

**RESEARCH TITLE**

**LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: LEARNING  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) THROUGH  
YOUTUBE IN SAUDI ARABIA**

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**Abstract**

This study is aimed to investigate the impact of social media platforms on Saudi students. This chapter presents the details of research philosophy, research approach and research design of this study. It also highlights who will make the sample population, how it will be selected and which tools will be employed to collect and analyze data from them. In the later part, it discusses the significance of following an ethical code of conduct in order to establish validity and reliability of research process.

## Introduction

In the recent times, life is characterized with the use of technology. People use technology to perform their daily routine practices. They use technology for business operations, shopping and entertainment. Same is the case of education sector where the use of technology is a common sight (Park, Song and Hong, 2018). Research indicates that students are comfortable in learning through technology and they prefer the use of digital technology as compared to traditional techniques while performing different educational tasks (Thouèsny and Bradley 2011; O’Hara et al, 2014). According to Prensky (2001), today’s students are different than the past generations. They are digital natives who use technology in every walk of life thus using traditional educational techniques to teach them can be problematic. It is imperative for teachers to include new educational techniques that can increase the students’ level of interest and can motivate them to participate in learning process actively (O’Hara et al, 2014). This situation is evident in all the parts of world including Saudi Arabia where people have access to different technologies and devices such as cell phones, computers and video games.

English is an international language that is spoken in almost all the parts of world. For this reason it has gained the status of lingua franca and people across the globe learn it as their second language (Meierkord, 2006). Saudi students are interested in learning English as it enables them to communicate across the globe. It widens their professional horizons and helps them to study and work in different parts of world. Saudi ESL students are inclined to use of technology for educational purposes and take up different digital tools and social media platforms for learning English. YouTube is the most prominent amongst these platforms (Park, Song and Hong, 2018)

### Context and Rational Of this Study

This study will be conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia that is an affluent country in the Middle East region. Due to abundance of its natural resources, especially oil and gas, Saudi Arabia holds an important position at regional and global political landscape. The country has a high per capita income and people have access to all life amenities. They also have access to technology and digital devices.

Use of technology for daily routine purposes is a common sight in Saudi Arabia and the recent pandemic COVID-19 has accelerated this trend. People are inclined to perform many life activities through digital means and as a result e-commerce is flourishing in this otherwise traditional society. Similar trends are observed in education sector where students and teachers frequently use digital resources in order to enhance speed and quality of learning (Hamad et al., 2019).

In the past few years, many researchers have explored the impact of technology on learning process. These studies have probed how the use of digital resources and different social media platforms can enhance the speed and quality of learning and which factors can hinder this process (Park, Song and Hong, 2018). Most of these studies are in the context of developed nations and very few have focused

to investigate the ground realities in this regard existing in the Middle East region especially Saudi Arabia. This study will be an effort to fill this research gap. It will provide information about how the use of different social media platforms (with special focus on YouTube) impacts the ESL students in Saudi Arabia. This information will help to understand the impact of digital platforms on students' learning for other subjects as well. Findings of this study will be applicable on other countries in the Middle East region where social and educational structures are similar.

### **Research Aims and Objectives**

This study is aimed to investigate the impact of social media platforms on Saudi students. It will answer the research questions:

- 1- How the learning material on social media platforms helps the Saudi ESL students?
- 2- How the use of YouTube improves Saudi ESL students' motivation and learning speed?

Whereas the objectives of this research are the following:

- To investigate the difference between language acquisition and language learning
- To probe the use of social media platforms (especially YouTube) for educational purposes
- To examine the impact of YouTube on student's motivation towards language learning
- To study the impact of video material available on YouTube on language learning

### **Outline of This Study**

In compliance with the format of academic research, this study has six chapters. Following is a brief account what these chapters entail:

**Introduction:** This chapter introduces the research topic, highlights its significance and presents its rationale. It also includes the aims and objectives that researchers intend to achieve through research process. At the end, it presents a brief outline of this study.

**Literature Review:** This chapter is an overview of existing academic information about the topic under discussion. It is further divided in various sub sections that discuss different aspects of research topic

**Research Methodology:** This chapter presents the details of research philosophy, research approach and research design of this study. It also highlights who will make the sample population, how it will be selected and which tools will be employed to collect and analyze data from them. In the later part, it discusses the significance of following an ethical code of conduct in order to establish validity and reliability of research process.

**Research Findings:** As the name implies, this chapter presents the findings of this study that the researcher has obtained through collection of primary data. It presents some selected parts of primary data.

**Discussion and Analysis:** In this chapter the researcher discusses the findings of this study and compares and contrasts them with the already existing information about this topic.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** In this final chapter, the researcher concludes the discussion made throughout this report and presents some recommendations for the related professionals and future researchers. This chapter ends at the final note that is the gist of this study.

### **Literature Review**

Literature review is a vital part of research process. It provides conceptual foundation for the study and informs the researcher what is already known about the research topic and what areas need further probing thus saves duplication of effort. A thorough literature review adds meaning to the research and makes the readers interested in further reading (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The following section includes a brief

#### **Language Acquisition vs. Language Learning**

Language acquisition refers to the natural, subconscious process of language learning. While acquiring language, the learners are just communicating and they are not aware that they are actually learning the language (Krashen and Terrell, 1988). But the language learning process is quite different in nature and while learning the language, the learners put in conscious efforts to develop a formal knowledge about the structure of that specific language. According to Krashen and Terrell (1988) language acquisition is natural and easy whereas language learning is complicated and involves a lot of effort. Research indicates that the learner's motivation to learn a new language plays an important role in the success or failure of this process. It is observed that the learners who are convinced that learning another language is beneficial for them and it will increase the probability of their success, put in more effort in learning process (Krashen, 1983; Krashen and Terrell, 1988).

#### **Use of YouTube for Educational purposes**

YouTube is commonly used web-based videos sharing platform. Since its inception in the year 2005, YouTube has become one of the most popular resources for online videos across the globe (Burk & Snyder, 2008). This platform hosts a large number of entertainment, educational, political, medical, and historical videos (Bonk, 2009). The number of YouTube users is increasing day by day. It is equally popular in developing as well as developed nations.

There are a great number of educational videos on YouTube that cover a wide range of subjects. As YouTube is a free of charge platform, thus it is used for educational purposes and is becoming popular day by day. Teachers from across the globe are creating their YouTube channels and uploading their videos that help students to learn with their own convenience. They can watch these videos anywhere and at their suitable time. Various scholars have probed how the use of YouTube is making the learning easy and fun and it brings authentic learning material to the doorsteps of students (Alimemaj 2010; Burke and Snyder, 2008). In the case of language learning, it provides authentic material as well as native accent that is very important for quality learning.

YouTube is a commonly used social media platform in Saudi Arabia. It is equally popular in men, women and youngsters who use it for a variety of reasons including sports, entertainment, lifestyle and education. Research indicates that YouTube has a tremendous potential to improve the students

learning in different subject areas including language learning. Authentic learning material is available on YouTube free of cost. It helps them to practice language with native teachers. It provides the student autonomy of learning and scope to practice language in and outside the classroom.

#### **Use of Video Materials for Language Learning**

Use of audio visual material in educational settings is a common sight. It is observed that students learn better when the educational content is supported by visual aids. In the recent times, use of technology for educational purposes has increased and new versions of audio visual aids are available. Use of videos for teaching and learning language is a common phenomenon that helps teachers to provide a high quality learning material to their learners (Canning-Wilson, 2000; Çakir, 2006). Videos are a great source of authentic linguistic material that is interesting and effective at the same time. Various research studies have identified the benefits of using video material for language teaching and learning. Use of videos allows the learners to experience the authentic language in a controlled and supervised manner. These videos bring life to the class room and help learners to experience it. This all motivates them to participate in learning process and to take charge of their learning that ensures the success of this process

#### **Impact of YouTube on Learners' Motivation**

Learners' motivation is one the most important factors related to the success of learning process. It is observed that motivated learners put more effort in learning process. They invest more time as compared to the learners with a low level of motivation. In relation to language learning, a high level of students' motivation is vital for success of learning process. It is observed that when learners are exposed to real language by native speakers, they get deeply engaged in learning process and this feature is present in YouTube videos. Furthermore, young learners feel bored while learning through traditional methods and their span of attention remains brief in such classes. In such situation, they learn very little in class of long duration. Besides this, retention of their learning also remains low due to the lack of interest (Boster et al., 2002). In such conditions, YouTube videos can increase their interest and can motivate them to engage in learning process. According to Lin (2000), teachers can easily use YouTube videos for enhancement of their learners' listening and speaking skills. Moreover, they can motivate them to practice the newly learnt linguistic feature by assigning them some videos that they can watch in their spare time. This all can turn the language learning into a fun activity that is otherwise a tedious task. Similar were the observations by Bravo, Amante, and Enache (2011) who found YouTube material useful to increase the motivation level of university students. This study revealed that students consider these videos enjoyable so are willing to spend some time to watch them.

#### **Hypothesis for This Study**

In the light of above academic information the researcher has developed the following hypothesis:

- YouTube is useful for educational purposes
- Videos available on YouTube are beneficent for language learning

- Videos available on YouTube are beneficent for Saudi ESL learners
- The material available on YouTube improves the level of learners' motivation.

### **Research Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the comprehensive plan that researchers make before starting the research process. This plan includes the details about theoretical underpinning of the study and research approach and research design selected by the researcher. It also provides information about the sample population, type of data used and the tools and techniques applied to collect and analyze this data. Bhattacharjee (2012) believes that a comprehensive research methodology guides the researcher throughout the research process and saves an incredible amount of time and effort.

### **Research Paradigm**

The term research philosophy denotes the theoretical underpinning of research. It highlights the researcher's beliefs about formation of truth about the research topic. Research philosophy also informs how the research topic can be probed and what type of data is required for this probing (Bryman, 2016). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) enlist the four major research philosophies as positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism where positivism takes the truth as a quantifiable reality that does not change with changes in circumstances. This research philosophy is appropriate for scientific investigation. On the other hand, interpretivism explains the reality of truth about a phenomenon on the bases of related people's experiences and observations. This research philosophy suggests that reality of a phenomenon can change when the related people's experiences and observations change with the passage of time or due to changing environment/circumstances (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Interpretivism works as the foundation for social research where researchers are focused to examine the sample population's opinion and standpoint. Realism and pragmatism research philosophies are used for the studies where researchers are aimed to explore the differences and relationship between the absolute truth and related people's perceptions. These research philosophies lead to mixed research where qualitative and quantitative both the types of data are used to explore the research topic (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This research study is based on interpretivist research philosophy that is commonly used in social research. It considers the truth as a personalized reality that takes shape through people's personal experiences and observations. This research philosophy leads to qualitative research approach where the sample population's beliefs and point of views are probed through qualitative data.

### **Research Approach**

Research approach is defined as a framework that explains what type of data will be used for exploration of a research topic, from whom and how this data will be collected and which tool/techniques will be employed for analysis of this data. Creswell (2014) classify main research approaches as qualitative research approach and quantitative research approach where qualitative research approach utilizes textual data and quantitative research approach uses numerical data to probe the research question. Many contemporary studies use a combination of these two approaches

called mixed research approach. This approach uses textual as well as numerical data to probe the research topic in detail and is considered more comprehensive as compared to a single research approach (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The researcher has selected a qualitative research approach for this study. This selection is based on this its ability to probe social constructs through textual information. It will enable the researcher to understand to what extent YouTube is helpful for Saudi ESL students in learning English as second language.

### **Research Design**

The term research design refers to the detailed plan that includes all the activities requires to attain the main aim of a particular research. There are various research designs that are suitable for different types of studies. Some commonly used research designs are observational research design, correctional research design, exploratory research design, case study research design and systematic review (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The researcher has selected an exploratory research design for this study. Exploratory research design is used in situations where sufficient data about the topic under discussion is not available (Maxwell, 2013). It enables researchers to understand the existing condition related to research topic and the underlying factors that are creating this situation (Creswell, 2013). Exploratory research design helps in in-depth probing of research topic in order to answer the research question. It also helps in accumulation of new knowledge about the topic under discussion.

### **Research Population**

Research population refers to a group of research participants who represent a wider population related to a research topic. Research population of this study will comprise 20 ESL students studying in Saudi universities. These students will be selected through purposive sampling technique that allows researchers to select the research participants who can provide the most relevant data (Silverman, 2013). The researcher will select the ESL students who frequently use social media platforms, especially YouTube for their language learning.

### **Data Collection**

Data is the foundation for every research study. There are two types of data namely secondary data and primary data. The term secondary data refers to the already existing knowledge about research topic and primary data means new information that is gathered for a specific study. Researchers can use either any one or both the types of data for conducting their research. A number of tools are available for data collection including surveys, questionnaires and interviews (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Researchers can select the data collection tool/tools in accordance to the nature of their research and time and resources available for the sake of that particular research (Gill et al., 2008). For this study, the researcher will use secondary and primary both the types of data. Secondary data

will be collected through a comprehensive literature review and primary data will be collected through interviews. The researcher will use a semi structured interview schedule for this purpose.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis is a vital part of research process. It gives meaning to the data collected for research purpose and enables the researcher to answer the research question. There are various research tools and techniques that help researchers to identify the main and sub themes of a data set and to relate the findings of their research with already existing information about the topic under discussion (Braun and Clarke, 2008). For analysis of data collected for this study, the researcher will use thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is popular choice of researchers investigating social phenomena where the sample population's beliefs and opinions are considered (Braun and Clarke, 2008).

#### Ethical Considerations

For academic research, researchers have to follow the university's code of conduct which suggests that sample' population's participation in research process should be voluntary in nature. Moreover, it should be based on their informed consent (Oliver, 2010). The researcher will religiously follow this code and conduct and will get a consent form signed from research participants before gathering primary data from them. This consent form will include the details about their rights and responsibilities during the research process. This code of conduct also suggests that researchers should properly acknowledge the other scholars' work used to develop the foundation of their research (Oliver, 2010). The researcher will comply with it through referencing and will acknowledge the other scholar work through in-text citation within the research report. Moreover, she will give a complete reference list at the end of the document.

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