Language Learning through Social Media Platforms among Gen Z: Analysis of Acceptance, Change, and Effectiveness

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Abstract
Today's generation, especially Gen Z, are active users of social media platforms in their daily lives, whether for information-seeking or entertainment. This phenomenon directly and indirectly affects language development among them. Therefore, the use of social media as a medium for language learning must be managed wisely to avoid negative implications. This study aims to explore language learning through social media platforms among Gen Z, focusing on aspects of acceptance, change, and effectiveness. A qualitative approach was used to gain deep understanding of the language learning scenario via social media, involving 10 study participants. Data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of language use and social gratification. Findings show that Gen Z's acceptance of language learning via social media is positive, driven by motivation and encouraging factors that promote continuous exploration. As a result, changes and increased effectiveness in active language learning occur, fueled by their interest and excitement toward descriptive, audio, and visual content obtained from social media. This study has the potential to be a key reference for future researchers in understanding how social media can be systematically and comprehensively utilized as a medium for language teaching and learning.
Keywords: Gen Z, Social Media, Language Learning, Acceptance, Change, Effectiveness

Introduction
Language learning through social media platforms has been identified as a medium with potential positive impact on language acquisition among Gen Z. Social media not only changes how they communicate, share information, and interact (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020), but also serves as a key source for language acquisition. These platforms offer access to comprehensive learning materials including online communities, video and audio recordings, and dedicated language websites that support self-directed and interactive learning. Social media also acts as a powerful tool to help Gen Z actively learn and practice language (Ahmed, 2019). Through interaction with native speakers and access to diverse learning resources,

they can continuously improve their language skills. Previous studies show that social media positively impacts language learning, especially by providing access to various resources such as language-specific websites, audio recordings, and video tutorials (Al-Khalidi & Khouni, 2021).

Moreover, social media helps Gen Z maintain motivation. Since many face motivational challenges, social media can act as a catalyst to keep them focused and on the right learning path (Ansari & Khan, 2020). Generally, Gen Z tends to obtain information and news through social media apps more than other generations. While definitions of social media may vary, most platforms share similar core features. According to Kemp (2023) in the Digital 2023 Global Overview report, more than 4.7 billion individuals, nearly 60% of the world's population use social media daily. The Global Web Index report also shows that 46% of internet users get news from online sources, while 40% access news websites for updates.

Research Problem

Language learning is a complex process requiring continuous practice, exposure to authentic linguistic input, and meaningful interaction. Traditionally, this process occurs in classroom settings using printed materials like textbooks. However, with the rise of digital technology and rapid development of social media, Gen Z now has access to language learning resources from around the world. Social media platforms offer rich and diverse environments for language practice, including content like videos, podcasts, and blog posts that cater to various learning styles (Biletska et al., 2021).

Social media has revolutionized language learning by expanding traditional teaching methods. It offers informal and flexible learning environments that complement conventional pedagogy (Choi & Chung, 2021). Learning through social media is also more enjoyable and interactive, encouraging Gen Z to actively participate in discussions, comment, and share their views directly contributing to authentic language practice.

Platforms like YouTube, podcasts, and blogs provide engaging learning opportunities with access to authentic content, flexible environments, and high levels of engagement. Social media can strengthen traditional language teaching by offering valuable supplementary resources for Gen Z to practice their language skills. However, it also presents challenges such as the risk of misinformation, lack of structured learning, and unequal access to technology. Users must remain aware of the evolving digital environment.

Overall, social media offers many positive effects on language learning. Key advantages include access to diverse learning resources like language-specific websites, audio recordings, and video tutorials, all of which support language mastery among Gen Z. Social media also boosts student motivation and engagement, making language practice more enjoyable and accessible. For example, interactive software and multimedia resources make learning more dynamic, especially when Gen Z communicates in the target language through natural environments that enable multimodal communication, content sharing, and peer feedback (Gil, Lin & Campbell, 2020).

Literature Review

According to Gil, Lin, and Campbell (2020), social media refers to Internet-based technologies that form interactive virtual platforms, where individuals within specific web communities can create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. In simpler terms, social media is a modern technological application that facilitates the exchange of information among users while enabling them to actively produce and share content.

Umirov and Seytniyazova (2022) emphasize that the use of technology in social media brings various benefits, making it one of the most significant mediums in language learning. Social media offers a wide range of resources and opportunities to Generation Z language learners, including access to diverse learning materials and chances to interact with native speakers and fellow learners.

Meanwhile, according to Gomez-Parra and Huertas-Abril (2020) as well as Manca (2020), the use of online resources that match individual levels and needs is a crucial element in autonomous language learning. In this context, Generation Z learners who study independently must acquire new skills to effectively utilize social media. Hamat and Hassan (2019) state that digital competence, the ability to learn independently, motivation, a sense of responsibility, and perseverance are among the essential skills required. Goh and Sigala (2020) also stress that these skills are undeniably important in the context of language learning through social media.

However, the effort to transform online materials into a practical and effective language learning environment is not an easy task. This challenge becomes more pronounced when Generation Z undergoes the learning process independently, without formal guidance, thus demanding a high level of awareness and competence in managing their own learning.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Khan (2018), which emphasizes how individuals use media to fulfill specific needs. In the context of this research, the theory is applied to understand Generation Z's motivation in using social media for language learning purposes. Four key aspects are outlined in this theory:

i   Socialization: Generation Z shows a strong tendency to engage in conversations and group activities, aiming to build a sense of belonging and establish connections with peers who share similar interests in particular subjects.
ii Entertainment: Generation Z's interaction with local communities through social media is also driven by the need for entertainment, which indirectly contributes to a more enjoyable and relaxed learning experience.
iii Identity Exploration: Participation in online groups allows Generation Z to explore and strengthen their self-identity, including their social standing among peers with shared interests and aspirations.
iv Information: Social media is used by Generation Z as a channel to obtain information related to relevant activities, whether in academic contexts on campus or in everyday life outside educational institutions.
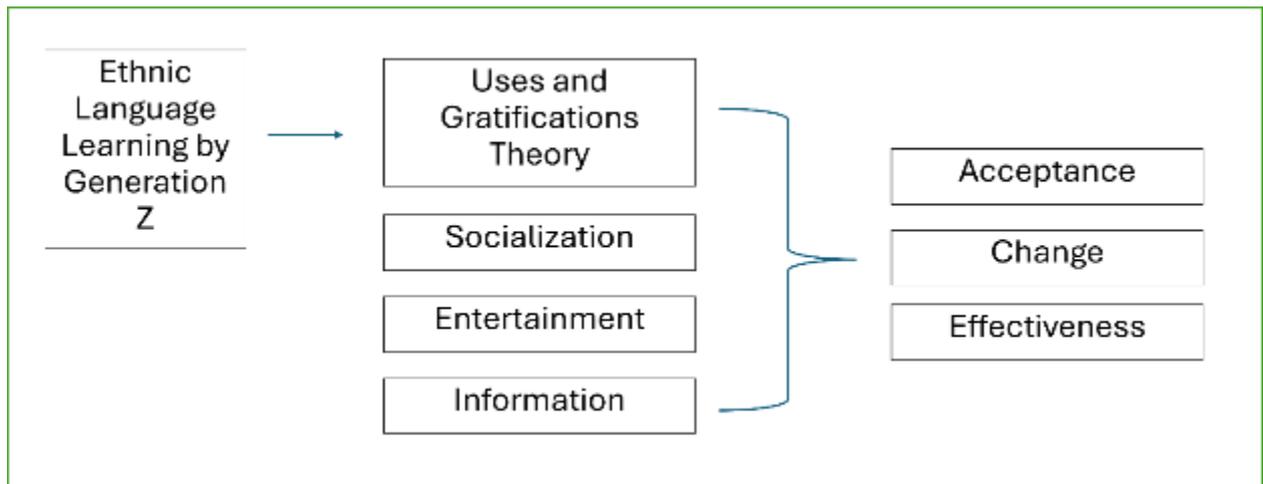
In the context of this study, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is an audience-centered approach developed based on an understanding of mass communication such as radio, television, newspapers, and other media. This theory focuses on the reasons individuals choose specific media to fulfill their particular needs. Unlike other theories that examine how media influences audiences, this theory emphasizes the actions of users toward media, specifically, how they use media for certain purposes.

Accordingly, this theory is considered highly relevant for this study as it provides a suitable framework for understanding the motivations and behaviors of Generation Z in using social media as a tool for language learning. Through the mechanisms outlined in this theory, the effectiveness of language learning can be significantly enhanced, especially when media is actively and strategically used by users to meet their learning needs.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a fully qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of social media in language teaching and learning. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the meanings participants assign to the studied phenomenon, as well as to understand the social and cultural contexts that influence their practices.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, enabling the researcher to obtain rich and contextual information from participants. The interview questions were designed based on the study's objectives and tailored to the participants' backgrounds to ensure relevance and accuracy of the information gathered.

Participant Selection

A total of 10 participants were purposefully selected from among individuals who actively use social media as a medium for language teaching and learning. The selection criteria included their level of involvement in online language learning activities, ability to communicate reflectively, and willingness to openly share their experiences.

Interview Procedure
Interviews were conducted online via digital communication platforms mutually agreed upon with the participants. Each session lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent for transcription and analysis purposes. Ethical procedures such as informed consent and confidentiality of participant information were fully observed.

Analysis and Discussion
Based on the field study conducted, the following presents the analysis of findings and discussion.

Analysis of Social Media Acceptance in Language Learning
i.   Acceptance of Confusion Due to Linguistic Diversity
Social media also has the potential to become a disruptive element in the language learning process among Generation Z. The wide range of activities offered by these platforms can easily divert their attention and cause them to lose focus on the intended language learning goals. Therefore, it is crucial for Generation Z learners to recognize the potential distractions and maintain commitment and concentration toward their learning objectives.

> *"In my view, the use of social media can help individuals learn multiple languages. However, it needs to be regulated, as the diversity of content may lead to inconsistency in language learning."*

ii.   Diversifying Vocabulary to Facilitate Language Learning
One of the most significant influences of social media on language learning is the expansion and modification of existing vocabulary. In the online context, many terms that previously held specific meanings have been reinterpreted in line with digital usage and virtual culture. These shifts in meaning gradually permeate spoken communication, shaped by social factors such as class, age, gender, and ethnicity, which collectively influence how individuals speak and interact. These factors contribute to the linguistic diversity present in society, reflecting the socio-cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of social media users. This observation is further supported by statements from the study participants, as outlined below.

> *"While using social media, I was able to learn a wide range of vocabulary that helped improve my understanding of language learning."*

Social media has brought significant changes to language usage, including the introduction of new vocabulary, abbreviations, and acronyms, as well as the simplification of grammar and syntax. Generation Z is driven using educational technology because it stimulates the learning process, enhances engagement, and encourages independent collaboration. Furthermore, this generation demonstrates a high capacity to adapt to various learning styles offered through digital platforms. One of the key benefits of using technology-based language teaching tools is their ability to significantly increase student engagement in the learning process

iii.   An Environment That Shapes a Dynamic Linguistic Landscape
The virtual social environment plays a vital role in influencing the language learning process by providing linguistic spaces and experiences that stimulate cognitive development. Through dynamic and open online interactions, Generation Z gains systematic access to practice, apply, and strengthen their language skills. This is further supported by statements from the study participants, as outlined below.

> *"Social media is a dynamic medium for language learning; it facilitates effective language acquisition."*

The use of interactive software and multimedia resources has made language learning more dynamic and enjoyable, especially among young people. Social media plays a vital role in helping them develop various skills, including the ability to navigate and share digital content, engage responsibly in online interactions, and build a strong digital identity. However, social media can also be a major distraction for students, as its attention-grabbing nature may lead them to become trapped in endless scrolling activities, ultimately affecting their focus on academic tasks (Alm, 2015).

The influence of social media on language is also evident through the rapid evolution of vocabulary, the increased use of new slang, and the emergence of unique linguistic features within the context of language development. These changes reflect how social media not only affects the way individuals communicate but also shapes a more flexible and diverse linguistic landscape.

Analysis of Changes in Language Learning Through Social Media
Language learning through social media also presents several risks, including information overload and difficulties in identifying credible and trustworthy sources. Therefore, it is important for Generation Z language learners to be aware of the potential distractions present in the digital environment and to set clear learning goals in order to maintain focus and effectiveness in their language acquisition process.

In facing these challenges, the role of language educators becomes increasingly significant. Language teachers can assist Generation Z in optimally utilizing social media for language learning purposes. This includes providing access to credible resources such as dedicated language websites and audio recordings, connecting students with native speakers and relevant learning communities, and continuously monitoring students' progress.

Overall, social media is a powerful tool in language learning; however, its effectiveness depends on appropriate usage strategies and strong pedagogical support from language educators. With proper guidance, teachers can help students stay motivated, actively practice language skills, and achieve meaningful progress in their learning journey. Monitoring students' activities on social media also enables teachers to provide constructive feedback and ongoing support, thereby ensuring that the learning process remains systematic and focused.

The Effectiveness of Social Media for Language Learning

i. Enhancing Reading and Writing Skills

The use of social media in language learning offers significant opportunities for Generation Z to sharpen their reading and writing skills. Through activities such as reading blog posts in the target language, learners are exposed to various writing styles, tones, and genres that enrich linguistic understanding and sensitivity to communication contexts. Writing blog entries or comments in the target language provides space for practical exercises and meaningful interaction, allowing learners to receive feedback from native speakers or peers within the learning community.

In addition, social media platforms offer exceptional flexibility in language learning. Generation Z can access content anytime and from anywhere, enabling them to engage in learning activities according to their personal schedules. This feature is especially beneficial for students who lack access to formal language classes or native speakers in their physical environment. Thus, social media has the potential to serve as an inclusive and adaptive support medium in strengthening the language skills of Generation Z.

ii. Language Practice Activities in Daily Life

The use of social media has the potential to help Generation Z integrate language practice into their daily routines in a more flexible and effective manner. For example, they can listen to podcasts in the target language while commuting or watch target-language videos on platforms like YouTube during their leisure time. This approach allows for continuous exposure to the language being learned in a relaxed and easily accessible context. At the same time, social media also provides space for active engagement in language learning. Generation Z has the opportunity to sharpen their writing skills by producing their own content or responding to other users' posts. This interaction not only enhances language proficiency but also encourages collaborative and reflective learning within a broader digital community.

iii. Enhancing Student Motivation

Social media platforms have significant potential in enhancing the motivation and engagement levels of Generation Z in language learning. This is because social media offers a wide range of content that is both engaging and relevant to their personal interests and preferences. Generation Z is able to select and follow content creators who produce materials related to topics they enjoy, thereby creating a learning experience that is more personalized, contextual, and meaningful. This is further supported by statements from the study participants, as outlined below.

iv. Synergy with Community Members

Social media platforms that feature language-specific communities and groups enable Generation Z to stay connected with others who are also learning the same language. This interaction has the potential to be a significant source of motivation in supporting their language learning process. While social media offers various advantages in the context of language learning, studies also indicate that there are several negative effects that warrant attention. One of the main drawbacks is the risk of information overload, where students may be exposed to excessive unscreened content, leading to confusion and disrupting their learning focus.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that the role of social media in language learning among Generation Z is highly significant. This is because the majority of Generation Z are active users of the digital world, and their high level of engagement with digital platforms directly influences the process of language acquisition and mastery. This phenomenon aligns with the framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that social media users tend to seek satisfaction through activities such as socialization, entertainment, and information-seeking. In the context of language learning, Generation Z's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage digitally has opened the door to more flexible, authentic, and self-directed learning approaches. Their ability to select content that aligns with personal interests and interact with communities of native speakers makes social media not only a support for formal learning but also a means of enriching informal learning experiences. Therefore, the effectiveness of social media in language learning is not only empirically proven but also holds potential to be a strategic component in contemporary pedagogical design. With appropriate support from educators and institutions, social media can be harnessed as a tool to strengthen language literacy, expand communication networks, and build long-term motivation among Generation Z.

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