

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION ON ACADEMIC WRITING OF UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Muhammad Anwar

MA TEFL, Department of English Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad

Email: m.anwarmayo1980@gmail.com

Aamir Sohail Ghuman

Ma TEFL, Department of English Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad.

Email: aamirsuhail415@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The creation of digital social media has brought a huge change among the people of 20th century. This new technology carries much weight as a new medium for students and also for the educators to build social connections. Anderson (2008) says online learning, as a subset of all distance education, has always been concerned with provision of access to educational experience that is, at the least, more flexible in time and in space than campus-based education (p. 53). The purpose of that study is to find out how the digital social media influence the writing and speaking, how they motivate students to improve their productive skills, and in what extend SNS is useful for the students to improve English language. With the aim of exploring the influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of Undergraduate level student, this research was conducted at 8 private and public universities in Sialkot. A sample of sixteen teachers and one hundred sixty students were respectively selected from five private universities and three public universities in Sialkot. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied during data analysis. The results indicated that digital social media has several influence in the writing and speaking of Undergraduate level student with the positive effects outweighing the negative effects. The findings confirmed that students as well as the teachers can formulate group discussions where they can exchange their ideas, can share course related materials, appeal to their student about assignments which helping the students to enhance their writing as well as their speaking. However the findings affirmed that digital social media also has some negative influence.

Introduction:

Once social media was introduced, it enabled a new way for people, particularly the younger generation, to connect with one another, based on common interests, goals and even values.

- Raymond Arroyo (2012)

People are living in a global world and every day they are adopting new technologies, information, lifestyle, language and so on. And nowadays digital social media (Facebook, twitter, yahoo messenger, google plus,) are very popular among young generations and they are influenced more by them. They think what they are pursuing in the digital social media is up to date and if they follow those trends, people will find them smart. However nowadays there are influences of digital social media in language acquisition of young learner. Young people are now most of the time connected with the people through digital social media, so intentionally or unintentionally they are following that trend of language acquisition.

Marshall McLuhan (2003), in his book, *The Book of Probes*, comments, "All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values" (p.199). In fact, the Media plays

a significant role in people's everyday routines, actions and reactions. Digital social media in many ways influencing people's life as it expands our social circle and explore new horizon through online connection, though it is changing the approach of communication. The young generations nowadays often use Facebook, twitter, google plus, skype, yahoo messenger etc. With the prevalence of Smart phones and popularity of texting, students are able to connect with their friends, family members, and with others. As people are able to meet different people of different country, they are learning new language through their conversation in social media. 80 percent of teen users are now frequenting social media sites, and they are using many different types of communication in the world of social media, like Net speak, overuse of abbreviations or slang. So there is no doubt that our real world social lives have got some changes. Therefore some parents are worrying about their children's future language acquisition which is a very promising reality.

It's slightly less in-your-face, but the Internet is also shifting the words we use to speak to one another, not just the way we choose to communicate. Our obsession with the Internet even influences the simple act of talking – out loud, in real life. Certain acronyms, neologisms, and abbreviations have infiltrated everyday speech.
(Chopra, 2013)

In the digital social media the young generations use some popular terms like LOL (for “laugh out loud”) which is developed into unique words. It has a meaning greater than their original abbreviation. LOL is now used like a type of punctuation to add a joking or cheerful intonation to messages. It doesn't always indicate literal laughter. Though the young people are using it with their friends informally, unintentionally they are acquiring these languages, and they use it in their formal writing and speaking. This types of text shorthand is now becoming a language all its own. As a result they are using those languages formally in the public place. As a result they are destroying their language. Digital social media uses require some unique adaptations, but it also provides us a new way of communication.

Purpose of the study

The way of speaking and writing of young generation is changing day- by- day, by the influence of digital social media. The text which we used for communication in the digital social media is basically production of our speech. What we try to say, reflect in or text message. The networks normally contain a relationship between the entities in it, an association such as a shared value, kinship, friendship, business transaction or other system. The networking that occurs influences an individual's thoughts, feelings and ideas and is an essential element of human interaction (Tyson, 2009, p.10). However the digital social media is not only influencing the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of people but also the writing and speaking. The purpose of that study is to find, how the digital social media is influencing the writing and speaking, how they motivating the students to improve English, and in what extent SNS is useful to developing Undergraduate level students' English language.

Research Questions/objective of the study

1. How are the digital social media influencing writing and speaking of Undergraduate level

- students?
2. Do digital social media motivate the Undergraduate level students to improve their English?
 3. What aspects of digital social media are helping the learners of Undergraduate level to improve their English Language (writing, speaking)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networking sites (SNS) are popular among the young generation all over the world now. Social networking sites are an online platform where people can create their own profile and can interact with the people all over the world. According to Alas Siri et al (2014), a social networking sites provide interactive platform that enables its users communicate with other members to establish social relations to share information and knowledge relative to individual experiences activities in real life.

Why SNS are popular

“SNSs provide a favorable platform for individuals to express themselves, establish new relationships, and maintain old relationships” (Gremu & Halse, 2012). People can now access important information and the trendy online culture to learn about things that were un-known to them before, as well as new values and symbols for communication developed for learning in an online environment that gives rise to new cultural cues. (Quader, 2014, p. 6). According to Asad (2012), people can share their thoughts, knowledge with each other which also help them to increase their knowledge about the world and life. Asad (2012) further say social networking sites have become gradually more integrated into the way many people today act, think, and relate to each other and therefore social networking sites has a huge number of implications in the field of education and these impacts on students, educators, administrators, and parents also (p. 499). According to Quader (2014) in SNS people can discuss about any subject or any topic they like to and they feel free to communicate or discuss in SNS rather than classroom environment. He also states sometime students are not comfortable to communicate or discuss in the formal classroom but they feel free in SNS to discuss which also enhance their learning and these sites have become very trendy as more and more people are leaning towards SNS to share their everyday happenings with friends online, rather than through face-to-face encounters. Asad. (2012) state “SNSs provides a platforms for the students to learn and discuss outside the formal classroom setting, therefore it also encourage students not to use materials only for the academic purpose, it also encourage them to use it in their everyday life (p. 500). Many researchers like Quader (2014) found that there are positive relations between the use of SNSs and academic performance of the student who uses SNS and the students who used SNSs scored higher on reading skills test and had higher grades. He also states that nowadays students are connected with their teachers in SNSs and sometimes they discuss about academic topic and come out with new information which helps them to enhance their knowledge. He also says that people learn about new innovations in an interactive way, where there is more freedom of expression than in any formal learning environment.

Use of SNS in Sialkot

In Sialkot the accessibility of internet and use of internet is still limited. Most of the young

people in the major cities use SNS. In a country like Sialkot, internet accessibility and usage capacity is still limited to the residents of major cities and some suburbs (Quader, 2024, p.2). In Sialkot Undergraduate education takes place in 08 universities where there are 03 government universities and 05 private universities. According to Akhter (2011) in Sialkot the students use internet mostly for social networking and entertainment and the reasons behind these are, lack of appropriate content from the field of education and absence of research based activities and assignments from Colleges. She also says “inquisitive students often feel lost in the humongous sea of information available on the internet”. But if the student could find something that was close to their school syllabus, they could find it useful and relevant to them and was most interested to use it. Akhter (2021) further state that the educational institutions understand this and they are already making use of this functional medium in various aspects of their day-to-day activities like from classroom teaching, assigning homework, assessing students and delivering results, technology, and more importantly the internet, is being embedded into the very core of the educational system. According to Asad. (2022) not every university but some universities in the Sialkot are now using SNS for academic purpose so the student-student and teacher-student can keep in touch through SNS and they can share important information, can discuss about any important issue or topic in SNS. Asad. (2022) also state that it cannot deny the impact of online social networking on academic learning outcomes though the students do not explicate the academic

Learning outcomes from online social networking and for junior students, they might first experience social learning and social integration into the university, and then feel more comfortable interacting with faculty to reach a higher level of academic integration and learning outcomes (p. 500).

Positive impacts of SNS

According to Asad (2012) students’ academic learning outcomes could increase when their social learning outcomes were heightened (p. 501). Students are however, keen to use SNSs for academic purposes and this presents an opportunity to engage them to learn informally by seeking, exploring and testing ideas with other students within their own social network. (Gremu & Halse, 2012) Digital social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus, “all these are impacting upon education far more dramatically than the conventional word-filled web page” (Easement, 2007). Boyd (2007) says teenagers and young adults have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives According to Flad (2010) now communication is instant as teens have their own cell phones that enable them to access social networking sites throughout the day. Livingstone (2008) says being friends with someone on a SNS allows a person to communicate in a variety of ways such as sending private and public messages, participating in on-line games, commenting on photos that have been posted, sharing music or movie preferences, responding to journal entries, and much more. While Krishan (1981) asserts that comprehensible input was both a necessary and a sufficient condition for the Acquisition of language, Ellis (1985) conducted an analysis of various studies and theoretical treatments of the subject and concluded that both input and interaction influence second language acquisition.

A teacher makes efforts to gain an understanding of students’ prerequisite knowledge, including any misconceptions that the learner starts with in their construction of new knowledge

(Anderson, 2008, p. 47). According to Harwood & Blackstone (2012) instructors can show they are engaged in students' Facebook learning by simply liking a link shared by a student, writing an encouraging comment to a post or referring in class to an interesting discussion that has occurred on the page. They further say SNS demonstrate to the students that the class tutor is present and interested in what is happening online, and that he/she values their contributions. According to Harwood & Blackstone (2012), this kind of support is very important to motivate the less confident learners to feel interested to participate in the discussion. And as the teacher is involved in the discussion the student are aware of their writing. They do not want to do any mistakes in their writing. Moreover the students want to be more creative in their writing because they know teacher is observing them and if their comment is resourceful, teacher will like his/her comment or will response to that. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory advocates learning contexts in which students are active in their own learning. To achieve this, Vygotsky (1978) advises that the traditional roles of the instructor and student are altered to enable the instructor to collaborate with students in order to facilitate the construction of meaning. According to Greenfield (1972) online chat is a new communicative environment and we may expect it to elicit adaptations in participants' language use. One dimension that distinguishes written from spoken language is explicitness—written language is more explicit, whereas spoken language is more implicit because it uses both verbal and nonverbal contexts to complete its messages. (Greenfield, 1972)

According to Bunce (2010) "CMC provides conditions for language use, through which language acquisition processes, via exposure, production, and collaboration, are thought to occur". He says such interaction is thought to encourage comprehensible input through interactional modification, corrective feedback, pushed output, and collaborative dialogue. Kern (1995) states, it helps the student to reduce the anxiety and feel free to participate and help them to improve their language production. SNS is popular among learners, increasing motivation and participation, and reducing anxiety. Pelletier (2000), Toyoda and Harrison (2002) have found that they generate negotiation of meaning and form, corrective feedback, self-correction, and output pushed towards target-like language as the student are aware about their status in the digital social media .

Negative Impacts of SNS

According to Bunce (2010) chatroom interaction was less effective for language learning than face-to-face oral interaction as "slow typing can considerably hinder language production, negotiation, collaboration, and therefore noticing". "An important characteristic of online chatrooms is that they are inherently visual. Chat conversations exhibit features of both written and spoken language" (Freiermuth, 2002). According to Herring (1996), chat takes place in the written medium (typing words on a keyboard and reading words on a screen), but like spoken language, particularly unplanned speech, generally consists of shorter, incomplete, Grammatically simple, and often incorrect (grammar and typographical errors) sentences. Anderson (2008) says "they exercise their mastery of communication norms and tools, some of which are not be appropriate to an educational online context" (p. 48). Therefore (Crystal, 2001) reports that 80% of the utterances in published log data were five words or fewer in length. Therefore Hazily

(2010) found in his research, chat users omit copulas, subject pronouns, and articles. The use of misspelled words and spellings by replacing normal words and terms in the language is a definite cause for alarm hindering the ability of students and children to communicate effectively through the appropriate written medium, when writing academic papers, essays, drafts or any other literary prose.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter of dissertation discusses the influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of Undergraduate level student and how it motivates them to improve their language, helps them to improve their English language. It also finds out the positive and negative influence of digital social media in English language and in what extent social media is useful for learners.

Research Design

The research survey was done both in private and public universities in Sialkot. Among those there were 5 private universities and 3 public universities. There were qualitative and quantitative questions for 160 students and 16 teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the research study focuses on Social Learning Theory which is introduced by Albert Bandura (1977). This theory demonstrated that people learn and imitate behaviors they have observed in other people. Bandura (1977) says “man’s superior cognitive capacity is another factor that determines, not only how he will be affected by his experience, but the further direction his action may take”. In social learning system people acquire new pattern of behavior through direct experience or by observing the others behavior. According to Bandura (1977) people can represent external influences symbolically and later use such representation to guide their actions. During the period of learning people not only perform response, they also observe the differential consequences accompanying their various actions on the basis of informative feedback and they develop thought or hypothesis about the type of behavior which most likely to succeed .

Sampling

There were qualitative and quantitative questions for 160 students and 16 teachers. The students and the teachers were chosen from 5 private universities and 3 public universities in Sialkot.

Setting

The researcher did students survey in 5 private and 3 public universities. The survey was done in the classroom of the universities. The researcher also took interviews of the teacher. Most of the interviews were taken in the cubical of teachers in the English department of the universities. But for some limitations some interview were taken via phone.

Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data from the students. The teachers were interviewed while collecting the data. A semi structured interview questionnaire was formed for that purpose. Mobile phone was also used to record the interviews of the teachers with their permission.

Data Collection Procedure

A major portion of the data was collected from students' responses by distributing questionnaires to them. However, due to time constraints and schedule problem, some of the data were collected through email. The teachers' responses were collected by face to face interview, but due to their busyness, some of their interviews were taken over phone.

Data Analysis Procedure

Initially the raw data were counted using tally. Later, Microsoft Excel was used to calculate percentage and prepare the charts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

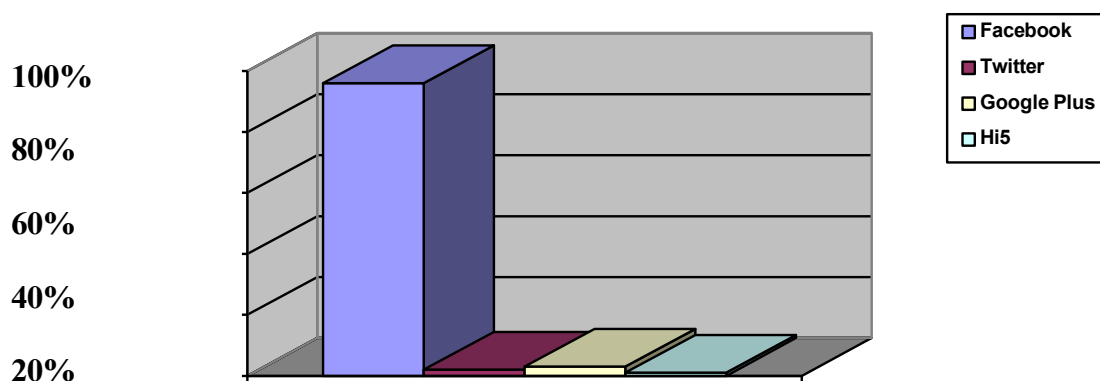
Analysis of students' survey

To find out the influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of Undergraduate level students' survey were conducted among 160 students from 5 private and 3 public universities in Sialkot.

Question1: Which Social networking Site (SNS) do you use the most?

Majority of the students (96%) responded that they use Facebook most, followed by (2%) twitter, google plus (1%), and hi5 (1%).

Figure 1 below shows the findings of the use of different social networking sites.

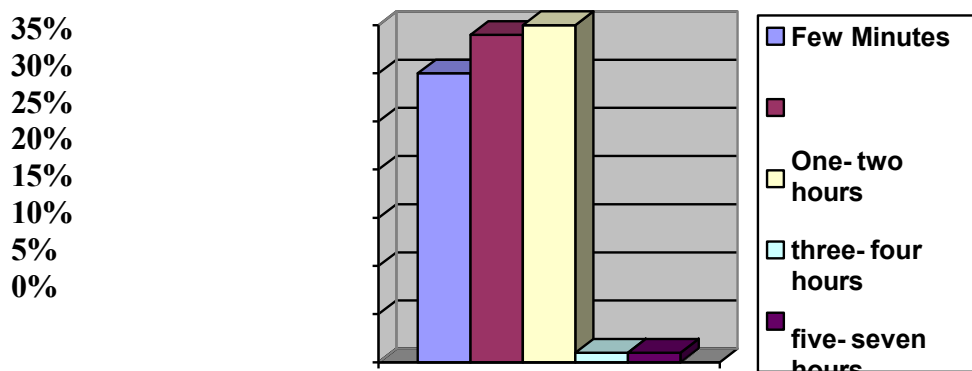


0%
96%

Figure1: The use of social networking sites

Question 2: How much time do you daily spend on the Social media (Facebook, twitter etc.)?

Regarding the use of social networking sites the students were asked how much time they spend in the social networking site. Figure 2 indicates that 36% students spend three-four hours in the SNS, followed by 34% spend one-two hours, 30% few minutes and 1% are always online via mobile.



Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes
Use English when chat with friends	66%	4%	30%
Use English when chat with teacher	97%	3%	
Friends correct mistakes in status/comment	2%	79%	19%
Teacher correct mistakes in status/comment	1%	89%	10%
Conscious about grammar/spelling when chat or give status	95%	5%	
Online chatting helps to improve speaking	86%	14%	
SNS helps to improve writing	80%	10%	10%
Language of SNS influence formal writing	6%	89%	5%
Use short form in formal writing	3%	94%	3%
Feel comfortable to practice English in SNS	95%	3%	2%
Sometimes pronounce informal word in class/presentation	3%	95%	2%

Table 1: responses regarding different issues of SNS

This table represents the overall response of the student regarding different issues of social networking sites which reflects the influence of the digital social media in writing and speaking of Undergraduate level students’.

CONCLUSION

Social networking sites are becoming popular among the young generation these days. Not only the youth but also the educators are connected in the SNS. SNS have played a vital role to connect the people all over the world and to communicate easily. The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of digital social media in Undergraduate level student’s writing and speaking, how it motivates students to improve their English, in what aspect it is helping to develop students writing and speaking, and in what extend it is useful for the learner.

Summary of the findings

The findings show that majority of them use WhatsApp, Facebook as their favorite SNS and most of the students usually spend there-four hours on social networking sites. The findings also show that students use SNS for both academic and non-academic purposes. The Undergraduate level students are connected with their friends and teachers in the SNS and they can formulate group discussions where they can exchange their ideas, thoughts, can share course related materials, information and the teacher can give assignment, so that it is easy for all the student to know. However, there are some drawbacks that SNSs come with. The students write in short form in SNS when they chat with their friends, when give any status or comments and it reflects in their formal writing and speaking, like in assignment, exam script or in presentation. However digital social media motivate the Undergraduate level students to improve their English as the findings show that the students are very conscious when they give any status because they want to present themselves as a perfectionist in the SNS. They try to write in proper grammar structure, correct spelling and appropriate sentence structure and therefore it motivates them to improve their English language as well. The findings also highlight that social media help students to improve their writing and speaking as the students are able to learn new word/ idioms /phrase from their friends in SNS and later they use those in their formal writing (assignment, exam script) and speaking (presentation) which enhance their writing and speaking. Their responses indicate that digital social media have influence on Undergraduate level student's writing and speaking. However, in the recent time the educators are also the users of SNS. According the findings of this research, teachers have included social networking sites into their teaching methods. Nowadays teacher of different universities use SNS to share course related materials with their students, communicate to their students regarding their coursework's, assignments or any upcoming event. The findings show that according to teacher SNS sometimes influence student's writing and speaking. According to the educator SNS provide scope to improve English language but it is the students who has to motivate themselves to learn new things from there as the students can learn new words, can improve their writing style and can be fluent in speaking. But there are also some drawbacks as sometimes they use short form in their formal writing and formal presentation and day- by- day there are less literary writings as they are used to use simple sentence which is an effect of SNS. An according to the educators it is monotonous to read their writings. Considering the findings of this study, teachers think besides some negative influence in students writing and speaking, there are also positive influences. In the SNS the students discuss about their coursework's, assignments, course materials and any different topic related to the course. And as they know their teacher is also going to participate in the discussion or will monitor them, they always try to write proper English because they do not want to do any mistakes in their writing as it is also about their prestige issue. Therefore when they discuss all those in their class they also try to speak properly. So according to the educators SNS is also helping the students to improve their writing and speaking.

Recommendations

There are great influence of SNS in writing and speaking of Undergraduate level student. The students

can take advantage to improve their productive skill if they use it in proper way. There are potential improvements in student's writing and speaking if the teachers as well as the students motivate themselves precisely. Teachers can be very innovative while using SNS for teaching purpose and can make lessons interesting and varied. According to Gremu & Halse (2012) nowadays students are keen to use SNS for academic purpose. So the teachers can provide an opportunity to the students to learn informally by seeking, exploring and testing ideas with other students within their own social network. The teacher can open a discussion board in SNS where the teacher and the student can post different articles, can discuss in different issue. The teacher has to recommend highly for using proper sentence structure, correct word and grammar. Harwood & Blackstone (2012) say SNS exhibit to the students that the class tutor is present and he/ she is observing what is happening on online. So they will be conscious about their writing and as a result it will enhance student's writing.

Therefore the teacher can talk about the issues and topic in the classroom which they discuss in the open discussion board in SNS. The teachers can give the students instant role play on any topic which they discussed in the SNS the previous day. According to Harwood & Blackstone (2012) the support of the teacher is very important to motivate the less confident learners to feel interested to participate in the discussion. And as the teacher is also involved in the discussion the student are aware of their speaking. It will help the students to improve their speaking.

Conclusion

Digital social networking sites have played a crucial role in founding a bridge among the people, which enable them to communicate on a common platform. Social networking sites can be a great way to stay in touch with a large group of people. The students of Undergraduate level have embraced this new way of communication to connect with their classmates and to keep in touch with their friends. Communication is rapidly changing, as now the educators and the students communicate through social networking sites. Therefore it is important to emphasis on how the educators can help their students to utilize the benefits of social networking sites to improve their productive skill. Therefore this research study suggests that if the teachers as well as the students utilize the digital social media in proper way it will be beneficial for them to enhance their English language.

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