

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LANGUAGE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF EFL LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of social media on the development of language skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Uzbekistan. In recent years, platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, and YouTube have become integral to students' daily communication, offering new opportunities for informal language learning beyond the classroom. The research explores how social media affects key language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence. Using a mixed-method approach, the study analyzes learners' engagement with English content on social media and evaluates both the positive and negative impacts of this exposure. The findings indicate that social media can significantly enhance vocabulary development, listen comprehension, and write fluency through authentic and interactive content. However, it may also contribute to the overuse of informal language, grammatical inaccuracies, and reduced attention to formal language structures.

Keywords: social media, language skills development, EFL, vocabulary acquisition, digital language learning, Uzbekistan

Introduction

In the digital age, social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook have become a big part of everyday life, especially for college students and young adults. These platforms enable immediate global communication, content dissemination, and exposure to genuine language usage, thereby revolutionizing conventional language learning frameworks. Previous research focused on classroom instruction, whereas recent studies underscore the significance of social media in informal language acquisition. However, worries remain about the possible bad effects, such as the spread of slang, abbreviations, and informal grammar, which could hurt formal proficiency. In Uzbekistan English is taught as a language and people are using digital things more and more. So it is very important for teachers and people who make decisions to understand what is happening.

This study looks at how social media affects the things that English students need to learn. Vocabulary, reading, listening, speaking and writing. The main goals of this study are to see how students use media to find out if it really helps or hurts their English skills and to give teachers some advice, on how to use social media in a way that helps students learn English.

Methods

The study was conducted with a sample of 150 university students in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, aged between 18 and 24, of whom 58% were female and 42% male. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, as they were easily accessible. All respondents had at least a basic level of English proficiency and were

active users of social media platforms. Data collection took place over a two-month period in 2025.

A structured questionnaire consisting of 35 items was used to gather data. The survey included questions related to participants' demographic background, the amount of time they spent on social media, and their preferred platforms. In addition, students were asked to evaluate the perceived impact of social media on their language skills. The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions to gain deeper insights into their experiences. To complement the survey data, participants completed a 30-minute English proficiency test designed to assess their reading, writing, listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 students to explore their perspectives in more detail.

Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, averages, and correlation analysis, with the help of SPSS software. Qualitative responses from the open-ended questions and interviews were examined through thematic analysis using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and key themes.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from the university administration, and all participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement. The reliability of the survey instrument was tested and confirmed, achieving a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, which indicates a high level of internal consistency.

Results

People who took part in the study said they spent an average of 3.8 hours per day on media. They used YouTube the most for English content with 72 percent of them using it. Instagram was next with 65 percent and then TikTok with 58 percent. The numbers showed that the more time people spent on media the better they got at understanding English. They got better at learning words with a strong connection between social media use and vocabulary acquisition. They also got better at reading and listening with social media use having an impact on these skills. People even felt more confident when speaking English because they could talk to others through comments and live sessions on media.. There was a problem. People who used social media a lot did not get better at writing formal English or using proper grammar. This was because they got used to using shortcuts like "lol" and "brb" and informal language.

The test to check skills showed the same thing. Students who spent than 4 hours a day on social media did 18 percent better on the parts of the test that checked vocabulary and listening skills. When we talked to the students they said they learned words naturally from watching videos and they felt more like speaking English online.. They were worried that they were using informal English in their school work and they did not know how to stop mixing formal and casual English. Social media use was helping them with media but it was not helping them with formal English assignments like writing papers. They liked using media but they knew they had to be careful, with their English skills.

Discussions

The results match what other studies have found showing that social media helps people develop their language skills. This is especially true when they get to read and write in English online. The big positive effects on vocabulary, reading and listening are similar to what other research has found when people are exposed to English through

media. Social media helps with vocabulary, reading and listening skills. Interactive parts of media make people more motivated to practice speaking. However there are some downsides. Using media for informal communication can hurt formal writing skills. This is because people often use slang and shorter sentences online. Informal online language can be bad for writing. Educators should help students use media in a way that is good for their language skills. In Uzbekistan, where English is important for international communication teachers could use social media in a structured way. For example they could have discussions or projects where students create content. Some limitations of this study are that it relies on what people said about their experiences and it only looked at one point in time.

Future studies could look at how social media affects language skills over a period. Overall social media can be a tool to help people learn English but it needs to be used in a way that is helpful not hurtful. When teachers also teach students how to use media wisely it can be a great supplement, to traditional language classes. The study results did show that social media is very helpful. Social media provides opportunities for people to practice English. Social media helps people to improve their skills.

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