

A Review of Social Media Research in Higher English Education

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, social media plays a significant role in many people's lives, studies, and work. There is a positive attitude toward using social media among teachers and students in higher education. The outbreak of COVID-19 has prompted all teachers and students to pay attention to social media and effectively use it to prevent the spread of the virus. The main focus of current research in higher English education is the use of social media tools in different countries worldwide. However, there needs to be a universal teaching tool. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of social media tools over the past 20 years. Additionally, it describes their role in education and disciplinary learning. Social media has become increasingly popular in education, but its limitations need adequate attention, mainly because they are considered positive.

Keywords: social media, higher education, English education

1. Introduction

Driven by the simultaneous development of the economy and technology, people's dependence on social media is increasing daily. Mobile and social networks have contributed to the continuous rise of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Linked In, and many other new unknown apps. From its original purpose of transmitting information, social media have evolved into an array of services users can access.

Due to the devastating COVID-19 outbreak and the implementation of national lockdown in many countries, teaching and learning across the world's universities has shifted from the regular traditional class-based to online. While the traditional approach has been preferred by most academics and students, adjusting to online learning posed a new challenge to academics and students. COVID-19 examined the results of existing studies in online learning and teaching. This study examines higher education institutions' responses to COVID-19 and lockdown, digital versus offline learning, and online teaching and learning challenges. The study shows that this shift brought many challenges for students and academics. Students and lecturers find it difficult to adjust to the environment, connectivity issues, uncondusive physical conditions, mental health-related concerns, and a lack of essential resources. The benefits of the COVID-19 initiative, such as innovation and capacity development, exist despite these challenges (Zethembe, 2020).

Researchers have studied social media as a way to influence higher education. As a result of their studies, they have found benefits, disadvantages, and recommendations that can be made from studying social media to influence higher education. Others have also examined the use of social media in teaching English, as several other researchers have also investigated it. In this course, the goal is to promote social media use in teaching students English. This is done by focusing on vocabulary, writing, and speaking skills through social media tools. Social media in colleges and universities have been largely unresearched concerning their impact on teaching English in colleges and universities. This paper aims to provide some insights into the impact of social media on college English education. It does this by examining and inferring the influence of social media on the teaching of college English.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Social Media

According to Merriam-Webster's definition of social media, it refers to electronic communication that enables individuals (through social networking sites and microblogging) to form online communities through which they can exchange information, ideas, personal messages, and content (such as videos).

The most widely used social media platforms are social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, as well as messaging apps such as WhatsApp and WeChat. In terms of popularity, these social media platforms are among the

most popular on the internet. It is possible to share videos on these platforms through some apps, such as YouTube. As well as this, some apps are available for interaction, such as TikTok.

Today, social media has become an integral part of our lives, from shopping to e-mail, education, and business. Networking sites and blogs are examples of social media. In the age of Twitter and Facebook, journalists and their organizations have been performing a high-wire act. People use these sites every day. Especially on social media, it is not clear who the "strangers" are today. Social media improves performance, such as achieving business objectives and increasing sales. Incorrect education can lead to failure. False advertising can harm an organization. Social media can harm society by invading people's privacy, and some useless blogs may influence young people, who might act violently or inappropriately (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

2.2 The History of Social Media

Handwritten letters were the oldest way to communicate long distances. With the development of the telegraph in 1851, news and information could be sent over long distances faster. Telephones and radio waves enabled quick long-distance communication in 1890. The first supercomputers were constructed in the 1940s, ushering in the Internet era. In the 1960s, CompuServe was one of the first internet services. By the 1970s, Usenet enabled virtual newsletters. Home computers were popular in the 1980s, and social media grew increasingly complicated. Internet relay chats (IRCs) were popular in the 1990s. Six Degrees, the first social networking site, was created in 1997. Users could create profiles and befriend other users. Early on, MySpace and LinkedIn gained popularity. Since YouTube emerged in 2005, individuals have been able to communicate and exchange information more efficiently over long distances. Facebook and Twitter were global in 2006. Several social networking platforms are available today. This way, users can reach the most significant number of people while maintaining a close relationship. We can only guess what social networking will look like in a decade or 100 years, but it will likely exist as long as people do (Wu, 2020).

2.3 Social Media with Higher Education

Social media has become a big part of economic, recreational, and educational activities in the 21st century. Using Social Media (SM) modalities as teaching aids in current educational environments has sparked an academic and scientific interest. According to an examination of the existing literature, the thematic themes that gained the most research attention within SM were political concerns/social movements, marketing/business performance, and college-level educational issues. Overall, SM applications in education made up 12% of the dissertation sample (Piotrowski, 2015). Some academics have proposed solutions based on the advantages, disadvantages, and difficulties of using social media platforms in higher education programs (Anderson, 2019).

Most educated younger generations, who are more connected and form online communities, compete with formal education for their attention. With the correct tools, teachers can create an engaging classroom environment that stimulates students' interest in learning. Students may think critically and creatively by using social media sites (Tadros, 2015). In this context, researchers began to look at the use of social media in education.

Students can use interactivity, blogging, group services in their studies, and Social Media for college and career searches (Sreeja & Jithin, 2015). Education gives unequalled opportunities for self-monitoring and self-improvement. By utilizing social media, teachers have new opportunities to engage with students and, more crucially, new tools to monitor and intervene in student learning, enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There are new ways for students to locate, retrieve, and share their learning materials and possibilities (Anderson, 2019). TikTok and other social media applications have been extensively utilized in higher education to demonstrate this online instruction method's feasibility. Other academic disciplines have gradually adopted this method (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021; Zachos et al., 2018).

2.4 Application of Social Media

With the development of technology, the types of social media tools continue to increase. It is also necessary to have applications for mobile phones in addition to network platforms. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the social media tools used by scholars in the field of education in the past 20 years, this study uses the following examples to describe.

2.4.1 Facebook

Many high school and university students use Facebook nowadays, making it the most popular social networking site (Chakraborty, 2020). According to an online poll conducted in 2009 among first-year undergraduates at a British college, Facebook was mainly used to meet new people at university and stay in touch with friends and family back home. The purpose of its use was primarily social rather than educational or intellectual (Chakraborty, 2020; Madge et al., 2009). Students are more likely to use Facebook than professors are to use email, according to a 2010 poll of staff and students at a mid-sized institution in the South (Roblyer et al., 2010). Young people can now use social networks for educational objectives in a modern fashion, thanks to the expansion of social media and networking capabilities.

Students use it to enjoy and exchange study-related information (Manasijević et al., 2016). Teaching and learning on Facebook have garnered significant interest from researchers worldwide. Facebook can improve teaching and learning in higher education settings (Chiroma et al., 2017). Research among Jordanian students found reasons, rewards, and advantages of using Facebook for academics. This study indicated that students using Facebook for academic purposes affected collaborative learning. The study found an above-average relationship between social media use and collaborative learning, which suggests the sample uses Facebook for school. Social science disciplines had a stronger positive association between perceived benefits and Facebook use. This data confirms that students utilize Facebook for collaborative learning and academic communication (Alwreikat et al., 2022).

Facebook's use in education offers students authentic and relevant learning experiences that engage their effort and behavior in a fun and effective learning environment. Facebook helps professors establish novel teaching strategies by presenting students with engaging activities (Dayu, 2018).

2.4.2 Instagram

Many language instructors are using social media software for academic purposes to stay in touch with their students or to develop online activities as mobile apps become prevalent. Instagram, a mobile app for sharing photographs and videos, is an excellent example of this trend (AlGhamdi, 2018). A descriptive English essay writing activity on Instagram with 101 participants showed that students had positive perceptions of utilizing Instagram to improve their writing but moderate attitudes. Based on the positive reactions, language teachers should use Instagram to establish a suitable learning atmosphere and enhance students' willingness to learn English (Akhiar et al., 2017). Some researchers supposed that Instagram affects English education students' listening skills and vocabulary, and the result showed they are true (Agustin & Ayu, 2021).

Research on Instagram focuses more on the application's role in improving students' English proficiency than on the application's role in creating a cultural change.

2.4.3 TikTok

TikTok, a popular social media network among Chinese undergraduates, is helping them study English during the Covid-19 pandemic. This article will discuss the potential and problems of using TikTok for English language communication competence acquisition by EFL undergraduate students by reviewing previous studies on TikTok and other social media integrated with short videos in English language communication competence acquisition among youth. Most EFL learners believe that using social media with short videos can increase their English communication competence via self-regulated learning with popular themes offered by English educators. Modern English teachers, scholars, and institutions should pay attention to the possible use of TikTok in English education for youth and establish an innovative digital learning system in TikTok for EFL students during the Covid-19 pandemic or post-pandemic period (Zhai & Abu Bakar, 2021). With the help of the TikTok application, students can improve their English vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking (Fahdin, 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2021).

After COVID-19, TikTok has become a more popular way for Chinese students to improve their oral English and other skills, and it has become a popular way for them to gain new experiences.

2.4.4 WeChat

Several language educators and scholars are exploring WeChat to promote mobile language learning and teaching in college classrooms. WeChat's rich media content is well-documented to facilitate language learning. However, we need to know more about its pedagogical role in mobile language learning. An adaptive learning system matches learning resources with students' interests or English-language requirements. Students appreciate learning English on smartphones, but it is not their primary method. WeChat does not automatically teach users (Guo & Wang, 2018). By developing a learning community based on WeChat, as an example of the "College English Writing" course, teachers and students can interact in-depth and reflect in-depth within the mixed learning environment of In class + After class, thus ensuring the mutual growth of both teachers and students (Chen et al., 2019). As a result of WeChat and WeChat Mini Programs, students can obtain timely feedback from their teachers while also improving their oral English proficiency (Chen, 2021).

WeChat is another of the most commonly used English teaching applications in the Chinese context, similar to TikTok. It is pertinent to note that resources still have certain limitations regarding English learning. The most significant benefit lies in improving the effectiveness of English teaching activities in the country.

2.4.5 YouTube

Students use YouTube videos and social media to study English. Learning is typically considered a translation of "instructional," which is the student interaction with educators and learning resources in a learning environment.

YouTube can access interactive multimedia learning for students, especially English language learners, and is a way to express creativity. Negative responses include YouTube's lack of timeliness as an interactive multimedia learning medium for students and lecturers (Sirait et al., 2021). Some scholars believe that YouTube videos can help English students improve their speaking skills and motivate them to study English. Meanwhile, EFL students should use YouTube as a learning resource to develop their writing skills, talk, listen, and other areas that can help them understand English (Nasution, 2019).

Students can use YouTube to improve their English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills according to their individual English learning situations, which makes it more of a resource-sharing platform for English learning.

Besides the previously mentioned social media tools, the study found that Google Classroom, blogs, and chatbots (computer programs that use artificial intelligence and natural language processing to improve spoken English while learning) are valuable tools for English language learners (Kim, 2018; Lingga et al., 2021; Salam, 2020; Syakur et al., 2020; Vanjani et al., 2020). However, the scope of use is somewhat limited. For example, TikTok and WeChat are widely adopted among Chinese English learners, while some Korean scholars mainly study chatbots.

2.5 Social Media and Higher English Education

With the application of social media in higher education teaching and the promotion of multiple disciplines, scholars have also made various attempts to apply social media in higher English education. The higher English education here mainly focuses on educational activities in non-English-speaking countries. The focus of the study is, on the one hand, teachers who carry out teaching activities; on the other hand, EFL/ESL English learners.

2.5.1 Social Media and Teaching

Social media is extensively used in English language teaching and learning. This may be due to the nature of social media, which facilitates the incorporation of constructivism and socio-cultural language theories.

The use of social media in the teaching and learning of English is widespread. The nature of social media facilitates the incorporation of constructivism and sociocultural theories of language. Scholars surveyed ELT teachers at a private university in Indonesia. Teachers at language centers are most likely to use Facebook and YouTube as social media tools. Faculty members are reluctant to use SMTs in the classroom, despite knowing their benefits in learning and using them for personal and professional purposes (Inayati, 2015). 2009 Education World chat recap Online social-networking tools are helping teachers break the classroom's isolation. Though many instructors in India have begun networking with colleagues from around the world, social media for continuous learning and professional development has yet to acquire traction (GUPTA, 2014).

It is not only possible to use social media for a variety of educational activities but also to provide timely feedback for students. Using voice, video, Etc., students can obtain feedback promptly regarding their English learning process, which also strengthens the teacher-student relationship (Dogoriti et al., 2014). Teachers can use social media to engage with students and monitor and intervene in student learning to improve teaching and learning (Martunis, 2020).

English teachers at colleges and universities should pay attention to and discover effective social media promptly. They should also apply them to their teaching activities to improve their English proficiency. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to hot information on time and enhance their personal and professional growth and development.

2.5.2 Social Media and Learning

A survey of 95 Chinese postgraduate students found that the top reason for using social media is "passing the exam", and expanding one's English vocabulary was the aspect learners aimed to improve (Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2021). The difficulties associated with learning English included vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, reading comprehension, syntax, speaking, listening, and motivation. A survey indicates that social media can facilitate the acquisition of foreign languages. The use of social media enhances reading, vocabulary, listening, and speaking abilities, as well as grammar. A study indicates that social networking benefits English as a foreign language students. EFL students can read news, recommendations, and other information on social media. Students can improve their listening skills using social media music and videos (Iswahyuni, 2021). Using Facebook and YouTube facilitates the improvement of English language learners' grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. YouTube and Facebook are excellent resources for learning foreign languages. Students and ESL teachers should use social media to learn English online (Abdul Halik & Rafeena, 2020).

Scholars have also studied students' tendency to choose social media and its purpose. The application aims to learn more about TikTok, listen to podcasts, or practice speaking through chatbots. According to their needs, students will choose targeted social media channels to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Eska Perdana Prasetya, 2021).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, despite the positive results of research on social media in the past 20 years, it has clarified its reliability as a tool for improving teaching abilities in the educational field. There are also some specific studies in higher English education, such as which tools can improve certain aspects of English Ability has a better effect. In all of these studies, however, social media usage is determined by the country in which the researcher resides. Based on the research of science and technology, economy, Etc., the previous differences between countries and regions have led to the need for more practical tools for peers. At the same time, the current research results pay more attention to the positive effects of social media, ignoring the research on the adverse effects. For example, the diversification of information push content on social media may decrease students' concentration, being buried in complicated information, forgetting the original purpose of learning, adverse effects on health, or other factors.

It is important to remember that countries and regions differ in their use of English, and the subsequent research may focus on the adaptation conditions and environment of social media in different countries and regions. The existing social media work can be adjusted to meet the needs of teaching activities in order to create a perfect, efficient, and targeted subject-learning platform.

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