



# The Impact of Social Media on Learning English Language during Covid-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

*The widespread usage of social media in English language classrooms is a result of the decision to switch to online instruction during the COVID-19 epidemic. The current study looked into how social media during the pandemic affected the level EFL students' speaking abilities. Using a qualitative approach, data was gathered through in-depth interviews with instructors and students. The majority of research indicates that social media use in speaking classrooms has advantages. Nonetheless, the most crucial component of the courses is taking into consideration the cultural variations of the students. The significance for lecturers' pedagogical awareness is emphasized.*

**Keywords:** *speaking abilities, social media, online instruction, EFL students, and COVID-19*

## 1. Introduction

### The problem

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to online instruction, leading to the widespread adoption of social media in English language classrooms. The impact of this transition on the speaking abilities of tertiary-level EFL students is the central problem addressed in the study. This paper will be carried to answer the following questions:

- 1- How has the adoption of social media in English language classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic affected the speaking abilities of tertiary-level EFL students?
- 2- How can lecturers enhance their pedagogical awareness to maximize the advantages of social media in EFL speaking classrooms?

### Aims

The research aims to

- 1- Investigate the Impact of Social Media on Speaking Abilities
- 2- Explore and identify the advantages of incorporating social media into speaking classrooms during online instruction.
- 3- Emphasize the significance of pedagogical awareness among instructors in adapting to and optimizing the use of social media for enhancing students' speaking skills.

### Hypotheses

The researchers hypothesize that the use of social media in English language classrooms during the pandemic has positively impacted the speaking abilities of tertiary-level EFL students and suggests that instructors who demonstrate a high level of pedagogical awareness regarding social media integration will contribute significantly to the success of speaking courses during online instruction.

### Procedures

The research utilized a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interviews with both instructors and students. These interviews were designed to gather rich and detailed insights into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the use of social media in EFL speaking classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Limits

The study's focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, the research findings may have limitations in generalizing to diverse EFL student populations due to potential variations in cultural and institutional contexts.

### The value

The research provides insights for instructors on how to leverage social media effectively in teaching



speaking skills, enhancing the overall quality of online EFL instruction.

## 2. Literature Review

Social media platforms are ubiquitous and research on their use in foreign language learning has become immense (Artyushina and Sheypak, 2018; Ayers, 2020). Today, with 2.95 billion social media users worldwide, the use of social media is becoming increasingly attractive and accessible, particularly for younger generations (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). Social media sites have become the primary means of communicating and maintaining a social life (Li and Croucher, 2020). Social media refers to websites, blogs, chat rooms, and computer programs, which are any form of content-based electronic communication that allows users to exchange information and present ideas. Social media platforms are ubiquitous and research on their use in foreign language learning has become immense (Artyushina and Sheypak, 2018; Ayers, 2020). Today, with 2.95 billion social network users worldwide, social media use is becoming increasingly attractive and accessible, especially among younger generations (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). Social networking sites have become the primary means of communication and a way to maintain a social life (Li and Croucher, 2020). Social media refers to websites, blogs, chat rooms and computer programs, which are any form of content-based electronic communication that allows users to share information and exhibit ideas. While some websites used for language learning represent the corpus of those social media channels and services mainly designed for specific purposes, dedicated to learning foreign languages. Furthermore, it is also proposed that English can now become the first truly global language, being the dominant or official language in more than 60 countries. The English language, as mentioned, is one of the most spoken languages in the world (Akinwamide, 2012). Roelofse (2013) argues that exposure to new literacies present in new technologies certainly influences the way second/foreign language learners perceive the world. Likewise, the amount of contact with these social services certainly influences students' literacy practices. New technologies not only change the way people live, but also influence the way they think. Furthermore, Davies (2012, p. 21) argues that "texts resulting from new technologies have transformed into complex hybrid systems that have imposed new demands on reading and writing, vision, social exchange and communication". Facebook is no exception in that using this social network requires a multimodal approach, integrating and combining words and written texts from many websites. In the same vein, researchers believe that WhatsApp has the same contaminating effect on learners' writing skills. There are a significant number of studies in the literature on the influence of social media on the linguistic performance of non-English speakers. Chomsky (2014) noted that due to the changes of our contemporaries, our language constantly, inevitably and naturally changes, transforms and becomes more adaptable to its users. In particular, the introduction and rapid development of social networking sites as an important activity has created a distinctive linguistic system necessary for practical communication (Attila, 2017). Baldwin (2012) points out that social media can be both friends and foes of natural language processing. If he considers social networks as a cause of "spelling inconsistencies, free adoption of new terms and regular violations of English grammatical norms", he emphasizes the advantage of "lexical standardization" in the same linguistic environment. In this context, Thurairaj et al. (2015) examined whether social media networks "degrade or impair academic English" and whether infrequent online code-switching and inconsistent spelling affect the language learning process of non-native English learners. Their results showed that the discourse used on social media does not influence learners' English proficiency, as they are more aware of the discrepancies between their informal online metalanguage and their formal academic language. The aim of the present study is to assess the potential benefits of widespread use of social media platforms for English learning during the pandemic and to explore learners' perceptions of these potential benefits, representing a gap in the literature that the present study aims to fill.

## 3. Data Collection

Three professors who instruct intermediate-level EFL students were chosen by the researcher. The selection of these instructors was predicated on their greater than five years of experience instructing EFL courses. This was a crucial factor because they had experience instructing EFL pupils. Twenty seven students in all met the selection criterion and were scheduled for interviews. These students were chosen based on their use of social media for their intermediate English programs and the fact that they were EFL students. Since speaking classes are the only aspect under investigation, that is



what was covered in the interviews. The pupils worked for fourteen hours a week in total. Since speaking classes are the only aspect under investigation, that is what was covered in the interviews. Over the course of seven weeks, the students completed fourteen hours of speaking sessions each week. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about their perspectives on the challenges they faced in speaking lessons and the issues they saw with the usage of social media in EFL classes. In order to get clarification and to corroborate the findings with the students, the researcher performed additional follow-up interview. The results are explained in the section that follows.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

One major element that surfaced in the debate in response to the challenges they encountered in acquiring speaking abilities was the role that cultural differences had in explaining the challenges. Since social media has permeated all cultures, taking cultural variances into consideration is one of the study's key findings. Students made the argument that while eye contact is expected in lectures to build rapport with other students, it is avoided as much as possible in Iraq. Fatima, a student stated that "we need to learn many words and English speaking skills are very important but it is difficult for us to practice because some of my group mates are not willing to communicate in English." A few students believe that learning English for an hour or two a day is beneficial. Social media platforms like WeChat and Zoom are popular among students and professors because they facilitate easy communication and encourage frequent practice. Since cultural awareness is linked to language learning, the lecturer must be able to comprehend their reluctance to participate in class.

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cooperation on the side of the lecturer. This outcome lends credence to Burns' concept of "structured and supported learning opportunities" for developing the various components of oral skills. When asked about the consequences of utilizing social media to improve speaking abilities, the professors stated that it had both positive and negative features.

Students enjoyed using social media because it allowed them to interact with technology. Because of the COVID-19 epidemic and the following move to the online platform, instructors have used social media to inspire students to engage in speaking lessons to compensate for the lack of physical sessions. Students who were reluctant to speak up in traditional courses were eager to participate in online forums. However, Mr. Abbas points out that one disadvantage is that some students were unwilling to turn on the cameras while speaking, making it impossible for the lecturer to determine if they were referring to notes or a Google translation. According to the instructor, "the positive aspect is that we were able to watch the videos we posted, and that helped them a lot with the pronunciation". The kids developed confidence to talk as a result of their ability to rehearse and listen regularly. Some students preferred to utilize social media in the classroom because they regarded the setting to be friendlier, whereas others preferred online classes because they perceived the environment to be less frightening. Using social media improved their speaking abilities, the students were pleased that the speaker ensured that all students participated and that each student was accountable for their own learning. Some group conversations required that every member watch the videos that were provided, and this served as a starting point for the debate. Despite the hurdles created by the COVID-19 epidemic, this study demonstrates the favorable impact and benefits of using social media for speaking lessons. However, the study emphasizes the implications for lecturers' training needs and pedagogical awareness while utilizing social media to teach speaking abilities. Students will also need to learn how to use social media sites for reasons other than amusement.

## Conclusion

Despite the hurdles created by the COVID-19 epidemic, this study demonstrates the favorable impact and benefits of using social media for speaking lessons. However, the study emphasizes the implications for lecturers' training needs and pedagogical awareness while utilizing social media to teach speaking abilities. Students will also need to learn how to use social media sites for reasons other than amusement. The current study's disadvantage is that it only analyzed a small sample from one private institution; future research with a larger sample size is needed to consolidate the findings of this study. Lecturers should also be able to include text resources that address the students' cultural environment. Making proper reading materials available to them will increase their interest and involvement in class. The consequence is that professors should be given adequate time to plan and integrate social media into language education. It takes a significant amount of effort to plan for each level of pupils as well as to diversify their usage of social media and not rely just on one site.

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