

The role of social media in improving English communication skills among undergraduate students: evidence from Mount Kigali University, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the contribution of social media to improving English communication skills among undergraduate students at Mount Kigali University. The study was motivated by the increasing use of social media among university students and to determine whether this usage contributes to measurable improvement in English communication skills. Through activities such as watching videos, listening to podcasts, reading posts, participating in discussion and exchanging messages, student can improve their English vocabularies, pronunciations, listening, writing and communication confidence. Social media therefore serves as interactive learning environment where students acquire language skills through observation and engagement. Communicative competence theory and constructivist learning theory guided this research. A convergent mixed methods approach employing a descriptive cross-sectional approach was adopted. The study population consisted of 92 final year undergraduate students from department of media and communications at Mount Kigali University. The study adopted a census approach for the quantitative survey, involving all members of target population to ensure comprehensive data collection, 15 participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience, thereby providing in depth insights that complemented the quantitative findings. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematically. The findings revealed that 78% of respondents used social media daily for approximately three to five hours on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and TikTok. The results showed that social media positively contributed to vocabulary development, listening comprehension, pronunciation, writing fluency, and communication confidence. Communication self-confidence recorded highest mean score ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.69$), followed by vocabulary improvement ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.74$). However, 34% of participants reported occasionally using informal social media language in formal of academic writing, indicating a challenge related to negative language transfer. The study concluded that intentional and academic use of social media significantly enhances English communication skills among university students. It is recommended that higher education institutions integrate structured digital literacy and academic language guidance into language education programs to maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing the effects of informal language use.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, Constructivist Learning, English Abilities, Rwanda, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an influential component of contemporary language learning by providing students with continues opportunities to practice communication skills beyond the traditional classroom environment. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and X (formerly twitter) facilitate authentic language exposure through text-based interaction, multimedia content, and real-time communication. Research studies indicate that these platforms support learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and increased engagement with English language content, enabling students to develop communication skills in informal learning settings (Godwin-Jones, 2018). In Rwanda, the expansion of internet access and digital technologies has increased students' exposure to English through social media, creating additional opportunities for language practice and interaction with both local and global communities.

Empirical evidence suggests that social media contributes positively to the development of several English communication skills, including vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, pronunciation, reading ability, and communication confidence (Richards, 2022). Through exposure to authentic videos, podcasts, discussions, and written content, students encounter language in meaningful contexts that facilitate learning retention. Research has shown that social media-supported learning environment can enhance English achievement, reduce language anxiety, and promote active learner participation (Zheng, et al., 2018). Nevertheless, scholarly debates continue regarding the potential negative effects of excessive social media use, particularly concerns that frequent exposure to informal language

abbreviations, and internet slang may influence formal academic writing and communication practices (Cingel & Sundar, 2012).

Against this background, the present study investigates the relationship between social media use and English communication skills among final year students in the department of media and communications at Mount Kigali University. The study conceptualizes social media use in terms of platforms preferences, frequency of engagement with English content and the nature of digital interaction, while English communications skills are measured through vocabulary development, grammar competence, reading ability, listening comprehension, and pronunciation, speaking fluency, writing skills and communications confidence. By focusing on Rwanda's multilingual context, where English coexists with Kinyarwanda, French, and Swahili, the study addresses an important gap in African research and provides context-specific evidence on how social media can support English language development, academic success, and future employability among university students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Developing strong English communication skills remains essential for academic achievement, employability, and professional success in today's globalized world. Hymes (1972) argued that linguistic competence alone is insufficient because effective communication also requires the ability to use language appropriately within specific social contexts. Similarly, Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority reported that despite the adoption language as the medium of instruction in Rwanda since 2008, many university students still experience difficulties expressing themselves effectively in spoken and written English (Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority, 2023).

This challenge persists even with the rapid growth of information and communication Technologies, which have transformed communication and leaning practices. Recent studies show that social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook have become important tools for students' academic and social interaction. Researchers argue that these platforms can support English language Development by improving vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and communication confidence (Chen, 2013). In addition, digital platforms encourage learner engagement and motivation through authentic communication and interactive learning experiences (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018). However several scholars warn that excessive use of informal online language, including abbreviations, slang, and emojis and non-standard grammar, may negatively after academic writing and formal communication skills (Baron, 2008). Although many studies have examined social media and language learning, most research has focused on Asian, European, and North American contexts, with limited evidence from African universities, particularly Rwanda. Rwanda presents a unique multilingual environment where Kinyarwanda, English, French, and Swahili coexist in educational and social communication. This sociolinguistic context may influence how student interact with English – language content on social media and how such interaction contributes to language development. Furthermore, limited research has explored which specific media platforms and content types are most effective for improving particular English communication skills among Rwandan university students.

This study therefore sought to investigate how social media contributes to the enhancement of English communication skills among final year students in department of media and communications at Mount Kigali University. The study aimed to provide context specific evidence that can help educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers integrate social media more effectively into language education while minimizing the negative effect of informal digital communication.

1.2 Research objectives

- i. To identify the social media platforms most commonly used by final year in media and communications at Mount Kigali University.
- ii. To assess the extent to which students interact with English content on social media platforms.
- iii. To examine the types of social media content preferred by students for developing their English communications skills.
- iv. To evaluate specific English communication skills acquired through the use of social media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Review

2.1.1. Communicative Competence Theory

Communicative competence theory introduced by Hymes (1972) to contrast purely grammatical approaches to language learning. He suggested that having command over a language means not only possessing linguistic or grammatical knowledge but also using the language appropriately and meaningfully in various social contexts (and this has become particularly true for various social media communication contexts). This view has been further expanded by Canale and Swain (1980), who defined communicative competence as comprised of grammatical, sociolinguistic,

discourse and strategic competence. The validity of communicative competence in second language learning is supported by a plethora of studies conducted on digital communication.

It enables the students to interact and use the language for real communicative purposes beyond classroom instruction (Chappelle, 2020). Similarly, online environments, especially, give opportunities for receiving input that would otherwise not be available and for authentic communication (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Most social media platforms like Whatsapp, Instagram, Tik Tok, Youtube, Facebook and X fall within the description of the concept of communicative competence theory, as it allows for interactive use of English by creating an environment where students are constantly interacting, sharing views, commenting on each other's' content and participating in discussions in English. Such activities are conducive to learners acquiring diverse language structures, communication styles, and authentic conversational practice, all of which contribute to developing language skills. It has been confirmed by the literature that use of social media platforms could improve language practice and interaction and collaboration among language learners (Manca, 2020).

In the present study's contexts, communicative competence theory aids in elucidating how usage of social media (independent variable) impacts English Communication Skills (dependent variable) with the continuous exposure, feedbacks and interactions from authentic English Language use. Thus the student can improvise their skills in writing, reading, speaking and listening. However, the same theory is important for understanding appropriateness, for it also raises the issue on how inappropriate transfer of informal social media language might affect students' academic performance.

2.1.2. Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivism theory places great emphasis on the learning through interaction between students (as individuals working together, social context and in group settings). According to Vygotsky (1978) all learners, rather than passively taking in knowledge like a sponge, are actively involved in constructing knowledge and meaning through interactions with their environment. Piaget (1970) explains that there are things that each individual could learn at a specific time; which the constructivists' have referred to as the 'zone of proximal development'.

This concept is highly influential in education today and in digital learning spaces. According to recent education research, digital technologies and online spaces help to enhance learning in a constructivist manner by enabling communication, social interaction and learner centric knowledge development (Hodges et al., 2020). Through social networking applications, for example, students have a space in which to participate in conversations, share experiences and ideas and engage in learning activities which lead to knowledge development through social interaction. The inherent capabilities of social media align well with constructivism in the following ways; communication opportunities are afforded, students can share ideas, construct new meaning through discussions, share resources, contribute to media production, and generally construct knowledge via active communication and interactions with others.

For instance, in engaging in activities such as viewing online educational videos, participating in online discussion forums, commenting on blog posts and sharing educational resources students gain meaning from the social learning they undergo. It has been demonstrated by recent research in digital learning environments that technologically-based learning enhances learner autonomy, collaboration, and the learner's self-directed knowledge creation process (Trust & Whalen, 2021).

Therefore, this study uses constructivist theory to explain how learners can improve their English communication skill through an active engagement of digital media. Based on constructivism, learners would increase their English communication ability in condition of interacting with peers, using authentic resources and real- life communication practice which go beyond the physical classroom. Thus, social media become a supplementary place to provide such conditions for learner's English learning and improvement. However, constructivism suggests the importance of a guidance and control to enable students master the appropriate academic and professional communications skill not just the informal digital communication skill.

2.2. Empirical Review

2.2.1 Social Media Platforms Used by Students for Language Learning

Empirical studies in recent years confirm that university students have adopted the use of social media in their efforts to learn English language. In a study of university students in Indonesia, Barrot (2022) identified WhatsApp and YouTube as the most popular learning tools because they promote collaborative learning, access to authentic materials of the English language, and interactions with fellow students. Similarly, in a research on European university students, Sockett (2023) discovered that learners' contact with authentic English was improved as a result of daily use of social media tools such as YouTube and Facebook.

Moreover, similar research carried out in Malaysia by Al Arif (2019) found that WhatsApp enabled group discussions, the exchange of files and immediate communication from fellow classmates and instructors. Furthermore, previous research in Nigeria has indicated that both Facebook and WhatsApp have frequently been adopted by

undergraduate students as a way of exchanging academic details and practice English communication (Asemah & Edegoh, 2013). Even though these researches have proved that social media has played an indispensable part in students learning, majority of them were undertaken out of Rwanda. Therefore, this study aims to reduce this contextual distance by finding out what social media platforms are the most commonly used by final-year Media and Communication students in Mount Kigali University.

2.2.2 Students' Engagement with English Language Content on Social Media

Research has also shown that engaging in and interacting with English content on social media is beneficial to language development rather than just watching them (passively scrolling through them). Barrot (2022) revealed that active commenters in posts, communicators in online discussions, and sharers of English content experienced greater gains in communication than non-interactors. Alghasab (2020) also found that learners' interaction through social networking sites facilitated their self-confidence in speaking English and the desire to communicate in the language.

In another study, Arfiandhani (2019) reported that those who constantly took part in English online discussion groups on social media learned more vocabulary and improve communicative skills due to the interaction with other users in online.

The study support social constructivist learning perspectives which are based on the interaction and cooperation. However, it show that there is no ample evidence on the engagement level with English-language content in social media of the university undergraduate students in Rwanda. The current research aims to investigate the engagement level with English-language content in social media at Mount Kigali University.

2.2.3. Preferred Content Types for Developing English Communication Skills

According to Mayer (2021), multimedia learning fosters comprehension when combined with audio and visual stimuli. Complementing this, Wahyudin (2024) observed that learners in a university setting favoured YouTube as a preferred medium, especially because it facilitates improvements in listening, pronunciation and vocabulary within a real communication scenario.

Furthermore, the research of Kim (2026) on TikTok discovered that the short-format educational video segments facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition and elevate learners' motivation in engaging in more practice sessions in English.

Likewise, podcasts were noted to be particularly beneficial in developing pronunciation and listening skills due to exposure to various native speakers with natural intonation and accents (Hasan & Hoon, 2013). In spite of these favourable outcomes, very few studies have explored the specific content types that are favoured by university students in Rwanda. As a result, the objective of this research was to determine the types of social media content that are preferred by the final-year university students to support the enhancement of English communication skills.

2.2.4. English Communication Skills Developed through Social Media Use

Empirical results confirm that use of social media enhances several skills of English communication. Baron (2008) indicated that communication online necessitates practice and increases writing skills, vocabulary in use, for learners of English language.

Recently, Barrot (2022) indicated that the student's use of social media with the English-language content showed an improvement in vocabulary, reading skill, speaking skill confidence and writing skill.

In the same manner, Tran et al. (2024) revealed that the use of discussions forums on line improves the pronunciation and speaking skills of the students, the students of the study discussed and interact about the topics in English, receiving comments from their peers and instructors immediately. Fathi et al. (2022) observed that social media use can foster the learner autonomy by allowing learners to access English educational resources and to practice the skills independently of classroom context. Although the present literature clearly established that use of social media provides educational benefit for language learning, there is little research investigating what kind of English communication skill have been developed by university students of Rwanda. This study therefore measures the English communication skills have been gained through social media usage by final-year students at Mount Kigali University.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed method approach. The convergent mixed methods were selected because it enabled the researcher to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently and integrate the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in enhancing English communication skills among final-year students in department of Media and communications at Mount Kigali University. Mixed-methods research is widely recognized for integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Saunders et al., 2023).

The quantitative component focused on measuring patterns of social media use, levels of engagement with English language content, preferred content types, and perceived improvements in English communication skills. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative component explored students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to using social media for English language development through semi-structure interviews and thematic analysis. The combination of both approaches enabled the study to capture measurable trends while also providing deeper explanations of participants' experiences (Flick, 2022).

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted at Mount Kigali University, located in Kigali City, Rwanda. The research specifically focused on the department of media and communications because students in this department frequently engage with digital communication technologies and social media platforms in both academic and social contexts. The university was considered suitable for the study due to the increasing of information and communication technologies and the widespread use of English as the language of instruction in higher education institutions in Rwanda.

3.3. Target Population and sampling

The target population comprised all final-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Media and Communication at Mount Kigali University during the study period. These students constituted the entire population of interest because they regularly use social media platforms and engage with English language content for both academic and personal communication. Owing to the relatively small size of the population, the study adopted a census approach in which all 92 students were included in the quantitative survey. Additionally, 15 purposively selected students participated in semi-structured interviews to provide qualitative insights into their experiences.

3.4 Data collection instruments

To collect data for this study on role of social media in promoting English communication skills among students at mount Kigali university, the research used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instruments. The questionnaire was administered to students to gather quantitative data on the social media platforms they use, their level of engagement with English language content, preferred content types, and the English communication skills developed through social media use. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed-ended questions, enabling the collection of standardized using data that were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain qualitative insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding the contribution of social media to vocabulary development, grammar improvement, speaking fluency, listening comprehension, reading ability, writing skills, pronunciation, and communication confidence.

The study also relied on secondary data obtained from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, confidence proceedings, and other scholarly publications related to social media and language learning. These sources provided theoretical and empirical support for the study and assisted in interpreting findings. The combinations of questionnaires, interviews, and secondary sources enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive information and enhance the validity and reliability of the study findings (Kothari, 2004).

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data that gathered from well-structured questionnaire were compiled and analyse using statistical SPSS package 27. They consist of descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and Inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation and Simple linear regression analysis to determine the association between social media and english communication skill were run with 0.05 significance level.

Quantitative analysis data were analyse thematic way of coding responses to develop some main theme corresponding to objectives of research from analyse the result. This thematic data were integrated with quantitative data at the interpretation part of finding to present the final result of research.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

The findings in table 1 indicate that the majority of respondent, 48(52.2%), were aged between 21 and 25 years, followed by 24(26.1%), respondents aged between 18 and 20 years. Respondents aged between 26 and 30 years accounted for 15(16.3%), while only 5(5.4%) were above 30 years of age. These results suggest that most participants

were younger adults who are highly likely to use social media regularly and engage with digital platforms for communication and learning purposes.

Table

Age Group of Respondents (N = 92)

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percent (%)
18–20	24	26.1
21–25	48	52.2
26–30	15	16.3
Above 30	5	5.4
Total	92	100

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents who participated in this study. The findings indicate that 55 respondents (59.8%) were male, while 37 respondents (40.2%) were female. This implies that the male students constituted majority of the participants. However, both genders were adequately represented in the study, providing diverse perspectives regarding the role of social media in promoting English communication skills among students at Mount Kigali University.

Table 2

Gender of Respondents (N = 92)

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	55	59.8
Female	37	40.2
Total	92	100

Table 3 presents the social media platforms used by students at Mount Kigali University. The findings indicate that all respondents, 92 (100.0%) reported using WhatsApp, making it the most widely used social media platforms among students. Instagram was the second most frequently used platforms, with 55 respondents (59.8%), followed by You Tube with 52 respondents (56.5%). TikTok was used by 45 respondents (48.9%), while Facebook and twitter(X) were used by 30 (32.6%) and 25(27.2%) respondents, respectively. These findings suggest that WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube are the dominant platforms through which students engage with digital content and communicate online. The high usage of these platforms indicates their potential role in promoting English communication skills by providing opportunities for interaction, content sharing, and exposure to English language materials.

Table 3

Social Media Platforms Used by Students (N = 92)

Social Media Platform	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp	92	100
Instagram	55	59.8
YouTube	52	56.5
TikTok	45	48.9
Facebook	30	32.6
Twitter (X)	25	27.2

Table 4 presents the frequency with which students use English while engagement on social media platforms. The findings show that 36 respondents (38.8%) reported always using English on social media, while 33 respondents (35.8%) indicated that they frequently use English. Additionally, 19 respondents 20.9 reported that occasionally using English whereas only 4 respondents 4.5 % rarely use English on social media. These results suggest that the majority of students regularly interact with English language content and communicate in English through social media platforms. Such frequent exposure to English provides learners with opportunities to practice reading, writing, writing, listening, and communications skills in authentic digital environments, thereby supporting the development of English communication skills among students at Mont Kigali University.

Table 4*Frequency of English Usage on Social Media (N = 92)*

Frequency of English Usage	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Always	36	38.8
Frequently	33	35.8
Occasionally	19	20.9
Rarely	4	4.5
Total	92	100

As indicated by Table 5, when it comes to the types of English content in social media preferred by the respondents, video content sourced from platforms such as YouTube and TikTok proved to be the most popular, with 42 students (45.7%) selecting this option. This was followed by text-based and article content, which received 23 votes (25.0%). Audio content, such as podcasts and music, was the third most preferred, chosen by 19 students (20.7%). Lastly, live chats or online forums appeared to be the least preferred option for English learning and practice. Based on these findings, it is noted that the majority of students at Mount Kigali University opt for audio-visual materials on social media as a way of interacting with and learning the English language. Thus, multimedia plays a key role in improving students' listening, pronunciation, oral fluency in English, and exposure to real English conversations.

Table 5*Preferred English-Language Content Types on Social Media (N = 92)*

Content Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Videos (YouTube, TikTok)	42	45.7
Text Posts/Articles	23	25
Audio Content (Podcasts/Songs)	19	20.7
Live Chats/Forums	8	8.6
Total	92	100

Table 6 depicts the English communication skills that the students believed have been developed as they use social media: Results show that vocabulary was the skill that had the biggest improvement for the 70 students who replied yes (76.1%). Following that is pronunciation for 63 respondents (68.7), and listening, also for 63 respondents (68.7). Writing fluency and grammar were rated the best improvement by 61 respondents (66.3%). Then, it is followed by speaking confidence at 55 respondents (59.7) and the last is reading comprehension for 51 respondents (55.4). As illustrated above, social media appears to enhance many of the facets of students' English communication skills at Mount Kigali University. The larger numbers corresponding to improved vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening may demonstrate that language use in such formats as Videos on social networks and online communication exchanges offers practical application. Social media can be effective tool for language learning that supports communication skill improvement in non-formal settings.

Table 6*English Communication Skills Improved Through Social Media Use (N = 92)*

English Communication Skill	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Vocabulary Development	70	76.1
Pronunciation and Listening Skills	63	68.7
Writing Fluency and Grammar	61	66.3
Speaking Confidence	55	59.7
Reading Comprehension	51	55.4

4.1.2 Social Media Platforms Most commonly used by Final-Year Students in the Department of Media and Communications at Mount Kigali University

Using a five-point Likert scale (SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree), respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements designed to assess the extent to which social media contributes to the development of English communication skills among final-year students in the Department of Media and Communications at Mount Kigali University. The statements focused on students' engagement with English-language content on social media and the perceived improvement of specific communication skills, including vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, pronunciation, and communication confidence.

Table 7*Social Media Platforms Most Commonly Used by Final-Year Students (N = 92)*

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
I frequently use WhatsApp for communication and accessing English-language content.	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.4%)	40 (43.5%)	45 (48.9%)	92	4.39
I regularly use Instagram to interact with English-language content and communication activities.	3 (3.3%)	8 (8.7%)	12 (13.0%)	38 (41.3%)	31 (33.7%)	92	3.94
I frequently use YouTube to improve my English communication skills through videos and tutorials.	2 (2.2%)	7 (7.6%)	11 (12.0%)	39 (42.4%)	33 (35.8%)	92	4.04
I use TikTok to access English-language content and improve my communication skills.	5 (5.4%)	10 (10.9%)	14 (15.2%)	35 (38.0%)	28 (30.5%)	92	3.78
Facebook and Twitter (X) are useful platforms for engaging with English-language content.	10 (10.9%)	15 (16.3%)	18 (19.6%)	29 (31.5%)	20 (21.7%)	92	3.37

Table 7 shows how respondents viewed the social media that are frequently used for communication and English learning in the class. According to Table 7, WhatsApp is one of the commonly used media, in which 88.4 % of respondents agree and strongly agree that they often use WhatsApp for communication purposes and use it to improve their skills and acquire information in English language learning (Mean=4.39). YouTube also got the attention of 78.2% respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing on using the media to improve their English communicating skills through videos, tutorial programs and documentaries (Mean=4.04). Likewise, 75.0% of the respondents often use Instagram to read English language content (Mean=3.94).

The survey reveals that 68.5% of the respondents use Tiktok to learn English language content. However, 53.2% of the respondents use Facebook and twitter to consume the English language content and 53.2% (Mean=3.37) agree that Facebook and twitter help their skills in English. With a general mean of 3.90, it is thus concluded that social media platforms play a significant role in engaging final year students in the Department of Media and Communications at MKU and are commonly used in learning English language, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram are among the major platforms frequently used for communication and English learning.

These are results are in line with other studies which indicate WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are the popular platforms used for language learning due to their ability to offer communication authenticity, interactivity and constant engagement with authentic materials (Barrot, 2022).

4.1.3 Assess the extent to which students interact with English content on social media platforms.

The study further examined how students 'engagement with English language content on social media platforms contributes to the development of their English communication skills. Using a five point Likert scale (SD=strongly Disagree, D=disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, AS= strongly Agree) respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to their interaction with English content on social media and the extent to which such engagement improves vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing, pronunciation, and communication confidence. These responses provided insights into how social media serves as informal learning environment that support English language acquisition among final year students in department of media and communication at Mount Kigali University.

Table 8*Extent to Which Students Interact with English Content on Social Media Platforms (N = 92)*

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
I frequently read English-language posts, articles, and comments on social media platforms.	2 (2.2%)	4 (4.3%)	10 (10.9%)	42 (45.7%)	34 (37.0%)	92	4.11
I regularly watch English-language videos on YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram	1(1.1%)	3 (3.30%)	8 (8.7%)	40(43.5 0%)	40 (43.5%)	92	4.25
I actively participate in discussions or conversations using English on social media.	3 (3.3%)	6 (6.5%)	12 (13.0%)	41 (44.6%)	30 (32.6%)	92	3.97
I use social media to communicate with friends or other users in English.	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.4%)	11 (12.0%)	43 (46.7%)	31 (33.7%)	92	4.04
Social media provides me with regular opportunities to practice English communication skills.	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.3%)	9 (9.8%)	45 (48.9%)	33 (35.9%)	92	4.15

Table 8 reveals the degree to which final year students of media and communications department at Mount Kigali University use the English language to engage with contention social media platforms. It reveals that a majority of respondents actively engage with the English language in a multitude of activities on social media including: reading English content, viewing videos, engaging in discussions, and communicating with other people in the English language. 82.7% of the respondents Agreed or strongly agreed that they frequently read the English language articles, comments, or posts on their respective social media networks ($M = 4.11$). Similarly, 87.0% Agreed or strongly agreed that they regularly watch English language videos in YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, an indicator that was the highest rating. 77.2% Agreed or strongly agreed that they often take part in discussions in English on social media ($M=3.97$) while 80.4% Agreed or strongly agreed that they often use the English language to converse with their peers and other online users ($M=4.04$). Furthermore, 84.8% Agreed or strongly agreed that they are regularly given the opportunity to Practice their English skills online. The mean score overall ($M=4.10$) indicates a high degree of engagement with English language content on the students' part, suggesting social media to be an integral, informal learning environment which affords the opportunity to be exposed to and practice the use of English for communication purposes. These result is similar to findings by research by Barrot (2022).which suggest that the participation in the online use of the English language via social networking platforms can develop communication confidence, fluency and proficiency among college students

4.1.4 Types of Social Media Content Preferred by Students for Developing their English Communication Skills

Regular interaction with English language content on social media platforms provides students with valuable opportunities to practice and improve their communication skills. Activities such as reading posts and articles, watching videos, listening to podcasts, participating in online discussions, commenting on content, and communicating with other users in English encourage active language use and engagement. These interactions expose students to authentic language contexts, enhance vocabulary acquisition, strengthen grammar and writing skills, improve listening comprehension and pronunciation, and increase confidence in speaking English. Consequently, social media serves as an important informal learning environment that complements classroom instruction and supports the continuous development English communication skills among students.

Table 9

Types of Social Media Content Preferred by Students for Developing English Communication Skills ($N = 92$)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
English-language videos on YouTube and TikTok help me improve my communication skills.	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.2%)	8 (8.7%)	40 (43.5%)	41 (44.5%)	92	4.28
Reading English posts, articles, and blogs on social media improves my language skills.	2 (2.2%)	4 (4.3%)	10 (10.9%)	42 (45.7%)	34 (37.0%)	92	4.11
Listening to podcasts, songs, and other audio content in English enhances my communication abilities.	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.4%)	11 (12.0%)	40 (43.5%)	34 (37.0%)	92	4.08
Participating in live chats, discussion forums, and online conversations helps me practice English.	3 (3.3%)	6 (6.5%)	12 (13.0%)	39 (42.4%)	32 (34.8%)	92	3.99
Multimedia content (videos, audio, and interactive discussions) is more effective than text-only content for learning English.	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.3%)	9 (9.8%)	43 (46.7%)	35 (38.1%)	92	4.16

Table 9 presents students' perceptions regarding the types of social media content they prefer for developing English communication skills. The findings indicate that English-language videos on platforms such as You Tube and TikTok were the most preferred content type, with 88.0 % of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that such videos help improve their communication skills (Mean=4.28). This finding supports the earlier results showing that videos were the most preferred English -language content among students. Reading English post, articles, and blogs also received strongly support, with 82.7%| of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that these materials contribute to languages improvement (4.11).

The results further reveal that 80.5 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that listening to podcasts, songs, and other audio content enhance their communication abilities (Mean=4.08), while 77.2% indicated that participation in live chats, discussion forums, and online conversations helps them practice English effectively (Mean =3.99. moreover 84.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that multimedia content combining both videos, audio and interactive discussion is more effective than text only content for learning English (Mean=4.16). the overall mean score of 4.12 demonstrates that students highly value multimedia and interactive content for improving their English communication skills. These findings suggest that audiovisual and interactive resources provide authentic language

exposure and meaningful opportunities for language practices among final year students in the department of media and communication at Mount Kigali University.

The findings are consistent with recent studies that identify videos, podcasts, blogs, and interactive discussions as effective digital resources for vocabulary development, listening comprehension, pronunciation improvement, and overall communicative competences (Mayer, 2021).

4.1.5 Specific English Communication Skills (Speaking, Writing, Listening, Reading, Vocabulary, and Grammar) Acquired Using Social Media

The findings indicate that social media significantly contribute to the development of English communication skills among final year students at Mount Kigali University. Students reported improvements in vocabulary, listening and pronunciation, writing, reading, speaking confidence, and grammar through regular engagement with English - language content such as videos, posts, podcasts, and online discussions. Overall, social media provides authentic opportunities for language exposure, practice, and interaction, making it an effective informal learning tool that complements classroom based English language learning.

Table 10

English Communication Skills Acquired through the Use of Social Media (N = 92)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
Social media has improved my English vocabulary by exposing me to new words and expressions.	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.3%)	8 (8.7%)	42 (45.7%)	38 (41.3%)	92	4.23
Using social media has improved my listening skills through videos, podcasts, and audio content.	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.3%)	9 (9.8%)	43 (46.7%)	35 (38.1%)	92	4.16
Social media has helped improve my writing skills through posts, comments, and online discussions.	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.4%)	10 (10.9%)	42 (45.7%)	33 (35.8%)	92	4.08
Social media has enhanced my speaking confidence through interaction and communication with others in English.	3 (3.3%)	6 (6.5%)	11 (12.0%)	40 (43.5%)	32 (34.8%)	92	3.99
Reading English-language content on social media has improved my reading comprehension skills.	2 (2.2%)	5 (5.4%)	10 (10.9%)	41 (44.6%)	34 (37.0%)	92	4.09
Social media has improved my understanding and use of English grammar.	3 (3.3%)	6 (6.5%)	12 (13.0%)	40 (43.5%)	31 (33.7%)	92	3.98

Table 10 presents' respondents' perceptions regarding the English communication skills acquired using social media. The findings indicate that vocabulary development was the most highly rated skill, with 87.0% respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that social media exposed them to new English words and expressions (Mean=4.23). listening skills also recorded a high level of agreement, with 84.8% of respondents indicating that videos, podcasts, and other audio content on social media improved their listening comprehension (Mean=4.16). These findings suggest that regularly exposure to multimedia content provides students with authentic language input that facilitates language acquisition.

The results further reveal that 81.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social media improved their reading comprehension skills (Mean=4.09), while 81.5% reported improvements in writing skills through posting comments, messages, and participating in online discussions (Mean=4.08). Similarly, 78.3 % of respondents indicated that social media enhanced their speaking confidence through interaction with other users in English (Mean=3.99), and 77.2% agreed that social media contributed to grammar improvement (Mean=3.98). The overall mean score of 4.09 demonstrates that social media plays a significant role in developing various English communication skills among final year students in the department of media and communications at Mount Kigali University.

The findings suggests that social media serves as an effective informal learning environment where students can practice English in authentic contexts, improve their communications abilities, and gain confidence in using the language. Vocabulary, listening, reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills all appear to benefit from regular engagement with English language content on social media platforms (Barrot, 2022).

4.1.6 Qualitative Findings from Semi-Structure Interviews

The semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected participants provided deeper insights into how social media contributes to the development of English communication skills. The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results and were organized into the following themes.

Theme 1: Vocabulary development

Most interview participants indicated that social media exposed them to new English words and expressions through videos, posts, podcasts, and online discussions. Participants explained that repeated exposure helped them their vocabulary and improve everyday communication.

"Watching English videos on YouTube and TikTok helps me learn new words every day, and I often use them when speaking with friends." (Interviewee 4, May 2025).

Theme 2: Improvement in Listening and pronunciation.

Participants reported that YouTube Videos, podcasts, and English songs improved their listening comprehension and pronunciation by allowing them to hear native speakers in authentic situations

"Listening to podcasts has helped me understand different English accents and pronounce words more correctly." (Interviewee 9, May 2025).

Theme 3: increased communication confidence

Several participants stated that interacting with other users on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram increased their confidence in communicating in English because they practiced without fear of making mistakes

"Social media gives me confidence because I communicate with many people in English every day." (Interviewee 12, May 2025)

Theme 4: Improvement in writing skills

Many participants explained that writing comments, messages, and discussion posts improved their sentence construction, grammar, and writing fluency.

"Writing comments in English has improved my grammar and sentence structure." (Interviewee 16, May 2025)

Theme 5: challenges of informal language

Although participants acknowledged the benefits of social media, several noted that excessive use of abbreviations, slang, and emojis sometimes affected their academic writing.

"Sometimes I accidentally use social media abbreviations when writing university assignments." (Interviewee 18, May 2025)

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the prominent role of social media platforms in supporting English language development among final year students in the Department of Media and Communications at Mount Kigali University. Students demonstrated a clear preference for interactive multimedia platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, reflecting trends identified in previous research. Barrot (2022) observed that these platforms are popular tools for English language learning due to their capacity to foster authentic communication and enhance learner engagement. Sockett (2023) also emphasized the effectiveness of video-based social media in increasing learners' exposure to real-world English, which is critical for language acquisition.

The data indicate that students actively engaged with English language content by reading posts, watching videos, participating in discussions, and interacting in English with other users. This pattern aligns with Chapelle (2020), who argued that digital environments offer valuable opportunities for meaningful second language interaction. Barrot (2022) further supports this, noting that active involvement with English content on social media enhances communicative competence, learner confidence, and language exposure. These results are consistent with communicative competence theory, which posits that language proficiency develops through active and meaningful communication rather than isolated grammar instruction.

Regarding the types of content preferred for developing English communication skills, students gravitated towards multimedia resources—particularly English language videos on platforms like YouTube and TikTok. Podcasts, blogs, and articles were also regarded as beneficial. Mayer (2021) found that multimedia resources support vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and pronunciation by providing integrated visual and auditory learning experiences. Kukulska-Hulme and Viberg (2018) similarly noted that digital multimedia environments supply authentic language input that fosters communicative language learning. These findings reinforce the constructivist learning theory, which views learners as active participants in knowledge construction through interaction with authentic resources.

The results further reveal that social media use contributes positively to the development of various English communication skills, including vocabulary, listening, reading comprehension, writing, speaking confidence, and grammar. This is supported by Barrot (2022), who found that social media enhances multiple language skills through ongoing engagement with authentic English content. Godwin-Jones (2018) also highlighted the role of mobile and social media technologies in promoting autonomous language learning beyond formal classroom settings. Hymes's

communicative competence theory is reinforced by these findings, as it emphasizes the importance of authentic communication in developing language proficiency. Constructivist learning theory also explains the effectiveness of social media as an informal learning environment, where knowledge is constructed collaboratively.

Overall, the evidence suggests that social media use—measured through platform preferences, engagement with English language content, and favored multimedia resources—positively influences the development of English communication skills among university students. The study's results are consistent with existing empirical literature and are grounded in established theoretical frameworks, underscoring the value of interactive, authentic, and learner-centered digital environments in language education.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that social media plays a significant role in promoting English communication skills among final –year students in the department of social media and communication skills at Mount Kigali University. The findings revealed that WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter(X) are commonly used platforms through which students' access and engage with English language content. The study further established that students frequently interact with English content by watching videos, reading posts and articles listening to podcasts, participating in online discussions, and communicating with other users in English thereby creating opportunities for continuous language exposure and practice.

The study also concludes that different types of social media content contribute positively to English language development. Videos-based content, particularly from YouTube and TikTok, emerged as the most preferred learning resource due to its ability to provide authentic language input and enhanced learner engagement. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that social media contributes to the development various English communication skills, including vocabulary acquisition, listening, and pronunciation, writing fluency, reading comprehension, speaking confidence, and grammar improvement. Among these skills, vocabulary development and listening skills recorded the highest; levels of improvement.

Overall, the study concludes that social media serves as an effective informal learning environment that complements classroom instruction by providing authentic communication opportunities and meaningful language practice, therefore, when used purposefully and responsibly, social media can significantly enhance students 'English communication competence and support their academic and professional communication needs

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, Mount Kigali University should encourage the purposeful integration of social media into English language learning activities. Lecturers and curriculum developers should guide students towards the effective use of educational social media content, particularly videos, podcasts, online discussions, and English language articles, as these resources provide authentic opportunities for language exposure and practice. The university should also promote digital learning initiatives that help students use social media platforms not only for social interaction but also for academic and language development purposes.

Students should be encouraged to engage more actively with English language content on platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which were identified as the most used platforms in this study. Regular participation in online discussions, content creation, reading posts, watching educational videos, and listening podcasts can further enhance vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Students should also be guided to use to use social media responsibly by balancing informal online communication with formal academic language practices.

Finally, policymakers, educators, and language instructors should develop strategies that leverage social media as complementary learning tool for improving English communication skills. Training programs, workshops, and digital literacy initiatives should be organized to help students maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing potential challenges associated with excessive use of informal language. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in other universities and educational contexts in Rwanda to provide broader evidence on the role of social media in language learning and communication skill development.

Declaration of Interest

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