

INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATORS IN HIGHLIGHTING THEIR UNIQUE ROLE IN TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED ESL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the beliefs and perceptions of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers regarding the impact of social media on students' vocabulary acquisition and literacy development. A qualitative exploratory design was utilized, with data collected through structured interviews with nine ESL teachers. Thematic analysis was performed using NVivo software, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, and interpreted through the lens of Technology-Mediated Learning (TML). Teachers indicated that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, and TED Talks, positively influenced students' vocabulary and engagement with reading and writing. However, they also expressed concerns about the overuse of informal language and the lack of content curation. The teachers acted as digital gatekeepers, striving to balance technology integration with cultural sensitivity. The study underscores the need for structured digital literacy training for ESL teachers and advocates for the informed integration of social media into language curricula to maximize educational benefits. This research addresses a gap by providing localized, gender-sensitive insights from educators in a conservative context, highlighting their unique role in technology-enhanced ESL education.

Keywords: ESL Education, Social-Media, Vocabulary Acquisition, Literacy Skills, Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed communication and education, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching among youth and educators. Applications like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are increasingly becoming essential tools for language

learning and literacy development [1]. These platforms create a supportive environment for ESL learners, enabling them to enhance their vocabulary, writing fluency, and reading comprehension beyond the physical confines of a classroom. Research indicates that these tools promote self-directed learning and

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engagement, especially in areas with limited access to formal educational resources. For example, YouTube videos, WhatsApp group chats, and Facebook forums provide immersive language learning experiences. However, despite the growing interest in educational technology, the perspectives and experiences of ESL teachers, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan, remain underexplored [2-4].

In Pakistan, where English serves as a lingua franca, students struggle with vocabulary retention, coherent writing, and critical reading, as English is not commonly spoken. Traditional teaching methods often rely on rote grammar and teacher-centered approaches, which hinder active learning. In culturally conservative cities like Sialkot, teachers are seen as agents of change, combining traditional teaching methods with technology to address educational inequities. These teachers typically create digital content tailored for ESL learners, utilizing WhatsApp for vocabulary enhancement and Facebook for collaborative writing tasks. Their experiences highlight how technology is used not only for formal curriculum learning but also to empower students and build linguistic confidence in non-traditional settings. Existing studies primarily focus on students' behavior and technology use in general, lacking in-depth insights into how educators perceive the learning opportunities and challenges associated with social media. Analyzing social media's role in informal learning and providing thematic insights into gendered teaching strategies is crucial [5].

This emerging focus is significant as it intersects with gender, culture, and educational innovation. ESL teachers from developing countries offer valuable perspectives that are often overlooked. Their narratives can contribute to inclusive, context-sensitive approaches to language

education, extending beyond urban centers to peripheral and underserved areas. The aim of this study is to examine ESL teachers' perspectives on the role of social media in enhancing students' vocabulary, literacy skills, and informal learning [6]. The primary objectives are: (1) to assess how social media supports vocabulary development; (2) to explore its impact on reading and writing skills; and (3) to evaluate its role in facilitating English language learning outside the classroom. This research is important for capturing the experiences of educators in Pakistan's ESL landscape. By employing thematic analysis of structured interviews, the study offers context-specific insights that can inform curriculum design, teacher training, and digital pedagogy. Its findings may guide the development of more inclusive and effective language instruction strategies in similar South Asian contexts.

Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram have become vital tools for exposing ESL learners to real-time vocabulary in natural and contextual formats. Through videos, captions, conversations, and digital stories, learners encounter a diverse range of vocabulary, often acquiring new words incidentally through engagement with digital content outside formal instruction. The visual and auditory aspects of this content aid retention by connecting words to real-life meanings. Interactive features such as flashcards, quizzes, and digital games further enhance vocabulary learning, while gamified apps reinforce recall. Learners also practice vocabulary by producing and sharing content, memes, and captions, benefiting from contextual, repetitive, and socially relevant exposure [7]. However, vocabulary acquired through social media can often diverge from formal or academic standards. The use of informal language, slang, and abbreviations may impede

learners' ability to distinguish between different registers [8].

Additionally, the lack of content can expose users to incorrect usage. Nevertheless, when applied in structured learning contexts, social media offers significant potential. It contributes to ESL learners' vocabulary, reading, and writing development. Activities like chatting, commenting, and blogging facilitate frequent writing in English, providing practice with grammar, spelling, and syntax in authentic interactions. This makes writing less intimidating and more engaging. For reading, articles, blog posts, and subtitled videos provide consistent input across genres, which aids comprehension, scanning, and critical thinking. Captions and online discussions support both surface and in-depth text understanding. Tools such as digital journaling, collaborative editing, and e-portfolios promote structured writing practice and feedback, enhancing coherence and accuracy [9].

Peer editing also fosters collaborative learning through feedback exchange. However, high-quality qualitative research focused on teacher-oriented methods is becoming scarce. Social media's low cost and flexible nature suggest it has a role in educational settings. Nonetheless, the casual writing styles influenced by social media can hinder formal writing development. Overreliance on informal expressions, fragmented syntax, and autocorrect tools may negatively impact academic performance [10]. Therefore, explicit instruction and correction are necessary to balance digital literacy with formal writing skills. Informal learning, which occurs outside traditional classrooms, now predominantly happens through social media, where learners engage via mobile apps, online forums, and video platforms. This accessibility enables self-paced learning in familiar

environments, fostering autonomy as learners choose what and how they study. Personal interests, including music, cooking, or gaming, make language learning more relevant and enjoyable, while peer networks on social media promote shared learning experiences.

These communities enhance motivation, confidence, and commitment. However, informal learning may lack structure, leading to fragmented knowledge and digital distractions. Digital divides, such as limited access, poor connectivity, and low digital literacy, raise equity concerns. Nonetheless, for learners with limited resources, informal learning remains essential [11]. Teachers play a crucial role in leveraging the educational potential of social media. Their attitudes influence how social media is integrated into the curriculum, and many view it as beneficial for engagement, authentic use, and collaboration. Teachers appreciate the accessibility, flexibility, and potential of these platforms. However, perceptions vary based on demographics and institutional support. educators, particularly in conservative or rural contexts, may face barriers such as restricted access, safety concerns, and sociocultural limitations on digital use. Despite these challenges, many actively use platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and digital storytelling to engage students. Research on their experiences remains limited, but existing insights provide valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in digital learning [12].

Understanding educators' views is essential for inclusive and context-sensitive instructional design. This study is framed within the Technology-Mediated Learning framework, highlighting how digital tools facilitate language development. Several learning theories support this model. From a behaviorist perspective, likes and

comments serve as reinforcement for learners' use of English, encouraging repeated language use through instant feedback loops [13]. Cognitivism emphasizes mental processing, with social media helping users associate language with images and sounds for better recall. Constructivist theory underscores the learner's active role in producing content, such as blogs, videos, and discussions, which foster deeper understanding beyond mere engagement. The sociocultural perspective highlights the importance of interaction, community, and identity in learning, particularly for teachers whose instructional practices are often shaped by cultural expectations. While much research has focused on learners, few studies have explored the perspectives of educators, especially women in conservative or developing contexts [14-16].

Effective Vocabulary Learning

The teacher in the current study shared insights from participants regarding effective vocabulary learning through social media. Participants reported that they can acquire new terminology and vocabulary using various platforms, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other teaching tools. They noted that AI contributes to language improvement. Additionally, participants indicated that sharing knowledge on social media allowed them to learn new vocabulary and concepts they previously did not know. TED Talks were also mentioned as a valuable resource that positively impacts English language proficiency. Furthermore, participants employed computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to assign tasks aimed at enhancing their students' vocabulary [17, 18].

Learning Vocabulary via International Experts

Participants indicated that they acquire new terms, vocabulary, and academic content by

engaging with international experts. One participant specifically mentioned that watching expert videos on idiomatic phrases significantly improved her English vocabulary [19].

Lexicon Divergence

However, social media can sometimes create confusion regarding the meanings of various vocabulary and phrases, as language and expressions vary globally. In this context, one participant's teacher noted that some individuals used vocabulary that, while correct in their region, was inappropriate in other contexts. This highlights the global differences in the English language.

Low Effectiveness

On the contrary, one participant believed that social media is less effective for enhancing English vocabulary. Additionally, one participant teacher advised that students should not rely solely on social media content; they need to develop strong independent learning skills. Social media should be viewed as an additional resource, as much of the content requires careful filtering. Furthermore, the variety of accents encountered on social media platforms makes it challenging for participants to discern whether they are hearing standard English or non-native expressions [20].

Four key sub-themes derived from insights of teachers: effective vocabulary learning through interactive social media use, acquisition via international experts, concerns about low effectiveness due to digital distractions, and lexicon divergence resulting from informal language use. These themes, analyzed using NVivo, reflect nuanced perspectives on how social media influences ESL learners' vocabulary development [21].

Teachers' Perspectives About Social Media Role in Improving Reading and Writing Skill

It was presented the themes derived from teachers' perspectives on the role of social media in enhancing ESL learners' reading and writing skills. These themes include the optimization of reading and writing skills and the adverse effects on language use.

Optimization of Reading and Writing Skills

The study participants reported that social media has a positive impact on reading and writing skills. They noted that platforms facilitate learning new concepts and improving pronunciation. Additionally, social media AI applications and reading online newspapers also contribute to enhancing their reading and writing abilities [22-24].

Adverse Effects on Language

While social media can benefit reading and writing skills, it also negatively affects communication. Teachers observed that students often use inappropriate language, vague abbreviations, and mix different languages in their writing. For instance, they tend to write in Roman English and utilize unfamiliar shortcuts instead of complete words. Furthermore, participants indicated that students acquire improper word usage and unreliable information through social media, opting for informal language rather than adhering to academic writing standards. Another drawback is the tendency for students to waste time on trivial and ineffective content. Participants expressed concern that students primarily use social media for entertainment rather than educational purposes. Additionally, one participant pointed out that the reliability of the content on social media is questionable, suggesting that the credibility of speakers should be evaluated before learning from them [25].

It was displayed a word cloud generated using NVivo software, illustrating teachers' perspectives on the role of social media in improving reading and writing skills among

ESL learners. The larger words, such as "reading," "writing," "social," "media," "language," and "improving," represent the most frequently mentioned themes during the analysis. These terms highlight the emphasis on how social media aids in the development of reading comprehension and writing proficiency. Other words, like "pronunciation," "teacher," and "appropriate," reflect specific concerns regarding the importance of correct language use and the impact of social media content. This visualization provides an overview of the key areas discussed by teachers, underscoring their perspectives on both the opportunities and challenges of integrating social media into reading and writing skill development [26, 27].

Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Social Media Facilitation to ESL Learners in Learning

the English Language outside the Classroom

It was outlined the themes of teachers' perspectives on using social media to facilitate English language learning for ESL students outside the classroom. These themes include the benefits of continuous and regular access, productive interaction, and practical application.

Enhancement through Continuous and Regular Access

Most participating teachers advocate for the use of social media outside the classroom to improve students' communication skills. There are several advantages to this approach. Firstly, diverse content is accessible to anyone at any time. Updated social media applications help students develop communication skills by connecting them with competent international teachers. Additionally, regularly watching videos and language course talk shows enhances participants' communication abilities. Participants in the study noted that social media offers equal

learning opportunities for everyone. Moreover, learning via social media is quick and content is available 24/7, enabling people to learn anything at any time on their mobile phones [28].

Enhancement through Productive Interaction

Students can improve their English communication skills by actively engaging on social media; for instance, they can create audio/video content and vlogs, and interact with language experts. After-class discussion sessions on social media, particularly those involving artificial intelligence (AI), have been shown to enhance students' English language communication skills. Interacting with individuals from diverse cultures and languages at an international level also improves communication proficiency, especially in terms of accents. One participant noted that exposure to various English accents, such as British, American, Australian, and others from Europe, has influenced her understanding of phrase and clause structure [29].

Enhancement through Practical Application

According to the participating teachers, social media-related content can further refine communication skills. They emphasize the importance of students applying what they learn on social media after classes. Some teachers integrate social media into their post-class activities. However, the study also found that students often use social media primarily for entertainment, creating trivial videos and neglecting valuable learning content.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the perceptions of ESL teachers in Sialkot, Pakistan, regarding the role of social media in enhancing students' English vocabulary, literacy skills, and informal learning. The findings align closely with the research objectives,

providing nuanced insights into the benefits and drawbacks of using platforms such as Facebook, TED Talks, and WhatsApp for language acquisition. Analyzing the results through the Technology-Mediated Learning (TML) framework highlights how digital tools shape language experiences through interaction, feedback, and multimedia exposure. Furthermore, many studies lack qualitative depth and overlook the connections between vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and writing development in digital contexts [30]. By focusing on ESL teachers in Sialkot, this study addresses these gaps, investigating how social media both supports and complicates English language teaching and contributes to broader discussions on educational policy and pedagogy in culturally nuanced settings. The study uniquely centers on the voices of teachers from a conservative socio-cultural context, which is often underrepresented in ESL digital literacy research.

Social Media and Vocabulary Development

The teachers reported that students who engaged with platforms like Facebook and TED Talks developed broader vocabularies, particularly when interacting with academic content. They noted that daily social media use facilitated incidental vocabulary learning, as international influencers and motivational speakers expanded students' lexical awareness. Specifically, TED Talks were highlighted as valuable for acquiring formal vocabulary and an academic tone, it was confirmed TED's 95% lexical coverage with a 4,000-word vocabulary. Facebook pages contributed to building topic-specific vocabulary through repetition and interactive feedback. The cognitive benefits of visual-text pairings and repeated exposure support the cognitivist perspective, while real-time interactions and user-generated content reflect

constructivist learning. This blended approach to vocabulary acquisition that Facebook and Telegram enhanced vocabulary retention alongside social engagement. However, several teachers cautioned about the prevalence of informal slang and its misalignment with formal academic vocabulary lexical divergence due to digital informality [31]. A unique insight from this study is the active gatekeeping role of teachers, who consciously curated content for vocabulary instruction. It was inferred that need for guided selection, demonstrating how curated TED-based vocabulary can enhance academic learning when mediated by ed Teachers have noted that platforms like YouTube and blogs contribute significantly to literacy development, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, and reading fluency. It was confirmed that subtitled TED Talks improve learners' abilities to mimic intonation patterns and refine pronunciation. Consistent with these findings, studies have shown that students who engage with such platforms demonstrate measurable improvements in fluency and grammatical accuracy. Additionally, blogs have been found to promote reflective writing practices with the positive impact of blogging on students' writing fluency and self-expression. From a behaviorist perspective, the reinforcement loop created by comment sections, likes, and shares provides immediate feedback, facilitates error correction, and enhances language accuracy. The sociocultural perspective emphasizes how learners adopt language norms from digital communities [32].

It was emphasized that language norms are co-constructed socially through repeated interactions, a phenomenon echoed by teachers who have observed peer influences on students' writing styles. Despite these advantages, concerns persist regarding

students' reliance on auto-correct tools, frequent use of abbreviations, and excessive informality. The dual nature of digital literacy becomes apparent as students navigate between formal academic language and informal online registers. A key insight from the literature is the evolving responsibility of teachers to not only develop language skills but also guide students in maintaining appropriate linguistic registers. ESL teachers have emphasized their roles as digital monitors, helping learners balance the tension between informality and academic correctness in digital writing environments.

Social Media as an Informal Learning Tool

Regarding social media, ESL teachers unanimously agreed that it serves as an excellent tool for learning anytime and anywhere, promoting autonomy and real-world language applications. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and podcasts were seen as avenues for students to interact with authentic English beyond the confines of textbooks. This highlighted the importance of Facebook in language learning within institutional settings and demonstrated how vlogs and mobile technologies help learners express themselves and practice language skills [33]. The informal and participatory nature of social media fosters exploration of language and supports constructivist theories of self-driven, learner-centered acquisition.

Social Media and Literacy Skill Development

Many learners develop linguistic and cultural competence through interactions within digital communities and focus on the co-construction of norms and meanings in online discourse. However, some educators express concerns that such interactions can distract students, lack discipline, and present low-quality or incorrect language

models [34, 35]. An emerging viewpoint from research indicates that women teachers view informal online learning as an enhancement rather than a replacement for structured education. They emphasize the importance of integrating digital tools within a pedagogically guided framework that balances autonomy with accountability that advocated for structured autonomy in blended learning environments [36-39]. This perspective opens new avenues for professional training, equipping teachers to effectively manage informal learning spaces while maintaining academic rigor.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that social media plays a multifaceted role in ESL education, as perceived by teachers in Sialkot, Pakistan. The Technology-Mediated Learning (TML) paradigm highlights that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TED Talks facilitate vocabulary acquisition, enhance literacy, and promote informal learning outside traditional educational environments. Grounded in constructivist and cognitivist theories, teachers noted that visual-text pairing, real-time interaction, and user-generated content enabled students to achieve a deeper understanding and improved long-term retention. Additionally, it can be argued that learning speed was enhanced in a behaviorist manner, with social media tools acting as feedback mechanisms through likes, comments, and shares.

From a sociocultural perspective, educators facilitated language exposure by aligning content with cultural norms and linguistic expectations. They also served as digital gatekeepers, contextualizers, and motivators for learner engagement, extending their role beyond traditional teaching interactions. While teachers recognized the educational advantages of social media, they expressed concerns

regarding issues like digital informalism, misinformation, and student distractions. Thus, social media presents both opportunities and challenges in pedagogy. This study holds significant theoretical and practical value, as it illustrates the application of TML in a conservative setting and highlights the dual instructional and cultural roles of ESL educators. Future curricula and teacher training programs should incorporate digital learning strategies to promote more equitable and context-sensitive language education.

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