



The Influence of Social Media on English Vocabulary Acquisition among English Major Students at the Faculty of Education - Misurata University

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تأثير استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على اكتساب المفردات الانجليزية لدى طلاب تخصص اللغة
الانجليزية بكلية التربية- جامعة مصراته

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Received: August 08, 2025

Accepted: September 26, 2025

Published: October 05, 2025

Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of social media on English vocabulary acquisition among English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University. As social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube become an integral part of students' daily lives, they expose users to a wide range of English vocabulary in both formal and informal contexts. The study adopts a quantitative method, using a structured questionnaire distributed to 80 students from various academic levels. The findings reveal that a majority of students perceive social media as beneficial tool for improving their vocabulary. They often use words and expressions learned through social media in their speaking and writing tasks. However, some challenges were also noted, such as confusion between informal and formal vocabulary. The study concludes that social media can serve as an effective supplementary resource for vocabulary development when used thoughtfully. It recommends integrating social media into language learning strategies to maximize its educational benefits.

Keywords: Social Media, English language, Vocabulary Acquisition.

الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على اكتساب مفردات اللغة الانجليزية بين طلاب تخصص اللغة الانجليزية في كلية التربية بجامعة مصراته. ونظرا لان منصات التواصل الاجتماعي مثل فيسبوك وإنستغرام ويوتيوب أصبحت جزءا لا يتجزأ من الحياة اليومية للطلاب، فإنها تعرض المستخدمين لمجموعة واسعة من مفردات اللغة الانجليزية في السياقات الرسمية وغير الرسمية. تعتمد الدراسة على منهجية كمية، باستخدام استبيان منظم تم توزيعه على 80 طالبا من مختلف المستويات الأكاديمية. تكشف النتائج أن غالبية الطلاب يرون وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كأداة مفيدة لتحسين مفرداتهم. وغالبا ما يستخدمون الكلمات والتعبيرات التي يتعلمونها من الوسائط الاجتماعية في مهام التحدث والكتابة الخاصة بهم. ومع ذلك، لوحظت أيضا بعض التحديات، مثل الخلط بين المفردات الرسمية وغير الرسمية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يمكن أن تكون بمثابة مورد إضافي فعال لتطوير المفردات عند استخدامها بعناية. وتوصي بدمج هذه الوسائط الاجتماعية في استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة الانجليزية لتعزيز فوائدها التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، اللغة الانجليزية، اكتساب المفردات.

1- Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, social media has become an essential part of students' daily lives, influencing various aspects of their learning experiences. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok expose users to large amounts of English content, which may contribute to their vocabulary acquisition. English major students, in particular, frequently engage with social media for educational and entertainment purposes, often encountering new words and expressions in different contexts.

Despite its widespread use, the impact of social media on students' vocabulary development remains a topic of debate. While some argue that exposure to digital content enhances language acquisition, others believe it may lead to informal or incorrect language usage. This study explores the role of social media in shaping the vocabulary of English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University, examining both its benefits and potential drawbacks.

1.2 Statement of the problem

With the increasing reliance on social media for communication and learning, English major students are frequently exposed to a vast amount of English vocabulary through various platforms. However, the extent to which social media contributes to their vocabulary development remains unclear. While some students may acquire new words and expressions through exposure to digital content, others might struggle with the informal and inconsistent nature of online language.

1.3 Hypothesis of the study

This study hypothesizes that social media plays a significant role in the vocabulary acquisition of English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University. It assumes that students who frequently engage with English content on social media are more likely to develop their vocabulary. However, the study also content the possibility that the informal nature of social media language may lead to the acquisition of non-standard or inappropriate vocabulary. Therefore, this research aims to determine whether social media serves as an effective tool for vocabulary enhancement or if it poses challenges to students' academic language development.

1.4 Research Questions

The current study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How do English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University perceive the impact of social media on their English vocabulary acquisition?
2. Do English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University use social media primarily for academic purposes, or do they consider it more for entertainment? How does this affect their English vocabulary acquisition?

2.Literature Review

The role of social media in language learning has been a growing topic of interest in recent years. As digital platforms continue to evolve, their impact on vocabulary acquisition among students has become a subject of academic investigation. Social media exposes users to a vast amount of authentic English content, ranging from informal conversations to educational materials (Mateusz Brodowicz, 2024). This study reviews previous researches on the relationship between social media and English vocabulary acquisition, highlighting key findings, theoretical perspective, and gaps in the literature. By examining existing studies, this section provides a foundation for understanding how social media influences the vocabulary development of English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University.

Zainal and Rahmati (2020) conducted a case study to explore the influence of social media on vocabulary acquisition and language learning among students in public and private universities in Malaysia. The study focused on popular platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, which have increasingly been adopted as tools for communication and education. The authors sought to determine whether these platforms serve as effective tools for vocabulary development and language learning motivation.

Data was collected via a questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively using SPSS. The results indicated that social media significantly enhances learners' interest in acquiring English vocabulary and overall language skills. Moreover, the study revealed both positive and negative influences of social media on language learning. While social media was found to boost motivation and exposure to new vocabulary, the researchers also acknowledged the potential for distraction and reduced academic focus.

Overall, the findings support the integration of social media into language learning contexts, emphasizing its role in fostering learner's engagement and facilitating vocabulary development.

Nasrallah and Zangana (2020) piloted a study to explore the impact of social media on vocabulary acquisition

among second-year EFL students at the University of Dialer, Iraq. The study examined various social media platforms, including social networks, blogs, and podcasts, and their effectiveness in helping students improve their English vocabulary. The researchers found that students who engaged with these platforms demonstrated significant improvement in their ability to acquire new words. The study emphasizes that the social media technologies offer an innovative and effective approach to language learning, surpassing traditional methods such as textbooks.

This research supports the idea that social media can be a valuable tool in enhancing language learning, especially, in the context of vocabulary acquisition. Few have specifically addressed the role of social media in foreign language learning, which makes this study particularly relevant.

Hegade (2020) examined the effectiveness of social media in the development of vocabulary in English language learning at the Junior College level. The study highlights the increasing role of the internet and social media in shaping the learning preferences of young learners worldwide. Teachers are now shifting their traditional roles to become facilitators, encouraging group tasks and creating stress-free learning environments to engage students more effectively. The study argues that social media platforms, like Facebook, WhatsApp, and web chat tools, have become valuable tools for connecting students and teachers, fostering collaborative learning, and improving language proficiency.

The research indicates that social media can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition, especially, when integrated into the classroom setting. Online games which are increasingly popular on social media platforms, help learners expand their vocabulary in a relaxing and engaging environment. Hegade emphasizes that while there is controversy surrounding the use of these platforms, their benefits in language learning are undeniable, as they provide learners with the opportunity to practice and expand their vocabulary outside the formal classroom setting.

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Sidig Sidgi (2021) conducted a study to examine the impact of social media on learning English vocabulary. Using a systematic review approach, the study highlighted that social media platforms play a significant role in language acquisition. It was found that social media increases learners' motivation and engagement, and exposes them to a wide range of vocabulary. The study concluded that social media should be integrated into modern teaching strategies, as it is a valuable tool for both teachers and curriculum designers in enhancing vocabulary learning.

Afiah et al. (2022) conducted a study examining the role of social media in enhancing English vocabulary acquisition. The research, conducted in a junior high school in Indonesia, emphasized the use of accessible platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube as effective learning media. The study revealed several significant findings: social media serves as an easily accessible medium for vocabulary learning, providing both teachers and students with valuable resources. Furthermore, it enhances learners' motivation by exposing them to English language content in an informal, engaging context. The study highlights that social media is not only a source of information but also an effective tool for increasing students' vocabulary. By regularly interacting with English content on platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, students encounter new words, improving their vocabulary retention. Moreover, social media aids in developing students' reading and listening skills, as they are frequently exposed to English language materials, fostering familiarity and fluency.

Hegade (ibid) also examined the effectiveness of social media in developing English vocabulary at the junior college level. The study emphasized that the internet has significantly influenced the learning preferences of young learners, particularly in acquiring the English language. In response to these changes, teachers are encouraged to adopt innovative practices that align with learners' evolving needs, shifting their roles from traditional instructors to facilitators of knowledge. The integration of social media into language teaching provides a more engaging and collaborative learning environment, promoting group tasks and reducing learner anxiety.

The paper highlights that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and web chats, despite some controversies, are becoming essential tools in language classrooms. These tools not only facilitate vocabulary acquisition but also enable teachers to

connect globally, share resources, and improve their teaching methodologies. According to Hegade, social media serves as a bridge between the classroom and the real world, making language learning more relevant and dynamic for students.

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights the growing role of social media as a supportive tool in English vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. Various studies conducted in different contexts—such as Iraq, India, and Malaysia—have shown that platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp provide learners with greater exposure to English vocabulary and help improve their language learning motivation. However, some challenges

remain, including potential distractions and a lack of structured guidance. These findings suggest that while social media cannot replace traditional methods of teaching vocabulary, it can be an effective supplementary tool when integrated thoughtfully into the language learning process.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of social media on English vocabulary acquisition among English major student at Faculty of Education _ Misurata University. This approach allows collecting measurable data through a structured questionnaire. The results are analyzed using basic statistical methods identify trends and relationships between social media usage and vocabulary development.

3.2 Participants and Setting

The study was conducted over a period of two non-consecutive weeks at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University. The participants included 80 English major students from all levels and semesters within the college, including both male and female students.

The criteria for participation were:

- Being an English major student enrolled in the Faculty of Education.
- Willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

A total of 80 participants were selected randomly, and their identities were kept confidential.

3.3 Research Instrument

A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and included 16 multiple-choice questions (*see appendix 1 p. 14*). Each question offered five response options based on a Likert scale:

- *Strongly Agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly Disagree*

The questions focused on students' social media usage, the types of content they engage with, and their perception of its impact on their English vocabulary acquisition. The instrument aligns with the research objectives.

3.4 Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed manually during class sessions. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

They completed and returned the questionnaire in class. Since English is the second language of the participants, the questionnaire was prepared in English.

Data were recorded on paper and analyzed manually using basic statistical methods, such as frequencies and percentages, without using advanced software.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented to answer the research questions. Table (1) below illustrates the demographic data of the participants.

The first research question was: How do English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University, perceive the impact of social media on their English vocabulary acquisition?

The findings showed that the majority of the students rely on social media as a primary source to improve their English vocabulary. For example, 77.5% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that social media helps improve their vocabulary (Question 1). Additionally, many students (71.25%) believed that learning vocabulary through social media is more effective than traditional methods (Question 2). However, there is some concern students regarding the accuracy and appropriateness of vocabulary learned through social media.

Approximately 32.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed that social media negatively affects word accuracy in formal contexts (Question 9). While 43.75% agreed or strongly agreed that they sometimes find it difficult to differentiate between formal and vocabulary learned from social media (Question 11).

Moreover, students reported using the vocabulary learned from social media in their daily conversations and writing. About 83.75% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they use social media vocabulary in spoken performance (Question 13), and 62.5% confirmed using such vocabulary in their writing (Question 14). This suggests that social media plays a significant role in expanding students vocabulary and enhancing their practical language use.

The second research question was: Do English major students at the Faculty of Education Misurata University perceive social media primarily for academic purposes or more for entertainment? How does this affect their vocabulary acquisition?

The data indicated that students used social media for both academic and entertainment purposes. A considerable number of participants follow educational pages and accounts specialized in teaching English which they believe helps expand their vocabulary (Question 3 and 15). Approximately 66.25% agreed or strongly agreed that following educational accounts aids vocabulary learning (Question 3) and 68.75 preferred following accounts that communicate exclusively in English (Question 15). This reflects an academic use of social media. At the same time, students acknowledged exposure to informal and entertainment content on social media, which sometimes causes confusion in formal vocabulary usage. While 43.75% showed concern about the informal nature of some vocabulary items (Question 10), a similar percentage found difficulty differentiating formal from informal vocabulary (Question 11). This dual use affects the type of vocabulary they acquire and their ability to use it appropriately different contexts.

In summary, the findings revealed that social media has a positive influence on vocabulary acquisition among English major students, but it also posed challenges in distinguishing between formal and informal language. Students benefit from educational content on social media while also encountering informal vocabulary, which affects their language accuracy in formal situations.

Table 1: Participants' Responses to Social Media and Vocabulary Acquisition Survey.

N	Statement (Summarized)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Rely on social media as primary English learning source	22 (27.5%)	40 (50.0%)	14 (17.5%)	3 (3.8%)	1 (1.2%)
2	Notice vocabulary improvement from social media exposure	20 (25.0%)	25 (31.2%)	40 (50.0%)	13 (16.2%)	2 (2.5%)
3	Following English teaching accounts expands vocabulary	30 (37.5%)	35 (43.8%)	11 (13.8%)	4 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)
4	Watching English content without translation helps learning	24 (30.0%)	29 (36.2%)	16 (20.0%)	10 (12.5%)	1 (1.2%)
5	Social media expands vocabulary more than Textbooks	18 (22.5%)	34 (42.5%)	20 (25.0%)	8 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)
6	Learning through social media aids memorization better	11 (13.8%)	46 (57.5%)	17 (21.2%)	5 (6.2%)	1 (1.2%)
7	Social media offers interactive environment for learning	12 (15.0%)	34 (42.5%)	26 (32.5%)	7 (8.8%)	1 (1.2%)
8	Video images on social media make learning more effective	18 (22.5%)	38 (47.5%)	20 (25.0%)	4 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)
9	Social media may negatively affect accuracy in formal use	6 (7.5%)	20 (25.0%)	19 (23.8%)	32(40.0%)	3 (3.8%)
10	Informal vocab from social media may cause inappropriate use	12 (15.0%)	27 (33.8%)	29 (36.2%)	10(12.5%)	2 (2.5%)
11	Difficulty differentiating formal/informal vocab from social media	11 (13.8%)	38 (47.5%)	13 (16.2%)	14(17.5%)	4 (5.0%)
12	Encountered inaccurate/inappropriate vocab from social media	9 (11.2%)	23 (28.7%)	35 (43.8%)	9 (11.2%)	4 (5.0%)
13	Use words learned from social media in daily conversation	24 (30.0%)	45 (56.2%)	9 (11.2%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)
14	Use words learned from social media in writing	18 (22.5%)	32 (40.0%)	24 (30.0%)	6 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)
15	Follow English-only accounts to improve communication	18 (22.5%)	37 (46.2%)	21 (25.0%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)
16	Notice difference in writing skill using new social media vocab	10 (12.5%)	37 (46.2%)	29 (36.2%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)

Note. N = 80 participants.

In the conclusion, the study has analyzed the responses of English major students regarding the influence of social media on vocabulary acquisition. The following findings were observed:

- There is no clear correlation between students' reliance on social media and their academic level, as participants from different levels equally benefit from vocabulary exposure through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.
- Most students are able to recognize and retain new vocabulary through visual and auditory input provided on social media, regardless of traditional learning styles or textbook usage.
- Social media offers an engaging and interactive environment that supports vocabulary acquisition in a more flexible and spontaneous manner compared to conventional methods.
- Although many students apply social media vocabulary in daily conversations and writing, some expressed concerns about the informal nature of such vocabulary and the difficulty in distinguishing between formal and informal usage.

Hence, the findings suggest that students' preference for learning vocabulary through social media is not strictly tied to their academic level. Rather, other factors—such as interest, platform content type, and exposure—may influence their vocabulary learning strategies more significantly.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the influence of social media on English vocabulary acquisition among English major students at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University. A quantitative approach was used to explore students' perceptions and practices through a structured questionnaire.

After conducting the study and getting information, it can be seen that the majority of the students rely heavily on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to expand their vocabulary. Students indicated that they found social media content more engaging and effective than traditional learning materials, especially, in elements. They also reported that social media platforms helped them to be more active, students frequently used vocabulary acquired from social media in both spoken and written communication.

However, some students expressed concern about the informal nature of vocabulary learned through social media, especially regarding its appropriateness in academic or formal contexts. This indicates a need for guidance in distinguishing between formal and informal usage. This exactly supports the claim of Safitri et al. (2020) that "there are common mistakes to avoid while learning English vocabulary on social media such as avoiding relying only on automated translations, ... engaging with native speakers for practice and participating in language exchange opportunities" *p.* 274. Such a strategic approach can help learners make the most of those digital resources.

Last but not least, the researcher kindly asked the participants as not the concern of the study, about other challenges in using social media for learning English vocabulary. A significant number of them mentioned surprisingly that they have problems related to the internet connection. Mostly, their phone signals sometimes go bad while they are watching English video or be on Whatsapp.

5.1 Implications

The findings of this study highlight the growing role of social media in language learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. For teachers, this implies the need to integrate relevant and well-structured social media content into vocabulary instruction. Teachers can use students' interest in digital platforms to introduce effective vocabulary learning strategies in a context that feels natural to them.

Moreover, this study raises awareness about the importance of helping students recognize the difference between formal and informal vocabulary. Teaching strategies should include examples from social media content, but also emphasize accuracy and appropriateness in formal communication.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers should explore the integration of educational social media content into their classroom instruction to make vocabulary learning more dynamic and engaging.
- Further research should examine how social media affects other areas of language learning, such as grammar, reading comprehension, or pronunciation and how to minimize potential challenges that arise from the use of social media for learning English.
- Workshops or awareness sessions can be organized to train students on how distinguish between informal and formal vocabulary used in different contexts.
- Teachers are encouraged to assess their students preferred learning tools, styles, and adapts their instruction methods accordingly, especially when addressing digital- native learners.

5.4 Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study faced several limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted over a short period of two non-consecutive weeks, which may have restricted the depth of data collected. Secondly, the study relied solely on questionnaire responses; no interviews or classroom observations were included. Including such methods could have enriched the findings and provided deeper insights into students' behavior and attitudes.

Additionally, the sample was limited to 80 students from a single faculty, which may affect the generalizability of the results to other contexts or universities. Finally, while the questionnaire was effective in highlighting trends, it could not fully capture the complex factors influencing vocabulary acquisition through social media.

Future Students are encouraged to include more diverse samples and use mixed methods, such as interviews or longitudinal studies, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in language learning.

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Appendix1

Questionnaire on The Influence of social media on English Vocabulary Acquisition among English Major Students at the Faculty of Education – Misurata University

Name (optional):

Level:

Gender: Male / Female

Instruction: This questionnaire is designed to understand the impact of social media on English vocabulary acquisition among English major students at Faculty of Education – Misurata University. Please read each statement carefully and tick (✓) the box that best represents your response.

Your answers will help us gain insight into how social media affects your vocabulary learning process. Your responses are valuable for understanding the positive or negative impact of social media on English vocabulary acquisition please make sure that your identity will be hidden and that you have the right to withdrew from participation at any time.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. You rely on social media as a primary source to learn English language.					
2. You notice an improvement in your English vocabulary due to continuous exposure to content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.					
3. Following pages or accounts specialized in teaching the English language on social media helps to expand your vocabulary.					
4. You think that watching content in English without translation helps you more in learning new vocabulary.					
5. Social media helps to expand your vocabulary more than textbooks.					
6. You believe that learning through social media helps you remember new words more easily than traditional learning.					
7. You think that social media provides an interactive environment that makes it easier for you to learn vocabulary compared to textbooks.					
8. You think that exposure to vocabulary through video images on social media makes the learning process more effective.					
9. You believe that learning vocabulary through social media may negatively impact word accuracy and usage in formal contexts.					
10. Using an informal vocabulary item learned from social media may lead you to using inappropriate words in meeting or informal Conversation					
11. You find it difficult to differentiate between formal and informal vocabulary items that you have learned from social media.					
12. You encountered a situation where you felt that the vocabulary you learned from social media was inaccurate or inappropriate.					
13. You use the words you have learned from social media in your daily conversations.					
14. You use the words you have learned from social media in your writing					
15. You like to follow accounts on social media that exclusively communicate in English so that you can communicate in English in the same way					
16. You notice a difference in your writing skill as you started using new vocabulary you learned from social media platforms.					