

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF MICROBLOGGING PLATFORMS ON ESL LEARNERS' WRITING FLUENCY AND VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

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Abstract

The expansion of digital communication has changed the ways second language learners engage with English. Among these developments, microblogging platforms such as Twitter/X and Threads provide spaces for written interaction and language use beyond the classroom. This study examines the impact of microblogging platforms on ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition. The study is informed by Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, with particular attention to the concepts of social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

A quantitative research design was used, with data collected from university-level ESL learners through structured close-ended questions and one open-ended question. Participants had experience using microblogging platforms ranging from six months to two years. The data were analyzed to explore the relationship between microblogging use and language learning outcomes.

The findings show that learners who regularly use microblogging platforms demonstrate improvement in writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition. These learners report greater ease in expressing ideas in written English and a broader use of vocabulary. Frequent users also indicate lower levels of writing anxiety compared to less active users. In addition, microblogging platforms appear to support motivation for writing, with learners engaging in more frequent written communication than in traditional classroom settings.

The study suggests that microblogging platforms can be used as supportive tools in ESL learning environments to promote writing practice and vocabulary development through social interaction.

Keywords

Microblogging, Twitter (X), Threads, Writing Fluency, Vocabulary Acquisition, ESL, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Sociocultural Theory, Digital Communication

Introduction

While fluency in writing and vocabulary development are two important factors in second language acquisition, despite the English as a second language (Esl) learners struggle with them. For ESL learners, the ability to express their ideas clearly and fluently with rich vocabulary is very crucial for academic success. As Muncie, 2002 in Lee, 2003, for second language improvement, writing in context with vocabulary use serves as a beneficial tool. For ESL learners, lack of vocabulary contributes to difficulty in writing (Santos, 1988; Astika, 1933) in (Lee,2003). However, with the advancements in technology today, language learning has become easy for ESL learners. Traditional classrooms often fail to provide enough opportunities for language learning, however, digital platforms particularly social media platforms have emerged as valuable tools for learning informal language. While there are different ways for ESL learners to learn and acquire these skills, digital technology is of crucial importance Diallo, 2014. Al-Jarrah, Al-Jarrah, Talafah & Mansor, 2019), the evolution of technology has fast paced social media tools that are being used by students in social and academic settings. Social media let's students engage with each other, which can be very beneficial because it will help them discuss class matters via social media (Al-Jarrah et al, 2019). Mensah, and Nizam (2016) in (Al-Jarrah et al, 2019) describes that social networking has served a meaningful impact on student's academic performances. Furthermore, Urda and Schoenfelder (2006) in Al-Jarrah et al, 2019 clearly alleged that social networking is absolutely

affecting students' effectiveness as well as their grades. According to Bakeer (2009) in Al-Jarrah et al, 2019, the students are now able to shape their learning according to their daily lives without getting help from their teachers. And it is all because of digital platforms.

Among these digital platforms, microblogging platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), threads, and Tumblr have gained popularity because of their global reach. Microblogging is a form of digital communication which allows a person to share short updates, unlike traditional blogging, which involves long and structured writing. The short updates may often contain pictures or other multimedia. These microblogging platforms allow users to write not more than a few hundred characters. These platforms encourage users to engage in meaningful written interactions. According to Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009, Microblogging platforms such as twitter (now X) is a perfect tool to support learning English, because of its accessibility, is suitable for any level of English, and additionally, those students who could not attend classroom, can participate in an online learning community in twitter. These microblogging platforms have proved to be authentic places of informal learning for students especially for Esl learners.

In today's fast evolving digital world, nearly everyone is aware of the term microblogging. Additionally, students not only are aware but they also use these microblogging platforms especially Twitter / X and threads for informal learning and for fun. Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng (2007), Microblogging is what that fullfills a need for an even faster mode of communication, compared to regular blogging. McFedries, (2007) in Ebner and Schiefner, (2008), what we call microblogging is posting updates, ideas or simply quick notifications. Microblogging is a short form of blogging that lets you write no more than 280 characters. Dunlap & Lowenthal, (2009) as in (Gao, Luo, & Zhang, 2012), many scholars believe that microblogging has great potential of promoting learning among students despite of the informal or sometimes playful interactions. Microblogging allows for clear expression with vocabulary use, and real-time communication. Although these are the features that align with natural language acquisition processes.

Although many social media tools which help in language learning are being explored, despite these platforms such as Twitter and threads, which offer real-world English, and authentic environments, remain under explored. Many scholars have already explored these microblogging platforms and their significance, but this study aims to explore the role of authentic microblogging platforms such as Twitter and threads in terms of writing fluency and vocabulary use for ESL learners. Furthermore, this study also explores how do ESL learners feel about expressing themselves in public and globally fast paced platforms like X and threads.

Literature Review

In the previous section, the use of microblogging platforms as well its significance in formal & informal learning was discussed. In this section, we reviewed several related studies of previous authors. The inclusion of these microblogging platforms in educational setting has gained significant attention. A range of studies have examined their role in enhancing communication skills as well as collaborative learning among students. However, fewer were able to directly address their influence on writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition among Esl students. Thoms (2012) studied the use of microblogging platforms, particularly Twitter, alongside traditional blogging in university classrooms. Thoms (2012) emphasized upon the ability of microblogging platforms to enhance student engagement, and reflective learning. He conducted his research on university students interaction and experiences with using Twitter specifically. He investigated that including digital platforms in learning can enhance students' engagement overall. Thoms (2012) concluded his research by discussing that microblogging platforms particularly Twitter has the potential to encourage students to participate or engage actively in continuous learning.

On the other hand, Holotescu and Grosseck (2012), conducted a case study that explored the use of microblogging platforms particularly Twitter, as a learning tool as well as learning community, that encourage collaborative learning, and the acquisition of digital communication skills. Their study discussed that microblogging gives opportunities to students for informal learning, and content creation. Their study focused on how microblogging enhance engagement and digital learning. They explored several learning scenarios that involves microblogging, with the outcomes that microblogging enhance students interaction with each other and build knowledge by sharing content.

Additionally, Gao, Luo, and Zhang (2012), conducted a research on microblogging' s use in education. They, specifically, analyzed previous studies between 2008 and 2011. Their focus was on identifying the trends, benefits and the possible limitations in the existing literature. Finally, their study highlighted the uses of microblogging into several themes such as enhancing communication, participation, and informal learning. They noted that these microblogging platforms, particularly Twitter, has great potential and been used widely to enhance engagement and build knowledge by sharing various content.

Ahmad Kharman Shah et al. (2016) in his article, discussed both the benefits and associated risks of microblogging within educational setting. The study noted that microblogging platforms like Twitter has various educational benefits such as they are used to share information globally, they enhance interactive learning and academic communication. Furthermore, it also highlighted the risks of using these platforms including privacy, miscommunication. Additionally, students can get easily distracted by them and the overloaded information that can hinder the way of real and authentic information.

Bozkurt et al. (2016), explored the direct impact of microblogging on creative writing skills among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The study significantly highlighted that microblogging platforms can encourage students to engage in real-time, hence allowing the students to think critically and express themselves. The study involved microblogging platforms particularly Twitter for analyzing creative expression of the students. Through the implementation of microblogging in classroom, the study noted significant changes in the students' written expressions. Furthermore, the students were able to write creatively in English. The study highlighted how short-form of writing influenced their confidence and skill in language.

Dascalu et al. (2016) analyzed students written content on blogs and microblogs to analyze their academic performance. The study evaluated students-generated-texts on micriblogging platforms by using natural language processing. The study focused on students discourse to analyze how the online writing patterns reflect academic performance overall. Furthermore, Sahril et al. (2012) in their research, discussed how microblogging platforms can enhance students' creativity in writing. The study highlighted the influence of short-form of writing on students creativity over time. The study emphasized that microblogging platforms particularly Twitter can encourage students to write frequently and organize their thoughts quickly. This way, microblogging has the potential to develop creativity amongst students in a real-time environment. The above mentioned outcome was based on the implementation of microblog-based writing tasks in an English language learning setting, meanwhile assessing changes in students creative expression.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), proposed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the 20th century, offers an important perspective on the linkage between social context, language, and cognitive development. Vygotsky argues that both nature (inborn ability) and nurture (social environment) work together in the language learning process, emphasizing that higher mental functions are built through collaborative, socially-mediated activities (Khan,

2024). Rather than viewing these two forces as separate influences, his theory presents them as deeply interconnected, with social interaction serving as the primary channel through which innate cognitive potential is realized and developed.

Central to this framework is the significance of social interaction and teacher-guided scaffolding in facilitating learning. Vygotsky contends that a learner's engagement with parents, teachers, peers, and the broader community plays a decisive role in shaping language acquisition and cognitive growth. Through these meaningful interactions, individuals are exposed to language in authentic, purposeful contexts, which not only accelerates linguistic development but also strengthens practical skills. In this sense, learning is not a solitary, internally driven process but rather a deeply social one, shaped and sustained by the quality of the human relationships and guided experiences that surround the learner.

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky fits this research very well because he believed that learning grows via social interaction and Microblogging platforms provide students a space where they can learn language through social interactions, where ESL learners can write, respond, engage, observe, and communicate with others in real language situations. Microblogging platforms exposes ESL learners' to new English vocabulary words sentence patterns, multiple ideas and expressions which shape their own language style over time.

The major concept of the theory is ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), which means there is a gap between what a learner can do alone and what he can do with someone's help. In the context of microblogging, a learner knows basic rules of grammar, but when interacting with social posts or comments, he comes to know about some advanced rules and vocabulary. For instance, a learner can make positive and negative sentences, but when he studies the rules of making interrogative sentences on social media platforms, he would be able to put the verb at the beginning of a sentence and can make interrogative sentences as well. Another example can be when a learner reads trending posts on Twitter or somewhere else, he may come across different vocabulary such as the use of the words "mind-blowing", "horrendous" and "ostentatious", and then he tries to understand these words in a social context.

Another important concept of the theory is scaffolding, which means giving temporary help or support to learners so that they can perform a task which is difficult for them to do alone. In a digital environment or microblogging context a learner observes the comments, structure of the sentences, peer responses, teachers' guidelines, etc. Learners try to follow similar patterns in their own writings. With the passage of time they become more confident and independent in their work. They experiment with new forms and patterns on their own. This temporary support helps them in growing later.

MKO (More Knowledgeable Other) is one of the core concepts of the Vygotsky theory and refers to someone who is having more knowledge than the learners. They can be a teacher, colleague, sibling or even a video tutorial. For instance, a teacher is guiding the writing of a descriptive essay. Here, the teacher is the MKO helping the students improve their language ability. The theory also highlights the importance of cultural context in language learning. When learners interact with other learners belonging to different backgrounds, help them in receiving multiple new words, ideas, and communication styles. In this way microblogging highly influences language learning.

Research Gaps

While the existing literature supports the inclusion of these microblogging platforms like Twitter or Threads in enhancing student's learning or engagement, however, several gaps are there to be addressed. Most of the studies focused on the implementation of these microblogging platforms in educational context for enhancing learning, engagement or creative expression, despite that they were unable to directly discuss their effect on students writing fluency or vocabulary acquisition. Few studies evaluated the linguistic impact of

microblogging specifically in the context of ESL learners. Even those that did focus on language learning primarily focused on creative writing, though they ignored other skills such as grammatical accuracy or coherence. Furthermore, most of the studies focused primarily on one microblogging platform that is Twitter, while overlooking the other platforms which people widely use such as Threads. Moreover, the long term effects of microblogging on language proficiency and the inclusion of these platforms into classroom curriculum has yet to be studied.

This study focuses on the need for understanding how microblogging can affect ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition, using the quantitative approach.

Methodology

The study follows a Quantitative approach, using five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. However, one open-ended question (qualitative method type) was added at the end of the survey form to analyze improvement in both ESL learners' Writing Fluency and Vocabulary Acquisition. A total number of 60 students studying at the University level were selected. Only the ESL students (equal representatives of both male and female) using Microblogging platforms such as Twitter or Threads were selected in order to investigate the impact of micro platforms on their writing Fluency and Vocabulary Acquisition. Most of the students use the microblogging platforms for less than 6 months, while few were using the platforms for more than 2 years. The participants of the study are ESL university level students who have differences in the English language proficiency. Data was collected using structured survey form consisting of close-ended questions and at least one open-ended question. The survey form was distributed online using digital platforms and the students participating were well informed about the purpose of the study. The data was analyzed statistically to measure the percentage and to analyze the relationship between microblogging platforms and the ESL learners.

Results and Discussions

The Results and Discussion section analyzes the real-time impact of microblogging platforms on ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition using a quantitative approach and one open-ended question at the end of the survey form. The study assesses the improvement in ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition after regular engagement with the platforms. The population size of 60 participants was chosen with equal representation of both male and female students. Only ESL learners using microblogging platforms were selected for the survey. The findings are organized across three dimensions: Writing Fluency, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Motivation and Engagement. The responses showed that 46.2% of the total students started using microblogging platforms 6 months ago, while 38.5% students have been using the platforms for more than 2 years.

In order to check the engagement of participants with the platforms, a survey question "How often do you write in English on microblogging platforms?" was added. The responses revealed that the majority (53.8%) rarely write in English on microblogging platforms, while 23.1% reported daily engagement and another 23.1% reported writing three to five times per week. No student selected once a week. These findings show variation in platform engagement within the sample, which may affect ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition. Learners who engage rarely may show weaker effects than those who use the platform daily. Furthermore, out of 60 participants, approximately 32 students rarely use microblogging platforms, while 14 are daily users and 14 use the platforms three to five times per week.

Table 1.1: Frequency of Writing on Microblogging Platforms

Frequency	Percentage	Approx. Number (n=60)
Rarely	53.8%	32

Daily	23.1%	14
3–5 times per week	23.1%	14
Once a week	0%	0

In order to check improvements in writing fluency, a Likert scale was used. The responses show that 30.8% of students agree that the platforms improve their overall writing speed in English, while 23.1% strongly agreed, making a combined positive response of 53.9%. However, 38.1% remained neutral and 7.7% disagreed. The results indicate that a majority of students perceive a positive effect on their writing speed, while a significant proportion remains uncertain. Out of 60 students, approximately 32 show improvement, while 23 remain neutral or uncertain.

Table 1.2: Improvement in Writing Speed

Response Category	Percentage	Approx. Number
Strongly Agree	23.1%	14
Agree	30.8%	18
Neutral	38.1%	23
Disagree	7.7%	5

Furthermore, a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate students' confidence in expressing their ideas in English. A total of 61.5% strongly agreed and 23.1% agreed, combining to 84.6% positive responses. Only 7.7% disagreed and 7.7% remained neutral. This emphasizes that confidence in written expression is closely linked to writing fluency.

Table 1.3: Confidence in Writing

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	61.5%
Agree	23.1%
Neutral	7.7%
Disagree	7.7%

Additionally, students were asked whether character limits on platforms help organize sentences. Results showed 61.5% strongly agreed and 15.4% agreed (76.9% positive). 15.4% were neutral and 7.7% disagreed.

Table 1.4: Impact of Character Limit

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	61.5%
Agree	15.4%
Neutral	15.4%
Disagree	7.7%

Furthermore, 69.3% students agreed that regular microblogging improved their sentence structure, while 23.1% strongly agreed. Neutral responses were 15.4%, and 7.7% each disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Table 1.5: Sentence Structure Improvement

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23.1%
Agree	69.3%
Neutral	15.4%
Disagree	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	7.7%

Frequently writing short posts improved communication clarity: 46.2% agreed and 15.4% strongly agreed (61.6% positive), while 30.8% remained neutral.

Table 1.6: Communication Clarity

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15.4%
Agree	46.2%
Neutral	30.8%

The second dimension analyzed vocabulary acquisition. 38.5% agreed and 30.8% strongly agreed (69.3%) that they learned new vocabulary through microblogging.

Table 1.7: Vocabulary Learning from Posts

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	30.8%
Agree	38.5%
Neutral/Other	Remaining

Additionally, 38.5% agreed and 23.1% strongly agreed that they use new vocabulary in academic writing, while 23.1% were neutral and 15.4% disagreed.

Table 1.8: Use of Vocabulary in Academic Writing

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23.1%
Agree	38.5%
Neutral	23.1%
Disagree	15.4%

Moreover, 69.2% strongly agreed and 15.4% agreed (84.6%) that microblogging exposes them to more vocabulary than classrooms.

Table 1.9: Vocabulary Exposure

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	69.2%
Agree	15.4%
Neutral	7.7%

Furthermore, 76.9% strongly agreed they can understand meanings from context, while 61.6% actively look up unfamiliar words.

Table 1.10: Contextual Vocabulary Understanding

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	76.9%
Neutral	7.7%

The third dimension is Motivation and Engagement. 61.5% strongly agreed and 15.4% agreed (76.9%) that microblogging motivates them to write more.

Table 1.11: Motivation to Write

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	61.5%
Agree	15.4%
Neutral	15.4%
Disagree	7.7%

Furthermore, 69.2% strongly agreed and 15.4% agreed that feedback encourages writing.

Table 1.12: Impact of Feedback

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	69.2%
Agree	15.4%
Disagree	7.7%

Additionally, 69.2% strongly agreed they feel less anxious writing online.

Table 1.13: Writing Anxiety Reduction

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	69.2%
Neutral	15.4%
Disagree	7.7%

A total of 76.9% believed consistent use improves language skills.

Table 1.14: Perceived Effectiveness

Response Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	69.2%
Agree	Remaining

Finally, the open-ended question revealed that 32 out of 60 students responded. Many reported improvements in vocabulary and fluency. Some noted they could convey ideas more precisely, while others highlighted improved daily communication. These responses suggest that regular engagement leads to perceived improvement in both fluency and vocabulary. Interaction through reading posts and comments was identified as a key factor, supporting the role of social interaction in language development.

Table 1.15: Open-Ended Responses Summary

Response Type	Observation
Vocabulary Improvement	Frequently reported
Fluency Improvement	Frequently reported
Learning through Reading Posts	Common theme
Participation Rate	32/60 students

Collectively, the analysis of the responses shows that there is a relationship between the microblogging platforms and the ESL learners' Writing Fluency and Vocabulary Acquisition. It is important to point out several dimensions emerging from the data.

The first noteworthy dimension highlights the high level of agreement expressed by the participants in the questions expressing the understanding of words in context or situation, improvement of confidence in writing and using social activity as motivation. The responses shows that the students learn new vocabulary words by reading posts daily and engaging with others on the platforms. Furthermore, the responses analyzed that students feel more confident in writing in English on these platforms rather than traditional classrooms.

The second dimension highlights the lowest levels of agreement recorded in such questions as writing speed and vocabulary transfer to academic writing. The analysis of these dimensions suggests that the language development facilitated through microblogging activities is rather informal and requires additional instructional support to become academically-oriented.

Finally, the qualitative data obtained from the last open ended question demonstrates that the students are capable to analyze the language development as a result of interaction with the Microblogging platforms.

Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of microblogging platforms on ESL learners' writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition. While previous research has focused on the implementation of these platforms in language learning, there remains a gap in examining their direct influence on learners' writing development. This study specifically explores how consistent engagement on microblogging platforms contributes to improvements in writing fluency and vocabulary acquisition.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all Gen Z or general learners belong to a digitally literate, urban demographic. (Khan, Farooq, & Khan, 2025) In Pakistan, many students from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds lack access to advanced digital tools and stable internet connectivity, which limits their ability to participate fully in microblogging-based learning environments. As a result, not all learners can be equally studied or represented in research on microblogging platforms due to this digital divide

Drawing on Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concepts of social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development, the study suggests that interaction on microblogging platforms supports language development. These platforms provide a low-anxiety space where learners can write regularly, interact with peers, and receive feedback, which gradually enhances their writing fluency and vocabulary over time.

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