

# **THE IMPACT OF COMPUTER SOCIAL NETWORKS ON USAGE, TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

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## **Abstract**

*Language is an evolving thing. It is naive to think that the language of social media is not having an effect on the way people use English in day-to-day life. It is more appropriate to consider just how much of an effect it is having on the way students learn and also communicate. The paper aims at investigating the impact of computer Social Networks Sites SNSs or social media in improving students' knowledge of English language namely vocabulary acquisition using students in English Department and Computer Science Department Nasarawa State College of Education Akwanga. Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasts, pictures, videos etc. In this work 110 students participated in the study to determine the impact SNSs could pose on students Vocabulary in English. The finding showed that over 96.4% agreed that SNSs plays a vital role in improving their academic activities and enhancing their English Vocabulary.*

**Keywords:** Computer, Social Network Sites, Social Media, Vocabulary

Vocabulary represents one of most important skills necessary for teaching and learning a foreign language. It is the basis for the development of all the other skills: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, spelling and pronunciation. Vocabulary is the main tool for the students in their attempt to use English effectively. When confronted with a native English speaker, when watching a

movie without subtitle or when listening to a favorite English song, when reading a text or when writing a letter to a friend, students will always need to operate with words (UKessay, 2015).

The researchers made English language their basis of this study because of its significance as spoken language internationally. English is undeniably important and had been recognized as an international language since decades ago. The origin of English is apparent due to the studies conducted by archeologists, a finding stated that "The oldest known writing of the real Old English words appears was found in 1981 at Undley Common, Suffolk. It was formed by two words which were "mægæmedu", written in Anglo-Saxon version of the runic alphabet, the meaning of these words are "reward for a kinsman". These words were expected written between AD 450 to 480, which was not long after English was separated from the Continental Germanic languages. Before 1981, a roe-deer ankle-bone found in Norfolk and bearing a single word interpreted as "roe-deer" which was also written in the fifth century, it was a common finding that was used by people as a prove on the study of old English."(Geoffrey Sampson, 2014).

Skewing this study on vocabulary, the importance of vocabulary, as argued in UKessay, (2015) that: "without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." Indeed, people need to use words in order to express themselves in any language. Most learners, too, acknowledge the importance of vocabulary acquisition. As a teacher, it will be noticed the fact that students usually find it difficult to speak English fluently. They usually consider speaking and writing activities exhausting because they keep on using the same expressions and words and very soon their conversation is abruptly interrupted due to missing words. And the main reason for such communication problems is the lack of vocabulary. Other students are confronted with the problem of forgetting the words immediately after the teacher has elicited their meaning or after they have looked them in the dictionary, and this is also a cause of the lack of vocabulary. The more words students learn, the easier they memorize them.

The teacher has an essential role in helping students to improve their vocabulary. Various teaching methods could be employed by the teacher at any given opportunity and be explored to achieve this. This article therefore, looked into one of the commonest companion of 21<sup>st</sup> century students that is Social Network or media. Could Social Network Services (SNSs) be a positive opportunity or a negative influence on teaching and learning vocabulary. With the proliferation of computers and mobile phones at the disposal of our students, it is clear that they speak computers, read computers, sleep computers and wake up in the midst of these complex computer software. In clear terms, the writers are demonstrating the fact that students are most occupied with computers which when narrowed is Social Networks Sites (SNS).

### **Meaning of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) or Social Media**

Social Networks Sites popularly called Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Wolfson, 2017).

Rouse, (2016) defines Social media as the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media.

Interactive media is a method of communication in which the program's outputs depend on the user's inputs, and the user's inputs in turn affect the program's outputs. Interactive media engage the user and interact with him or her in a way that non-interactive media do not. Websites and video games are two common types of interactive media. Movies and most TV shows are generally not considered interactive media; however, shows that require audience participation could be considered interactive media (Investopedia, 2017).

There are so many social network sites (SNSs) in which the most popular platforms as explained by Wolfson, (2017);

- **Blogs:** A platform for casual dialogue and discussions on a specific topic or opinion.
- **Facebook:** The world's largest social network, with more than 1.55 billion monthly active users as of the third quarter of 2015. Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including status updates. Brands create pages and Facebook users can "like" brands' pages.
- **Twitter:** A social networking/micro-blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages (140 character limit).
- **YouTube & Vimeo:** Video hosting and watching websites.
- **Flickr:** An image and video hosting website and online community. Photos can be shared on Facebook and Twitter and other social networking sites.
- **Instagram:** A free photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photos and then share them on a variety of social networking sites.
- **Snapchat:** A mobile app that lets users send photos and videos to friends or to their "story." Snaps disappear after viewing or after 24 hours. Currently, we are not allowing individual departments to have Snapchat accounts, but asking that they contribute to the Tufts University account.
- **LinkedIn Groups:** A place where groups of professionals with similar areas of interest can share information and participate in a conversation.

### **Importance of Social Networking SNSs**

SNSs has turned the society into a more family relationship base. The advantages of SNSs are too numerous to mention both within the academics and the society in general. The writers (Wil, 2014; Alix, 2012; Sharma, 2011; Cohn, 2014 and Rutledge, 2013) outlined as thus;

**1. Worldwide connectivity:** When searching for a former college roommate, one-time school teacher, or an international friend, no easier or faster way to make a connection exists than social media. Although Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest are probably the most well-known social networking communities, new websites are popping up regularly that let people connect and interact over the Web.

In many ways, these social communities are the virtual equivalent of church socials where family and friends gather to exchange news and get updates. Even the age-old custom of connecting with pen pals has been upgraded as private messages can be sent over social media. When it comes to getting information, few methods are faster than social media.

**2. Commonality of interest:** When one opts to participate in a social network community, one can pick and choose individuals whose likes and dislikes are similar and build a network around those commonalities. For instance, if a chess aficionado, a book lover or a particular political leaning, one can find and interact with those who share same interest.

It can also be a great way to share tips and ideas. Sites like Pinterest have been very successful due to the ease in which a person can learn - and share - information about a subject topic, hobbies, crafts, cooking, gardening and other do-it-yourself activities. By pinning and sharing, one can attract like-minded individuals into a circle.

**3. Real-time information sharing:** Many social networking sites incorporate an instant messaging feature, which lets people exchange information in real-time via a chat. This is a great feature for teachers to use to facilitate classroom discussions because it lets them utilize the vast store of information available on the Web. This can be a great time saver for the teacher - since students no longer need to visit a library to conduct research- and it can be a great way to engage distracted learners.

**4. Targeted advertising:** A non-profit organization that needs to get the word out about an upcoming fundraiser or a business owner marketing a new product or service, there's no better way than social media to get your message in front of millions of people 24/7.

**5. Increased news cycle speed:** Undoubtedly, social networking has revolutionized the speed of the news cycle. Most news organizations now rely on social media sites to

collect and share information. Social media - especially Twitter - is steadily becoming a mainstream source for breaking news. Today an individual can know, in real time, what is happening throughout the world. This has led to the development of a nearly instantaneous news cycle as everything from terrorist attacks to local car crashes get shared on social media, quickly alerting their intended audience of the event.

### **Fears of Social Networking**

There are fears allay by many in the society towards the use of SNSs. Some of these fears are worth giving attention to. The writers outlined some of these fears as follows;

**1. Backlash:** A joke among friends is one thing but a joke with the world at-large is much different. When potentially offensive content is posted online, the amount of feedback can be excessive and is often brutal. This is particularly true with highly opinionated subjects like politics and religion. This backlash can also have a long-term impact on a person's future, especially in a world that has fallen prey to over-sharing. Even school students are learning that comments they post on social media can influence whether a college approves their application for admission.

**2. Cyberbullying and crimes against children:** Use of social networks may expose individuals to other forms of harassment or even inappropriate contact. This can be especially true for teens and younger children. Unless parents diligently filter the Web content their family views, children could be exposed to pornography or other inappropriate content.

**3. Risks of fraud or identity theft:** Whether accepted or not, the information posted on the Internet is available to almost anyone who is clever enough to access it. Most thieves need just a few vital pieces of personal information to make one's life a nightmare. If they successfully steal a person's identity, it could cost the person dearly.

**4. Time Waster:** Business Insider reports that social media is the most popular use of the Internet - surpassing email - and smartphones and other mobile devices seem to be the driving force behind this trend since 60 percent of the traffic is from a mobile source. The GlobalWebIndexpoll shows that 28 percent of the time spent online is on social networks. With these type of numbers, some of the time spent on social media occurs at work. When these visits are for non-work-related activity, it can cost companies money through lost productivity. A state that 89 percent of responders admitted to wasting time on social media while at work. So, could be same in schools as students could spend much time on SNSs rather than studies, Conner, (2015).

**5. Corporate invasion of privacy:** Social networking invites major corporations to invade privacy and sell personal information. ‘Have you ever posted a comment on Facebook, only to notice an advertisement appear with content related to your post?’ Last year, Facebook earned an estimated. The posting of such information touches on one’s privacy [www.adweek.com](http://www.adweek.com) (2017)

**Differing Opinions** Because networking and online social communities are so widespread, several studies have looked at the effects of social networking. A common complaint, highlighted on [debate.org](http://debate.org), suggests social media is making us less social and more aggressive. Comments on social media sites are often blunter than the statements would be if they were made face-to-face. But other sources, like suggest that social networking, like any other technological tool, is as good as a user makes it Rutledge, (2013). Meanwhile it should be noted that when using any social media platform, one must take responsibility for his or her own safety and never join a group just because it is trendy or all friends are doing it. In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of social networking, it’s best to err on the side of caution and protect privacy. One must be careful with what to post and treat others as if they were in a face-to-face situation Claywell, (2013).

#### **Social Network Sites (SNSs) in Education (English Language)**

Social media in education refers to the practice of using social media platforms as a way of enhancing the education of students. Wikipedia (2017). Dhanya, (2016) in an article regarding social networks in English language suggested that the integration of social media into classroom practice entails a reconfiguration of roles: the teacher is no longer the sole source of content, and the students are able to shape their learning in ways which align closely with the needs of their daily lives. All these encourage the user to engage with information in English, reading and writing both formally and informally. The use of these techniques can act as a bridge to facilitate communication inside and outside the classroom. These devices can, of course, be a powerful teaching and learning device too.

#### **Review of Related Works**

Research relating Spoken English and social networks or media has been of great concern to scholars. This work made good findings in which research as were carried out and results of findings were taken into consideration. Most of these researches were aimed at proving if social networks necessarily have any impact on students’ performance in English language with bias to speaking ability like vocabulary, grammar and others. Some of the researches conducted are stated thus;

Sim and Pop, (2014) in a research titled *The Impact of Social Media on Vocabulary Learning Case Study facebook* Particularly, the research attempts to answer the question: ‘Can social media affect students’ development and progress in the foreign

language?’ In order to discover the answer to this question of the study, a project based on Facebook for the experimental group was conceived. It was assumed that significant differences were to be found between the groups using social media for learning purposes and those who did not in developing vocabulary knowledge. The study was conducted with a number of 127 students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, 1st and 2nd year students following the specializations: International Business, Management, Marketing, Finances studying in the academic year 2013-2014. The development in each group was measured and it clearly demonstrated a more significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge of the group exposed to the Facebook group. It is a rather innovative study as there are not many similar studies using the value Facebook can add to learning performed in Romania. The results of the study did not support the assumption that the experimental group would outperform the control group, as the differences between the two groups were not that significant.

According to Thurairaj and Roy (2012) Facebook and Twitter do lead to positive language learning. Thus, these SNSs like Facebook and Twitter should be incorporated as learning tools for language learning. Based on the interviews conducted, students stated that activities through social media are very interesting and it makes learning easier besides helping them improve their communication. The researcher found that, making Facebook and Twitter as learning tools is claimed to be fun and it is welcomed by the students. Besides, the researchers have also indicated that Facebook and Twitter are used widely to communicate in English. There are various activities preferred by the students and most importantly everything leads to positive language learning. Thus, the students do improve tremendously in their language as well as their writing skills. Besides, the students also claimed that they do learn and improve their language from the preferred activities on Facebook and Twitter. It is indeed a learning process when they check messages, tweets or notifications while surfing the sites. Besides, the students also confirmed that they learn new sets of vocabulary when they check their friends’ activities or updates. In addition, it is revealed in this research that the students are very open to the usage of Facebook and other social networks to support classroom activities. With the features on Facebook and Twitter, they can enhance classroom discussion and make it more interesting. In Malaysia, the younger, college-going generation is paralyzed without mobile phone apps such as Whatsapp, Viber, Hangout, Line, WeChat and Tango.

### **Methodology**

The researchers carried out a simply survey to ascertain if SNSs really influence students’ vocabulary. Survey used was to sample the students’ response and analyze these response via frequency distribution and simple percentage. Instruments applied was questionnaires designed with direct questions. The instrument underwent a test and

re-test for reliability within the English department and Computer Science of College of Education Akwanga.

128 participants were selected at random with approximately half of each were from English and Computer Science department. The students were well briefed by the researchers to ascertain their level of comprehension of the topic and interest in the research. Some dropped out of participation as a result of lack of time, interest or knowledge of the topic. A total of 110 participants stayed through the entire period under request. The briefing on the topic took one day while administrating of the questionnaires, answering and collection by the researchers lasted two days.

### Findings, Analysis and Results

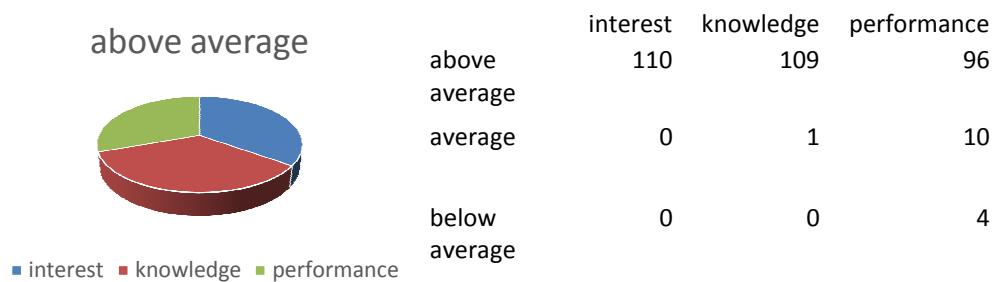
Preliminary questions regarding the participants: data reveled clearly that the participants were NCE 2 and 3. The sex were 62 males and 48 females which show fair representation. Responses to questions were by simple selection (Yes/No, Strongly Agreed – Strongly Disagreed). The findings and analysis are stated thus;

1. Student performance and interest in English language
2. Knowledge on vocabulary
3. Possession of Computer (desktop / laptop), mobile phone (smartphone), Tablet/Pad
4. Frequency of interaction with computers before acquaintance with SNSs
5. Level of acquaintance with SNSs
6. Educational value of SNSs
7. Influence of SNSs on Studies
8. Influence of SNSs on vocabulary usage
9. Interest in English vocabulary at present - unchanged
10. Suggestions on SNSs in school

### Question 1: Performance, Interest and Knowledge in English Vocabulary

Among the respondents, all of them responded positively in terms of interest and good knowledge of English and vocabulary. Although a very small fraction (15 people) response said the performance was average.

**Table 1**



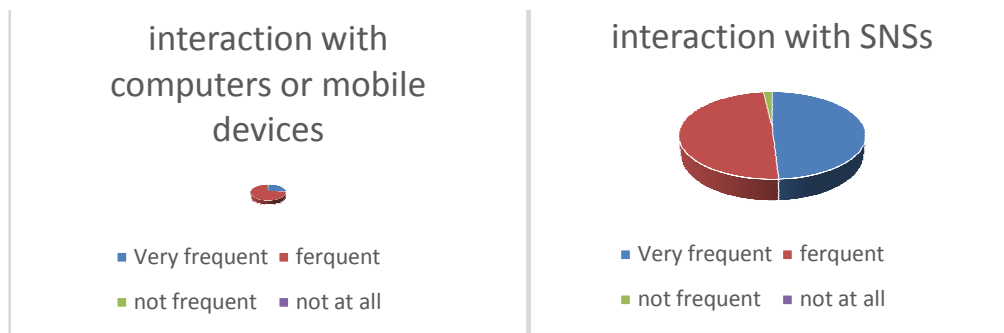
The analysis here gave credence to the students selected for this study. They have good understanding and interest in vocabulary also their performance in English language is good.

**Question2: Relationship with Computers or Mobile device and SNSs**

All respondents have interacted with computers and mobile phones but the frequency varies widely. Probably is because many got acquaintance with SNSs, since 82 (74.5%) respondents never had any meaningful interaction with SNSs and only 28 (25.5%) had.

**Table 2**

	Very frequent	frequent	not frequent	not at all
interaction with computers or mobile devices	29	80	1	0
interaction with SNSs	54	54	2	0



**Questions 3: Educational values of SNSs its influence on students' vocabulary**

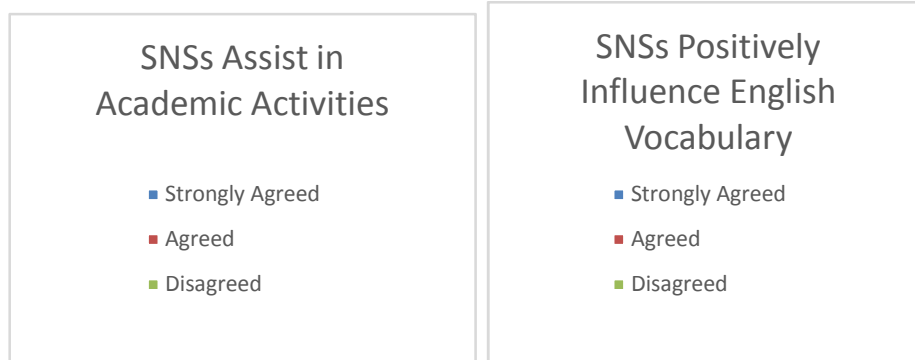
Respondents numbered 69 agreed strongly that SNSs assist them in their academic activities. Specifically mentioned were facebook and whatsapp whereby they take advantage of their free space and send even videos relating to grammar, speeches, and others. 37 respondents agreed similarly. Only 4 respondents disagreed as they viewed SNSs as a means of distraction to academics.

Relating to its influence on English vocabulary, 62 respondents agreed that SNSs has influenced their vocabulary usage positively since it has increased their level of interaction with people as distance is no longer a barrier to communication. They quickly acknowledged that SNSs though affect them in other aspects of English relating to writings which is simply because of extreme use of abbreviations and shortening of words and wrong usage of words with no regard to correct spellings.

42 respondents did not necessarily disagree but rather they said SNSs assist them generally in their academics. They are not specific on English vocabulary, which by analysis it is inclusive.

**Table 4**

	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
SNSs Assist in Academic Activities	69	37	4	0
SNSs Positively Influence English Vocabulary	62	42	4	0



### Results

The data gathered and analysis so far shows that SNSs has engulfed the entire modern society not even only the educational system. Students relate with SNSs beyond what one can imagine. Therefore, the earlier it is tailored towards academics the better. The frequency at which these students communicate within and without has no ‘vacuum space’ that is, hardly will these students stay for a couple of hours without speaking or sending a message. Most formal communications are aided by the use of dictionary which is already embedded in the device.

The analysis shows that over 96.4% of participants view SNSs as a positive tool for academic purpose as well as for improving English Vocabulary. Only four respondents representing 3.6% viewed SNSs as a destructive tool to students’ academic activities. This is quite insignificant when compare to those who see SNSs as an additional tool to enhance their English vocabulary hence the entire academics. The researchers are of the view that SNSs should be given wide acceptability in the classroom whereby assignments, discussion class, quiz etc can be done via SNSs platform.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Vocabulary, the core of any language, is probably the most challenging and time-consuming part of learning a foreign language. It takes time and flows like a continuous process, once you have settled the fundamentals of a language (pronunciation, orthography and basic grammar). Throughout this process, learners become familiarized with the words they come across. As researchers claim Sim M, and Pop A. (2014) its frequency of usage and the number of encounters in different forms and contexts that determine the acquisition of new vocabulary.

SNSs could be tailored into an innovative approach in teaching English language interactively, linking social media channels to English language learning. Students are thus encouraged and supported to develop communication and language skills.

The researchers still do not forget the fact that SNSs are wrongly used in the society today as attested to by 3.6% participants of this work. Therefore, seeing how wide and effective SNSs could help the students, parents and teachers must assist in educating the students on the need of engaging only the positive side of SNSs.

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