STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND SELF-REGULATED BEHAVIORS TOWARD USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This paper examines Vietnamese EFL students' social media use, language learning, and self-regulated learning. An immersion study with 253 A2-level non-majored English students used mixed methods approach to examine students' opinion on social media as a language learning tool and its support for self-regulated learning. The attitudes are typically positive, considering social media for language learning due to its motivation, engagement, and convenience. More importantly, the study shows that social media use is a precursor to self-regulated learning practices by students searching for resources, practicing autonomy, and participating in online communities. However, diversions and lack of native speaker interactions can be a restriction, requiring discipline and creativity in social media language acquisition. The study also suggests that educators and researchers consider how social media can enhance and hinder language development.

QUAN ĐIỂM SINH VIÊN VÀ HÀNH VI TỰ ĐIỀU CHỈNH ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG TIỆN TRUYỀN THÔNG TRÊN MẠNG XÃ HỘI TRONG VIỆC HỌC NGÔN NGỮ

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
	Bài báo này khảo sát việc sử dụng phương tiện truyền thông trên mạng xã hội, học ngôn ngữ và học tự điều chỉnh của sinh viên học Tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ nước ngoài tại Việt Nam. Một nghiên cứu nhập vai với 253 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh trình độ A2 đã sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp để khảo sát ý kiến của sinh viên về mạng xã hội như một công cụ học ngôn ngữ và sự hỗ trợ của nó cho việc học tự điều chỉnh. Thái độ thường là tích cực, coi mạng xã hội là công cụ học ngôn ngữ do động lực, sự tham gia và tiện lợi của nó. Quan trọng hơn, nghiên cứu cho thấy việc sử dụng mạng xã hội là tiền đề cho các thực hành học tự điều chỉnh bằng cách sinh viên tìm kiếm tài nguyên, thực hành tự chủ và tham gia vào các cộng đồng trực tuyến. Tuy nhiên, sự phân tâm và thiếu tương tác với người bản ngữ có thể là một hạn chế, đòi hỏi kỷ luật và sáng tạo trong việc học ngôn ngữ qua mạng xã hội. Nghiên cứu cũng gợi ý rằng các nhà giáo dục và nhà nghiên cứu nên xem xét cách mạng xã hội có thể tăng cường và cản trở sự phát triển ngôn ngữ.

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1. Introduction

Increasingly, scholars are studying the use of social media as a means of language acquisition outside formal educational settings and organizations [1]. The instruments used for this kind of learning often prioritize social and enjoyable activities above formal education. Several interest-based communities that have been examined explored innovative methods in which Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMOs) [2], fanfiction groups [3], social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook [4] and Twitter [5], and photo-and video-sharing platforms like Flickr [6] and YouTube [7] can be utilized for informal learning. Many experts have provided diverse interpretations of the term "social media". In their work, Kaplan and Heinlein [8] identified "Web 2.0" as the underlying technology that enabled the development of social media. Social media refers to a collection of internet-based apps that facilitate the creation and sharing of information among users. From their perspective, social media may be categorized into six distinct groups, which include blogs, SNSs, virtual gaming worlds, virtual social worlds, communities of content, and collaborative projects. Davis III et al. [9] highlighted the communicative aspect of social media by defining it as including all web-based and mobile apps that enable users to generate, interact with, and distribute digital material via different modes of communication. Maca provided a significantly different explanation of the notion. Manca [10] defined social media as online applications that have diverse functionalities, including photo sharing (e.g., Instagram), information search and organization (e.g., Pinterest), instant messaging (e.g., WhatsApp, Messenger), personal expression of viewpoints (e.g., Twitter), or a combination of these purposes (e.g., Facebook). Nevertheless, due to the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the technological landscape nowadays, the current methods of defining social media are primarily based on its functionalities and modes of communication. However, this approach may lead to outdated descriptions of the concept and fail to consider certain aspects of how technology impacts modern educational activities. O'Reilly et al. [11] made significant contributions to the notion of "social media". These factors encompass "user participation," which emphasizes the active engagement of users in interacting with content, "openness," which promotes the utilization of adaptable development models and social media tools by making technological architectures accessible, and "network effects," which involve displaying one's activities and achievements to a wide audience. These websites extend beyond the traditional classroom setting and provide students with enough autonomy in their communication and resource sharing. They provide several advantages that facilitate language acquisition, including opportunities for authentic language use, avenues for social interaction, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives [12]. The use of digital platforms and networks in educational settings has resulted in significant transformations in current instructional approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT). Using the full potential of modern technologies in teaching requires instructors to focus on creating educational activities that maximize students' learning experience. Pegrum [13] suggests that incorporating digitalized education into the curriculum may create learning environments that promote active involvement and engagement via the use of technology. According to Reinhardt [14], both traditional teaching methods and innovative solutions that may address the various needs of pupils in the digital age have been reassessed.

Zimmerman [15] viewed self-regulation as the detailed cognitive activities individuals engage in to obtain and transform information. He maintained that self-regulation significantly contributes to acquiring important insights from learning activities. To breeze through unfamiliar learning contexts in an effective way, learners are required to define their aims and embrace pertinent learning techniques. Under this model, people consistently evaluate their learning performance, recognize their productive and less effective areas, and utilize multiple learning approaches to confront challenges. By engaging in this reflective practices learners can assess their education and modify their learning strategies.

The primary objective of higher education should be to enhance students' self-regulated learning (SRL) capacities, which are essential for successfully completing their college degree. For students to attain their learning goals and assess their progress, they need to be motivated and possess the necessary learning techniques, as shown by self-regulated learning (SRL). In the context of Vietnam, there has been a transition in emphasis from imposing learning processes via external regulation by instructors to empowering students and strengthening their SRL capacities. Nevertheless, it is not a simple task, particularly during the first years of college when students make the shift from secondary education to tertiary education. Furthermore, the SRL techniques used by learners are influenced by contextual variables, including self-efficacy and social assistance. While Oxford [16] and Tseng et al. [17] underscore its importance in higher education language learning contexts, challenges persist, particularly within Vietnamese educational transitions from secondary to tertiary levels [18]. Factors such as self-efficacy and social support markedly influence SRL strategies among Vietnamese students [19]. Recent investigations by Tran and Nguyen [20] have delved into the intersection of SRL and digital tools, revealing that social media can serve as a conduit for fostering autonomous learning behaviors. Despite these insights, a critical gap has existed in the longitudinal assessment of SRL through social media platforms. While prior studies have examined the relationship between social media usage and SRL [19]-[21], they concentrate on data from various times and do not provide an understanding of how social media aids SRL in the near future. Additionally, very few studies focus on Vietnamese EFL students' perspectives on social media as a language learning resource and their immediate effects on their SRL practices. By providing a brief and specific outlook on the role of social media in SRL development among Vietnamese EFL learners, this study closes the gap. With these aims, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Vietnamese EFL students' perspectives on social media as a language learning tool?

2. To what extent does the use of social media enhance Vietnamese EFL students' self-regulated learning?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research setting and participants

Mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative data, were employed in this study. The former includes questionnaires that were used to investigate, while interviews for the latter assisted researchers in gaining deeper insights into students' perspectives and self-directed behaviors in language learning.

The research was carried out at a private university in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, involving a sample of 253 A2-level non-English majored students enrolled in General English courses in 2024. The majority of these participants were freshmen who regularly utilized social media applications in their daily learning routines. The participants were chosen due to convenient sampling methods. Among the participants, 44.7% (113) identified as male, while the remaining 55.3% (140) were female, indicating a slightly higher representation of females in the sample. In addition, the vast majority of participants, 94.9% (240), reported using social media every day. Only 5.1% (13) of the respondents indicated other usage patterns beyond daily engagement. This suggests that daily use of social media is a common behavior among the participants, reflecting their high level of connectivity and interaction through social platforms.

2.2. Research instruments

The study used mixed methods, including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires comprised fourteen items. Half of them aimed to investigate students' perspectives, while the other half were used to discover how they regulate their learning behaviors in acquiring a new language on social media. The items were chosen and adapted from

contemporary literature on the interplay between self-regulated learning and social network learning [16], [17], [22]-[24]. The questionnaires, designed based on the five-point Likert scale, were delivered to students via Google Forms. Afterward, the gathered data were analyzed by SPSS 20.0 software. Then, the interviews were held with the participation of ten students, who were chosen for convenient sampling.

This study measured three core constructs, including perspectives on social media as a language learning tool and self-regulated learning. These constructs were essential in addressing the research questions regarding Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions and the extent to which social media use enhances self-regulated learning. Firstly, social media language learning perspectives were operationalized using survey and interview questions about students' attitudes. Items covered students' motivation, convenience, and authentic language materials. Also, students were asked about the challenges which they faced, such as distractions or lack of interaction with native speakers. As for engagement, students' social media language learning activity involvement was measured. Language learners were asked how often they watched videos, spoke to native speakers, and joined online language learning networks. The operationalization of this notion involves how students used social media for learning engagement versus traditional methods. In terms of self-regulated learning (SRL), it is for assessing students' social media self-directed learning. Setting objectives, discovering resources, tracking progress, and joining language-learning networks were research topics. Students were assessed for learning autonomy, motivation, and progress. In interviews, students said that they used social media to manage time and avoid distractions. Language acquisition and self-regulation tools were used to create evaluation scales of these components for validity and reliability.

The measurement scales for these constructs were adapted from established instruments in the field of language learning and self-regulation, ensuring both validity and reliability. The items were reviewed by experts to ensure they accurately captured the constructs in question. Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data from interviews were coded to identify themes that aligned with the constructs. The Alpha coefficient of over .90 indicated that the scale was reliable.

2.3. Data collection and analysis procedures

The questionnaire was administered to the students and the interviews were held at the end of the second semester of the school year 2023-2024. Firstly, the researchers asked for permission of the lecturers to enter the class to gather data. The researchers explained any students' questions coming up in the process. After ten minutes, the data were collected to prepare for the subsequent analysis using descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). After finalizing the quantitative data, the researchers then prepared for the interview questions to have a deeper understanding of the previous data.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

For research question 1, as demonstrated in Table 1, in general, most students expressed their positive perspectives towards using social media in learning English. The majority of students believed that the audio and video content on social media boosted their motivation to learn English (M=4.04, SD=.99), especially when they want to acquire new vocabulary (M=3.97, SD=.97) and communicate to native speakers (M=3.85, SD=1.05). The qualitative data strongly supports these findings. For instance, Participant 4 explicitly stated their preference for learning through engaging video content on platforms like TikTok, emphasizing its effectiveness in improving their listening and speaking skills, *"I prefer learning through engaging video content*

on platforms like TikTok. It's really effective in improving my listening and speaking skills." Similarly, Participant 3 shared, *"Watching English films with subtitles on social media helps me to improve my speaking skills."* This highlights the benefits of watching English films with subtitles on social media to enhance their spoken language abilities. The qualitative data underscore the power of audio-visual content in boosting motivation and facilitating language acquisition, aligning with the quantitative results.

Moreover, most students concurred that using social media made them more enjoyable and engaging (M=4.00, SD=1.01) as they felt flexible and convenient when accessing such digital applications to learn English (M=3.94, SD=.98), allowing learners to access language learning resources at their own pace and preferred time. The qualitative data echoes this sentiment, with Participant 11 emphasizing the ability to learn "*anytime, anywhere*" as a key advantage of social media for language learning. Additionally, Participant 9 appreciated the diverse and readily available language learning resources on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, further supporting the quantitative findings regarding the perceived enjoyment and engagement associated with social media-based language learning, *"The diverse and readily available language learning resources on platforms like YouTube and Instagram are great. I can choose any topics or lessons that I am interested in."*

Compared to the traditional methods, most students agreed that they preferred using social media to get access to language learning (M=3.90, SD=1.03). In addition, students admitted that they were stimulated when obtaining feedback from other social media users on their language learning progress (M=3.90, SD=1.01). While the qualitative data did not explicitly address this aspect in the same way, it provided indirect evidence of the importance of social interaction and feedback in language learning. For example, Participant 1 mentioned interacting with native speakers through messaging apps, which likely involves receiving feedback on their language use, *"I interact with native speakers through messaging apps."* Similarly, Participant 8 actively participated in online groups focused on correcting English language errors, indicating a desire for feedback and improvement, *"I join online groups to share the goals and practice English together with other members. We called and messaged each other. Sometimes, we can also find the mistakes and weaknesses to improve together"*. These qualitative insights suggested that while the specific aspect of immediate feedback may not have been directly addressed in the interviews, the broader theme of social interaction and feedback aligns with the quantitative findings regarding its motivational impact on language learners.

Table 1. *Students' perspectives on social media as a language-learning tool*

No.	Items	Interpretation	N = 253	
			M	**SD**
1	I feel more motivated to improve my vocabulary thanks to social media.	Agree	3.97	.97
2	I am more interactive with native speakers thanks to social media.	Agree	3.85	1.05
3	I feel more flexible and convenient to practice language skills at my own pace	Agree	3.94	.98
4	I feel more motivated to practice language skills using social media compared to traditional methods.	Agree	3.90	1.03
5	I feel more motivated when I receive immediate feedback on my language use from other users on social media	Agree	3.90	1.01
6	I feel more motivated to improve my speaking and listening skills through audio and video content	Agree	4.04	.99
7	I feel more enjoyable and engaging when practicing language thanks to social media.	Agree	4.00	1.01

For research question 2, as can be seen in Table 2, the quantitative data revealed that students actively utilize social media for self-regulated language learning. The high mean scores for seeking language learning resources (M=3.96, SD=1.16) and learning about cultural nuances (M=3.96, SD=1.18) highlight the proactive nature of their learning behaviors. The qualitative data further

supports this, with Participant 7 stating, *"I actively search for English language lessons and inspirational content on YouTube and Instagram, constantly seeking out new ways to improve my skills and stay motivated."* Additionally, Participant 6 mentioned, "*I watch videos about English vocabulary and read bilingual stories on social media, which helps me expand my knowledge and improve my reading comprehension.*" Also, Participant 5 said, "*I follow the key opinion leader (KOL) about language learning on different platforms like TikTok or YouTube. Their videos not only support me with knowledge but also encourage me to try my best like my idols.*"

The quantitative finding that students frequently practice language skills outside of formal classes using social media (M=3.60, SD=1.09) is also corroborated by the qualitative data. Participant 1 talks about using Facebook and TikTok daily to learn English, "*I use Facebook and TikTok daily to learn English, immersing myself in the language and practicing my reading and comprehension skills.*", while Participant 4 emphasized the focused approach, stating, "*I use social media primarily for listening practice and improving my speaking skills by watching interviews and films without subtitles, challenging myself to understand natural spoken English.*" These examples illustrate how social media enables learners to extend their language practice beyond the confines of the classroom, fostering self-directed learning.

Furthermore, the quantitative data shows that students actively seek out language learning groups or pages on social media (M=3.47, SD=1.03). This aligns with Participant 1 demonstration of targeted engagement, stating, "*I actively participate in English learning groups related to my field of study, allowing me to connect with peers and practice professional communication.*" In addition, Participant 3 showcased their goal-oriented approach, mentioning, "*I follow pages dedicated to IELTS preparation, accessing valuable tips and resources to improve my test-taking skills.*" These instances demonstrate how learners leverage social media to connect with like-minded individuals and access specialized language learning communities, further supporting their self-regulated learning endeavors.

Finally, although the quantitative data indicated less frequent participation in language learning challenges and activities on social media (M=3.33, SD=1.12), the qualitative data suggested that students still engage in interactive activities to enhance their language skills. Participant 8 highlighted the value of online communities, sharing, "*I actively participate in online groups to improve my English writing by receiving feedback and corrections, which helps me identify areas for improvement and refine my writing skills*". This highlights that even though formal challenges or activities may not be the primary mode of engagement, learners still find ways to interact and receive feedback on their language use through social media platforms, contributing to their self-regulated learning process.

Table 2. *Students' self-regulated learning behaviors on social media as a language-learning tool*

No.	Items	Interpretation	N = 253	
			M	**SD**
8	I actively seek out language learning resources on social media.	Often	3.96	1.16
9	I learn cultural nuances of a language on social media.	Often	3.96	1.18
10	I actively seek out language learning groups or pages on social media.	Often	3.47	1.03
11	I participate in language learning challenges or activities on social media.	Sometimes	3.33	1.12
12	I create or share content (posts, videos, comments) in the language I am learning.	Sometimes	3.29	1.22
13	I engage in conversations with native speakers through social media.	Sometimes	3.23	1.29
14	I use social media to practice language skills outside of formal classes.	Often	3.60	1.09

3.2. Discussion

This study shows that Vietnamese EFL students view social media as a language learning tool positively. They found it stimulating, entertaining, and convenient for growing vocabulary,

interacting with native speakers, and obtaining authentic language materials. This positive perspective is supported by quantitative data, where students rated motivation, enjoyment, and flexibility highly, and qualitative data, where students expressed enthusiasm for social media platforms' diverse learning opportunities and interactive features. Many participants indicated utilizing Facebook and TikTok to watch videos, listen to podcasts, and interact with native speakers, demonstrating its motivational and engaging effects on language acquisition.

Social media use promotes self-regulated learning in Vietnamese EFL students, answering the second research question. The data shows that students actively seek language learning tools, practice outside of class, and join online forums to improve their English. Both quantitative and qualitative studies show students using social media for independent language practice and searching out learning materials and communities. Participants reported creating objectives, measuring progress, and seeking feedback from peers and online forums, indicating a proactive approach to language learning.

In general, these results support previous studies regarding the use of social media for language acquisition. The enhancement of motivation, active engagement, and availability of real language materials coincide with the findings of Barrot [1], Özdemir [4], and Taskiran et al. [5]. Likewise, the choice of social media instead of traditional methods aligns with the identified advantages of digital platforms regarding flexibility and convenience suggested by Nasution [12] and Pegrum [13]. The conclusion of the study about the effective use of social media in enabling self-regulated learning behaviors is, therefore, consistent with prior literature on the ability of digital technologies to enhance learner independence and self-direction [19], [21]. Nevertheless, this investigation also shows discrepancies from earlier findings. Some research focuses on social capacity of media to facilitate collaborative learning and interactivity [2]. However, the current study found higher engagement in language learning challenges/activities and contact with native speakers than expected. This suggests that while social media offers engagement, learners may not use it collaboratively. These disparities may be due to cultural traditions, linguistic skills, or SNSs. Thus, more research is needed to understand how these elements affect the social media collaborative tasks of learners. As highlighted in several studies [19], distractions of participants and difficulty focusing should be considered limitations of social media for language acquisition. Therefore, one must control their temptation to spend hours on social media and use it strategically for language acquisition. Avoiding the negative effects of Internet searches can help teachers and scholars help pupils self-regulate and function efficiently in the technological age.

Consequently, this study adds language acquisition and self-regulated learning perspectives to social media research. Social media for education boosts motivation, engagement, and self-regulation. These findings assist educators and scholars in building better language teaching techniques that leverage mainstream web-enabling technologies and handle potential dangers. Future research might examine the long-term effects of social media on second language acquisition, including learner demographics and state-based techniques for self-regulated learning. Thus, research needs to suggest ways to improve second language teaching in the digital age by studying the relationship between social media and second language acquisition.

4. Conclusion and implications

This study examines Vietnamese EFL students' perspectives on social media as a language learning resource and how self-regulated learning practices are expressed. Thus, quantitative and qualitative statistics corroborate most student opinions on using social media for language learning, particularly in terms of motivation, engagement, and accessibility. Students like the flexibility of social media platforms for studying. The current study found that social media use greatly facilitates self-regulated learning behaviors because learners search for learning resources, practice in isolation, and participate in online communities to improve their second language acquisition. These findings support previous research on using social media to

encourage and inform pupils. The flexibility and convenience of digital media make social media a good alternative to traditional communication. Self-sourced language and cultural resources support self-directed learning, where students take charge of their education.

The study highlights specifics and differences from previous works. The present study found lesser involvement in language learning challenges and activities and interaction with native speakers than in other social media studies. Social media allows for learning interaction, but students may not leverage its collaborative potential. One drawback of using social media to learn languages is the concerns of the participants about distractions and attentiveness.

This study shed light on how Vietnamese EFL students use social media to learn English. They report social media can boost motivation, involvement, and self-regulated learning. These findings are relevant to educators and researchers for designing improved instruction, curricula, and technologies to support language learning more fully and purposefully, especially in digitally mediated environments with unique opportunities and risks. The longitudinal effects of social media on language acquisition, different learner demographics, and a curriculum that promotes self-regulated learning through social media could be studied in the future.

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