2

Learning Language Through Social Media - Issues and Concerns

Dr A.V.Bharathi
Associate Professor, Department of English, Tolani Commerce College, Adipur
av.bharathi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Language is a familiar aspect of our lives and a system through which we express our thoughts and feelings. It is a means of communication. The ICT revolution has extensively broadened the scope of communication by providing many avenues to facilitate communication at the global level. Today, most young graduates communicate through social media portals such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, etc. This advent of social media has affected the language learning patterns of the younger generation as it has given rise to the web- slang, jargon and short forms. This trend of social media texting habits may adversely affect their language learning. Today, the coronavirus pandemic scenario has imposed digital teaching modes at all levels. Social media came to the rescue and supported the teachers in staying connected with their students during these crucial moments. These channels facilitate educational communication in many institutions without infrastructural support for conducting full-fledged online classes. Some believe that this social media texting has enhanced their communication abilities. As all the students attended their sessions online through various social media portals, the researcher conducted a research study to determine the influence of social media texting on their language learning. As part of her ICSSR-sponsored significant research project, the researcher administered a questionnaire to 940 students pursuing their final year graduation in various disciplines in colleges affiliated with KSKV Kachchh University—the questions aimed to gather students' impressions regarding the impact of social media on their language learning. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the demographic data, while inferential statistics of the Chi-square test were used to test the research hypotheses.

Keywords: social media, language learning, communicative abilities, texting habit interaction

Learning language through social media – Issues and Concerns

The 21st-century smart graduates are expected to have proper communicative efficiency to excel in their performance in any field, including academics. The technology-driven, current-day knowledge society has turned the world into a global village. Today, most youngsters use social media networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram and many more to interact with their friends physically or virtually. The emergence of social media has remarkably influenced students' communicative proficiency and exceptionally written communicative efficiency. The use of social media amongst the youth is significantly growing, and social media has become a popular means of communication and interaction with peers.

The present coronavirus pandemic scenario has changed the teaching-learning strategies. It has brought a drastic revolution in academics and compelled teachers to opt for virtual teaching mode instead of physical classroom teaching. Social media applications can effectively and efficiently share classroom teaching material with students. However, it is undeniable that young graduating students communicate freely and spontaneously while interacting with their friends and peer groups through these portals. They hardly bother drafting proper, correct messages while considering all the parameters of written communications. On the other hand, academics' current assessment and evaluation process emphasises written communicative abilities alone at higher levels of formal educational scenarios. However, today, most graduates do not have optimal communicative skills. Though they qualify per their academic record, some of them can't even give their introduction correctly. They hesitate to appear confidently in front of an interview panel. The employment solution company Aspiring Minds survey report revealed that poor communication and computer skills are the main lacunae hampering the educated engineering graduates' career prospects. So today, when knowledge and proficiency in English have become imperative to ensure success in any field, including academics, the ongoing communication revolution has provided many avenues to facilitate physical or virtual communication. The young netizens of this technology-driven 21st-century bright graduates are expected to have proper linguistic competence to withstand the increasing competition in the current world.

Process of   Second Language   Learning

Language is a familiar feature of our life. It is a significant aspect of societal culture. It is a means of communication. There are two different forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication demands the systematic use of certain words, and non-verbal communication includes kinesics. Language is a skill subject, and learning is gaining knowledge or skill by study, experience or being taught. Unlike the mother tongue, the second language can't be acquired naturally and automatically. It has to be learnt deliberately by making strenuous efforts.

Social media

Social media is emerging as a prominent platform to facilitate communication at the global level. In the current coronavirus pandemic scenario, social media tools help teachers stay connected with students through virtual mode. They are more exposed to social media and are influenced by it.

Social media has brought many new vistas and affected the preferred learning styles of young people in their language learning process. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube are popular tools that young graduates and college students use for social interactions. They momentarily text their messages, and the writing is associated with the texting. So, this social media interaction through texting is quite casual among college students. Most of them use YouTube to watch videos and to stream online. Now, even teachers use this channel even in educational settings. Some studies revealed that social media networking helps them to promote their communication skills. In contrast, others reported the detrimental effect of this social media use on students' sanctity in the English language. Academic language is formal, and this formality is missing in their social media texting. In academics, web slang, ungrammatical construction of sentences, and contracted and short forms are not accepted. The central aspect of academic assessment and evaluation gives maximum weightage to the benchmarking elements of written communication. Simple spelling mistakes and incorrect punctuation marks have adverse effects on their academic performance. So, there is no consensus regarding the influence of social media on students' communicative abilities.

The Effect of the Pandemic on the Educational Process

The coronavirus pandemic has transformed the process of classroom teaching and interaction between the teacher and the students in educational institutions by suddenly imposing a shift in the process. As per the directed guidelines, all the colleges and universities were compelled

to adopt digital virtual classroom teaching practices. If the institution had proper infrastructural abilities to conduct online classes and if the teachers and students had the ability to participate confidently in the virtual classroom teaching sessions, this shift would have been welcomed by all the stakeholders. In that case, the online teaching-learning process has many advantages for students. However, the sudden imposition has brought attitudinal differences between the teachers and learners. The digital mode of learning has a significant impact as the students differ in their perception of the usage of the online teaching processes. Even teachers and students from rural backgrounds face difficulties as a result of a lack of infrastructural support and attitudinal differences between teachers and students. Some colleges provide technical support through MS Teams, and others have access to it through various social media portals. Many institutions allow their faculties to engage in classes through online social media portals. As there are heterogeneous groups in every college, most students already use their Android phones for social interactions among their groups. However, they interact freely and casually with friends and other social groups. However, they need to be more formal in their formal educational communication. So, the present paper attempts to look into the details of the influence of social media texting habits on their communication skills from their perspective.

Review of Literature

Many studies examined the relationship between students' use of social media and its impact on their academic performance. Some studies substantiated that students' consistent use of social media networks may damage their genuine writing efficiency. Other studies found that this social media channel can enhance the communicative abilities of smart generation graduates.

Anika Belal (2014) conducted a study on 'the influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of tertiary level students', which confirmed that social media enhances students' writing and speaking skills. The study also revealed that the students unconsciously use short-form words, incorrect grammar, and sentence structure in their formal writing and speaking. Quader (2014) found positive relations between the use of social networking and the student's academic performance. According to Asad (2012), students' academic learning outcomes could increase when their social learning outcomes are heightened. According to Herring (1996), chat takes place in the written medium (typing words on the keyboard and reading words on a screen). However, like spoken language, particularly unplanned speech, it generally consists of shorter, incomplete, grammatically simple, and often incorrect sentences. Anderson

(2008) says that 'they   exercise their mastery of communication norms and tools, some of which are not appropriate to an educational online context.'

Swan (2017) found that informal contractions might influence learners and apply them in their formal writing. It may hurt their grammar and spelling. Kasuma's study (2017) revealed that social media introduced a variety of discourse functions and thus improved language abilities. Another Dhanya (2016) survey showed that diverse avenues brought through social media provided learners with opportunities to enhance their language skills.   Derakshan and Hasanabbasi (2015) found that Facebook has dramatically impacted second language learning. Al Rahmi and Othman (2013) revealed that students become more interactive and engaged when social media tools are used in the classroom. However, Abbasova's study (2016) found that although social media texting negatively affects students' writing skills, it helps improve learners' vocabulary and literacy skills.

Data Substantiates……

The National Employability Report by Aspiring Minds, an employability solutions company, revealed that inadequate English and computer skills are the key factors that make graduates unemployable.   All jobs require high competence in cognitive skills and English. It was found that the higher the skill requirement for a job, the more significant the gap between employability.   The mental skills remain the same.   However, the most crucial difference between them is their communication skills in English.   So, we cannot deny that "Poor English and computer Skills Make Graduates Unemployed" (Reema Nagarajan).

➢ NASSCOM data published in an article "Only 25% IT graduates readily employable: Nasscom" by The Economic Times justifies why big IT companies and organisations like NASSCOM say that only 25% of technical graduates are employable. What they mean is that most of them have not been able to communicate their skills and thought processes effectively because of a gap between industry and academia (Geetanjali Singh).

Rationale

As referred by the above report, the ongoing competition demands proper communicative proficiency, which requires at least an optimal level of knowledge. However, it is a known fact that many young graduates cannot express their thoughts clearly and in flawless English. Some of them, even after acquiring that academic qualification, did not have the confidence to give their self-introduction confidently and hesitated to appear before the selection committee or interview panel freely. The same youngsters spontaneously participate in social media interactions and actively generate written textual messages without caring for the benchmarking aspects of written communication informally. If it is constrained to their social groups and friends, it may be acceptable to them. But, if they continue the same tendency unknowingly in their formal academics, it will influence their academic standards. Considering this, the researcher had the objective of finding out if there is any association between students' social media texting habits and their influence on their communication skills. This article discusses the impact of social media on students' communication skills from a student's perspective.

Research questions

- How does social media texting influence the students' communication students' skills?
- Is there any effect of students' social media texting trends on their academic performance?

Objectives of the Study

- ➢ To know the students' opinions on their social media texting habits and its impact on their communication   skills
- ➢ To know whether social media texting has any influence on students' formal writing skills or not.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to validate the above objectives. empirically

Hypotheses 1

Ho: - There is no association between students'   social media texting habit and their adoption of grammatical aspects while texting through social media.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: - There is no association between students' social media texting tendency and their concern about framing correct sentences while texting through social media.

Design of the study: It is a descriptive survey.

Population and Sample: All the students pursuing their final year graduation in Arts Science, Commerce, Computer Science and Management disciplines from the selected ten colleges affiliated to study. University constituted the population of the study, and the sample of 940 students was considered through the convenience sampling method for this study. The sample included 435 (46%) boys and 505 (54%) girls. The sample consisted of students pursuing the final year of their BA, BSc, BCom, BBA or BCA programmes in different colleges. All the colleges were located in different places, like Adipur, Bhuj, Gandhidham, etc., in the district of Kachchh in Gujarat. The diagram shows that 389 students (41%) studied through the Gujarati medium of instruction at the school level. Another 349 students (37%) pursued their school education through English medium, and the remaining 202 (21%) opted for Hindi instruction at their school. These details are shown in the diagram shown below:

Fig. No1 Gender Wise Distribution of Sample   Fig.No2 Medium of Instruction at School
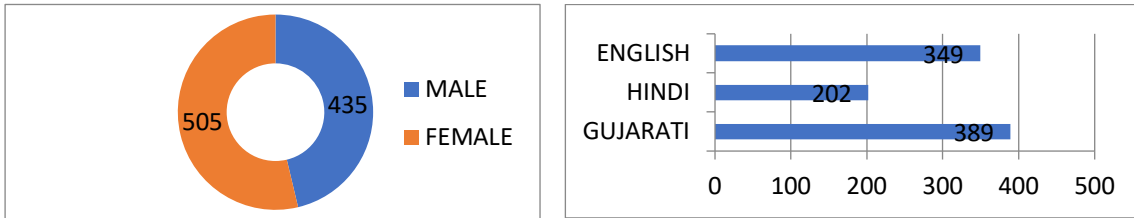
Research Tool

A   structured questionnaire was prepared to gather information from the students. The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding respondents' demographic details and questions regarding the study theme, which elicited responses from the respondents.

Data Collection

The researcher visited each college twice for this purpose, explained the purpose of the study, distributed the questionnaire to the students present, and shared the link through Google Forms. All the received responses were considered as samples through convenient random sampling.

Data Analysis

Data collected as responses were analysed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages and inferential statistics. The collected data is analysed using statistical tools like the mean and Chi-Square test. Chi-square tests the stated hypothetical statements at 0.05 and 0.01 significance levels.

Interpretation

While attempting to answer the question about using social media texting habits, 744 students said they use social media to communicate amongst social groups. The remaining 196 students responded in negation.

While attempting to question the significant portals they prefer to use for their communication, most respondents preferred WhatsApp, followed by Google, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. The details are given in the table below.

Table 1: **Use of Social Media Portals**

Which social media portal do you generally use?	Responses	Preference
WhatsApp	657	1
GOOGLE	469	2
Instagram	458	3
YouTube	397	4
Snapchat	287	5
Facebook	146	6
Twitter	11	7

In the following question, students were asked to mention whether they believe that social media networking promotes their communication skills; 676 students responded affirmatively and reported that they think that social media communication improves their communicative abilities, and the remaining 264 responded in negation. The data is shown in the tabular form below:

Table 2: Perception of Students on Skill enhancement through social   media

Responses	No of Respondents & Percentage
YES	676 (72%)
NO	264 (28%)

On being asked about their general tendency while texting through social media amongst their social groups on various aspects, such as their habit of checking grammatical aspects, spelling mistakes, usage of acronyms and short forms, etc., 58% of them reported that they do check grammatical aspects while framing their message. The remaining 42% of them responded negatively. Furthermore, 61% of them mentioned verifying word spellings, while the remaining 39% responded in negation. While attempting another question on choosing the correct and appropriate words,73% replied that they care while using proper words. Still, the remaining 27% said they don't bother about these aspects. While responding to an item on the use of acronyms, 76% replied in affirmation, while the remaining 24%of responded in negation. While attempting yet another question on whether they adopt all the benchmarking aspects of written communication in their texting,54% of them replied that they keep all the required aspects of written communication in mind. In comparison, the remaining 46% of them reported casually drafting the message without caring about the needed aspects of written communication. The details are shown in the table and diagram given   below:

Table 3 Showing General Tendency of Students While Texting					
Responses	Proper Grammatical Construction of Sentences	Spelling Checking	Careful Usage of Words	Use of Acronyms	Adopting Benchmarking Aspects
Positive (Yes)	541(58%)	578(61%)	685(73%)	711(76%)	510(54%)
Negative (No)	399(42%)	362(39%)	255(27%)	229(24%)	430(46%)
Total	940(100%)	940(100%)	940(100%)	940(100%)	940(100%)

Fig.3 shows respondents' general trend of social media texting.
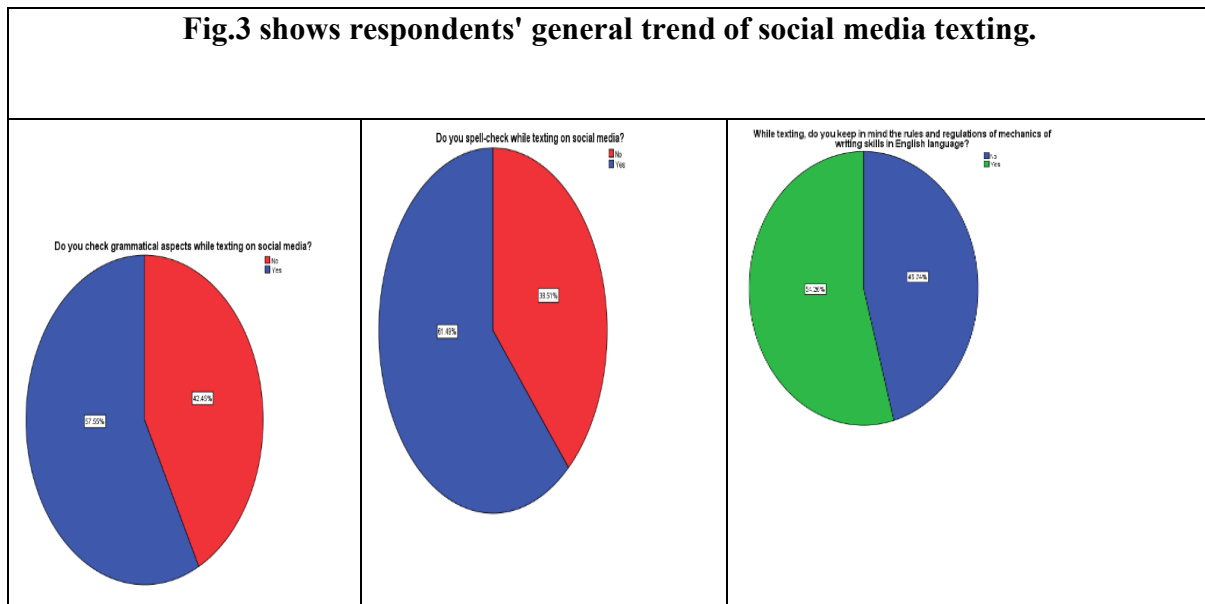
While attempting a question on whether they believe that there is any relation between their social media texting skill and their formal academic writing skills, 585 respondents (62%) mentioned that there is some association between students' social media texting habits and the remaining 38% believed that their social media texting habit does not influence their formal academic standards. The details are shown in the following:

Table 4 Students' Perception on Influence of Social Media Texting on Formal Academic Writing Skill.

Options	Frequency	Per cent
No	355	37.8
Yes	585	62.2
Total	940	100.0

Hypotheses Testing

Ho: - There is no association between students'   social media texting habit and their adoption of grammatical aspects while texting through social media.

H1: - There is an association between students' social media texting trend and their adoption of grammatical aspects while texting on social media.

Table 5 shows Students 'Social media Usage

Options	Observed N	Percentage
YES	744	85.9574
NO	196	14.0425
Total	940	

58% of the student respondents replied that they take care of grammatical aspects while texting through social media channels, and the remaining 42 mentioned that they don't bother with grammatical aspects while texting their messages instantly.

Table 6 Results of Chi-square		
	q11usingsm	Concern for Grammar
Chi-Square	319.472[a]	21.451[a]
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig	.000	.000

As the significant value of Chi-square is 0.000, which is lower than 0.05, HO is rejected that there is no association between students' social media texting trend and their concern for grammatical aspects while texting on social media.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no association between students' social media texting tendency and their concern for careful word usage to frame correct sentences while texting through social media.

H1:- There is an association between students' social media texting trend and their concern for carefully using words to frame correct sentences while chatting through social media.

Table 7 Data of social media Users

Options	Observed N	Percentage
YES	744	85.9574
NO	196	14.0425
Total	940	

Table 8 Students perception regarding careful use of words

Responses	Observed N	Percentage
1.00	685	72.8723
2.00	255	27.1276
Total	940	

Table 9   Chi-square Results

	q11usingsm	Careful Usage of Words
Chi-Square	319.472[a]	196.702[a]
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

As the significant value of Chi-square is 0.000, which is lower than 0.05, HO is rejected here. There is no association between students' social media texting trend and their concern for careful word usage to frame sentences correctly while chatting through social media.

Major Findings

Students' exposure to social media networks significantly influences their academic performance. It has been revealed that students are addicted to social media networking and interact freely and spontaneously without thinking about the required benchmarking aspects of their communication. They sometimes adopt the same non-standard language, which is not accepted in academics informally. The study revealed that 42 % of them are hardly bothered

by their grammatical construction. Another 46% reported not considering any benchmarking aspects required in their social media texting. The Chi-Square test results also proved that their casual texting is framed without caring for the quality aspects of written communication.

Conclusions

Students use web slang /internet slang, which refers to a different form of communication from the general standard. It is widespread in social media interaction as it is more effortless, instantaneous, short and time-saving. However, as representatives of the innovative generation, current graduates are expected to have adequate communicative proficiency, and this online process provides them an opportunity to enhance their communicative efficiency. The online portals have made communication easy, effective, and efficient. If they wish to improve their communicative proficiency, they are exposed to new ways and means of self-learning through various technology-enabled apps and tools like Pinterest, Edmodo, etc. However, they use non-standard English words and jargon while texting their responses instantly without caring for the standards.

If assessed and evaluated properly per the academic communication standards, these messages are full of wrong grammatical constructions framed without taking care of the spelling, punctuation, capitalization marks, etc. They informally draft the message carelessly and casually without concern about the benchmarking aspects of written communication. This tendency to draft instant messages without proper thinking may lead to similar mistakes in their formal academic writing. They tend to leave some letters from a word and create short forms and acronyms like OMG (Oh My God) and FYI (For Your Information). These jargon and short forms are not acceptable in academics.

This study particularly focuses on identifying the writing patterns of youngsters in their social media texting practice and the influence of this writing trend on their academic performance.

The use of social media has a significant impact on their writing skills. This has both positive and negative influences. On the positive side, students are exposed to new words from those textual comments. It helps them to write in a better way if they make conscious efforts to learn. In addition to this writing, they can learn other language skills by watching and reading online sources and materials. They can enhance their oral communication skills by participating in video conferencing. Above all, they can drive away their psychological phobia and hesitation in their regular participation with ease. However, if the same casual attitude is continued in

their formal writing unknowingly, it may adversely affect their academic performance. These jargon, internet slang, and contracted forms, standard features of their belongings, are unacceptable by educational standards.

Recommendations

Students should be educated about the influence of social media on their academic performance.

Teachers should monitor the students and guide them to use appropriate apps, particularly those created for self-learning.

Teachers should help students understand that social media can become an efficient tool for learning English if appropriately utilised.

Students should realise the difference between formal communication and informal chatting.

Works Cited:

Abbasova, Milana. *The Impact of Social Networks on the Students' English Language in Azerbaijan*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307967123_The_Impact_of_Social_Networks_on_the_Students'_English_Language_in_Azerbaijan. Accessed 25 Aug. 2016.

AL-Rahmi, W. M., and M. S. Othman. "Evaluating Student's Satisfaction of Using Social Media through Collaborative Learning in Higher Education." *International Journal of Advances in Engineering & Technology*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2013, pp. 1541–51, http://www.e-ijaet.org/media/12I16-IJAET0916887_v6_iss4_1541to1551.pdf.

Asad, Seguya, et al. "The Effect of Social Networking Sites on the Lifestyles of Teachers and Students in Higher Educational Institutions." *International Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2012, pp. 498–510, doi:10.14419/ijbas.v1i4.374.

Belal. *Influence of Digital Social Media in Writing and Speaking of Tertiary Level Students*. No. April, 2014, p. 10.

Derakhshan, Ali, and Samareh Hasanabbasi. "Social Networks for Language Learning." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2015, p. 1090, doi:10.17507/tpls.0505.25.

Foreman, Doug, and Monroe Marje. *Safe Practices for Life Online: A Guide for Middle and High School*. International Society for Technology in Education, 2012.

Ghazanfar, Asif A. "Evolution of Communication Systems: A Comparative Approach." *Acta Biotheoretica*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2006, doi:10.1007/s10441-006-8257-1.

Hamano-Bunce, D. "Talk or Chat? Chatroom and Spoken Interaction in a Language Classroom." *ELT Journal*, vol. 65, no. 4, Oct. 2011, pp. 426–36. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq084.

Herring, S. *Computer-Mediated Communication: Linguistic, Social and Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. John Benjamin Publishing Co., 2016.

Lomicka, Lara, and Gillian Lord. "Social Networking and Language Learning." *The Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology*, no. Thorne 2010, 2016, pp. 255–68, doi:10.4324/9781315657899.

Mohamad Zuber Abd Majid, Muhammad Hussin, &. Muhammad Helmi Norman. "Using Facebook for English Language Learning: The Differences Among Gender and Ethnicity." *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2019, pp. 32–40.

Nagaraj, Geetha. *Teaching and Learning English: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Teacher-Trainers*. Orient Black Swan, 2008.

NatarajanReema "Poor English, comp skills make grads unemployable" published in Times of India on 24.06.2013.

NatarajanReema "Poor English, comp skills make grads unemployable" published in Times of India on 24.06.2013.

Quader, Shams B. I. N. "Online SNS Usage Patterns Of." *Media Asia*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2011, pp. 47–59.

Raimes, A. *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford UP, 1983.

Saraswathi, V. *English Language Teaching: Principles & Practice*. Orient BlackSwan, 2004.

Shakir, Taaha, et al. *Social Media and Its Impact on Adolescents*. 2018, pp. 240–240, doi:10.1542/peds.141.1_meetingabstract.240.

Singh Geetanjali(2013), in her paper entitled "Need to Bridge the Gap between Industry and Academia: Is There a Disconnect? Presented at the International Conference on Empowering the English Language Classroom, 18th-19th Jan.2013, Jaipur.

Slim, Hadoussa, and Menif Hafedh. "Social Media Impact on Language Learning for Specific Purposes: A Study in English for Business Administration." *Teaching English with Technology*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2019, pp. 56–71.

Swan, Kayla. *Gaining Perspective: Social Media's Impact on Adolescent Literacy Development*. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12648/4972. Accessed 16 Aug. 2021.

Terry, Anderson. *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. AU Press, 2011.

Veda, S., et al. "Journal of English Language and Literature (Joell) Research Article Influence of Social Media on English Language Learning Journal of English Language and Literature (Joell)." *Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2016, pp. 105–10.

Wang, Chunli, and Xiaoqing Gu. "Influence of Adolescents' Peer Relationships and Social Media on Academic Identity." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2019, pp. 357–71, doi:10.1080/02188791.2019.1598848.

Williams, Harry Napier. "Clinical Skills and Experience Are Essential for Older People's Care." *Nursing Standard*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2012, pp. 31–31, doi:10.7748/ns2012.09.27.3.31.p9397.

Zainal, Zahirrah, and Noor Hanim Rahmat. "Social Media and Its Influence on Vocabulary and Language Learning: A Case Study." *European Journal of Education Studies*, vol. 7, no. 11, 2020, doi:10.46827/ejes.v7i11.3331.