

Perceptions of Pakistani University Teachers About The Influence of Popular Social Media on Their Spoken Language: A Sociolinguistic Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out how Pakistani university instructors perceive the effects of utilizing well-known social media sites on their spoken English. These days, social media platforms are important places for people to engage with one another. Language use has been profoundly impacted by social media in several ways, including writing and speaking. New forms of written language, such as blogs, tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram status updates, and more, have proliferated since the internet's inception and the substantial growth of social media networks. Globally, people use social media platforms to communicate interactively. The current study is exploratory in nature and has employed qualitative techniques to gather information through interviews. The study examined the alterations or patterns, inclusions, and exclusions that university instructors see in their spoken English that are attributable to the impact of widely used social media on their spoken language. Data was collected through interviews and was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clark (2016) thematic analysis model. The study finds that the social media can be considered a strong addition to spoken English development among university teachers in Pakistan. Social media can be used to add value to language skills and pedagogical performance; however, when used irresponsibly, it can breach the rules of formal language.

Key words: University teachers, spoken language, social media

Introduction

Social media's beginning has significantly changed our lives. In recent years, it has affected people's lives all around the world. People's lives are being impacted by social media in a variety of ways. It has altered people's perspectives on life. Additionally, it has altered how people view other beliefs. According to Zhou (2021), social media has significantly impacted language acquisition. It has altered how people approach learning a language. Additionally, because teachers use a variety of social media platforms, social media has also impacted language instruction. The way individuals utilize language for pedagogical and instructional goals is altered by their attachment to social media platforms (Torchinava, 2023).

The extensive undergoing of popular social media has been observed to affect the general language proficiency, either positively or negatively in language development of the learners. Research indicates that using social media achieves language learning by supplying the learner with high-frequency language input, communication opportunities, and motivation, which may lead to the enhancement of vocabulary, reading, listening, and speaking ability (Al-Jarf, 2014; Ainin et al., 2015). By interacting with various media and socializing in real time on applications like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, the learners can learn to use the language in contexts that have a purpose and facilitate incidental and informal learning (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012). Nonetheless, studies have shown that using social media too much can also affect formal language knowledge in a bad way, because the common use of non-standard spelling and short forms as well as unnatural grammar structure may be transferred to scholarly writing and lower the grammatical competence (Crystal, 2011). In general, available studies provide a positive outcome that social media could be used to improve language proficiency through exposure and interaction, although it requires the use of guidance and balance in terms of social media usage in addition to receiving formal language teaching.

The purpose of this study is to find out how Pakistani university instructors perceive the effects of utilizing well-known social media sites on their spoken English. According to Muftah (2024) social media has a substantial influence on language use in

many of different ways, such as speaking and writing. This study will investigate the positive and negative effects of social media use on university teachers' spoken English. The language used by teachers has a significant impact on their students' language acquisition. Teachers' word choice, pronunciation, and grammar have a direct impact on students' language development. (Nadeem, Siddique, and Yasmin, 2020). Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher will examine how university instructors perceive the influence of prominent social media platforms on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, code-mixing, code-switching, and other areas. Thematic analysis of the interviews shed light on how social media use affects the participants' language.

Statement of the Problem

Research on university instructors' perceptions related to the impact of social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram on their spoken English language proficiency, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and pronunciation in Pakistan, is inadequate. Therefore, by examining how Pakistani university instructors perceive the influence of these social media sites on their spoken language, this exploratory study seeks to bridge this research gap.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the perception of Pakistani university teachers about the impact of popular social media on their spoken English.
2. To study the specific trends in spoken English of university teachers that can be attributed to the influence of popular social media.

Research Questions

The researcher intended to get answers to the following questions:

1. How do Pakistani university instructors perceive the impact of popular social media on their spoken English?
2. What specific trends do university teachers perceive in their spoken English language that can be attributed to the influence of popular social media?

Literature Review

Social media has become a part of a routine, most prominently for young people. Social media allows for casual, real-time conversations and real-time communications that cut over regional boundaries. Using technology, communication has evolved into a platform where speech is mimicked by written language and where formal and informal expressions coexist in a mixed language environment. (Sikandar, 2025)

Muftah (2021) investigated the effects of social media on English learning at the undergraduate level at Najran University. In 2020, she enrolled 166 students who were majoring in English language studies. The students did not directly engage with English speakers because Arabic was their first language. To observe the beneficial effects of different social media platforms during the epidemic, the authors employed a closed-ended questionnaire. Thirteen percent of students gave unfavorable answers to the question about social media use, while over eighty-six percent gave positive answers. According to the investigation's findings, 37% of students used three different media platforms, while 26% of students could only effectively use one. Sixty-one percent of students said they only use social media for academic purposes. 31% acknowledged using social media to communicate and converse with their pals. According to 28% of students, networking is used to make friends all over the world. 19% of students used social media as a gaming platform. 73% of students believe WhatsApp to be a useful tool for English language study. Facebook was chosen by 53% of students, followed by Twitter (31%), Google (27%), and Instagram (22%). 32 Five students described how networking has helped them with speaking, listening, and vocabulary. While 14% of students reported an improvement in their reading skills, 41% of students reported an improvement in their writing skills. According to 14% of students, these websites have been very beneficial for their academic work. 18% of students, however, refuted this since they did not consider how the media affected their academic performance. Overall, the author has concluded that using social media has become a necessary component of the learning process and is now unavoidable. Students have begun to rely on the internet currently. In addition to gathering knowledge, they improved their

speaking abilities and vocabulary in English. As a result, technology has replaced teachers as the primary source of knowledge.

Mahmud et al. (2022) carried out a descriptive study on fifty English professors from Indonesia's Makassar University. The primary goal of the study was to find out how English instructors felt about using social media. In addition to their impression of social media's engagement, the study's researcher aimed to examine the effects of social media on the teaching process, specifically in the context of English. The usage of social media as a platform for the teaching process was seen favorably by English teachers, according to a Google form survey. Six distinct social media platforms were chosen for the investigation. WhatsApp was the most widely utilized platform, with a maximum frequency level of 17 users. Speaking was shown to be the most taught skill through social media, followed by reading, when the four fundamental abilities of English were covered. When it came to social media, listening was the least understood skill.

Numerous social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Twitter (X), have evolved into more than just instruments for communication in Pakistan.

Shahid et al. (2025) carried out research to study the Influence of social media on English Vocabulary in Pakistan. It is stated that various social media platforms are also catalysts for lexical innovation. Their study looked at how social media affected Pakistani youth and young adults' learning, adaptability, and hybridization of English vocabulary. The study used a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, content analysis, and semi-structured interviews, to examine how social media influences the use of emojis, hashtags, abbreviation culture, neologisms, and emojis as semantic tools, as well as the phenomenon of code-switching between regional languages, English, and Urdu. According to the findings, people who use social media frequently acquire a unique digital vocabulary that differs from standard English usage and is characterized by informality, technology analogies, and sociolects.

To sum up the topic above, it may be argued that social media has changed spoken language, especially English. In addition to being an international language, it is also the most often used

language online. People with various dialects and cultures utilize it in their own unique ways. Therefore, social media accidentally causes changes, yet these changes are accepted globally. This also illustrates how social media has shaped a language.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to find out how Pakistani university instructors perceive the impact of popular social media on their spoken English. The current study is exploratory in nature and employed semi-structured interviews as a qualitative approach to data collection. The population of this study consists of university teachers teaching in Pakistani universities. The sample comprised of university teachers teaching in two federal capital universities including National university of Modern Languages and Behria University.

Convenience sampling techniques was used to select 20 university teachers consisting of ten males and ten females. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to collect data only from those teachers who will be easily available as university teachers may have their own schedule and busy routine. Finding out how social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp affect various aspects of spoken language, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar usage, contractions, fluency devices, code-mixing and code-switching, and the use of formal and informal language by university instructors, is the goal of the current study.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data containing questions related to the influence of using popular social media on teachers' spoken language. The interviews contained questions related to various spoken language aspects such as pronunciation, use of vocabulary, grammar, slang, informal words and expression, code-switching, and code-mixing etc. The data collected through semi-structured interviews is qualitatively analyzed.

The current study employed thematic analysis model of Braun and Clark (2016). This model comprehensively supports qualitative data in thematic analysis. The model suggests six phase thematic analysis of interviews, which are as follows:

1. Familiarizing with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Naming themes
6. Writing analysis

The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to highlight and explain various different aspects of popular social media linked to the spoken language of Pakistani university teachers.

Data Analysis

This section presents detailed analysis of the data that is interviews. The present research aimed to analyze the perception of university teachers in Pakistan about the impact of popular social media on the spoken language of. Twenty interviews were recorded to recognize the perception of university teachers in Islamabad, Pakistan. The interviews were thematically analyzed using model of Braun and Clark (2016). The thematic analysis of the interviews demonstrated various themes including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, code-switching/mixing, use of informal language, and shifting style. The detailed analysis of the themes mentioned is as below.

The respondents said that social media has had a positivity use on the pronunciation of the English language mostly because it has exposed the users to various accents, expressions and the natural pronunciation models across the world. Being non-native English speakers, most of them had a challenge with pronunciation at the beginning, but constant use of such sites as YouTube, Facebook, Tik Tok, Twitter, and WhatsApp taught them proper pronunciations, taught those to speak more fluently, enriched their vocabulary, and gave them confidence to use the English language. Introduced to influencers, video lessons, live practice, and pronunciation guide helped learners to adjust to the world pronunciation standards, change the accent to more American one, as well as use new words and trends in the speech. Nonetheless, a few respondents had an opposite opinion and said that social media had minimum or no effect on their pronunciation because they did not actively use these platforms in learning, noting that its effect is both good and bad with respect to use.

According to the respondents, social media has greatly enhanced their vocabulary by providing them with knowledge of words that are trending, phrases, slang, idioms, and alternative meaning of the existing words, which are slowly finding their way into their daily verbal language. Social networking sites (Facebook, YouTube, video clip content with captions and subtitles, English films and English-oriented channels) have enabled them to acquire and remember new words such as selfie, hashtag, viral, and hairstyles, among premature heteronyms and colloquial terms. Their continuous exposure to memes, hashtags, global communities, and discussions on the Internet has improved their knowledge of the modern English language, sense of humor, and informal communication, as well as reading ability and the usage of vocabulary. Even though the respondents also admitted that social media promotes too much slang and colloquial expressions, they agreed highly on that it contributes heavily in building vocabulary and connecting people despite their widely varying language and cultural backgrounds, but that hinges on the usage.

The respondents claimed that social media has also had an observable impact on the grammar usage of spoken English, as it encourages more casual, conversational, and shorter forms of speech that are predetermined by fast communication, characters, emojis, hashtags, and trending phrases. This exposure was perceived by many to promote easily circumventing sentence constructions, contractions, and loose grammar in often spoken dialect, and the preservation of professional and academic grammar in professional settings. Simultaneously, some participants also reported the positive outcomes stating that websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and grammar-related websites, including BBC Learning English and Grammarly, served as helpful tools to fix the rules that were previously misunderstood and become more aware of the way verb tenses, word constructions, and correct speech should be used. Nonetheless, a few respondents complained that irregular and unsuitable grammar with social media may be confusing, affecting their punctuation habits, and adversely impact learners, especially those learners who use erroneous patterns of language by copying thus making it more difficult to develop correct grammar without the help of a guided learning environment.

The participants mostly concurred that social media has made great contributions to code switching and code mixing in their verbal communication as it enables them to interact easily with people of different languages and social status. Regular time on the internet has resulted in situations when a person can easily convert between languages, especially Urdu and English both in their daily lives and in the classroom settings where it is not uncommon to use it to improve clarity and efficiency in communication. Most observed that even though people have been using the code-switching concept before the advent of social media, the rate has escalated now because of being exposed to language and expressions and the use of different speaking styles on the internet. The practice has made them more comfortable using language mixture as a means of communication and psychological intervention to be able to identify and relate better across the cultures. Nevertheless, some of them considered too much code-switching too confusing and stressed on the fact that one should use it depending on language skill, situation, and listeners.

The interviewees had divided opinions regarding the role of social media in the usage of formal and informal language in the classroom, although most of them recognized the powerful role played by the social media. A lot of people believe that social media has facilitated the use of informal language, making communication in the classroom more relaxed, creative and interesting and this helps to avoid any form of hesitation by the students and enables them to communicate effectively. Contact with modern manifestation has widened the usage of words and it has changed the vocabulary of teachers, and this has seen the substitution of old vocabularies with new ones. Nevertheless, many of the respondents saw this effect in a negative perspective that they believe, overuse of informal languages, slangs, emojis, colloquialisms etc. may provide students with a loose grip of the proper usage of English and fail to foster the academic language learning among them. Although there was a respondent who found no influence, the entire response indicated that social media has caused a shift in formal and informal communication that a teacher should be aware of the two and develop awareness among the students to ensure that the appropriate language is used in the academic context.

The participants had different personal experiences although many of them concurred that social media has had a significant influence on personal speech by imposing new trends to expression, vocabulary and the speaking style. Due to the exposure to internet, slang, abbreviations, contractions, hashtags, emoticons, as well as viral phrases, people have promoted faster, shorter, and less formal communication, frequently alternating longer discourses with shorter and more meaningful sentences. Several respondents claimed vocabulary, confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and even accent improvement, citing the influence of particular training by having an impactful engagement with influencers, bloggers, movies, subtitles, and trending material on the social Internet. The internet culture has introduced new meanings of the current words and the usage of digital slang terms which include OMG, LOL, TUSM, hashtag blessed, and google it among others, which have become common lingo in daily conversations. Nevertheless, few of the respondents reported a minimal effect, meaning that the degree of the influence of social media varies according to the interest and activity of a particular individual on online trends.

Generally, majority of the participants perceived that social media has increased their English spoken fluency by exposing them to various linguistic styles, accents, vocabularies, and communicative habits that consequently made them more fluent, effective in pronunciation, confidence in classroom instruction. The frequent exposure to diverse online sources, global online communities, and current trends assisted them to acclimatize themselves to varied language contexts, widen vocabulary, and enhance listening abilities. Social media was regarded as a useful addition to conventional language learning, which stimulated creativity, cultural awareness, and the practical use of language, however, the participants pointed at the necessity of balance. Some participants expressed their concern as to the adverse effect on grammar created by the popularity of informal and inappropriate language on the Internet, nonetheless the majority acknowledged the existence of negative consequences but stated that overall influence of the social media on the proficiency of spoken English is positive and it depends on the conscious usage of the tool.

Conclusion

Based on the perceptions that university teachers hold in Pakistan regarding the role of popular social media in designing and developing spoken English, their roles are more than just that; their effects are complex. In general, the participants believed that social media is a resourceful and useful tool in linguistics that has had a positive effect on pronunciation, development of vocabulary, fluency, confidence, and communicative flexibility. The prolonged exposure to various accents, real-life models of speech and the world content proved to help the teachers to perfect the pronunciation, widen the lexical base and be more confident to use English in the classroom conversation.

Social media has also made it easy to get acquainted with the modern terms of expression, the changing meanings of words, and the styles of communication of the world, which explains why teachers can also remain linguistically relevant and impressive in the academic environment. Simultaneously, the results also point to a discernible movement to less formal language usage, such as loose grammatical constructions, abbreviations, colloquialisms, and code-switching, mostly associated with the form of communication via the Internet. Although a lot of the participants found these changes to be good in encouraging interaction, creativity, and engagement of learners, there were opinions raised about the possible negative state of grammatical correctness and unclear distinction between the formal and informal languages in academic settings. The further spread of code-switching and code-mixing, especially between Urdu and English, was widely regarded as a pragmatic and effective measure towards better comprehension, but overdependence on the same was by some regarded to be confusing.

To sum up, the social media can be considered a strong addition to spoken English development among university teachers in Pakistan. It mainly depends on its conscious and critical use to have its effect. Social media can be used to add value to language skills and pedagogical performance; however, when used irresponsibly, it can breach the rules of formal language. Thus, there is a need to employ a mediated and knowledgeable approach that would ensure the most out of its gains and less of its demerits in academic and professional communication.

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