

INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS INTO LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS FOR ECONOMICS STUDENTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing language learning, particularly for specialized academic disciplines such as economics. This article explores how social media can be effectively integrated into language classrooms to support economics students in developing linguistic proficiency alongside domain-specific knowledge. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and classroom interventions, this study examines the impact of platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram on vocabulary acquisition, communication skills, and engagement with economic concepts. Results indicate that structured integration of social media fosters collaborative learning and contextualized language use, though challenges such as digital distractions and varying levels of technological proficiency must be addressed. Recommendations for educators include designing task-based activities and establishing clear guidelines to maximize benefits.

Keywords: Social media, language learning, economics education, technology integration, collaborative learning.

Introduction

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has transformed educational practices, with social media platforms gaining prominence as tools for enhancing language learning (Chen, 2018). For economics students, who require proficiency in both language and discipline-specific terminology, social media offers unique opportunities to engage with authentic content, interact with global economic communities, and develop communication skills in real-world contexts. Platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram enable students to access

current economic discussions, share insights, and practice language skills in professional settings (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). However, the integration of social media into language classrooms raises challenges, including managing distractions and ensuring equitable access. This article investigates how social media can be effectively incorporated into language instruction for economics students, focusing on strategies that enhance linguistic and disciplinary competencies.

Literature Review

Social media's role in education has been extensively studied, with research highlighting its potential to foster interactive and student-centered learning environments (Tess, 2013). Greenhow and Lewin (2016) argue that platforms like Twitter facilitate real-time communication and exposure to authentic language use, which is particularly beneficial for language learners. In the context of economics education, Alford and Jones (2019) found that social media engagement with economic news and debates improved students' understanding of complex concepts. However, studies also point to challenges, such as the risk of information overload and the need for digital literacy skills (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For language learners, social media can enhance vocabulary acquisition and cultural awareness but requires structured implementation to avoid off-task behavior (Reinhardt, 2019). This study builds on these findings by exploring tailored strategies for economics students in language classrooms.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the integration of social media in language classrooms for economics students. The research was conducted at a large public university with 60 undergraduate economics majors enrolled in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=30) using social media-based activities and a control group (n=30) following traditional instruction.

Intervention

The experimental group participated in a 12-week intervention involving three social media platforms: Twitter for microblogging economic trends, LinkedIn for professional networking and article sharing, and Instagram for visual storytelling

of economic concepts. Tasks included posting summaries of economic articles, engaging in discussion threads, and creating infographics. The control group used textbooks and classroom discussions without social media.

Data Collection

Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys assessing students' language proficiency, engagement, and economic knowledge. Additionally, focus group interviews with 10 participants from the experimental group provided qualitative insights. Language proficiency was measured using a standardized ESP test, while engagement was evaluated through self-reported motivation scales.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention scores. Qualitative data from interviews were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns related to student experiences and challenges.

Results

The experimental group showed significant improvements in language proficiency ($t(29)=4.12$, $p<0.01$) and economic vocabulary acquisition ($t(29)=3.87$, $p<0.01$) compared to the control group. Engagement scores were also higher in the experimental group ($M=4.2$, $SD=0.6$) than in the control group ($M=3.5$, $SD=0.7$). Qualitative findings revealed that students valued the authenticity of social media interactions but reported challenges such as time management and navigating unverified information.

Discussion

The results suggest that social media platforms can enhance language learning for economics students by providing authentic, context-rich environments. Twitter's concise format encouraged precise communication, while LinkedIn fostered professional discourse. Instagram's visual component aided in conceptual understanding through creative expression. However, challenges such as distractions and varying digital literacy levels necessitate structured implementation. Educators should design task-based activities with clear objectives and provide training on critical evaluation of online content

(Reinhardt, 2019). These findings align with Greenhow and Lewin (2016), who emphasize the importance of guided social media use in educational settings.

Conclusion

Integrating social media into language classrooms for economics students offers significant benefits, including improved language proficiency, engagement, and economic understanding. However, successful implementation requires careful planning, including clear guidelines and support for digital literacy. Future research should explore long-term impacts and strategies for inclusive access across diverse student populations. By leveraging social media's interactive potential, educators can create dynamic learning environments that prepare economics students for global communication.

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