

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES MOTIVATION AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH AMONG UZBEK YOUTH

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Abstract. *Social media's explosive growth has changed how people learn languages, especially in contexts where English is a foreign language (EFL). This study investigates how Uzbek youth's motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English are affected by social media. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study looks at how students interact with websites like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram and assesses how this affects students' self-esteem, anxiety, and communication style. According to the results, social media greatly increases learners' motivation and reduces psychological barriers to speaking, which increases their willingness to communicate in English. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate informal digital environments into formal language instruction.*

Keywords: *social media, motivation, willingness to communicate, English speaking skills, Uzbek youth, EFL.*

1. Introduction

Social media has become a potent instrument influencing many facets of education, including language acquisition, in recent years. In Uzbekistan, where English is extensively studied as a foreign language, informal learning via digital platforms is increasingly augmenting traditional classroom instruction. Learners are constantly exposed to real-world language input and interaction opportunities through social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

Motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) are critical factors in second language acquisition. While many Uzbek learners possess grammatical knowledge, they often struggle with speaking due to low confidence and high anxiety. This study investigates how social media environments contribute to enhancing learners' motivation and their readiness to communicate in English.

2. Literature Review

Motivation has long been recognized as a key determinant of success in language learning. It can be broadly categorized into intrinsic motivation (driven by personal interest) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards). Social media has been shown to foster intrinsic motivation by making learning more engaging and relevant.

A learner's readiness to start a conversation in a second language is known as willingness to communicate, and it is impacted by contextual, social, and psychological elements. According to earlier research, learners are more likely to participate actively in informal digital environments because they are less afraid of making mistakes.

Research on social media in language learning suggests that platforms offering video-based content are particularly effective in improving speaking-related skills. However, there is limited research focusing specifically on the Uzbek context, which this study aims to address.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was conducted among 150 Uzbek students aged 16–24 who actively use social media for English learning. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences.

The survey measured:

1. Frequency of social media use for English learning
2. Levels of motivation
3. Willingness to communicate in English
4. Self-reported confidence and anxiety

Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and perceptions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Increased Motivation through Engagement

The findings reveal that social media significantly enhances learners' motivation. Participants reported that entertaining and relatable content, such as short videos and vlogs, made learning enjoyable. Unlike traditional textbooks, social media content is dynamic and culturally relevant, which sustains learners' interest.

4.2 Reduction of Speaking Anxiety

One important discovery is that social media can lessen speaking anxiety. Many students feel more at ease using English in casual contexts, like leaving comments on videos or taking part in online forums. A low-pressure atmosphere is produced by the lack of instant judgment.

4.3 Improvement in Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

The study found a strong positive relationship between social media use and WTC. Learners who frequently engage with English content online are more likely to initiate conversations in English. Exposure to real-life language use increases their confidence and perceived competence.

4.4 Passive vs Active Engagement

Active engagement (commenting, content creation) has a greater influence on speaking abilities and WTC, whereas passive consumption (watching videos) helps with comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Nonetheless, a large number of students continue to be passive consumers, suggesting that they require assistance in converting consumption into interaction.

5. Implications

The findings suggest that educators should consider integrating social media into language teaching strategies. Teachers can:

1. Encourage students to create content in English
2. Use social media clips as discussion prompts
3. Promote online interaction in English

Additionally, curriculum designers should recognize the value of informal learning environments and bridge the gap between classroom instruction and digital practices.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that social media significantly increases Uzbek youth's motivation and willingness to communicate in English. Social media platforms facilitate the growth of communicative competence by supplying interesting content, lowering anxiety, and providing chances for genuine interaction. Longitudinal effects and the influence of particular platform features on language learning outcomes could be investigated in future studies.

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