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Social Media Learning Nexus: Exploring ESL Learners' Self-Directed Out-of-the-Class English Language Development Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the contribution of social media to undergraduate students' English language learning process outside the class. Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered from nine female teachers, nine male teachers, and eighteen undergraduate students. Thematic analysis was done using NVivo software for the identification of important themes emerging from participants' views. Research indicates that social media sites like YouTube, WhatsApp, and AI tools greatly enhance English language learning through constant access, interactive experiences, and real-world application outside of formal schooling. Educators and learners indicated enhanced reading and writing skills, vocabulary enrichment, and communication skills through informal learning platforms. Nevertheless, the misuse of social media for entertainment purposes, the propagation of fake content, and the inability to monitor students' use were the emerging concerns. The research concludes that purposeful utilization of social media can be a strong adjunct tool for developing English language skills outside the class. It advises promoting digital literacy, content surveillance, and teacher-student cooperation in order to make digital tools more effective for language learning.

Keywords: social media; English language learning; out-of-class practices; informal learning

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of social media in the everyday life of undergraduate students has changed considerably their learning experiences, particularly in the context of English language acquisition. Social media like WhatsApp, YouTube,

Facebook, Instagram, and most recently, TikTok and Telegram, are no longer exclusively employed for social purposes and leisure; they have become informal but powerful sites of learning.

In English as a second language (ESL) contexts, social media provides learners with instant, interactive, and contextualized exposure to reading and writing practices outside the institutional classroom (Yunus et al., 2021; Zhang, 2020). In Pakistan, where English is formally taught as a second language at all levels, learners tend to have limited exposure to the use of English outside the realm of learning. Classroom instruction and examination-oriented syllabi provide limited scope for real use of language, especially for the development of communicative competence in reading and writing (Akram & Malik, 2012). These learners often watch English-language media, read social media or blog captions, write and publish content, or engage in English-based forum discussions. These activities are a type of incidental and informal language learning, and they can have a vital impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary enrichment, and writing proficiency (Alghizzawi et al., 2019; Thang et al., 2017). The soaring popularity of smartphones, low-cost data plans, and abundant access to Wi-Fi in urban and semi-urban settings such as Sialkot have presented new opportunities and challenges for students to access English material on their own.

Informal online practices are especially useful in multilingual and multicultural settings where English is not the language of day-to-day communication. Here, students' use of social media is a gateway between formal learning and real-world usage. Social media material—spanning subtitled TED videos and educational YouTube channels to written blogs and tweet storms—provides contextual learning in a less fearful and more flexible space. This informality invites learners to delve into the language in their own time and per their own interests, promoting greater autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Rao et al., 2021; Zhang & Zhou, 2020). Further, the interactive characteristics of social media facilitate real-time communication and feedback. Learners can comment on posts, create comments, subscribe to language-learning groups, or even keep blogs and vlogs in English. Habits of reading also enhance as students read English subtitles, captions, or articles shared in social media feeds. Studies indicate that digital exposure, if consistent and intentional, can contribute to quantifiable gains in reading and writing for academic purposes (Al-Shlowiy & Alhaisoni, 2021; Mohamed et al., 2022). These reading/writing habits, though frequently casual, contribute to written fluency and narrative coherence.

However, with this increasing use of social media for language acquisition comes several challenges. Notable among these is the informality of the language used on social media. Students often adopt the internet slang, abbreviations, emojis, and non-standard grammar used on social media, which can hinder them from acquiring academic writing skills (Alsulami, 2022). Under a lack of appropriate guidance, students might adopt erroneous or ill-suited language structures that could have an adverse impact on their educational performance (Aghaei et al., 2021;

Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Moreover, the user-generated and unmonitored quality of content on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube also questions the authenticity and correctness of language exposure.

Although these shortcomings exist, social media is still a strong additional tool in the learning of English. It is especially so where classroom teaching is restricted or excessively conventional. Within a Pakistani environment, where large class sizes and old-fashioned syllabi tend to restrict student interaction, the extra-classroom use of social media may become a significant component of educational reform. The student is becoming more of an independent learner, using mobile technology to individualize language-learning pathways (Yunus et al., 2021). In places such as Sialkot, where education is high but classroom incorporation of technology is low, students' out-of-class digital practices now dominate their language acquisition. Much, however, remains unknown about how this region's undergraduate students actually use social media to enhance their English reading and writing abilities. The majority of past studies in Pakistan have either studied formal applications of education technologies or applied the overall advantage of social media utilization without paying attention to skill-specific results like reading comprehension and academic writing (Aslam & Anam, 2020; Abbas et al., 2021). This discrepancy underscores the importance of an in-depth investigation of students' out-of-class digital activities— what they do on social media when not in the institution, what kind of English materials they consume, and what difficulties they face without formal guidance. It is imperative to get to know these areas in order to create interventions that close the gap between informal and formal English language learning.

Thus, this research intends to explore how Sialkot undergraduate students utilize social media outside the classroom to develop their English reading and writing abilities. The study intends to find out the platforms specifically used by the students, the kind of content produced and consumed, and their attitudes toward the role played by these digital activities in promoting their academic literacy skills. In capturing learners' voices and exploring their actual extracurricular involvement with English via social media, this research adds to an increasing amount of scholarship on digital language learning. It provides useful guidance for teachers, curriculum planners, and language planners in comparable settings.

Research Objectives

- To explore how ESL learners utilize social media outside the classroom for continuous and self-directed English language learning.
- To investigate the role of interactive and expert-driven engagement on social media in enhancing ESL learners' English communication skills outside the classroom.
- To examine the perceived challenges and limitations of using social media for English language learning outside the academic setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has come to play a central role in the daily lives of students, acting as an intermediary between formal and informal learning. The greater application of online platforms, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, has facilitated students to learn English content, use English to communicate, and write and speak in English beyond the classroom (Nguyen & Habók, 2021). Within the Pakistani context, that is, in cities such as Sialkot, where English is not the primary language and class exposure is limited, social media provides a vital means for language development, especially in reading and writing. The informal nature of social media facilitates a learner-centred environment where the students take charge of their language learning process.

Several studies have indicated that this autonomous learning enhances motivation, accelerates the acquisition of vocabulary, and develops fluency in reading and writing (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Al-Sharqi et al., 2015). The learners are not limited to formal instruction's content and organization but may investigate varied genres, texts, and discussions according to their choice. For example, reading blogs, engaging in online discussions, or adding captions to an Instagram post become habits that support language structure and usage. Studies have indicated that social media has a positive influence on reading behaviour and understanding, especially when learners interact with subtitled videos, online stories, or narrative-based texts. Kabilan et al. (2010) have explored that reading material on social media, such as news, e-books, or educational updates, allows ESL learners to understand vocabulary and syntactic structures in context. Likewise, Shadiev et al. (2020) point out the way captioned videos on YouTube offer assistance for incidental reading acquisition. These technologies allow learners to comprehend the semantic compositions of English in real time, usually with visual aid that ensures better retention.

Conversely, composing on social media sites— whether commenting, blogging, or tweeting— provides learners with the possibility of composing in English in a non-formal way. Al-Jarf (2020) says that students who write using WhatsApp or Facebook have been observed to gain more confidence and fluency as time passes. While what they write tends to be informal and unstructured, it mirrors the reality that, in communication outside the classroom, immediacy of communication and appropriateness in terms of the context are more important than correctness in grammar. Although these benefits exist, most scholars caution against the perils of untutored, casual English exposure. Students tend to pick up casual registers, spelling mistakes, and colloquial expressions that run counter to formal English conventions (Kuteeva, 2011). Far from discrediting the language learning value of social media, this highlights the importance of digital literacies and critical thinking. In addition, Ahmed and Hassan (2019) found in their study with Pakistani undergraduate learners that excessive use of entertainment apps (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) tended to result in passive viewing instead of active learning. A strong benefit of social media, especially for ESL learners, is its interactive feature that

fosters collaborative learning and peer assistance. Students engage in WhatsApp learning groups, Facebook discussion boards, or livestreams with live comment sections, promoting dialogic interaction (Yunus et al., 2019). They mimic actual communication situations and enable students to experiment and iterate on their reading and writing approaches. In addition, sites such as Reddit or Quora familiarize learners with question-answer-based communication that resembles academic questioning and opinion exchange. Students also gain from exposure to native and skilled speakers, which hastens language exposure beyond the domestic linguistic bounds. Saito and Akiyama (2017) note that students who look up to English-speaking influencers or converse with skilled speakers enhance pragmatic competence and discourse-level comprehension. Social media is thus a language tool as well as an area of immersion and identity formation in English.

In Pakistani and South Asian studies, scholars have emphasized cultural and infrastructure hurdles in learning English formally. These include overpopulated classrooms, insufficient individualized feedback, and conventional grammar-translation methodology. Here, social media acts as a compensatory mechanism (Tariq et al., 2021). It enables learners to customize their learning speed, pick material of interest to them, and receive feedback from computer programs like Grammarly, QuillBot, or artificial-intelligence tutors like ChatGPT, thus improving reading comprehension as well as writing accuracy. In a local investigation in Punjab, Shahbaz and Khan (2020) discovered that over 60% of university students preferred learning words and reading material via social media rather than textbooks. Likewise, learners reported that their writing became better when they blogged frequently or participated in group discussions in English. The informal and interactive environment facilitated creativity and risk-taking, two of the most important language acquisition factors.

Nonetheless, screen time, distraction, and content quality concerns still linger. Students can be subjected to conflicting information or overexposure to non-academic content that waters down their language learning priority. This requires a balance in which social media is incorporated into language learning, not only casually but also through teacher direction, workshops, or digital media literacy courses (Zhou & Wei, 2021). In addition, socio-economic status, gender, and technological literacy influence the manner in which students use social media to learn English. Ownership of devices, access to reliable internet, and exposure to various platforms still vary across much of Pakistan, including Sialkot (Younas et al., 2022). Hence, while social media offers significant potential, its equal and effective application relies upon filling larger infrastructural and pedagogical gaps.

In short, social media has proven to be an effective, dynamic, and independent tool for English language learners, especially in non-native English-speaking areas such as Sialkot. It offers substantial opportunities for enhancing reading and writing skills through textual, visual, or interactive modes. With some disadvantages like exposure to informal language and distraction, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages when learners are taught how to use these platforms

successfully. Thus, both policymakers and educators need to think about how to incorporate informal online learning into formal curricula in order to facilitate sustainable and context-specific language acquisition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study used a qualitative method to investigate how undergraduate students in Sialkot use social media outside the classroom to develop their English reading and writing skills. This study aimed to comprehend the actual life practices, perceptions, and experiences of both students and teachers towards using social media for English language learning in out-of-class settings.

A qualitative case study design was used to obtain a rich understanding of the application of social media as an extracurricular learning tool by English language learners. This allowed the researcher to concentrate on a particular setting and investigate the intricacies of language acquisition outside the classroom. The qualitative approach was appropriate given its emphasis on capturing participants' lived experiences, actions, and meanings.

The population for this research included English language instructors and undergraduate students in English language majors at colleges and universities in Sialkot. The population included males and females who were experienced in social media and using it for education or communication. Teachers from institutions in both the public and private sectors and students who habitually employed digital platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, or other resources for language practice were included in the accessible population.

Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method that is widely applied in qualitative research to identify participants who can offer rich and pertinent information from their experiences, was used in the research. The selection was made to warrant that the selected participants had significant interaction with English language learning and utilized social media platforms outside the classroom setting. The sample consisted of 36 participants in total, including nine female teachers, nine male teachers, and 18 undergraduate students from Sialkot's colleges and universities. Teachers were picked owing to their direct engagement in instructing English as a second language (ESL). In contrast, students were recruited from English language learning programs in order to gain insight into their out-of-class digital learning practices. The heterogeneity of the sample enabled the gathering of a wide array of views across gender and educational roles. This sample size was deemed adequate for qualitative thematic analysis, given that it provided adequate data to obtain data saturation while remaining manageable for intensive analysis. The fact that the sample was purposive helped to ensure that the data obtained were significant and relevant to the research aims, specifically in identifying how social media enhances English language acquisition outside the normal classroom environment.

Structured interviews were used as the main data collection instrument. The interview guides were developed individually for the teachers and students to cater

to their specific experiences and views. Open-ended questions with elaborate and flexible response options were used, with probing techniques applied to delve further into areas of interest, including preferred platforms, content types consumed, language improvement activities, and challenges perceived.

Prior to data collection, permissions were obtained from the institutional authorities and informed consent was obtained from all participants. In-person and online interviews were done, depending on the participants' availability and preference. All interviews were of about 30 to 45 minutes duration and were audio-recorded after obtaining consent. Transcription was done verbatim for accuracy. Interview information centered on participants' use of social media beyond classrooms to improve English reading and writing competence, such as their use frequency, engagement types, and interaction with online communities.

Thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to look at the qualitative data. This process involved getting used to the data, initial code generation, searching and reviewing themes, naming and defining themes, and producing the final analysis. NVivo software was utilized to facilitate coding, visualization, and classification of emerging themes. The analysis presented main patterns in participants' perspectives. Word clouds and code frequency charts produced by NVivo created visual overviews of prominent themes across the various participant groups.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To guarantee the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, several approaches were employed. Triangulation was attainable by data collection from three separate groups (female teachers, male teachers, and students). Member checking was employed through sharing fundamental summaries with the participants in order to ascertain the accuracy of participants' responses. Thick description and open documentation maximized the transferability and dependability of the research results.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to stringent ethical standards. Participants were thoroughly informed of the aim of the study, methods, and rights, such as withdrawing at any point without penalty. Written informed consent was secured. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through participant codes (e.g., FT1 for Female Teacher 1, ST2 for Student 2). All data gathered were stored securely and utilized for academic purposes only. The appropriate departmental ethics committee gave ethical permission to conduct the study.

DATA ANALYSIS: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

This section offers the interpretation and analysis of data obtained from female and male teachers and undergraduate students on social media usage for learning English beyond the classroom. Findings examine how learners use digital platforms extrinsically to practice their English language skills. Themes were created with NVivo software, representing varied views on opportunities, challenges, and

the practicality of social media use in out-of-class learning environments.

Table 1: Female Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation to ESL Learners in Learning the English Language outside the Classroom

Sr. no	Themes	Coding	Original Responses
1	Enhancement through unceasing and regular access	Available for all Available at any time Useful outside the classroom	<p>FT1: students must update with those applications. I would love to make all these sources available for the students at any time.</p> <p>FT2: I recommend AI programs and a chat board to improve language skills outside the classroom. They're effective.</p> <p>FT3: if people want to learn language skills from social media, there is no such barrier or far from anyone</p> <p>FT4: Teachers and family are often unavailable, so there are many things on social media from every field of life that students can use to help them.</p> <p>FT7: Watching videos on Islamic channels, constantly narrating different religious aspects, and taking language courses have helped me improve my English communication.</p> <p>FT8: I don't see any language barrier, as everyone has an equal opportunity to express freely what they think and feel.</p> <p>FT9: We can learn fast. It's available 24/7. You can learn anything anytime by touching and holding your mobile phone, so it's easily available.</p>
2	Enhancement through productive interaction	Making audio-video vlog enhances language skills Collaborating with language influencers or experts Using AI-powered language tools	<p>FT1: They must be engaged by themselves in audio/video making, learning to use social media apps or channels, and using vlogs, so yes, they shall get engaged with them in teaching-learning environments, either in classes or working environments.</p> <p>FT3: Social media significantly contributes to English language development by providing a platform for interactive learning, practice, and feedback outside the classroom.</p> <p>FT4: Social media can further support</p>

			<p>language learners through live language lessons, Q&A sessions, collaboration with language influencers or experts, or AI-powered language tools.</p> <p>FT7: I feel my proficiency has improved due to continuously talking to people from diverse cultures. I also feel my accent changing.</p> <p>FT9: Listening to diverse language experts with different accents has also changed my phrase and clause structure.</p>
3	Enhancement through practical application	A practical application of sharing is needed.	<p>FT1: inside or outside the class, there should be something positive, whatever is being said, written or read on social media, with some practical application in the student's life.</p> <p>FT4: If the social media courses are related to students' real lives and language learning, that can bring positivity to learning. Learners can make learning better after class.</p> <p>FT8: Encouraging more usage of English content can support English language learners in learning in the best possible way.</p> <p>FT9: It has a lot of influence on my communication. I learned new words, etc., using them with my students to make them competent.</p>
4	Ineffective utilization	Use of social media just for entertainment	<p>FT5: We indulge in videos for entertainment and must remember to learn something.</p>

*FT= Female teacher

Table 1 represents themes emerging from female teachers' perspectives regarding social media facilitation for ESL learners learning the English language outside the classroom. These themes are: enhancement of language skills through unceasing and regular access to social media, promoting productive interaction with social media, practical application of social media, and effective utilization of social media in the classroom. Details are given below.

Enhancement of Language Skills through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media

Most of the teachers in the participants promote using social media outside the classroom to enhance students' communication skills. There are many

advantages. First, various content can be accessible to anyone at any time. Updated social applications can assist them in developing their communication wonderfully with competent international teachers (see Table 1; FT1, FT2, FT3, & FT4). Additionally, constantly watching videos and talk shows in language courses improves participants' communication (see Table 4.3; FT7). According to the study participants, social media provides everyone with equal learning opportunities (see Table 1; FT8). Moreover, people can learn quickly via social media, and content is available 24/7. People can learn anything anytime on mobile phones (see Table 1; FT9).

Promoting Productive Interaction with Social Media

Students can enhance their English communication skills by positively engaging in social media; for example, they can make audio/video content and vlogs and communicate with language experts (see Table 1; FT1&FT3). Social media discussion sessions after class, particularly with artificial intelligence (AI), enhanced students' English language communication skills (see Table 1; FT4). Interaction with people of diverse cultures and languages at the international level is improving people's communication proficiency, especially their accents (see Table 1; FT7). According to one of the participants, multiple accents are used on social media platforms, i.e. British, American, and Australian, and other European countries also speak English. Differentiating these accents has changed her phrase and clause structure (see Table 1; FT9).

Practical Application of Social Media

As per participants' teachers, social media-relevant content can polish their communication skills more. After classes, they must apply what they learn on social media (see Table 1; FT1, FT4, FT8& FT9).

Ineffective Utilization of Social Media

Some teachers are against using social media after classes. They think that students use social media just for entertainment, as per the participants' teachers of study. Students watch and make useless videos for entertainment and neglect learning useful content (see Table 1; FT5).

Figure 1 illustrates word cloud generated using NVivo software, showcasing female teachers' perspectives on how social media facilitates English language learning for ESL learners outside the classroom. Prominent terms such as "social," "media," "language," "communication," and "enhancement" emphasize the role of social media in providing constant exposure to English, fostering communication, and supporting vocabulary acquisition. Other notable words like "students," "learning," "practical," and "outside" highlight the flexibility and independence social media offers in learning beyond the classroom. The figure also reflects observations on the balance between academic application and entertainment use, summarizing female teachers' nuanced insights on the benefits and challenges of social media in English language education.

	Expert Interaction with Social Media		video call.
3	Language Skills Enhancement Through Practical Application of Social Media	A practical application of sharing is needed	MT1: Social media facilitates a lot. There are many audiovisual aids, and the teacher can assign some tasks from a distance. Through the effective use of social media, the teacher can make learning effective outside the classroom. MT5: Learning should encourage using gadgets like mobiles, tablets, and laptops inside and outside the class. It can speed up learning.
4	Ineffective Utilization of Social Media	Useless engagement on social media	MT3: I think social media plays a lesser role.
5	Difficulty in Monitoring Social Media Use	Inappropriate use of social media	MT5: Those gadgets should be well-directed and monitored, as online resources are double weapons. They can waste students' time and energy, and it is challenging for parents to monitor their children.

*MT= Male Teacher

Table 2 generates themes based on male teachers' perspectives on social media facilitation for ESL learners in learning the English language outside the classroom. These themes are discussed as follows:

Language Skills Enhancement through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media

Some participants' teachers promote using social media outside the classroom to enhance students' communication skills. They stated that due to updated knowledge and resources, social media channels can serve educational purposes, i.e., linguists' proficiency. Students should train for up to a year to be proficient in EL (Table 2; MT1, MT2, MT3, MT4, and MT5).

Language Skills Enhancement through Expert Interaction with Social Media

Only one male participant teacher favours collaborating with language experts to enhance students' communication skills. Students can enhance their English communication skills by sharing content monitored by language experts (Table 2; MT4).

Language Skills Enhancement through Practical Application of Social Media

As per participants, social media facilitates a lot. There are varieties of audiovisual aids, and teachers can assign learning tasks from a distance (Table 2; MT1 & MT5).

			<p>development.</p> <p>ST9: Traditional methods are down to growth, but social media can enhance your knowledge daily.</p> <p>ST10: Watching certain videos, i.e. Netflix and Google searches, helps me to learn English proficiently.</p> <p>ST16: Social media groups give information daily</p>
2	Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media	<p>Making audio-video Vlog enhance language skills</p> <p>Collaborating with language influencers or experts</p> <p>Using AI language tools</p>	<p>ST2: Using mobile phones anywhere, we can easily capture new words.</p> <p>ST3: In traditional methods, there is specific material in books, but social media provides vast information.</p> <p>ST7: Social media can enhance language learning in several ways compared to traditional methods, such as authentic language use and word content.</p> <p>ST8: joining an online community or forum, regularly engaging in discussion with the coach, contributing to comments, and exposure to vocabulary and idiomatic expressions increased language.</p> <p>ST10: We see different lectures, and even when we can't understand something from our teachers, we use YouTube or other websites.</p> <p>ST13: Social media greatly helps by giving PDFs and PPTs instead of buying books.</p> <p>ST18: When I find something new, I write it on Google, and Google translates it into my language.</p>
3	Ineffective Utilization of Social Media for Language Skills Enhancement	Use of social media just for entertainment	<p>ST1: There are some apps like Instagram and Snapchat, which, from my point of view, are a waste of time.</p> <p>ST18: If we try to search for Pakistani and Asian Literature on Google or ChatGPT, we don't find the correct answer</p>
4	Adverse Effects of Social Media on Language Skills	Misconception Inauthentic material, low quality, distraction and	<p>ST4: It creates a misconception during the communication while listening.</p> <p>ST4: It creates a misconception during the communication while listening.</p> <p>ST6: It also represents several challenges,</p>

	Enhancement	superficial knowledge.	like the quality of content, informal language, distraction, superficial learning, etc. ST9: People sometimes use bad words and slang language. They never feel any embarrassment. It affects language. ST10: Some side activities, for example, we, dramas and reels, divert attention from our aim. ST11: There are so many negative things that we have to avoid regarding language.
5	Learning via Experts on Social Media	A variety of experts and knowledge.	ST9: It saves our time. We are not bound to one teacher for specific knowledge; we can interact with different people for different types of knowledge and information. ST14: People will give you a profound knowledge of English, something you have never encountered.
6	Social Media as a Source of Authentic Knowledge	Authentic knowledge	ST13: Social media is the only way to get authentic knowledge.
7	Non-Effectiveness of Social Media	No effects of informal language on English language learning.	ST14: Informal language includes gestures and posture, while formal language includes vocal cords and words, so I think informal language has no influence.
8	Social Media as an Easy Access to Knowledge	Easy access	ST 17: Some people are too lazy to read a book; they want shortcuts and social media that easily provide extensive information. ST18: In 2024, people will not have time to read newspapers and books, and social media will be a ground-breaking platform for language learning.

*ST= Student

Table 3 represents themes of students' perspectives regarding social media facilitation for ESL learners learning the English language outside the classroom. These themes are discussed as follows:

Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media. Most teachers in the participants promote using social media outside the classroom to enhance students' communication skills daily (see Table 4.9; ST16). There are many advantages. First, through online classes, students can enhance their learning. For example, they can listen to lectures repeatedly by recording. Conversely, traditional

methods require going to the institute to take the lectures, which are not repeated (see Table 3; ST1). According to the study participants, watching videos and movies and reading short stories and novels contribute to English language development (see Table 3; ST8 & ST10). According to one of the study participants, learning modern languages requires more than traditional methods. Conversely, social media can enhance language knowledge and learning via different modes (see Table 3; ST9). **Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media.**

Students are enhancing their English communication skills by engaging with social media. For example, they learn new things using their mobile phones to learn at any location and time (Table 3; ST2). Moreover, social media provides vast information compared to traditional methods, where only book material is available (Table 3; ST3).

Additionally, according to one participant, social media enhances language learning compared to traditional methods like authentic language use and word content (see table 3; ST7, ST13 & ST18). Moreover, engaging in discussions with coaches in an online community or forum and making regular contributions can provide new knowledge and idiomatic expression (see Table 3; ST8). Furthermore, according to one of the participants, social media can be helpful whenever the teacher is unavailable or students need help understanding the lecture (see Table 3; ST10).

Ineffective Utilization of Social Media for Language Skills Enhancement

Some students are against the use of social media for English language learning. Students thought that the majority were using social media just for entertainment. As participants in the study stated, students are using some apps like Instagram and Snapchat for entertainment, which is a waste of time (see Table 3; ST1). Additionally, one participant said there is very little contribution from Pakistani and South Asian people in online material; thus, we found less Pakistani and Asian literature on Google or Chat GPT. Conversely, we don't find the correct answer (see Table 3; ST1 & ST 18).

Adverse Effects of Social Media on Language Skills Enhancement

According to the study participants, social media negatively affects students' learning. For example, one of the students stated that social media provides inauthentic material, is low quality, distracts students from learning, and provides ineffectual and superficial knowledge. Additionally, students thought that social media creates misconceptions in communication during online learning (see Table 3; ST4 & ST6). Moreover, social media users come from different environments and are diverse. So, sometimes, we experience people using inappropriate language without any embarrassment. This affects students' adequate language learning (see Table 3; ST9 & ST11). Moreover, one participant thought that non-learning activities like watching videos and reels on social media could divert students' attention from their study aim (see Table 3; ST10).

Learning via Experts on Social Media

Students stated that various content and international experts are accessible

to anyone. The variety of experts and knowledge assists students in saving time. It also facilitates students; they are not bound to one teacher to gain knowledge. They can interact with different people for various types of knowledge and information (Table 3; ST9 & ST14).

Social Media as a Source of Authentic Knowledge

According to one of the students, updated social applications can assist students in developing their English language skills wonderfully through authentic knowledge presented on social media (see Table 3; ST13).

Non-Effectiveness of Social Media

According to one of the students, social media is beneficial for English language learning. It does not support formal language use much, as informal language consists of body gestures and posture. Conversely, formal language depends upon verbal communication. Thus, the students thought informal language does not impact students' English language learning via social media (see Table 3; ST14).

Social Media as an Easy Access to Knowledge

A student participant stated that social media easily provides knowledge and learning content. It facilitates a lot for people who find book reading hard (see Table 3; ST17 & ST18).

Figure 3 presents a word cloud generated using NVivo software, highlighting students' perspectives on how social media facilitates English language learning outside the classroom. Prominent terms such as "language," "learning," "social," "media," "knowledge," and "students" emphasize the central themes of leveraging social media as a tool for accessing knowledge, engaging with diverse content, and enhancing language skills. Other terms like "experts," "traditional," and "methods" indicate students' recognition of the advantages of social media compared to traditional learning approaches. This visualization reflects students' acknowledgment of social media as a valuable platform for independent learning and skill development, despite potential distractions.



Figure 3: Students' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation to ESL Learners In Learning the English Language Outside the Classroom: Word Cloud Generated Using NVivo Software

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Female Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation for ESL Learners outside the Classroom

1. Language Skills Enhancement through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media

Through regular watching, reading, or participating in discussions on YouTube and WhatsApp, learners were able to enhance their language skills. This supports Bosch's (2009) argument on the importance of consistent engagement with multimedia resources to develop learners' linguistic skills. Teachers noted that social media allows students to learn anytime, from anywhere. This supports Irfan et al. (2016), who highlighted the role of digital technologies in providing constant opportunities for language practice.

2. Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media.

Female teachers noted global peer discussions and collaborations as being important for productive language use. These comments support Harrison and Thomas (2009), who argued that cross-cultural interactions via social networking sites improve practical language skills. These collaborative projects executed on digital platforms, exemplified by group work on Google Drive, support Ramzan et al. (2023), who called for the use of technology to facilitate learning through interaction.

3. Practical Application

In aligning with the findings of Glover and Brunin (1990), teachers reported students exercising language skills beyond the borders of the classroom, including actively participating in discussions and writing blog posts. These researchers claimed that the digital application of such language skills enhances retention and fosters a strong sense of confidence. As Grosseck (2009) notes, actively sharing materials through social media helps learners broaden their access to valuable qualitative resources.

4. Ineffective Utilization

Teachers observed that the emphasis placed on non-educational material on Instagram and Facebook severely limits the potential of social media as an educational tool. Bosch (2009) also noted the same problem: the predominance of non-educational content has been a barrier towards the engagement of social media in education. The contest between entertainment and education, as Kaplan (2010) describes, is an enduring problem. Kaplan defines this problem as the contradiction within social media, serving both as a leisure and educational platform.

Male Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation for ESL Learners outside the Classroom

1. Language Skills Enhancement through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media

Male teachers noted that platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube facilitate learning anytime and anywhere, creating flexible, self-paced learning opportunities. This supports findings by Palombo (2015), who highlighted the potential of

asynchronous digital tools for autonomous learning. Constant exposure to multimedia resources, such as videos and interactive lessons, was emphasized as a key benefit. Klages & Clark (2009) found similar results, where e-portfolios and social media enhanced learning outcomes through continuous engagement.

2. Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media

Social media enables collaboration with linguistic mentors and participation in webinars, providing exposure to professional and academic discourse. Harrison and Thomas (2009) highlighted similar advantages, emphasizing mentorship as a driver of linguistic growth. Teachers pointed out that such expert-led sessions contribute to vocabulary expansion and cultural understanding.

3. Practical Application of Social Media for Language Learning

Practical application of language through content creation, such as writing blogs or participating in digital forums, was reported as a significant benefit. This aligns with findings by Murray and Hourigan (2008), who demonstrated the importance of writing practice in reinforcing vocabulary and grammar skills.

4. Ineffective Utilization of Social Media for Language Learning

Entertainment-focused social media use, particularly on platforms like Instagram, was flagged as a distraction. Teachers noted this as a major limitation, echoing concerns by Obar et al. (2016), who found that non-educational content often detracts from academic objectives.

5. Difficulty in Monitoring Social Media for Language Learning Purposes

Teachers reported challenges in monitoring students' social media use for educational purposes. Limited oversight was seen as a barrier to ensuring consistent academic engagement. Bosch (2009) discussed similar challenges, highlighting the unregulated nature of digital tools as a drawback.

Students' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation for ESL Learners outside the Classroom

1. Language Skills Enhancement through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media

Most students expressed satisfaction with the availability of resources on YouTube and LinkedIn, which advanced learning beyond the classroom setting. This concurs with Ellison (2007) as well as Bosch (2009), who documented the existence of social media resources as an unlimited storehouse of educational materials. It was mentioned that social media enables learners to structure their studies according to personal schedules, which was one of the major advantages. This corroborates Palombo (2015), who noted the contribution of self-paced digital resources to independent learning.

2. Language Skills Enhancement through Productive Interaction on Social Media

Students' language skills were enhanced through engaging with expert content creators on platforms like Twitter or watching webinars conducted by language professionals. These findings are supported by Harrison and Thomas (2009), who pointed out expert-led talk as an important source for gaining precise language and culture. Students were exposed to native speakers on a regular basis through

Skype and YouTube, which helped them to learn new languages and accents as well as authentic language, supporting the findings of Godwin-Jones (2006) and Lomicka & Lord (2009).

3. Ineffective Utilization of Social Media for Language Learning

Several students acknowledged prioritising leisure content over educational material, which illustrates the social media aftermath phenomenon. Kaplan (2010) and Obar et al. (2016) expressed some of the same worries and called for the development of targeted strategies to direct students toward more scholarly engagement with these tools. The present study reports that social media is also not being utilized academically in the real sense, as noted from the participants' responses, because such content is less abundant compared to recreational material. This supports the findings by Ariantini et al. (2021) regarding the need to find an equilibrium between entertainment and educational content on social media.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that social media performs a multi-faceted role in facilitating English language learning beyond the classroom among undergraduate students in Sialkot. Insights from female teachers, male teachers, and students all attest that digital platforms— if used positively— act as effective tools for improving learners' English skills, especially in informal, self-initiated settings. A major theme that emerged across all participant groups was Language Skills Enhancement through Unceasing and Regular Access to Social Media. Social media offers 24/7 availability and ease of use, allowing students to engage with English content on their own terms. Students and teachers alike observed that students gain from exposure to diverse English resources such as lectures, YouTube videos, e-reading materials, AI facilities, and vlogs, which facilitate receptive (reading, listening) and productive (speaking, writing) skills. The data also substantiated the significance of fruitful interaction, specifically through collaboration with native speakers, language forums, and language influencers. These interactions help learners learn through immediate feedback, exchange in real English contexts, and exposure to various accents and cultural expressions— all of which lend depth to language acquisition. The other key point recognized was the application of language skills in real life outside the classroom. Instructors stressed that students should not only read content but also practice putting their learning into use in actual work—posting, commenting in English, and producing content—which ensures retention and fluency. However, the participants also expressed concerns regarding the ineffective use of social media. Digital platforms are mostly used by some students for entertainment, who are usually exposed to informal or unsuitable words that can have an impact on their academic writing. Negative impacts, including misinformation, low-quality content, diversion, and less concentration on formal learning, were also reported— emphasizing the dual-edged nature of digital engagement. Surprisingly, some students considered social media a potential source of true knowledge and enjoyed the diversity of specialists available online. However, others mentioned no

regionally relevant literature or questioned the reliability of some online sources. Overall, although social media poses some problems, the findings of this research confirm its potential as a positive out-of-class learning tool. When applied thoughtfully and with guidance, social media may contribute to effective language learning experiences, enhance learner autonomy, and close the distance between instructional English and authentic English use. These results support the need for increased digital literacy instruction, instructor guidance, and curriculum inclusion to maximize educational benefits from these sites in ESL environments.

Recommendations

- Schools should encourage learners to utilize social media websites like YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook for the sole purpose of language development in English. This may involve guided use of educational material such as vlogs, language learning material, and discussion forums.
- Teachers need to be taught how to lead students in finding quality, authentic, and educational material on social media. Online literacy workshops can equip students to evaluate the quality of online content critically and not fall into the trap of misinformation or slang-filled content.
- Students can be encouraged to use what they get from social media in real-life assignments, like making English content (e.g., vlogs, blog posts, and captions), having discussions with fellow students or native speakers, and writing reflections on videos or articles.
- Teachers can develop learning communities or educational groups on apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook, or Google Classroom to give feedback, share materials, and expand the learning space into cyberspace.

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