

Social Media and COVID -19 Pandemic: Accelerating the Learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

About the Journal

Journal DOI	https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha
Journal Home	www.rupkatha.com 
Indexed by	Scopus  Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)  DOAJ 
Journal Metrics	CiteScore 2020: 0.2 SJR 2020: 0.162 SNIP 2020: 0.193 JCI 2020: 0.50

About the Issue

Issue	Vol. 14, No. 4, 2022 "Global Anxieties in Times of Current Crises"
Editor	Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay
Affiliation	Universidad de Guanajuato
Issue DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n4
TOC	https://rupkatha.com/v14n4.php 

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Article DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n4.24	Pages: 1-13
Abstract	https://rupkatha.com/v14n424 	
Full-text PDF	https://rupkatha.com/V14/n4/v14n424.pdf 	
Article History	First Published: 26 December 2022	
Article Impact	Check Dynamic Impact 	
Copyright	Aesthetics Media Services 	
Licensing	Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 	

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Social Media and COVID -19 Pandemic: Accelerating the Learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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Abstract

COVID-19 began in China (2019) and spread to other nations and become a world pandemic (2020). The news media and social media platforms have played an important role in information dissemination about the Coronavirus throughout the world. During COVID-19 Pandemic, social media has become a key tool for enhancing social networking and information sharing via the web. As more people turn to the internet for health information, social media platforms are helping to spread life-saving precautions that individuals, families, and communities may take to reduce their chance of contracting the virus. Language learners are linked to interactive social media platforms in Social Media Language Learning. The goal of this study was to look at the role of social media during COVID in foreign language acquisition. The participants in this study were Saudi Arabian college students. The study's sample comprised 200 (n=200) college students, and the social media platforms investigated included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat and other platforms. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. The results indicated that the students used various social media platforms in order to get the appropriate information about the virus that indirectly helped and motivated them learning a new language. These learners lack the self-motivation needed to use social media to develop their English language abilities. The study discovered that adopting online social media during a pandemic for English language learning had a significant impact on interactions with peers and teachers.

Keywords: Social Media, COVID-19 Pandemic, popularity, information, Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram. EFL Learning.

Introduction:

Worldwide, schools were shut down during the COVID-19 epidemic, and pupils were kept inside their homes. Social media have altered networking, but they have also been a crucial instrument for social organizing, healthcare, and even establishing relationships between people of different intellectual backgrounds. The use of social media for information gathering, health-related information, fast material feedback, remote trainings, and awareness-raising was done. The most popular platforms for constantly needed communications are social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. For most individuals, social media is an integral aspect of daily life. The majority of students utilize social media to study and enhance their English in academic settings, and language instructors encourage their students to engage in technological activities. There haven't been many studies that look at how social media affects education and learning, especially in the context of learning English, despite the fact that social media inexorably influences people's lives all over the world and given that today's students

are resistant to traditional teaching methods and learning techniques. The purpose of the study is to close a knowledge gap about social networking's involvement in EFL learning and to reveal the scope of social networking use among Saudi college students during the COVID-19 Pandemic, including their compliance and comfort levels. On the premise that many EFL students utilize online social networking to study a foreign language, this is founded.

Studies show that social and interactive learning are the main components of language acquisition, hence this method improves learning. In order to a) examine how academics use social media for language learning and b) gauge social media's popularity during the time of COVID, the researcher conducted this study. The media has developed into a content-rich industry today, with new opportunities appearing often. Conversely, social media is evolving into a more personal product. Anyone with Internet connection may create and manage their own "media," including Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, blogs, LinkedIn profiles, and a number of other platforms. As a result, many media channels might be regarded as reliable sources of information about options for non-formal education. One of the most recent examples of a communication technology that has been accepted by society is social media, which offers social interaction and encourages young people to learn new things. The new social media have been noticed by educational institutions, which recognize its importance and contribution to education.

The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to analyze the data collected. Using a purposive sample strategy, a group of EFL students would be selected to provide the information needed. To gather the information required for analysis, the learners will first get a questionnaire with a Likert scale, which will be followed by semi-structured face-to-face interviews. To help with this question's clarification, the following sub-question was developed. The following inquiries were made in order to gather data and identify potential solutions:

- i) Offline Learning to Online Learning
- ii) What are your motivations for utilizing social media platforms?
- iii) Does Social Media help you in learning new things?
- iv) How often do you use Social Media during COVID-19 to be updated?
- v) Impact of COVID-19 on EFL learners
- vi) Using social media for EFL learning
- vii) Most common social media sites help in EFL learning?
- viii) Does your proficiency have increased learning EFL during pandemic by using Social Media?
- ix) Positive impact of social media on EFL learners during COVID-19?
- x) Which is the most common social media platform suitable for EFL learning?

Review of Literature

Students at Saudi colleges had unexpected and uncomfortable experiences as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Children's social and intellectual development was significantly impacted by the pandemic's preventative measures (Alghamdi, 2021). Given the present trend toward distant

learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemics and the fact that social media is now widely utilized, examining its effects on foreign language learning may be crucial. The planet was destroyed by COVID-19, which also put it on hold. One of the worst pandemics in recorded history; it endangers the growth of science and technology (Akhter, 2021). The COVID-19 case study illustrates how the impact of social media might increase as a result of societal alienation. According to online sources, social networking is the most important medium for establishing and fostering the expansion of connections and enterprises among users of social media platforms worldwide. The E-Campus program, in addition to other teaching tools like Zoom, Webex, and Google Classrooms, were used by Saudi Arabian teachers to train their students. As teachers and students become increasingly accustomed to the notion of setting up and accessing opportunities to educate in a different way, e-learning is growing in popularity throughout the world. Social media includes any content-based electronic communication that enables people to share information and ideas, such as websites, blogs, chat rooms, computer programs, and applications. Online social networking services like Facebook, Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp are the most often used platforms for continuously essential conversations (Habbash, 2019).

Language learning social networking sites encompass all social media platforms and services that are especially designed for learning a foreign language. They were however primarily developed to fulfill certain objectives. An assertion that English was the first genuinely global language is supported by the fact that it is the major or official language in over 60 nations. As was already said, English is one of the languages that is most widely used worldwide (Akinwamide, 2012). As a case study regarding the effectiveness of distance learning, 300 undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia were asked about their opinions on remote learning during the spring 2020 semester. The results of this study demonstrated that distance education helped students get the knowledge they needed during the COVID-19 outbreak (Alsmadi et al, 2021).

Researchers in Saudi Arabia who examined the usage of social networking sites and their influence on education found that students use them to better their academic performance and socialize (Noori et al., 2022). (2015) Al Abdul Kareem Today's pupils are digital natives. The use of digital devices including televisions, computers, video games, mobile phones, digital cameras, and other media is commonplace among today's pupils. Digital natives' brains are supposed to grow differently from non-digital people who are a generation older. While this is happening, many of the teachers who educate the digital natives are digital immigrants from a prior non-digital era, and they have a critical need to advance to the level of their students' thought processes. Many social media platforms have been used for a variety of purposes in academic and non-academic contexts throughout the digital and e-Learning revolution period, drastically altering the EFL environment (Yadav, 2021).

A new coronavirus (COVID-19) was discovered in Wuhan, China, in 2019. The COVID-19 epidemic shook the world economy and left behind catastrophic economic damage everywhere (Akhter, 2022). Social media platforms have been utilized to improve instruction and inspire pupils. According to the study, Facebook and Twitter were two of the most popular social networking sites in schools (Van et al 2020). As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, EFL teachers provided online learning through a variety of activities, including as monitoring student involvement and giving them synchronous or asynchronous feedback on their work, depending on the school

program. Online learning was carried out using a variety of frameworks and technologies, including the learning management system and external solutions (Akhter, 2020).

Along with the subject of study on social media, using these sites to learn other languages has become more and more popular. Social media is growing increasingly appealing and accessible, especially for the younger generation, with 3 billion active users worldwide (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). Email has been replaced by social networking sites as the major form of communication and as a way to maintain a social life. The most often used and accessible technology in classrooms includes digital boards, overhead projectors, document cameras, laptops, desktop computers, iPads, and internet connectivity for all devices. The study makes the point that just because technology is accessible does not mean it is automatically incorporated into instructional activities in the classroom. When it comes to strengthening technology integration in the classroom, there are several things to take into account.

Along with the subject of study on social media, using these sites to learn other languages has become more and more popular. Social media is growing increasingly appealing and accessible, especially for the younger generation, with 3 billion active users worldwide (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). Email has been replaced by social networking sites as the major form of communication and as a way to maintain a social life. Similar to this, how much time kids spend interacting with these social utilities has a big impact on their reading habits. New technology affects not just how people live, but also how they think.

Blattner and Fiori claim that by exposing users to a variety of linguistic types and colloquialisms that language departments and textbooks cannot provide, Facebook groups can help users develop their communicative, pragmatic, and linguistic skills (2009). It is easier to watch real speaking behaviours and gain information when using social networking sites. These websites could give group members access to first-hand knowledge and the ability to see facts about a language and culture in real-time, all of which are essential for improving pragmatics in a language. It has been noted that faculties are thinking about how to incorporate high-tech and e-learning methods into their curricula in order to keep up with their students' perceptions because most student communities have a positive impression of instructors who integrate technology into their instructional strategies. Social media platforms may be utilized to generate authentic prolonged reading experiences that can aid in the deliberate and inadvertent growth of vocabulary as well as the complexity of writing (Muftah, 2022).

Most instructors have chosen to utilize social networking sites in the classroom on their own, rather than having this option forced upon them by educational institutions. Despite the growing number of arguments in favor of the deliberate integration of social networking sites into higher education, there is no scientific evidence to back up these assertions. Despite the fact that most instructors are aware of the possibilities of completely integrating social networking sites into their teaching, it is evident that university campuses have more social networking site users than any other location (Tess, 2013). Social media is widely employed in higher education's EFL programs, and it has a big influence on how learning and teaching are done (Noori et al, 2022). Akram and Albalawi demonstrated that Facebook was a harmful learning distraction for their Saudi students (2016). In view of these conflicting claims, the current study aims to confirm the

possible impact of social media sites on English language acquisition during the COVID-19 Pandemic from the perspective of Saudi undergraduate students.

Methodology

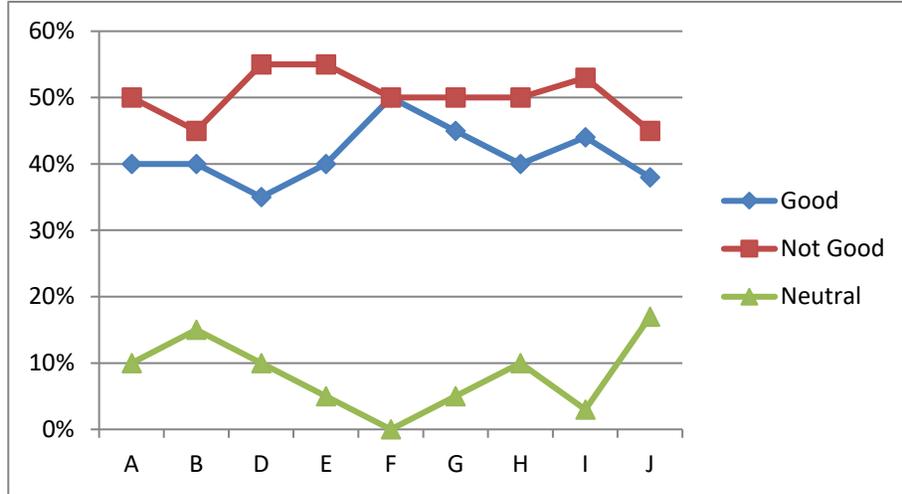
The goal of this study is to evaluate how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people's use of various social media and networking sites for English language acquisition. It also seeks to develop beneficial recommendations for upgrading upcoming online language learning.

Sample

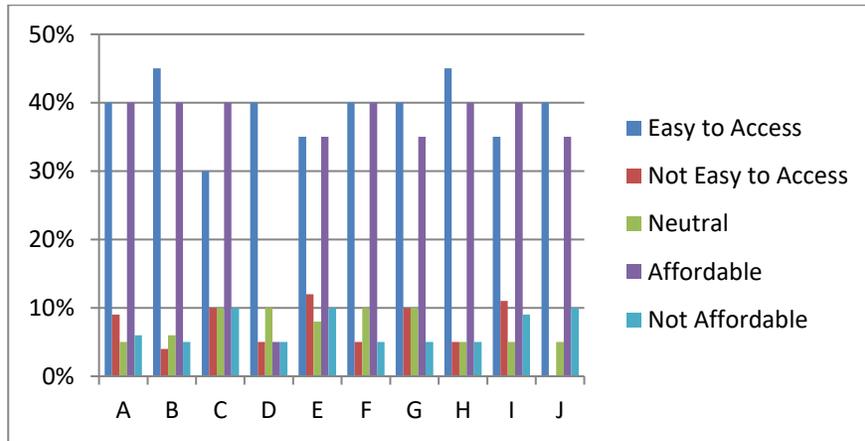
The study was carried out for undergraduate English language learners at Saudi Arabian universities. It took place during final exams in the second semester of 2022, after two years of online study and instruction. The sample consisted of 200 English language majors with bachelor's degrees who were between the ages of 18 and 25. Arabic is a native language for each participant. They seldom ever engage with one another outside of the classroom. To put it another way, most of them had little to no contact outside of the classroom with native English speakers.

To evaluate the impact of various social media platforms on English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, a more thorough methodology was designed for this study's quantitative technique. The quantitative method was used to carry out more in-depth assessments of a smaller area using closed-questionnaires. Ten multiple-choice items on this survey-based questionnaire addressed the objectives of the study. The poll received responses from 200 English language learners in total. The study is broken down into three sections: the first looks at the demographic data of the students; the second looks at how the learners' experiences with social media platforms—including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Google, and others—affect their ability to learn English during the COVID-19 pandemic; and the third looks at how frequently they use social media. The impact of social media platforms on learning a language during the COVID-19 outbreak as well as their general impact on the amount of time spent on social media. The validity and reliability of the survey were looked at. Each of the ten groups, which are numbered from Group A through Group J, contains 20 pupils. They were asked the following questions, and their responses were noted. The data is displayed here;

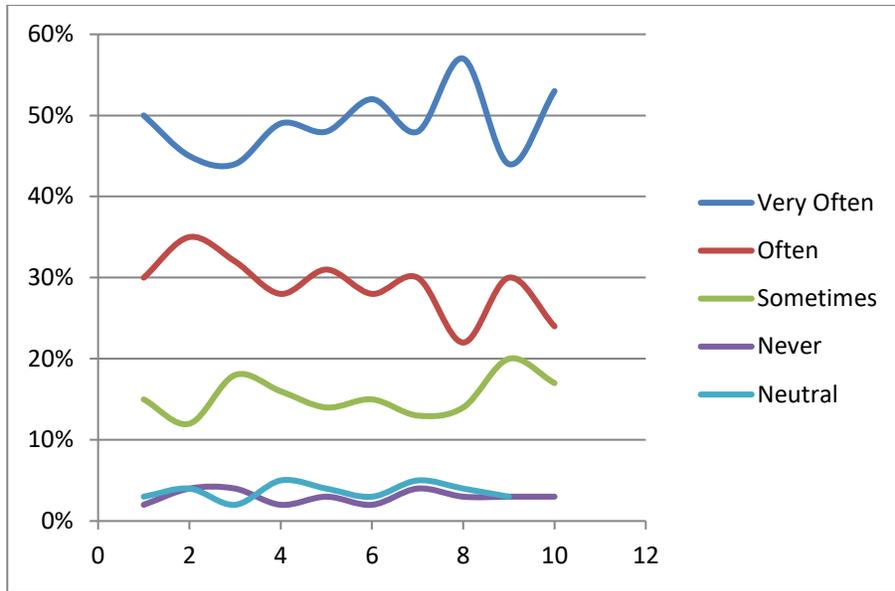
i) Offline Learning to Online Learning



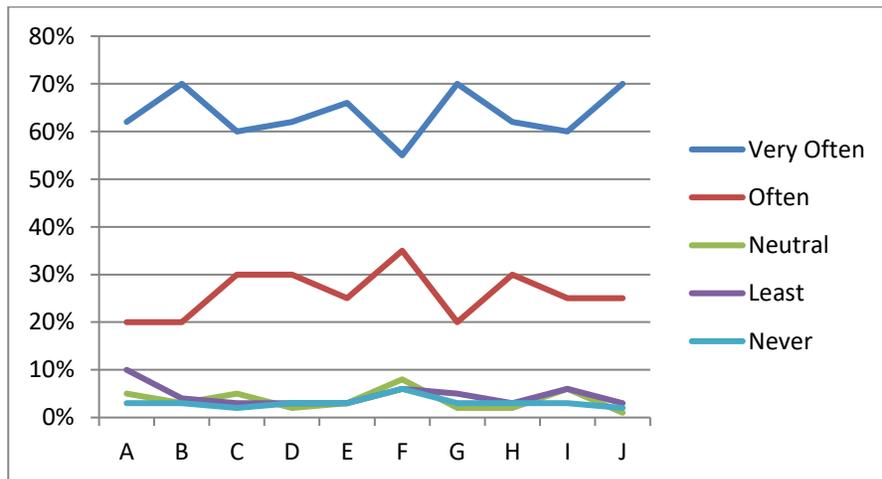
ii) What are your motivations for utilizing social media platforms?



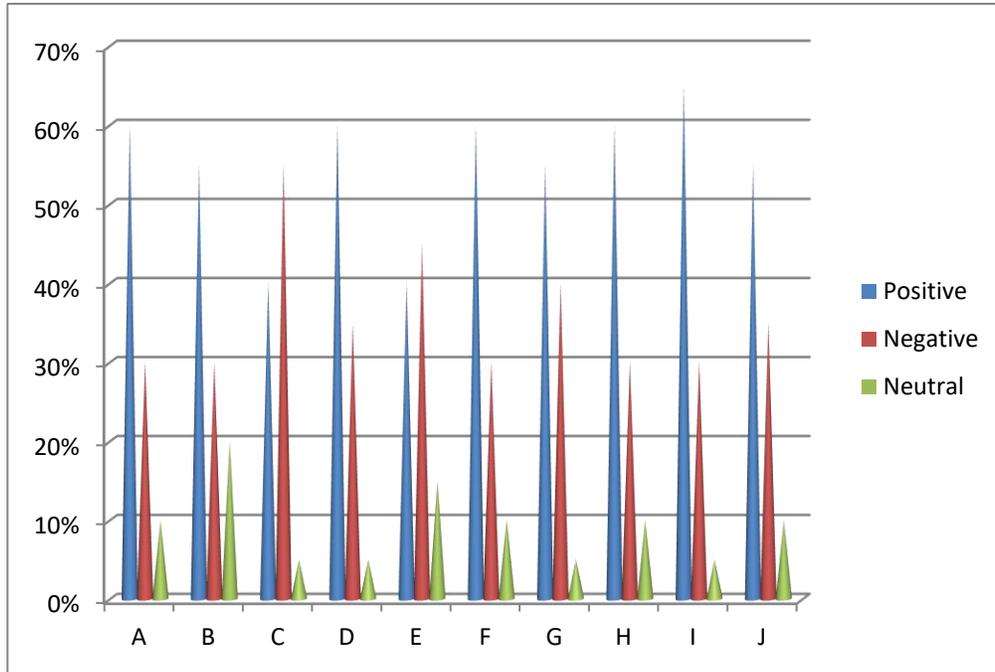
iii) Does Social Media help you in learning new things?



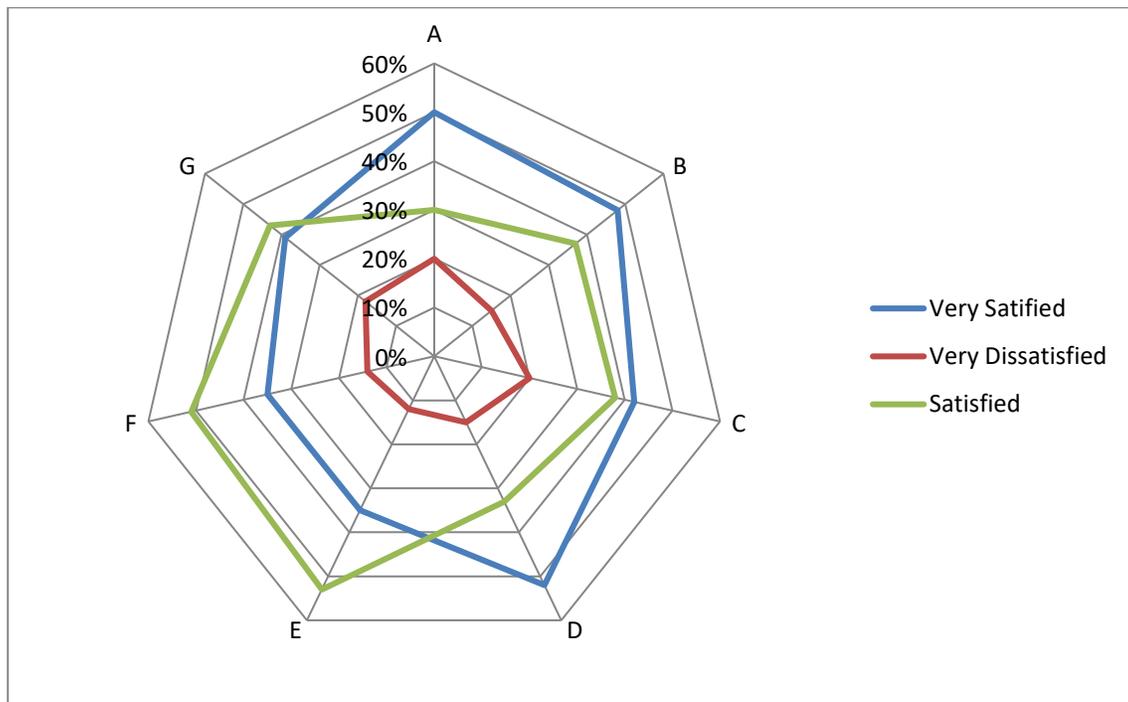
iv) How often do you use Social Media during COVID-19 to be updated?



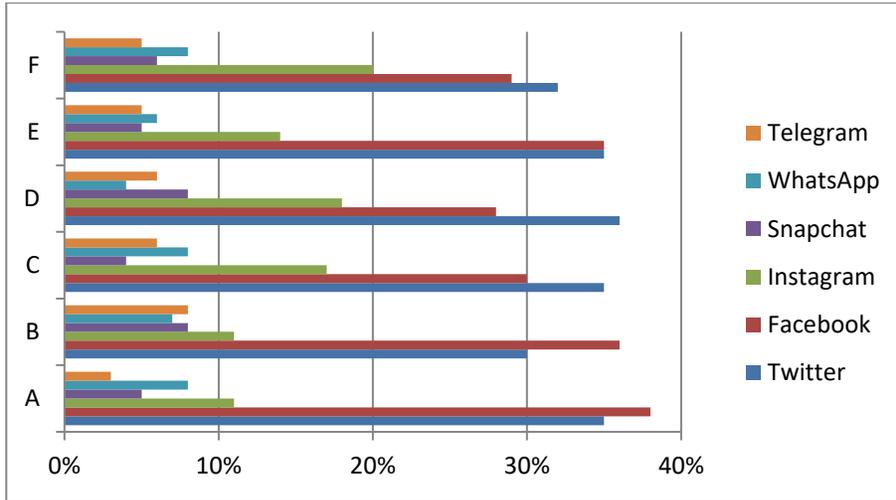
v) Impact of COVID-19 on EFL learners



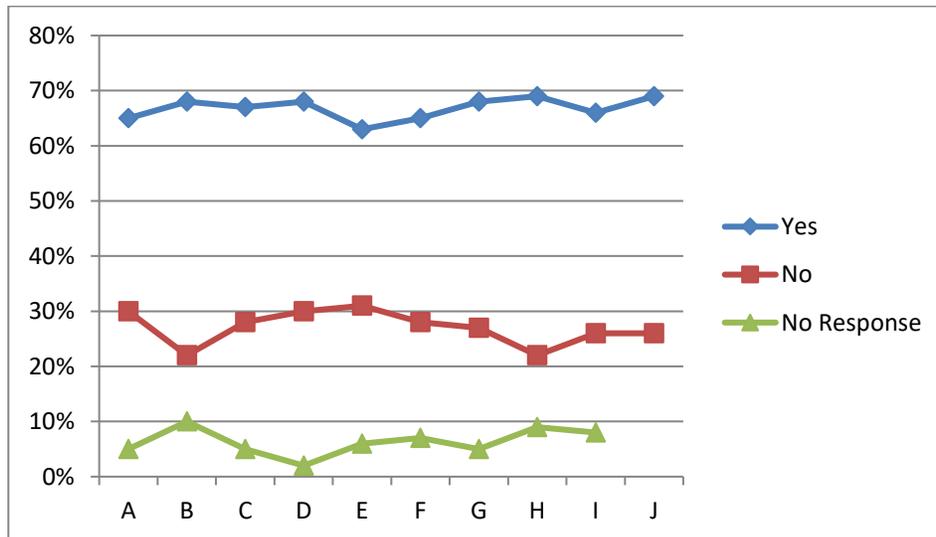
vi) Using social media for EFL learning



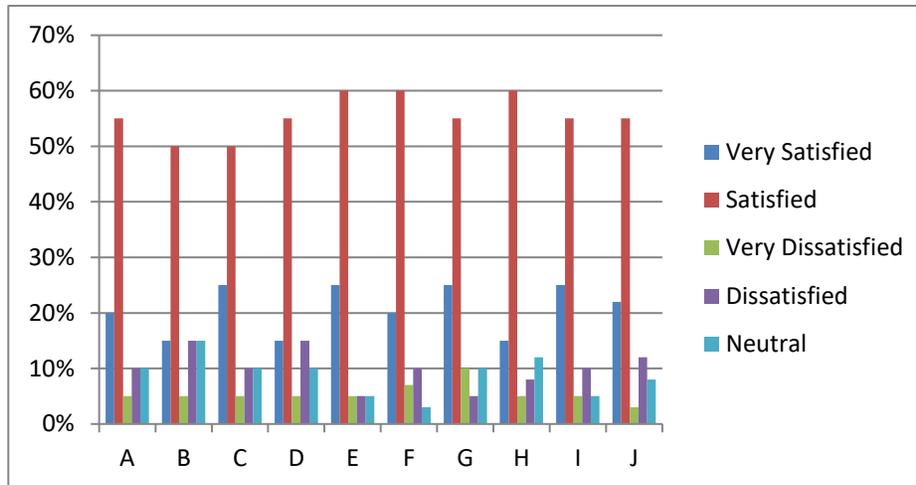
vii) Most common social media sites help in EFL learning?



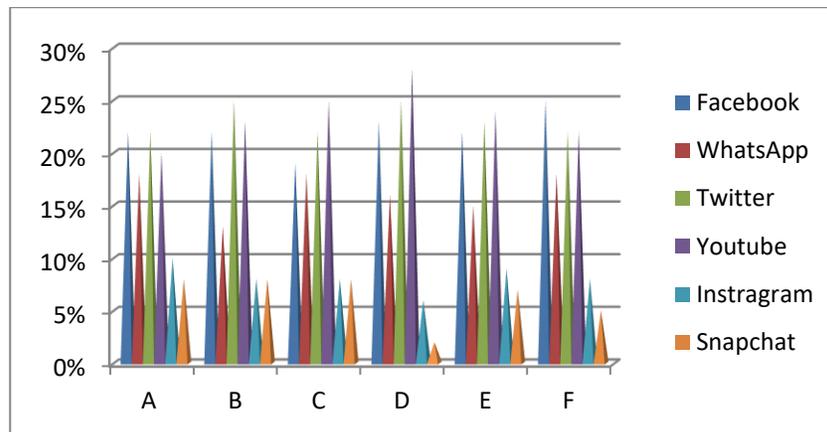
viii) Does your proficiency have increased learning EFL during pandemic by using Social Media?



ix) Positive impact of social media on EFL learners during COVID-19?



x) **Which is the most common social media platform suitable for EFL learning?**



Analysis:

The survey's questions ranged in length and variety, and these differences were taken into account when categorizing the study's conclusions. The researcher utilized specific questions during COVID-19 to elicit a wide range of viewpoints and comments on the impact of social media platforms on English language acquisition. Study topics included Saudi Arabian undergraduate students' preferences for and usage patterns of social media for learning English as a foreign language, as well as their use of the platform during the COVID-19 pandemic and for quickening their acquisition of the language. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp were found to be the most well-liked social media platforms among EFL students.

Social media is frequently utilized for many things, such as ensuring that people are informed during pandemics, and it has greatly influenced the revolutionization of education. According to the study, students commonly utilize social media to obtain trustworthy information about their surroundings and safety precautions in an emergency. They acknowledged utilizing social media to communicate with one another and their language instructors. The EFL teaching and learning activities for the study made extensive use of social media. According to the vast

majority of respondents, students use social media to interact with professors and classmates, see and download class notes, and access academic resources. Additionally, a resounding majority of them claimed to have used social media to advance their education and expertise. The vast majority of respondents asserted that social media helped them with their academic work and saved them time. Most students said that using social media helped them keep on top of class issues and quickly find materials and academic resources. They said that using social media has enhanced their learning as well as their writing, reading, and thinking skills. The information also demonstrated how social media helped students stay up to date on course changes, including time and location, allowing them to study whenever and wherever they pleased. The majority of college students now participate in a variety of Whatsapp and Facebook social media groups where they follow various academic websites to increase their knowledge. According to this study, it is advantageous to use online social media to link students to a worldwide instructor for collaborative learning and to foster their growth as creative and dynamic individuals.

Limitations

Like so many other studies, this one contains flaws, gaps, and limitations. The study's biggest flaw is that it ignores youth social media addiction, which may be harmful and lead to lack of attention. The study was only open to a select group of pupils. The results are therefore not generalizable.

Conclusion

Students utilized social media extensively to research the role of social media in EFL learning during the COVID-19 epidemic in Saudi Arabia. By looking at the use of media in EFL learning, this research fills in the gaps. Additionally, it looked at how and how often people use social media for EF learning. According to the report, social media is often used in EFL classrooms. The most well-known social networking platforms were Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp, while Instagram, Snapchat, Telegram, and other platforms received less attention. The study also discovered that most students used social media during university teaching and learning activities for a wide range of purposes, including communication, reading and downloading study materials, enhancing knowledge and skills, staying informed about changes to students' class locations and times, and defending themselves against the pandemic.

Social media has been more popular recently, and so too have people's opinions about the Internet. We no longer rely solely on a limited number of content producers to provide us with information, data, and other resources via the Internet. Social media is used by people to share, exchange, and rate information about friends, goods, and events. The internet has developed into a conduit for two-way communication. The role of Internet users has changed throughout time from that of casual users to that of creative creators who create and share their own content. According to the research, social networking sites are used by the majority of EFL students because they make it simple for them to find and share useful instructional resources. They also think that people across all professions utilize internet as their primary means of communication.

As a consequence, a larger number of respondents agreed with the statement about using social media while participating in COVID to learn a foreign language. The value of social networking sites is well known, and when students have a solid grasp of the sites they use, using social networking sites in the classroom is frequent. EFL students must continuously improve their teaching methods, learning styles, and modes of instruction. They must also adapt their learning activities to keep up with the rapid advancements in technology. When learning methods and procedures are technologically compatible with the technical proficiency and learning preferences of the learners, learning is more relevant and effective. The study's conclusions shed light on the fact that social media was crucial in expediting the learning of English as a Foreign Language during the COVID-19 epidemic in this regard.

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