



Social Media Influences the Process of Vocabulary Learning in Kurdish EFL University Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the role of social media in vocabulary development and language acquisition among Kurdish EFL university students. It sought to demonstrate the benefits of using social media to increase vocabulary and acquire new languages while also providing evidence of the significance of social media platforms in this process. A legitimate market research approach was employed to determine the level of language acquisition among English language department students at Halabja University and the role of social media in this context. The quantitative method was used, and a survey questionnaire was designed after getting validity and reliability; 120 participants were selected from Halabja University through Google Forms. The findings suggest that social media is a powerful tool for vocabulary learning among Kurdish EFL university students. However, further research is necessary to explore the specific features of social media that facilitate vocabulary learning and investigate the effectiveness of different social media platforms. Additionally, future studies should consider incorporating qualitative methods to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of social media on language acquisition among Kurdish EFL university students.

Keywords: EFL students, Halabja University, vocabulary learning, social media, English language department

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Introduction

Social media has recently become very popular for communicating and sharing ideas. The process of learning vocabulary increased while social media developed in society. Language is an essential communication tool used in many aspects of life. It is a language used for teaching, learning, exchanging information, and speaking with friends, family, and coworkers (Khan et al., 2016). Individuals utilize social media on various electrical and rechargeable devices, including tablets, smartphones, and computers, to easily share their views with others. Its primary purposes are global awareness and communication. Compared to traditional sources, social media is more accessible, usable, and convenient for users, making it helpful for communication and information exchange (Pavlick et al., 2015). Social media is essential for learning English since it allows students to practice reading, writing, and vocabulary by reading new texts and phrases. In our Nation, teaching English is centered on two components. The first one is vocabulary, and the second is structure. The new methods for teaching English as a second language are based on the idea that understanding a language's structures is more crucial than acquiring its vocabulary. We need enough language to utilize them since we cannot attain shape in a vacuum. To master a language, one must become fluent in its basic vocabulary and grammar. On the other hand, Different vocabulary acquisition techniques help EFL and ESL students learn new words. These techniques include using images such as "a picture is worth a thousand words" to label items, such as affixing a label with the word "desk" on the furniture. They have been characterized by several research studies, such as those by Gu & Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), and Nation & Nation (2001). Gu & Johnson (1996) emphasized using discovery and consolidation techniques. The discovery category includes social and social strategy subsets, whereas the consolidation category includes social, cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategy subsets Schmitt (1997).

Besides, social media platforms, including Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, google, and many other platforms-controlled societies, especially students, play a vital role in learning new vocabulary. Sometimes, because of the frequent repetition of icons and words inside those platforms, people can use them daily and replace those words instead of their mother languages. This research will discuss social media's impact on vocabulary learning in Kurdish EFL among university students.

Research problem

The main problem is that people think social media is a time-wasting platform that has less effect on learning new vocabulary. However, with social media, people can pick up new languages. In general, this study will talk about how social media affects picking up new words. Further, social media substantially affects the vocabulary learning process of Kurdish EFL among university students. Furthermore, there needs to be more understanding of social media benefits among people who think it is a time waste for students.

Research objectives

1. To assess the impact of social media on the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary words among language learners.
2. To evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of using social media for vocabulary learning among language learners.
3. To identify the most effective strategies for incorporating social media into vocabulary learning activities.

Research questions

1. What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of using social media for vocabulary learning among language learners?
2. What are the most effective strategies for incorporating social media into vocabulary learning activities?
3. How does social media impact the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary words?

Aim of the study

This study intends to educate students on the advantages of social media for expanding vocabulary and learning new languages. Also, it works to prove accurate data to society about the importance of social media platforms in learning vocabulary for Kurdish EFL university students. This study also conducts actual market research. It aims to identify the level of learning language among students compared to past years and the role of social media in this case.

Literature Review

Smartphone

Smartphones provide more features than conventional mobile phones, such as multimedia players and access to various online materials. The mobile phone industry has evolved as a result of the growth of the app business. As an illustration, mobile apps that direct users to websites may boost website traffic for website owners (such as portal sites), and individual developers may discover new cash streams (Verkasalo et al., 2010). Users may personalize their mobile devices and services by downloading the mobile applications they choose, suggesting that they have more influence over the mobile environment

Users may have extremely personalized smartphones and services by utilizing the different functionalities of smartphones and having the applications they choose. Web services are becoming more and more customized, and mobile services are regarded as more personalized than web-based services since a mobile phone is connected to a specific user (Jarvenpaa & Tomak, 2003). Users of smartphones may tweak their apps and get highly personalized mobile services (Tossell et al., 2012). Users may utilize smartphones to accomplish many objectives due to their highly individualized character; thus, rather than merely embracing a specific device, customers choose what a smartphone is for themselves. Smartphone users who can set up apps on their devices can extensively customize mobile services (Tossell et al., 2012). Due to its ability to be incredibly personalized, users may utilize smartphones to do various tasks. Instead of unquestioningly embracing a specific product, customers may determine what a smartphone is for themselves.

Information systems (IS) research has placed a strong emphasis on identifying the "why" behind user behavior (Koufaris, 2002). In the research stream, factors like usage intention, contentment, and return intention are critical for understanding primary results since they relate to users' motivations or aspirations (Koufaris, 2002). Traditional adoption research has yet to show much interest in the variety of values customers seek despite helping encourage users to embrace IT employment (Bagozzi, 2007). This might be one of the reasons why conventional IT users think of themselves as passive users who respond to technology rather than as active users who make decisions about what technology to employ (Bagozzi, 2007). The passive-user approach has limitations when understanding users' IT behavior in smartphones since users build their own devices by selecting their apps (Olson & Reynolds, 1983). In other words, the conventional adoption paradigm must adequately explain the variety of consumer values associated with smartphones since

it ignores them. Expanding our understanding of traditional adoption models might be necessary to fully comprehend the adoption of user-empowering IT. This research will examine the many mobile activities users engage in to demonstrate how user-empowering IT works. To analyze user values in IT, the research uses a means-end chain (MEC) methodology (Olson & Reynolds, 1983).

Learning vocabulary through a Smartphone

Over the past 10 years, the usage of mobile phones for vocabulary learning has significantly expanded, highlighting how these technologies may aid L2 learners in language acquisition (Lu, 2008). Initially, the research utilized the Short Message Service (SMS) function of mobile phones quite a bit. Several experiments, such as those by Zhang et al. (2011) and Lu's (2008) investigation, contrasted different forms of more conventional training to SMS-based vocabulary instruction; both attempted to compare SMS messages to written papers. In the above studies, SMS groups fared better than control groups that received printed information on the post-test; however, delayed post-tests revealed no statistically significant difference. According to Suwantarathip & Orawiwatnakul (2015), the effectiveness of SMS messages provided to students outside of the classroom vs in-class vocabulary assignments over 6 weeks was compared in a similar experimental study. According to the study, individuals who participated in the experimental group fared better than those who did not.

In line with Saran & Seferolu's (2010) and Alemi's (2012) experiment, Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) was employed in addition to SMS's text messaging features. The experimental group received vocabulary instruction through SMS and MMS messages containing multimedia, including graphics and sounds, as opposed to the control group, which received classroom instruction for the same vocabulary. The post-test results of the experimental group were unquestionably better than those of the control group. When evaluating the effects of SMS and hardback dictionaries on academic vocabulary learning, there was no discernible difference between the two groups' vocabulary knowledge on post-tests; however, the SMS group fared better on the delayed post-test. Additionally, it was revealed in all of this study that students were in favor of utilizing SMS to learn vocabulary.

For the first two weeks of the first four-week trial, students received brief vocabulary lessons through emails sent to them on their mobile devices, and for the last two weeks, they received them on desktops. In the second trial, students were divided into two groups; one group received emails, while the other received printed materials containing the same information (Alemi et al., 2012). Students said using mobile phones was more effective than using computers or printed materials and preferred it. In the last experiment, a website that the authors and their students had created to teach idioms was analyzed. Idioms utilized in multimedia and taught with examples were known as idioms (sounds, images, videos). The authors requested feedback on the website from a group of students using phones and PDAs as mobile devices. Students discovered that using the website on mobile devices was substantially more "effective" and entertaining (Thornton & Houser, 2005). Students claimed that mobile phones were more efficient than computers and printed materials. Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) performed a study on vocabulary acquisition to compare the effectiveness of using flashcards vs. mobile devices. The experimental group considerably outperformed the control group on the post-test multiple-choice questions in their research, highlighting a difference between the two groups. The control group was taught the identical phrases using flashcards, whereas the experimental group received the exact words over six weeks using a mobile application.

Stockwell (2010) is another example who examined how students performed academically, how quickly tasks were completed, and how much time was spent during three years between 2007 and 2009. The study's results revealed no statistically significant differences in student test scores. However, most students chose to use computers rather than mobile devices, with the usage of mobile devices increasing in 2009 (Stockwell, 2010).

Effect of social media on learning new vocabulary words

The use of social media is rising, and it is becoming more critical in our personal and professional lives; social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook may be used by students who need extra assistance with schoolwork (Patel, 2013). Students from different areas who overuse social media may easily acquire current knowledge and information (Patel, 2013). Nowadays, Facebook is a well-liked website and a fantastic platform utilized by people worldwide. It gives its users the freedom to post their talks about current events online and engage in online debates with one another (Patel, 2013). People may now interact and communicate more successfully because of social media platforms. According to Jenali Patel's research, "Facebook can improve communication and connection amongst users in a simple and accessible method" (Patel, 2013, p74). Additionally, users are allowed free reign to learn words in their own way and apply them however they see fit. The vocabulary of ESL students may be significantly increased by watching YouTube videos. Language learners find it more challenging to communicate, read, write, and speak the target language since learning a foreign language is difficult (Patel, 2013). Videos on YouTube can be essential for vocabulary development; the advancement of technology "provides new opportunities for language practice and performance evaluation" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2011, p12). Second language acquisition has advanced significantly with the internet's development and the rise of social media; Facebook and YouTube are only two examples of the many prominent social media platforms (McLuhan, 1964). They give people worldwide the opportunity or means to interact, exchange thoughts and information, and educate one another about their own cultures and societies. Indeed, they offer a platform on which individuals from all areas of the world may post their movies and enable others to learn from them. The world has become a "global community," and the media now conveys the message (McLuhan, 1964). Furthermore, it allows individuals from other cultures to interact, communicate, and advance their cultural ideals; people can learn about various cultures and languages since there is so much diversity there that it just takes reciprocal interaction for them to do so (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

For instance, by speaking with locals or reading blogs and comments left by other users, students may learn English anywhere in the world. Social networking is one of the most practical tools for ESL students to quickly learn English. Internet platforms known as "social media" include websites, applications, and usage patterns that promote participation, community growth, collaboration, and sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While using the internet and email system to study a language, students may have more opportunities for genuine dialogues (Warschauer, 2012). "the difficult task for instructors to plan individual and group activities utilizing online resources, and also commended the advantages of students seeking for them and therefore learning more directly and effectively about diverse cultures" (Nader, 1996, p14). Internet usage has grown in importance in today's classrooms for young people; according to Kamal (2013), learners utilize the Internet as a crucial study tool outside the classroom. It is becoming increasingly common for them to use it in class. Students' reading habits have changed from reading on paper to reading online; people from various viewpoints and backgrounds contribute their brilliant ideas, knowledge, and precious thoughts through articles and films; according to Kamal, "conversation is the best method for teaching vocabulary," and "we can easily recognize that through social media contact, students learn more quickly than through paper-based learning" (Kamal, 2013, p18). The secret to effectively communicating with others is more than just the grammar of the learned language; knowing more words gives our brains additional resources to prepare or analyze situations and more methods to think about things (Kamal, 2013). In the article " Impact of Social Media on ESL Students' Learning Performance, " additional researchers claim that "Students who use social networking tools in their coursework are active and very engaged; they allegedly made greater advancements in general education " (Anankulladetch, 2017, p11). Furthermore, adopting Facebook as a platform for microblogging can improve student connections and promote communication among them (Revere

& Kovach, 2011). Moreover, Facebook assignments encourage active learning and let teachers give quick feedback. Teachers may anticipate improved levels of education and excellent classroom management by successfully integrating social media as learning resources in their classrooms (Revere & Kovach, 2011).

Using social media among university students

YouTube and Flickr are used to share visual content, Facebook and LinkedIn are used for social networking, Wikipedia focuses on creating shared information, and Twitter is used for microblogging (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016). Social media's broad use and potential have led researchers to strongly recommend adopting it in education (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Roblyer et al., 2010). According to Greenhow & Robelia (2009), teachers have utilized Facebook and YouTube "both within and outside of classrooms to achieve instructional objectives, such as publishing instructive films or student learning tools" (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009, p20). This move has resulted from the popularity of digital media among students, who use it to augment and enhance their classroom learning owing to its ease and speed of communication. Therefore, the students' medium functionality and environment influence user attitudes. Refers to students' chances to interact with one another in English as a second language. These opportunities will help to shape how often they turn to social media to meet their communication needs in appropriate contexts. With limited face-to-face language engagement, teachers might encourage students to use the Internet to develop their communicative English language skills (Chartrand, 2012). Chartrand (2012) argued that students' learning preferences influence how and to what extent they use social media. Balakrishnan et al. (2015) examine the effect of various learning styles on people's intentions to use social media. Because using social media for studying is a growing trend among college students, the researchers concentrated on the factors affecting students' intentions to do so.

Methodology

Research procedure

This study was made using a quantitative method. In this research, the priority is for quantitative methods because most questions are quantitative. Statistical tools and Microsoft Excel were used to analyze the data. Google Forms were also used to conduct surveys and collect data online. In addition, data were categorized using Google Forms. The data were collected from university students studying in the English language department of Halabja University.

Research instrument

The data for this study was collected using Google Forms, an essential instrument of this research. Further, Microsoft Excel was used to rearrange the data and understand the overall results of participants. Furthermore, statistical tools were used to determine the consequences for participants. Research Gate and Google Scholar were used to reach and collect the literature part.

Pilot study

More than the data of this research will be needed for a large study. This study will be reliable if it expands by collecting 4000 face-to-face data from all Kurdistan universities. The samples can be divided among cities, with 1000 for prominent cities and 500 for small cities and towns. Two thousand data can be collected from both Sulaymaniyah and Erbil. Besides, 500 data can be collected from Kirkuk, Kalar, Chamchamal, or Duhok. The more extensive study needs different techniques for analyzing data, such as benchmarking by analytic hierarchy process to offer a coherent framework for a desired choice by quantifying its criteria and alternative possibilities and tying those

parts to the broader purpose. Stakeholders use pair-wise comparisons to compare the importance of criteria two at a time.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the age discrimination of participants. Here, most participants were between 18 and 20 years old, the youngest age group among participants. Further, 21-25 age group participants scored as this study's second largest age group. Then, the 26-30 age group participants scored 12 percent in overall data collection. According to the chart, most participants agree with the youngest age group.

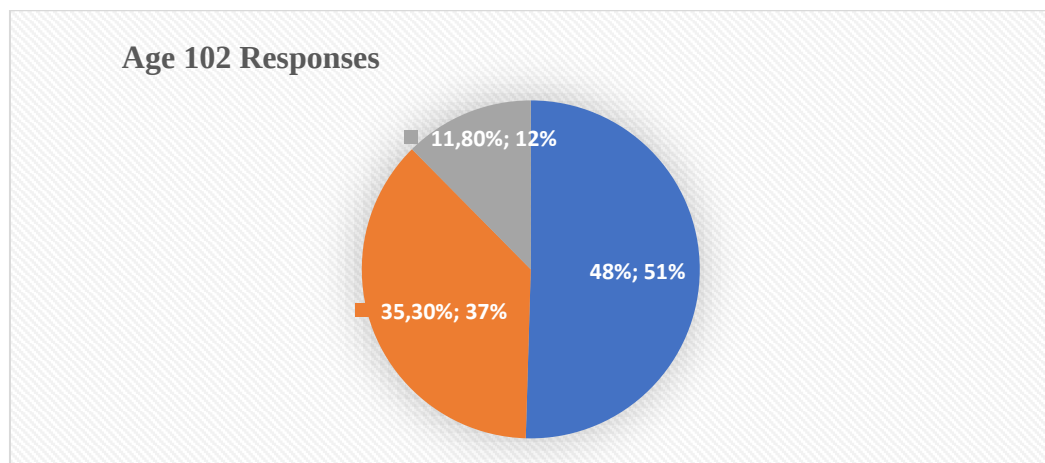


Figure 1. Age of participants

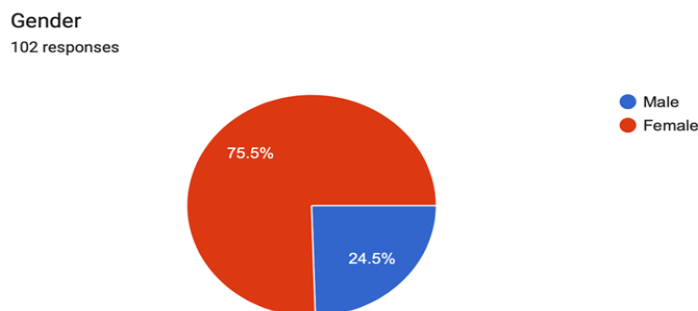


Figure 2. Gender of participants

Figure 2 determines the gender of the participants. Based on the results, 24 percent of participants were male, while 76 percent were female. The pie chart above shows that the number of female participants is more than male participants, which highlights that female participants are more than male participants in responding to social media's impact on learning vocabulary.

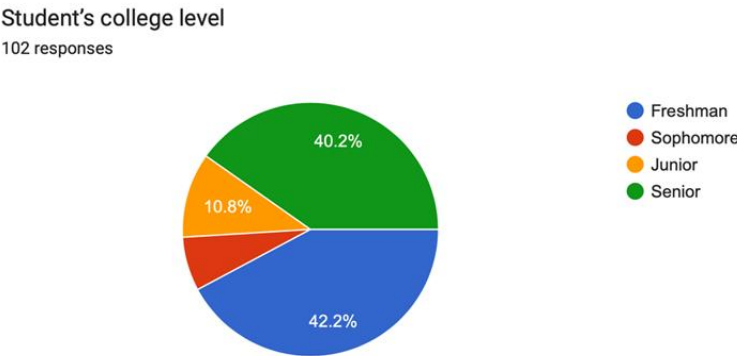


Figure 3. Stages of students

Figure three emphasizes that most participants were first-year students, accounting for 42 percent. Senior students occupy 40 percent of the total data, while 10 percent of the overall data belonged to junior students from the third stage.

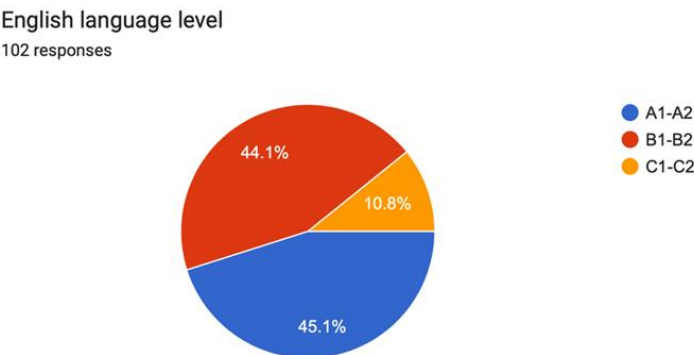


Figure 4. English language level of participants

Figure four determines that 45 percent have A1 and A2 level certificates in the English language. On the other hand, 11% of students have B1 and B2 certificates, while the rest, 44%, have B1 and B2 certificates in English. Most of the participants are very professional in English, while a few are beginners.

Do you use the English language outside of the university atmosphere?
102 responses

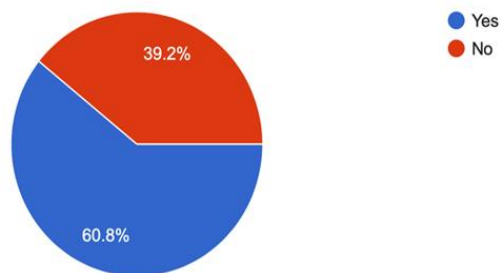


Figure 5. uses the English language outside of the university participants.

Figure five emphasizes using the English language outside of the university atmosphere. It shows that nearly 61 percent of participants use English outside of the university atmosphere, which is more than half of the participants. On the other hand, 39 percent of participants did not use the English language outside of the university atmosphere. This result is excellent because participants are happy with using it, which increases their knowledge of the language.

Which social media platform do you use?

102 responses

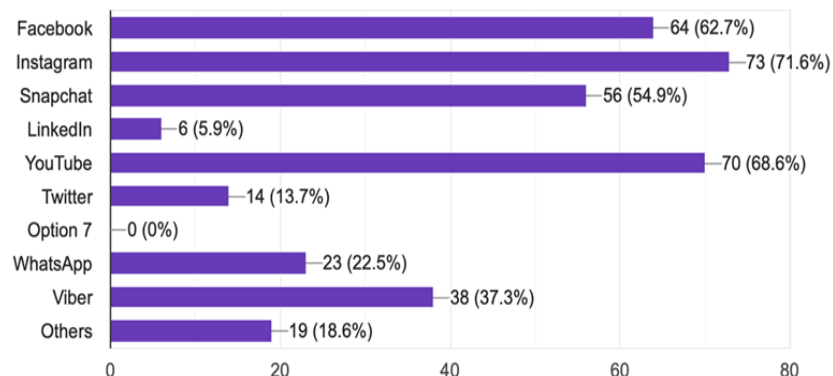


Figure 6. Social media users.

Respondents use different platforms in social media. Figure 6 determines the percentage of participants who use various social media platforms. Most participants use Instagram which is 72 percent, while 63 percent use Facebook. On the other hand, 69 percent of respondents use YouTube, and 55 percent use Snapchat. The data shows that only some participants use social media platforms, such as LinkedIn 6%, Twitter 14%, WhatsApp 23%, Viber 37%, and other social media platforms 19%. Most recent studies emphasized that individuals mostly use YouTube and Instagram to learn English through different accounts and channels (Atmowardoyo et al., 2020).

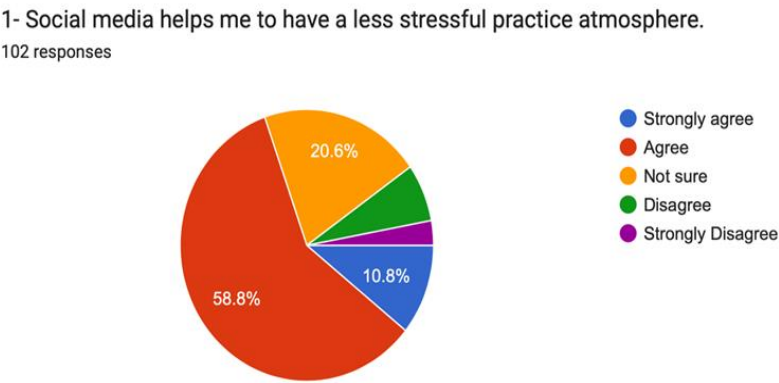


Figure 7. determines the stress level among participants

Figure 7 determines the stress level among participants during practicing the English language on social media. According to the results, most of the students agreed that social media helps them to have a less stressful practice atmosphere, which scored 59 percent of participants. Compared to other research, these results were nearly the same, and most participants had a less stressful social media environment than in real life for practicing English (Tess, 2013).

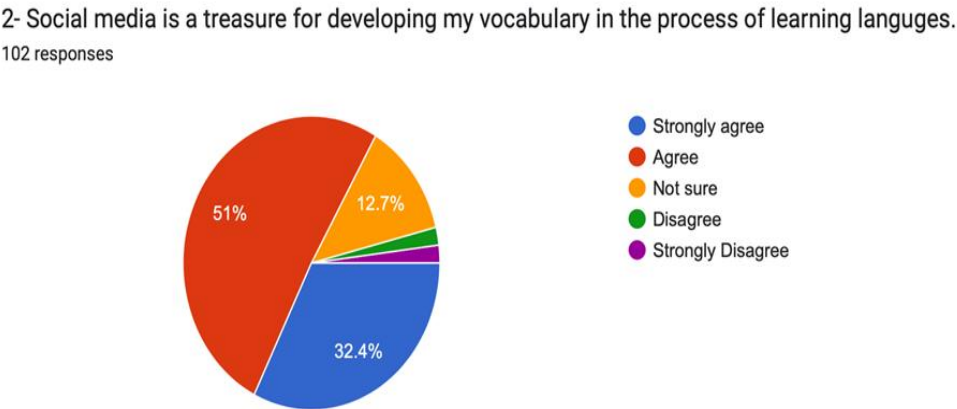


Figure 8. Shows that most participants strongly agreed and agreed about highlighting social

Figure 8 shows that most participants strongly agreed and agreed about highlighting social media as a treasure for developing vocabulary in learning a language, scoring 32% and 51%, respectively. Recent studies have found that social media has become one of the primary sources of vocabulary during learning (Li & Xie, 2020). On the other hand, the newest platform for learning a language is social media, as highlighted in the literature part (Patel, 2013).

3- Social media wastes my time and decreases my ability to learn new vocabulary.
102 responses

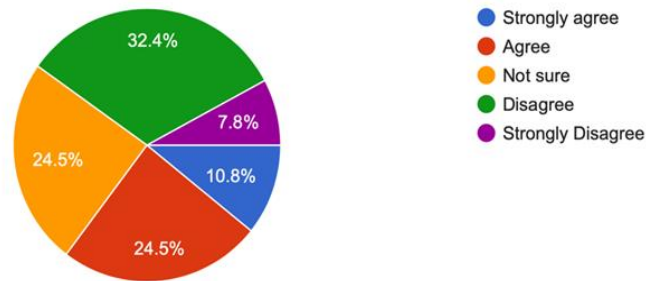


Figure 9. Social media did not waste users' time

Figure 9 shows that social media did not waste users' time but increased users' abilities. According to the results, most of the participants disagree with the statement that social media wastes their time and decreases their ability to learn new vocabulary. However, 25 percent of participants were not sure and agreed. They thought social media wastes time and decreases their ability to learn new vocabulary. Besides, this idea is against previous studies mentioned in this research, such as (Dudeney & Hockly, 2011), because it noted the rise of students' ability to learn vocabulary while using social media as a tool for learning language.

4- I forget the new vocabularies that I learned from social media quickly.
102 responses

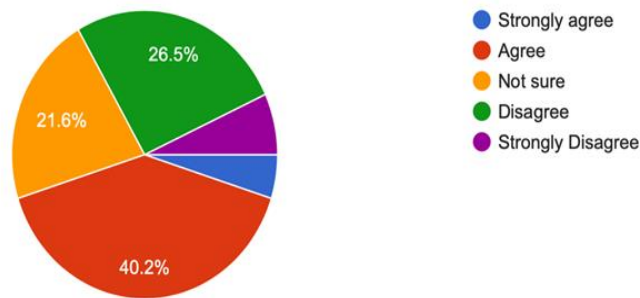


Figure 10. Emphasizes that 40 percent of participants need

Figure 10 emphasizes that 40 percent of participants need to quickly remember the new vocabulary they learn from social media. Likewise, 27 percent of respondents disagree and do not forget the language they learned from social media. The literature is against students quickly forgetting vocabulary, as Revere and Kovach (2011) discussed.

5- Social media teaches me how to use daily English vocabulary in an accurate time and place.
102 responses

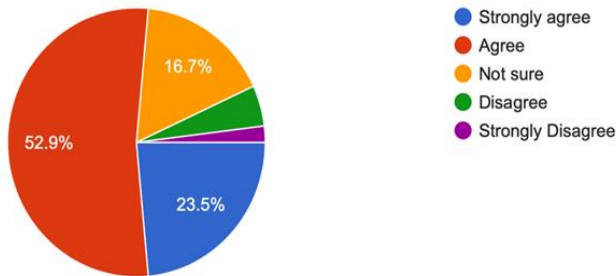


Figure 11 shows that nearly half of the participants, who scored 53 percent, agree that social media teaches them how to use their daily English vocabulary; 24 percent strongly agree. According to previous research, social media is vital for learning daily English vocabulary through native vloggers (Yadav, 2021).

6- language learners Focus on learning vocabulary through social media platforms to increase the effectiveness of learning languages.
102 responses

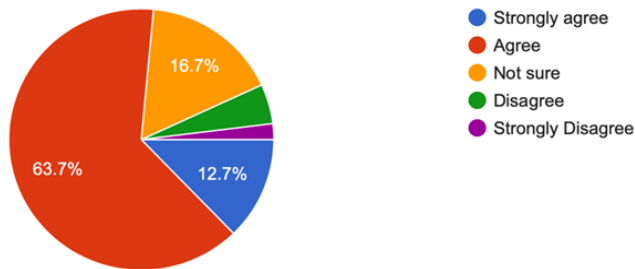


Figure 12 shows that students mostly agree that English learners focus on social media platforms nowadays to learn English language vocabulary effectively. The percentage of agreed participants is 64. Besides, 17 percent of participants are still determining if English learners focus on social media to learn vocabulary effectively or not. In addition, 13 percent of respondents strongly agree and thought that language learners focus on learning vocabulary through social media platforms to increase language learning effectiveness.

7- Chat conversations help me to learn new vocabulary.
102 responses

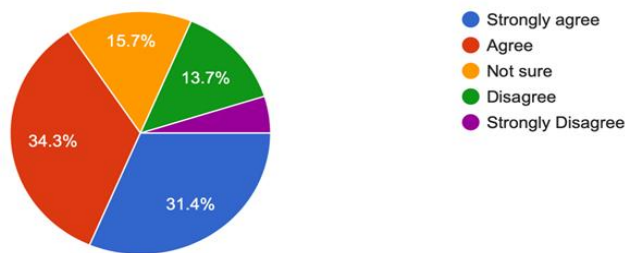


Figure 13 determines the effect of chat conversations on learning new vocabulary. Of most surveyed participants, 34 percent agreed that chat conversation helps them learn new vocabulary, while 31 percent strongly agreed. However, a few participants who scored 14 percent thought that chat conversations did not help them learn new vocabulary. Suwantarathip and Orawiwatnakul (2015) agreed with this statement. Both researchers highlighted the effect of SMS in expanding learning vocabulary among language learners.

8- Voice message, Audio calls, and Video chat help me to learn and recognize new vocabulary.
102 responses

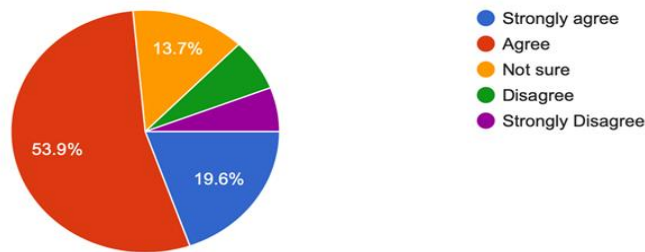
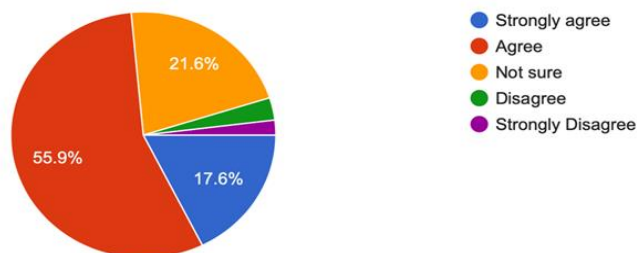


Figure 14 finds that 54 percent of participants agreed that voice messages, audio calls, and video chat help them learn and recognize new vocabulary; in comparison, 20 percent strongly agreed.

9- Social media platforms provide more engagement between language learners.
102 responses



According to the results of this figure above, 56 percent of the participants who are 56 percent thought that social media platforms provide more engagement between language learners; in comparison, 22 percent of participants needed clarification. In addition, 18 percent of respondents strongly agreed with it.

10- Social media platforms provide motivation through native vloggers or public figures to learn vocabulary.
102 responses

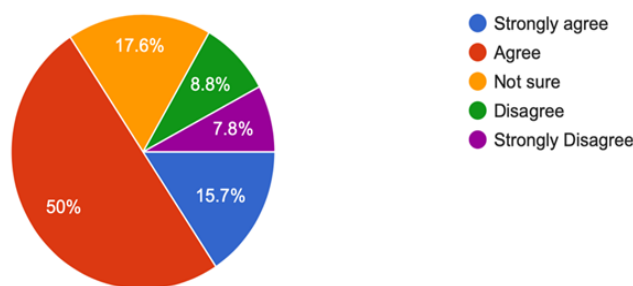


Figure 16 shows that half percent of participants thought social media platforms motivate native vloggers or public figures to learn vocabulary. On the other hand, 9 percent disagree, and 18 percent are unsure about it because they did not follow native vloggers.

11- social media keeps me updated on all vocabulary development.
102 responses

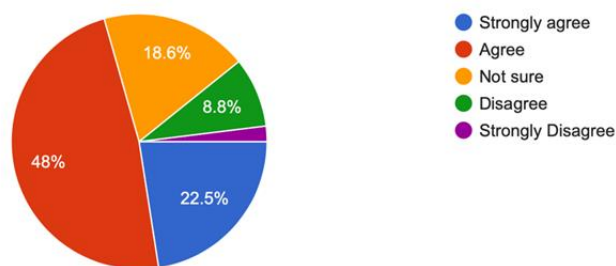


Figure 17 emphasizes that 48 percent of participants thought that social media keeps them updated on all vocabulary development; in comparison, 9 percent disagreed with this, and they felt that they had to update themselves through vocabulary books, not social media. On the other hand, 19 percent of respondents have yet to learn how social media keeps students updated about vocabulary. (Grosseck & Holotescu, 2008). This assumption is supported by Wilkins (1972): “Without grammar, very little can be delivered; without vocabulary, nothing can be delivered” (p. 111).

Conclusion

All in all, interacting and exchanging ideas have become quite popular on social media. Learning new words became more prevalent as social media spread across society. Language is a vital communication tool in many facets of daily life. It is a language used for conversing with

friends, family, and coworkers and for instruction and learning. This study tried to explain the effect of social media on English learners and how social media influences the learning process among English language learners. Also, this study found out the factors of social media that affect students learning a language. At the end of this study, there are some recommendations for students and social media users who want to develop their vocabulary through social media, including following the right person and channel for learning the English language and avoiding scammers. In contrast, they wish to take language learning courses online. Further, extended researchers are suggested to extend this research to one of the most common social media platforms and investigate how this platform helps language learners learn vocabulary. For instance, how YouTube influences its users in learning a language.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest

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