs may be useful educational resources and tools.

Mastery: A Situated-learning Approach

A study using Twitter as a tool for acquiring specialized vocabulary in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was presented by Sabater and Fleta (2015). Through a blended learning approach that combined traditional classroom techniques, such as in-person and virtual meetings, with online digital material, they investigated students' communication and confidence in using ESP terminology. They discovered that using Twitter improved students' engagement and communication both within and outside of the classroom (Sabater & Fleta, 2015). However, there were no apparent benefits in terms of language acquisition (Sabater & Fleta, 2015).

The majority of learning happened when students engaged and socialized with other students and Facebook users, especially those who were native speakers of the target language, according to a study on using Facebook to increase students' vocabulary knowledge (Kabilan & Zahar, 2016). According to the study, Facebook can inspire students and boost their confidence, engagement, interaction, and teamwork, making it a potentially useful learning tool.

Facebook has the ability to boost student involvement and participation, as noted by Tran (2016). Guvendir and Gezgin (2015) looked at how a Facebook game affected

students' vocabulary development and discovered remarkably beneficial results. A study on schoolchildren's use of SMPs (i.e., Facebook) for vocabulary learning produced similar findings (Indari & Putri, 2018). Additionally, according to Tran (2016), "learners had a positive view towards using social networking to support their learning and towards mobile learning" (p. 54).

On the other hand, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014), who focused their research on Facebook use in Romania, discovered that students who used Facebook were more engaged and motivated to learn, but they did not find any significant differences between students who were exposed to the target vocabulary through Facebook and those who were not. The methodologies used in this study and others of a similar nature may be to blame for the lack of advancements and improvements. In order to assess the impact of SMPs on vocabulary acquisition in a little amount of time, the researchers used pre-test and post-test procedures that did not prioritize or fully consider the voices of the participants.

Particularly in education and social science research, each transaction and setting is unique, and each participant's perceptions and interpretations are important and distinct as well (Pring, 2000). Therefore, by examining these research, methodological inadequacies have been identified.

Bouhami (2016), one of the researchers who looked into SMPs generally, came to the conclusion that SMPs are useful and successful in raising the vocabulary of EFL students. In a similar vein, Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016) discovered that SMPs had a significant impact on vocabulary acquisition since they pique learners' curiosity and offer vocabulary in a variety of formats, such as text, images, and videos.

Conclusion. According to this literature review, there is a dearth of research on the use of SMPs for vocabulary learning. This highlights a glaring limitation: it's possible that the students simply took part in the studies to satisfy the teacher or researcher or to pass the course. Future studies, in which the researcher acts as an impartial observer, are advised to close these gaps in the literature and study.

In order to employ and apply SMPs in language learning, it is also essential to concentrate on examining and elucidating the attitudes and behaviors of EFL and ESL learners (Khany & Monfared, 2013; Warschauer, 2002). Furthermore, the majority of research has not included adequate facts and data regarding the trials or the usage of SMPs. This demonstrates still another limitation: the lack of a thick description, which Geertz (1973) defines as offering a comprehensive, rich, understandable, and in-depth account of the research.

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