

The Impact of Social Media on Pragmatic Understanding Among Students

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how social media affects the pragmatic comprehension of students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang (UMT). Specifically, it investigates how platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok influence students' ability to use language proficiently in diverse social contexts. The research employed qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and questionnaires administered to 17 students in the English education program at UMT. The study found that 47.1% of respondents strongly agreed that social media positively impacts their pragmatic knowledge, while 41.2% agreed, indicating a general consensus on its benefits. Additionally, 76% of students reported that engaging in social media interactions heightened their awareness of socio-pragmatic norms, and 72% found their language learning experiences more interactive and engaging due to social media. These findings suggest that social media platforms can enhance pragmatic skills through informal and diverse language interactions. The study concludes by advocating for the incorporation of social media into language education to bridge the gap between formal education and real-world communication, thereby improving overall learning and pragmatic competence.

Keywords: Pragmatic comprehension, Social media, Language learning, Qualitative research

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the significance of social media has skyrocketed, particularly among university students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang (UMT). Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok have become integral parts of students' lives, serving various purposes from maintaining personal connections to accessing information and news. These platforms offer unique opportunities for students to engage in diverse social interactions, which can potentially enhance their pragmatic understanding—the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2020), Indonesia ranks as one of the largest users of social media globally, with over 160 million active users, a substantial portion of whom are young adults and students. This extensive usage underlines the importance of investigating the impacts of social media on students' language skills, particularly their pragmatic competence, which is crucial for effective communication in both academic and professional settings.

Despite the widespread use of social media and its potential benefits, there are concerns about its impact on students' pragmatic abilities. The informal nature of communication on these platforms, characterized by abbreviated language and lack of nonverbal cues, might not translate well to formal settings such as academic writing or professional communication. Previous studies, such as those by Mirzaei et al. (2016) and Lantz-Andersson (2018), have highlighted both the positive and negative influences of social media on language learning. However, there is a paucity of research specifically examining how these platforms affect the pragmatic skills of students in Indonesia, particularly at UMT. Addressing this gap is crucial as it provides insights into the potential of social media as a tool for language education and its implications for curriculum development. This study, therefore, aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and the pragmatic understanding of UMT students,

focusing on how these platforms contribute to their ability to interpret implied meanings and navigate diverse social interactions effectively.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the socio-pragmatic impacts of social media within the context of Indonesian higher education, specifically at UMT. While earlier research has broadly addressed the role of technology in language learning, this study delves into the specific ways in which social media platforms influence students' pragmatic competence. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focused on Western contexts, this research considers the unique cultural and educational landscape of Indonesia, where social media usage patterns and educational challenges differ significantly. This study also extends the existing literature by using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pragmatic benefits and limitations of social media. The findings are expected to offer new insights into the practical applications of social media in enhancing language education, potentially guiding educators and policymakers in integrating these tools more effectively into the curriculum.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how social media usage affects the pragmatic understanding of students at UMT. Specifically, the research seeks to identify the ways in which platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok contribute to students' ability to interpret implied meanings, engage in varied social interactions, and develop socio-pragmatic norms. The study also aims to explore the potential of these platforms as supplementary tools for language education, providing recommendations for their effective integration into teaching methodologies. The scope of the research includes a detailed examination of the types of social media interactions that enhance pragmatic skills and the contextual factors influencing these interactions. Operational definitions include pragmatic understanding (the ability to comprehend and use language appropriately in different social contexts) and socio-pragmatic norms (the social rules governing language use). The study's limitations include the sample size, which is restricted to 17 students from the English education program at UMT, and the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. Despite these limitations, the research offers valuable insights into the role of social media in language learning and its potential implications for educational practice.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative methodology to explore the relationship between social media usage and the pragmatic understanding of students at UMT. According to Sugiyono (2016), qualitative research methods are philosophically oriented towards exploring the conditions of scientific objects through the researcher as the primary instrument. The study's participants were sixth-semester English education students from UMT, with a sample size of 17 students enrolled in the program. Data collection was conducted through interviews and questionnaires, focusing on students' pragmatic knowledge, their frequency of social media use, and the relationship between these variables.

The data collection instruments included specific questions designed to gauge the students' pragmatic competence and their perceptions of how social media influences their language use. The interviews provided in-depth insights into the students' experiences and perspectives, while the questionnaires allowed for the quantification of responses, providing a broader understanding of the trends and patterns in social media usage and its impact on pragmatic skills.

The research design also incorporated a literature review to contextualize the findings within the broader body of existing research. This approach enabled a comprehensive analysis of how social media platforms influence pragmatic understanding, supported by empirical evidence from previous studies. The mixed-methods approach ensured a robust examination of the research questions, combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews and questionnaires done as part of this study gave useful insights into how social media affects pragmatic comprehension among UMT students. Nearly half of respondents (47.1%) strongly agreed that social media may be a beneficial instrument for improving pragmatic knowledge among UMT students, with another 41.2% agreeing. Only 11.8% of respondents remained indifferent on

this subject, demonstrating that social media has a beneficial impact on strengthening students' pragmatic abilities.

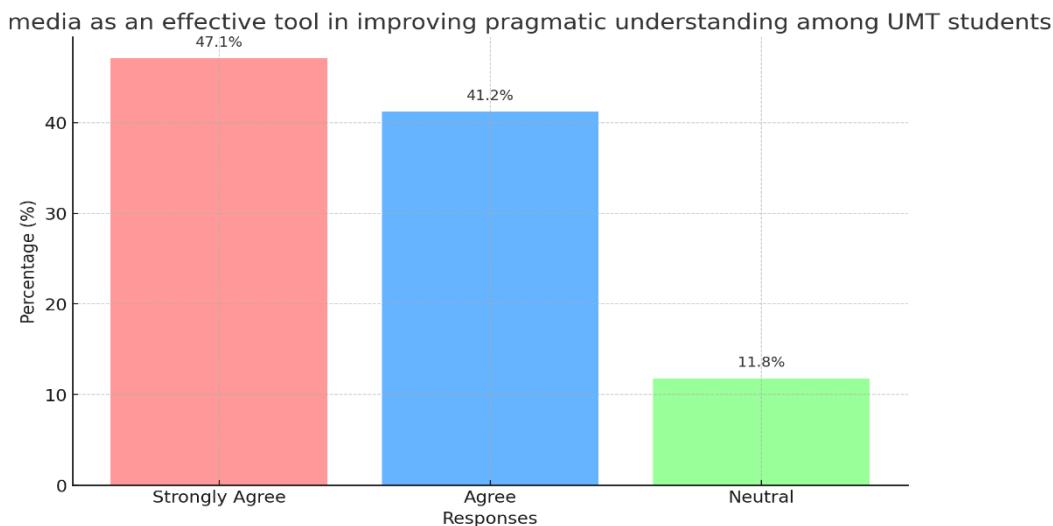


Figure 2. Percentage of questionnaire results

The findings are consistent with previous study (Mirzaei et al., 2016), which stresses the favorable impact of technology, especially social media, on students' capacity to comprehend implicit meanings in social interactions. The large number of respondents who believe social media is good at improving pragmatic comprehension lends credence to the idea that digital communication platforms can play an important role in language skill development.

Moreover, the results of the study resonate with the research by (Lantz-Andersson, 2018), highlighting how social media platforms create informal communicative spaces that aid in the development of pragmatic understanding in second language learners. The positive responses from the respondents regarding the role of social media in improving their awareness of socio-pragmatic norms and conventions align with Lantz-Andersson's emphasis on the benefits of diverse language interactions facilitated by digital platforms.

The interviews revealed that 76% of students expressed that engaging in social media interactions has helped them become more aware of socio-pragmatic norms and conventions in language use. This finding is consistent with the study by (Hasan & Idrees, 2020), it investigates the socio-pragmatic aspects of social media remarks about online learning. Students' enhanced awareness of socio-pragmatic features as a result of social media interactions demonstrates the platform's significance in exposing them to a variety of linguistic settings and communication styles.

Furthermore, the positive responses from 72% of students who mentioned that social media has made their language learning experiences more interactive and engaging support the research by (Fiallos et al., 2021), which discusses the educational benefits of digital platforms in enhancing learning experiences. The student's perception of social media as a tool for interactive learning underscores the potential of integrating digital platforms to create dynamic and engaging language learning environments.

The interviews and questionnaires revealed a widespread consensus among UMT students on the good influence of social media on pragmatic understanding. The high percentage of respondents who believe social media is effective for improving pragmatic skills, raising awareness of socio-pragmatic norms, and creating interactive learning experiences highlights the potential of digital platforms to support comprehensive language learning and the development of pragmatic competence among students. These findings highlight the necessity of using social media technologies in language teaching to create interesting and effective learning settings.

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that social media significantly improves the pragmatic understanding of students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang (UMT), with 88.3% of respondents recognizing its effectiveness. Platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok offer diverse, informal communicative spaces that enhance socio-pragmatic skills by exposing students to varied language interactions, helping them grasp implied meanings and social norms. This finding supports existing research that highlights how social media can transform traditional education into more engaging, student-centered approaches. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating social media into language teaching to create dynamic learning environments, improving students' ability to navigate both formal and informal language use. Despite some challenges, the advantages of social media in developing pragmatic competence and overall communicative skills are significant, making it crucial for educational institutions to integrate these tools into their curricula for comprehensive language learning and effective communication in a digitalized world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that educational institutions, particularly at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang, integrate social media platforms into their language teaching methodologies. Given the significant positive impact of social media on students' pragmatic comprehension, educators should leverage platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok to create more interactive and engaging learning environments. Specifically, language instructors could design activities that encourage students to participate in online discussions, create content, and engage in language practice within these platforms. Additionally, curriculum developers should consider incorporating modules that address the use of social media for pragmatic skill development, emphasizing the importance of understanding socio-pragmatic norms and implied meanings in various contexts. Training programs for teachers should also be implemented to equip them with the skills needed to effectively utilize social media as a teaching tool. Furthermore, it is recommended to conduct further research with larger and more diverse samples to validate the findings and explore additional benefits and potential challenges of using social media in language education. By embracing these recommendations, educational institutions can enhance students' language proficiency and better prepare them for real-world communication demands.

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