



A INFLUÊNCIA DAS REDES SOCIAIS PARA APRENDER INGLÊS EM JOVENS ALUNOS

Resumo

Esta pesquisa-ação foi desenvolvida em uma escola privada no Equador. O objetivo era explorar como as mídias sociais poderiam promover as habilidades de inglês dos alunos. Devido à pandemia causada pelo Covid-19, toda a exploração foi online. Os participantes foram estudantes de 13 a 15 anos. O acesso à internet e os aparelhos tecnológicos foram aspectos essenciais durante esse processo de aprendizagem, pois permitiram que os alunos aprendessem e praticassem a língua-alvo de forma diferenciada. O nível de inglês dos alunos era A1 de acordo com o teste de diagnóstico que eles fizeram no início do ano letivo. Os dados foram coletados por meio de pré e pós-pesquisas, pré e pós-testes e rubricas. Durante esse processo, houve sessões online onde os participantes interagiram com estudantes internacionais de alguns países do mundo para praticar suas habilidades em inglês. Como resultado, os participantes adquiriram mais vocabulário e melhoraram sua interação, precisão e organização da escrita. Além disso, eles manifestaram a utilidade de incluir redes sociais como Facebook, Instagram e Twitter como parte de suas aulas de inglês.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa-ação. Processo de aprendizado Pré e pós-testes. Redes sociais. EFL,

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO LEARN ENGLISH IN YOUNG LEARNERS

Abstract

This action research was developed in a private school in Ecuador. It aimed to explore how social media could foster students' English skills. Due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19, all the exploration was online. The participants were students from 13 to 15 years old. Internet access and technological gadgets were essential aspects during this learning process because they allowed the students to learn and practice the target language differently. The students' English level was A1 according to the diagnostic test they took at the beginning of the school year. The data was collected through pre- and post-surveys, pre and post-tests, and rubrics. During this process, there were online sessions where the participants interacted with international students from some countries around the world to practice their English skills. As a result, the participants acquired more vocabulary and improved their interaction, accuracy, and writing organization. Furthermore, they manifested how useful was to include social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as part of their English lessons.

Keywords: Action research. Learning process. Pre and post-tests. Social media. EFL.

LA INFLUENCIA DE LAS REDES SOCIALES PARA APRENDER INGLÉS EN ESTUDIANTES JÓVENES

Resumen



Esta investigación acción se desarrolló en un colegio privado de Ecuador. Su objetivo era explorar cómo las redes sociales podrían fomentar las habilidades de inglés de los estudiantes. Debido a la pandemia provocada por el Covid-19, toda la exploración fue online. Los participantes eran estudiantes de 13 a 15 años. El acceso a Internet y los aparatos tecnológicos fueron aspectos esenciales durante este proceso de aprendizaje porque permitieron a los estudiantes aprender y practicar el idioma meta de manera diferente. El nivel de inglés de los estudiantes era A1 según la prueba diagnóstica que le realizaron al inicio del año escolar. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de encuestas previas y posteriores, pruebas previas y posteriores y rúbricas. Durante este proceso, hubo sesiones en línea donde los participantes interactuaron con estudiantes internacionales de algunos países del mundo para practicar sus habilidades en inglés. Como resultado, los participantes adquirieron más vocabulario y mejoraron su interacción, precisión y organización de la escritura. Además, manifestaron lo útil que fue incluir redes sociales como Facebook, Instagram y Twitter como parte de sus clases de inglés.

Palabras-claves: Investigación-acción. Proceso de aprendizaje. Pruebas previas y posteriores. Medios de comunicación digitales. Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

INTRODUCTION

Young learners seem to be influenced by social media, and it helps them to learn new things every day. According to Anankulladetch, as cited in Srinivas (2019, p. 273), social media has become a typical technology-supported learning tool for public and tutorial use in recent years. During the Pandemic caused by Covid-19, many students around the world were asked to study online to keep learning. Some teachers had to learn how to use online educational platforms to impart their classes, but at the same time, social media became part of their lessons. Nowadays, many students have the internet at home, and for that reason, it is helpful for teachers to use social networks to engage their students in a learning process, especially when it is about learning English as a second language.

As time passes by, technology is becoming more required in education, and one of the reasons is that students feel attracted to work online. Many Ecuadorian schools are forced to change their methodology by using virtual learning as part of their curriculum. Alharthy and Alfaki (2014) as cited in (ZAINAL; RAHMAT, 2020, p. 2) revealed that it is more effective to learn via social media than traditional learning. Due to the lack of digital skills, some educators are still assimilating how to combine social media within their lessons and trying to understand its benefits. According to Al-Jarrah et al. (2019), more and more websites and applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and email are becoming part of the teaching and learning process. The vast majority of Ecuadorian people manage to use social networking sites. According to Statista (2021), Facebook concentrated 54.82 percent of social media site visits in Ecuador by young people. Some English teachers must consider it when planning their lessons because Facebook is a page with a lot of English vocabulary, and it would be an excellent opportunity for students to learn the target language.

One of the benefits of social media apps is that it provides young learners with vocabulary and exchange content. Another advantage these apps contribute to teenagers is working with interactive tools such as videos, movies, songs, and online meetings. Sim (2016) claimed that working with computers and social media helps EFL students mainly with vocabulary acquisition (as cited in SRINIVAS, 2019, p.269). Thus, the impact of technology



associated with social media can improve students' vocabulary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Back in the day, technology was indirectly always part of education, but it was until that a global pandemic stroke the entire world, especially Ecuador, which had thousands of deaths. Due to Covid 19, from 2020-to 2021, Ecuadorian schools were forced to close and prepare their educators with online strategies and apps to continue teaching. According to Asanov et al (2020) "Schools in Ecuador were closed on March 13, 2020, and a national lockdown and quarantine period imposed" (p.2). Even though many educators did not manage technology so well, they had to learn it and become almost experts. Consequently, many schools and educators changed their methods and techniques by implementing technological tools as part of their lesson plans.

According to Vassallo e Warren (2017), "the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools has increased dramatically in recent years." (p.99). Eren (2015) claimed that Web 2.0 tools allow people to produce, consume and share information globally by allowing them, learners, in particular, to create their networks for feedback and support (p. 282). In the same vein, social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and many others serve different purposes in communication (ZAINAL; RAHMAT, 2020). These mediums have helped learners of English indirectly as English is widely used on social media.

Nowadays, kids and adolescents feel attracted to create profiles and write their thoughts on them using English. For example, hashtags are prevalent on Facebook or Instagram, and people enjoy posting things following them. According to Tylor (2019) "English is universally accepted as the most important language for children to learn". English is considered one of the most critical languages globally; people are always trying to learn and use it on social media because they want everybody to understand what is posted. According to Erzad (2018), social media cannot be separated from the English language because most use the English language in its application or features. This is indirectly so effective in learning English.

We live in an age when many young learners enjoy studying using technology. They seem to acquire the target knowledge better when social media is involved in their lessons. Learning a new language is a constant practice process. For that reason, it is beneficial for students to write in English on their social networks and try to read others' posts in the target language to gain more vocabulary to understand English better. Adams (2015) as cited in Al-Jarrah et al., (2019, p. 90) stated that some students experienced an improvement in their reading skills due to participation and involving social media). Some teachers do not agree that using social media is part of the learning process because it could be distracting the students, but on the other hand, English teachers should teach the learners the advantages of using them and the benefits they have when learning a new language. Mensah and Nizam described that social networking has a meaningful effect on the students' academic performances (as cited in AL-JARRAH *et al.*, 2019, p. 90).

Using Facebook seems to be one of the most beneficial technological tools to learn English because pupils like to post and comment on other people's thoughts using the target language. According to Al-tamimi et at. "Facebook attracted the students' attention and focus, motivating them, making them social learners, and achieving more continuous



learning and sustainable effect (p.194). One benefit of social media is that it automatically corrects any mistakes that appear when people write in English. Suryani (2019) “Facebook is able to provide direct feedback so as to create interpersonal communication” (p. 5).

Dhanya (2016, (as cited in PUSPA, 2018, p.91)) described some of the advantages of using Facebook in English education, they are; (1) creating a closed group, (2) creating an open group for participants, such as courses or language programs, (3) creating a poll to obtain reciprocal information, (4) creating questionnaires to obtain information on student preferences and interests, (5) uploading the subject matter so that it is available forever and can be corrected, (6) upgrading materials using notification facilities so that students will be informed of the change of the latest information.

As English is considered the business language, teachers must consider that students need to learn it because of globalization. According to Derakshan e Hasanabbasi (2015, as cited in SALIM; HAFEDH, 2019, p. 57). Facebook promoted students’ communication and language skills. Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram could be one resource for using in class because they not only let people post in another language, but they also detect misspelling mistakes and give the option to correct them. When teachers correct the students’ errors or give feedback, they learn better to realize what they are failing. The same happens when posting on a social networking site, every time people are being corrected, they learn and try not to make the same mistakes.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This research aims to prove that social media pages such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can help learners improve their English skills. The results obtained by the survey showed that participants of this project involved 25 males and 15 females at a private school in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The age of the students varied from 13 to 15 years old, and all of them had high incomes, with Spanish as their mother tongue. Based on the results, students had an A1.1 level of English, which was learned from regular school instruction. All of the participants had access to the internet, smartphones, and laptops. Internet access was super stable, and participants never had any problem login into class. The institution coordinator and teacher chose students among the best students in the subject from last year. The sample that took part in this research also was connected with students from Moldova, Russia, England, Netherlands, and Australia on their social media sites to practice their English. In addition, the teacher organized video conferences three times a month in which all the participants had the opportunity to practice speaking with other students from the countries mentioned before.

Instruments

This study was applied by using quantitative instruments. A pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the study; after that, a post-test was done to compare the results. The case lasted for a whole school year period. The teaching methodology followed a student-centered approach because learners managed their time to practice randomly. Despite the existence of many social networking sites, it was recommended for the participants to use Facebook, but they could use Instagram or Twitter according to their likes. Melor et al. revealed that Facebook could be embedded in writing activities as the



participants utilize the features in Facebook to learn new vocabulary by reading the comments of the other students in the group, discussion in getting ideas for writing, and spell-check by peers (as cited in GHANI et al., 2015, p. 97).

Survey: The participants took a questionnaire about their interests, social networks preferences, and time spent when using the internet. *Pre-Survey:* It was applied at the end of the first part of the term to assess participants' English proficiency level and their background knowledge. The survey was designed to integrate skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. *Post-Survey:* During the post-survey, the students self-assessed at the end of the school year based on a Likert Scale that contains the following criteria: excellent, good, average, bad, and very bad. It aimed for participants to realize their improvement at any English skill and to know in which parts they must continue practicing to get better in the target language. *Rubric:* This instrument was divided into four components: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and organization. It was applied during the pre and post-test. *Pre-testest:* The students were asked to upload a video on the educational platform used by the school in which they have to answer some personal questions. The questions were designed according to the participants' English level. It let the researchers grade the students by using the rubric. *Post-test:* The students were assigned to groups of four, and they were asked to create a podcast in which two of them had the role of interviewers and the other two were interviewees. They have to talk about a topic that is famous on social media such as the role of Tik Toks in Teens, Reels to Promote Brands, and Hashtags to Be Part of a Community. The instruments were piloted and validated by two experts in the area, and it let the educators realize the students' improvement after integrating social media as part of their English lessons.

Design, procedure, and data analysis

Over a scholar year, students at a private school were encouraged to voluntarily participate in using social media sites to develop English skills as a classroom supplement.

Students' parents signed a consent letter in order to protect their privacy in this study. Additionally, the different social media sites were integrated into the design of practice their written and oral communication.

Firstly, students had the opportunity to post messages and write assignments. They also posted YouTube videos on Facebook, shared their ideas on Twitter, and collaborated with members of their group to complete written assignments. Eventually, they took an interest in learning English while chatting with a pen pal from wherever part of the world through the web. Week per week, students began contributing more and more to their commentary. At the beginning, their posts were short and voluntary so they say only they liked it, but later they started asking questions using the vocabulary related to the content they were studying in classes. Students had to follow many steps to feel comfortable posting a response and creating dialogs on the Facebook group, increasing their motivation and behavior during learning (PINTRICH; ZUSHO, 2002).

At the beginning and end of this study, students took a pre-survey at the end of the first week to assess their level and background knowledge. On the other hand, post-survey was applied at the end of the school year based. Both surveys were based on a questionnaire consisting of some closed and open-ended items. There were 480 answers from a total of 40 students who completed the survey questionnaire at random. The items were related to the acquisition of new vocabulary, students' use of technology, perceptions of their oral as well as written communication, sense of posting content, and comments associated with the use



of social media.

Students answered each item using a five-point Likert scale which was based on criteria by Dashtestani e Stojkovic (2015) but was modified the rating scale was modified according to respondents' attitudes where 1 represented terribly and 5 represented excellently.

During the pre and post-test, the research design involved 40 students. Both tests were based on a rubric that assessed Students' perception of their social media experience to measure vocabulary acquisition and practicing, interaction with peers, accuracy, and organization in terms of their ability to communicate among the virtual community. These five components considered de Villiers' opinion (2010) who studied the potential of the Facebook group and discussion facilities for focused academic use.

RESULTS

Data analysis

This research was based on quantitative instruments to carry out the data analysis. The data was collected and analyzed using the SPSS program to portray the statistical information like mean and standard deviation. For data analysis, the effect size was calculated.

The pre and post-test data were also analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure statistical differences. Those statistical values were represented in tables that detailed the main items to reflect social media's impact on learning English on the participants. Students' perspectives towards each criterion significantly increased their communication skills, mainly in their written production and reading comprehension.

Table 1: Pre-survey and Post-survey

Criteria	Pre-survey Mean	Post-survey Mean
Communicates by videoconference focuses attention on the speaker.	1.07	2.51
Acquires new vocabulary and expressions orally	1.21	3.07
Speaks smoothly without interfering with communication.	1.03	2.44
Asks questions to Facebook groups in order to get answers or explanations.	2.00	4.43
Produces simple digital content using the vocabulary learned	2.21	4.59
Posts content and comments about trending topics.	1.93	4.46
Identifies the main idea from the reading on social media platforms.	2.14	4.43
Reads correctly and decode unfamiliar words.	2.08	4.30
Analyzes the message using context clues.	1.56	4.12



Gets an idea of what it is listened to in the target language	1.07	2.29
Practices to take notes about the media that they heard	1.01	2.13
Uses the correct grammatical pattern to speak in different tenses	1.13	2.07

Source: Carrión, A.; Riera, F.; Barrera, D. 2022.

Table 1 shows the pre and post-survey where participants could express their perspectives towards each criterion. Learners had to produce simple digital content using the vocabulary learned with a mean of 4.59, post content and comment about trending topics (Mean = 4.46) and ask questions to Facebook groups to get answers or explanations (Mean = 4.43). The reading results would mean that participants could identify the main idea from the reading on social media platforms (Mean = 4.43), read correctly and decode unfamiliar words (Mean = 4.30), and analyze the message using context clues (Mean = 4.12).

The speaking production was far below the written production between pre-and post-survey. It was evidenced that learners significantly improved their acquisition of new vocabulary and expressions orally (Mean = 3.07), communication by videoconference focuses attention on the speaker (Mean = 2.51), speaking smoothly without interfering with communication (Mean = 2.44). On the other hand, the listening comprehension had significant improvement in both surveys to get an idea of what is listened to in the target language (Mean = 2.29), practice taking notes about the media that they heard (Mean = 2.13), and distinguish the words, tone of voice, and the body language of the speaker (Mean = 2.07).

Table 2 shows a rubric conducted to find out whether there was a significant performance in participants' writing skills. This table had four components such as vocabulary, interaction, accuracy, and organization. It can be noticed that all components significantly improved through Effect size. It is evidenced that the significant improvement was in organization with 0.964 and vocabulary with 0.921. It is also shown that the sample enhanced their interaction with 0.891 and accuracy of 0.869, which was beneficial for their learning process.

Table 2: Rubric

	N	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey		Effect size
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Vocabulary	40	2.07	0.730	3.79	0.975	0.921
Interaction	40	1.71	0.726	3.21	0.975	0.891
Accuracy	40	2.14	0.770	3.57	1.016	0.869
Organization	40	2.00	0.679	4.00	0.877	0.964

Source: Carrión, A.; Riera, F.; Barrera, D. 2022.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study focused on how beneficial could integrate social media while learning a new language, especially English. This research took into account the students' prior knowledge of the target language. When the study started, it was evident that students could not organize their sentences, and they had the lack of vocabulary to express their ideas. But, as time passed, they began to interact with each other more frequently. The participants improved their communicative skills, especially in writing because it could be seen as they started to post and comment on others' posts in the target language.

The participants mentioned that they enjoyed working on social media, especially on Facebook. By creating Facebook groups, they had the opportunity to chat in English, in which they acquired vocabulary, and it allowed them to be more participative during their online classes. The students also liked to practice English by making Facebook lives which were beneficial for their learning process.

The students interacted in English because they had to create dialogs, make videos, and create content in English as homework. Besides, at the end of the school year, they created podcasts as a final assignment that was graded for research purposes. The participants improved their writing and reading skills while reading and commenting on their peers' posts. They also fostered their speaking and listening skills by performing the activities assigned by the teacher including interacting with international students.

Finally, it was found that the participants enjoyed learning and practicing their English skills by interacting with each other, performing online activities, and using social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

LIMITATIONS

Working during this action research, future researchers should consider that there were some limitations during the process. Working using social media with adolescents could be distracting for them because they may lose focus on the research objectives. In the beginning, some adolescents may not consider that the main purpose of using social media for learning English is to acquire vocabulary and practice the four English skills differently. Thus, the teacher sometimes did not have enough time to control all the activities being practiced and asked for help from colleagues.

The last limitation was the technological part. Some students have Internet or electricity problems, and it delayed the lesson plan because sometimes there were activities planned to work in pairs or groups, and the tutor had to follow a plan B for the ones who were online. Some of the missing participants used to ask for tutoring classes in the afternoon, and it retarded the teacher to do other activities that needed to be done, checked, or planned.



RECOMMENDATIONS

After concluding this study, the researchers recommend that educators interested in applying this research to their students should consider that working with technology could be demanding for teachers because the sample may need help in most assignments. They would ask the tutor for extra time to do the activities due to Internet problems or timing. In addition, the students could focus more on the creative part rather than the learning, and the tutor must be clear from the beginning that learning English is the main purpose of the lesson, and creativity will be included as part of it.

It is also recommended to prepare an organized lesson plan that any teacher could follow if the principal educator is missing due to personal reasons. Thus, the educator must manage technology and social media to guide the participants when they have questions or doubts. In addition, there should always be a plan B in case of connection problems or missing students.

The last recommendation is that teachers must consider that they are working with underage students, and they must communicate to the parents what is going to be done and the final results. It is also essential to create closed groups to practice English on social media and assign partners according to their interests. So, the learners would not try to find random people to talk to. The educator could also contact a foreign teacher in another country whose students have the same English level as the group and connect them to practice the target language.

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