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ENHANCING LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH SOCIAL-MEDIA NETWORKS IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION CONTEXTS

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May **Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada ta’lim tili ingliz tili bo‘lgan muhitlarda (EMI) talabalar til ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirishda ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning pedagogik imkoniyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Fanlarni ingliz tilida o‘qitish talabalardan akademik ingliz tili kompetensiyasi, sohaviy terminologiyani o‘zlashtirish, og‘zaki va yozma muloqotda faol ishtirok etish ko‘nikmalarini talab etadi. Shu sababli ko‘plab talabalar ma’ruzalarni tinglab tushunish, akademik matnlarni o‘qish, fikrni ingliz tilida bayon qilish va interaktiv muloqotda muayyan qiyinchiliklarga duch keladilar.

Kalit so‘zlar: fanlarni ingliz tilida o‘qitish (EMI), ijtimoiy media tarmoqlari, til ko‘nikmalari, akademik ingliz tili, raqamli pedagogika, oliy ta’lim.

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May **Abstract:** This article analyzes the pedagogical potential of social networks in developing students’ language skills in educational environments where English is used as the medium of instruction (EMI). Teaching subjects through English requires students to develop academic English competence, master subject-specific terminology, and actively participate in oral and written communication.

Keywords: teaching subjects through English (EMI), social networks, language skills, academic English, digital pedagogy, higher education.

INTRODUCTION. The expansion of English-Medium Instruction has become one of the most visible tendencies in contemporary higher education. EMI generally refers to the use of English for teaching academic subjects in contexts where English is not the first language of the majority of students or teachers [4; p. 2]. Universities adopt EMI for different reasons, including internationalization, academic mobility, global competitiveness, access to international literature, and preparation of graduates for global professional environments. However, EMI is not only an institutional policy or a language choice. It is also a complex pedagogical practice that requires students to learn disciplinary content through a language that may still be developing.

The success of EMI depends greatly on students' academic language competence. Students may enter EMI programmes with general English knowledge, but they often face difficulty when they need to understand lectures, read discipline-specific texts, take

notes, participate in discussions, prepare presentations, and write assignments in English. Macaro *et al.* emphasize that EMI research continues to debate whether learning academic subjects through English automatically improves language proficiency without negatively affecting content learning [9; p. 36–76]. This point is essential because exposure to English alone does not always lead to successful language development. EMI students require purposeful support, meaningful interaction, and repeated opportunities to use English in academic contexts.

In many EMI settings, language learning remains implicit. Subject teachers may focus mainly on disciplinary knowledge, while language teachers may not be directly involved in EMI courses. As a result, students are expected to develop academic English through participation in EMI classes, although classroom time is often limited and content coverage is prioritized. This creates a gap between the linguistic demands of EMI and the actual support provided to students. Such a gap is especially important in non-Anglophone higher education systems, where English is used academically but not always widely used in everyday communication.

At the same time, students' learning practices have changed significantly due to digital technologies. Social media networks such as Telegram, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, LinkedIn and other platforms have become common spaces for communication, information exchange and informal learning. For many students, social media is not separate from learning; it is already part of how they access explanations, watch tutorials, communicate with peers, follow academic content and share resources. In language education, social media networks provide opportunities for authentic language exposure, learner interaction, collaborative writing, multimodal communication and autonomous learning [12; p. 1–39].

The relationship between EMI and social media is therefore pedagogically significant. EMI creates a need for academic English development, while social media provides flexible spaces for extended language practice. When properly guided, social media networks can help students use English more frequently, interactively and meaningfully. They can support listening through videos and podcasts, speaking through voice messages and short presentations, reading through posts and digital texts, writing through comments and reflections, and vocabulary learning through shared glossaries and multimodal examples.

The purpose of this article is to review how social media networks can contribute to enhancing language skills in EMI contexts. The article discusses EMI-related language challenges, the pedagogical affordances of social media networks, and their role in

developing listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and academic communication. It also considers possible challenges and offers pedagogical recommendations for integrating social media into EMI learning. The article argues that social media should be viewed not as an informal distraction from academic learning, but as a potentially valuable pedagogical environment when tasks are structured, outcomes are clear and interaction is meaningfully connected to course content.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present article is based on a theoretical review of scholarly literature related to English-Medium Instruction, social media networks, computer-assisted language learning, digital pedagogy and language skill development. The study is non-empirical in nature and does not involve experimental procedures, questionnaires, interviews or classroom observation. Instead, it synthesizes existing research and conceptual perspectives in order to identify how social media networks may support language development in EMI contexts.

The materials reviewed include academic books, journal articles, systematic reviews and theoretical works addressing EMI, online language learning, digital discourse, learner autonomy and social networking in education. EMI-related literature is used to identify the linguistic demands and challenges experienced by students in English-medium higher education. Studies on social media and digital language learning are used to analyze how online platforms may support interaction, motivation, multimodal input and language practice.

Methodologically, the article follows a narrative review approach. A narrative review is appropriate when the aim is not to calculate statistical effects, but to organize and interpret existing knowledge around a specific educational problem. In this article, the problem is the need to enhance EMI students' English language skills through accessible and pedagogically meaningful digital tools. The review is organized thematically, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, academic communication and learner autonomy.

The analytical perspective of the article is also informed by sociocultural and interactionist views of language learning. From this perspective, language development is not limited to individual memorization of grammar and vocabulary. It occurs through interaction, mediation, participation and meaningful use of language in social contexts [15; p. 3–20]. Social media networks are relevant to this view because they create spaces where students can exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, respond to peers, receive feedback

and engage with authentic English content. The article also considers the multimodal nature of social media communication. Online platforms combine written text, audio, video, images, emojis, captions, hyperlinks and comments. Such multimodality can support comprehension and engagement, especially for learners who struggle with dense academic texts or fast spoken lectures. However, multimodal communication also requires digital literacy and pedagogical guidance.

Thus, the methodological basis of the article combines EMI research, language learning theory and digital pedagogy. This allows social media networks to be analyzed not simply as technological tools, but as communicative environments that may extend the EMI classroom and support academic language development.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

EMI and the Need for Academic Language Support

English-Medium Instruction is often associated with the expectation that students will improve their English while studying academic subjects. However, this expectation can be problematic when language development is not explicitly supported. EMI students are not only

learning English; they are learning disciplinary knowledge through English. This means that they must process content and language at the same time. For students whose English proficiency is still developing, this can create cognitive and emotional pressure.

Dearden notes that EMI is expanding globally, yet its implementation differs widely depending on institutional policy, teacher preparation and student language levels [4; p. 4]. In some contexts, EMI is introduced before sufficient academic language support is available. Students may therefore experience difficulties in following lectures, understanding specialized terminology, asking questions, participating in discussions and completing written assignments. These challenges may reduce both language learning and content learning.

Macaro *et al.* argue that one of the central concerns in EMI research is whether students' English proficiency actually improves as a result of EMI participation [9; p. 36–76]. The answer is not simple. EMI may offer rich exposure to English, but exposure alone is not enough. Students need opportunities to use English actively, receive feedback and reflect on their language performance. In addition, they need support in academic vocabulary, disciplinary discourse and communication strategies.

Kamaşak *et al.* show that academic language-related challenges are a significant part of EMI learning experiences [8; p. 1–12]. These challenges are not limited to grammar or vocabulary. They include understanding academic tasks, interpreting

teachers' explanations, producing discipline-specific language, and participating in classroom communication. Therefore, EMI requires a broader view of language support, one that includes academic literacy, interactional competence and learner confidence.

Social media networks can respond to some of these needs by extending language practice beyond classroom time. They allow students to encounter English in flexible formats, interact with classmates, ask questions, share resources and practise language in smaller units. This is especially valuable in EMI contexts where students may feel anxious about speaking in front of the whole class or may need more time to process academic content.

Social Media Networks as Pedagogical Spaces

Social media networks are often associated with entertainment and informal communication. However, in educational contexts, they can also function as spaces for collaboration, resource sharing, feedback and community building. Manca & Ranieri argue that social media in higher education has both potentials and limitations, depending on how it is integrated into teaching practice [10; p. 216–230]. This means that social media itself is not automatically effective. Its pedagogical value depends on task design, teacher guidance and learner engagement.

In language learning, social media provides several affordances. First, it offers authentic input. Students can access real English through videos, posts, interviews, comments, podcasts and academic pages. Second, it supports interaction. Students can communicate with peers, teachers and wider online communities. Third, it encourages multimodal learning. Text, sound, image and video can work together to make meaning clearer. Fourth, it supports learner autonomy because students can choose materials, follow channels and practise English outside formal lessons.

Reinhardt explains that social media can support second and foreign language learning because it creates opportunities for participatory communication and meaningful language use [12; p. 1–39]. This is particularly relevant to EMI, where students need to use English not only for language exercises but also for explaining ideas, discussing content and constructing academic meaning. Social media can therefore become a bridge between informal digital communication and academic English development.

In EMI contexts, social media networks can be used in different ways. A teacher may create a Telegram group for weekly vocabulary, use YouTube videos before lectures, ask students to record short explanations, organize peer feedback through comments, or invite students to share academic resources. These activities can make English practice more regular and less limited to classroom performance.

However, social media should be integrated carefully. If tasks are unclear, students may simply scroll through content without meaningful learning. If participation is not guided, stronger students may dominate while quieter students remain passive. Therefore, social media-based EMI tasks should have clear instructions, academic purpose and manageable outcomes.

Developing Listening Skills through Social Media Networks

Listening is one of the most important skills for EMI students because lectures, seminars, presentations and video materials are often delivered in English. Many students struggle with speed, accent, terminology and density of information. Social media networks, especially video-based platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, can provide additional listening exposure that students can control.

Unlike live lectures, online videos can be paused, repeated and watched with subtitles. This allows students to process information gradually. For EMI students, this is highly useful because they can review difficult sections, write down terminology and compare different explanations of the same concept. Godwin-Jones emphasizes that informal online language learning can support learner engagement because learners often select content according to their own needs and interests [6; p. 8–27].

Teachers can use social media listening tasks before, during and after EMI lessons. Before a lecture, students may watch a short video introducing the topic and list key vocabulary. During the course, they may follow subject-related channels and summarize weekly content. After a lecture, they may compare the teacher’s explanation with an online explanation. Such tasks help students develop listening comprehension while reinforcing disciplinary knowledge.

Listening tasks should be active rather than passive. Students should not only watch videos but also complete purposeful activities: identifying the main idea, noting key terms, answering comprehension questions, preparing discussion points or recording a response. These tasks help transform social media from an entertainment platform into an academic listening resource.

Developing Speaking Skills and Oral Confidence

Speaking is often the most anxiety-producing skill in EMI contexts. Students may understand lectures and readings, but hesitate to speak because they fear making mistakes or being judged. This problem is especially common when classroom culture is teacher-centered or when students have limited experience using English for academic discussion.

Social media networks can provide low-pressure opportunities for speaking practice. Voice messages, short videos, online presentations and live discussions allow

students to practise speaking in manageable formats. For example, students can record a one-minute explanation of a concept and share it in a class group. They can rehearse before recording, listen to themselves and improve their output before submission. This process may reduce anxiety and increase confidence.

Speaking tasks through social media can also support fluency and academic expression. Students may explain key terms, summarize readings, describe diagrams, present mini-research findings or respond to classmates’ questions. These tasks encourage students to use English as a tool for academic communication rather than only as a subject of study.

Peer interaction is also important. When students listen to classmates’ recordings and respond with questions or comments, speaking becomes dialogic. This aligns with the idea that

language develops through meaningful interaction [15; p. 3–20]. In EMI settings, such interaction helps students practise both subject knowledge and communicative competence.

Teachers should provide supportive feedback. The aim should not be to correct every pronunciation or grammar mistake. Instead, feedback may focus on clarity, organization, use of terminology and ability to communicate meaning. This approach helps students become more confident and willing to participate.

Developing Reading Skills through Social Media Texts

Academic reading is a major challenge for EMI students. They are often required to read textbooks, articles, slides, reports and research materials in English. These texts may contain dense vocabulary, complex syntax and unfamiliar disciplinary conventions. Social media cannot replace academic reading, but it can prepare students for it and make reading more accessible.

Many academic institutions, journals, researchers and educational channels share simplified explanations, infographics, summaries and short posts on social media. These materials can introduce students to key concepts before they read longer academic texts. For example, an EMI student studying education may first read a short post about formative assessment, then move to a journal article on the same topic. This gradual movement from accessible digital text to academic text can support comprehension.

Social media reading can also develop critical literacy. Students need to learn that not all online content is reliable. Teachers can ask them to evaluate the credibility of posts, compare online explanations with textbook definitions, identify bias or check whether information is supported by evidence. This is important because EMI students are expected to participate in academic knowledge communities, where source evaluation is

essential. Another useful practice is collaborative reading. Students can share a post, article or infographic in a group and comment on key vocabulary, main ideas or confusing points. This allows students to support one another and co-construct meaning. In EMI contexts, collaborative reading can reduce the burden of difficult texts and encourage active engagement with academic content.

Developing Writing Skills through Online Interaction

Writing is central to EMI success because students are often assessed through written assignments, reports, reflections, project work and examinations. However, students may not receive enough regular writing practice. Social media networks can support writing by encouraging frequent, short and purposeful written communication.

Students can write comments, summaries, questions, reflections, captions, mini-arguments and peer feedback. These forms of writing may be shorter than formal essays, but they still help students practise organizing ideas, using vocabulary and communicating meaning. Over time, short social media writing tasks can become a bridge to more formal academic writing.

For example, after an EMI lecture, students may write a five-sentence summary in a Telegram group. They may then comment on two classmates' summaries and ask one question. This simple task develops comprehension, writing fluency and interaction. Later, selected summaries can be revised into formal academic paragraphs. In this way, social media writing becomes part of a process approach to writing.

Social media-based writing may also increase audience awareness. Students know that their peers will read their posts, so they may pay more attention to clarity and relevance. Peer responses can encourage revision and elaboration. However, teachers need to help students distinguish between informal digital writing and academic writing. Abbreviations, emojis and casual expressions may be acceptable in some online interactions, but students must also learn formal academic style.

Feedback is crucial. Social media can support corrective feedback, especially when feedback is dialogic and constructive. Studies in digitally supported writing contexts show that online feedback can help learners notice language problems and revise their writing more effectively [11; p. 252–266]. In EMI settings, feedback should address both language form and content clarity.

Vocabulary and Academic Language Development. Vocabulary development is one of the strongest areas where social media can support EMI students. EMI requires students to understand and use general academic vocabulary, discipline-specific terminology and functional phrases for academic communication. Without sufficient vocabulary, students may struggle to understand lectures, read texts, write assignments and speak confidently.

Social media networks can support vocabulary learning through repetition, multimodality and collaborative practice. Teachers and students can create shared glossaries, weekly vocabulary posts, terminology quizzes or short explanatory videos. Each term can be presented with definition, translation, example sentence, pronunciation and visual support. This makes vocabulary more memorable and context-based.

Hashtags can also help organize vocabulary learning. For example, a class may use hashtags such as #KeyTerms, #AcademicPhrases, #LectureVocabulary or #EMIWriting. Students can return to these posts before exams or assignments. In addition, students may be asked to use new terms in comments, voice messages or short explanations. Active use is important because vocabulary is learned more effectively when students apply it in meaningful contexts.

Academic phrases are also important. EMI students need expressions such as “This concept refers to...,” “The main argument is...,” “The data suggest that...,” “One possible explanation is...,” and “In contrast...” Social media tasks can help students practise these phrases repeatedly in short written or spoken outputs. Over time, such practice can improve academic fluency.

Learner Autonomy and Motivation. Social media networks can also support learner autonomy. EMI students cannot rely only on classroom instruction; they need to develop independent strategies for improving academic English. Social media provides access to a wide range of learning resources, including lectures, tutorials, academic discussions, language learning pages and professional communities.

Learner autonomy does not mean that students learn without guidance. Rather, it means that students learn to set goals, choose resources, monitor progress and reflect on learning. Teachers can guide students by recommending reliable channels, designing reflection tasks and encouraging students to build personal learning routines. Sockett argues that online informal learning of English is increasingly important because learners often engage with English voluntarily outside formal instruction [13; p. 1–20].

Motivation is another important factor. EMI can be stressful for students who feel that their English limits their academic success. Social media may reduce this pressure by creating flexible, familiar and interactive learning spaces. Students may feel more comfortable asking questions in a group chat than in a large classroom. They may also be motivated by peer support, creative tasks and the opportunity to use English in authentic ways.

However, motivation must be balanced with academic seriousness. Social media tasks should not become superficial or purely entertaining. They should be enjoyable, but also connected to learning outcomes. The best EMI-related social media activities combine relevance, interaction and academic purpose.

CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMI CONTEXTS

Although social media networks offer many pedagogical possibilities, they also create challenges. The first challenge is distraction. Social media platforms are designed to attract attention, and students may easily move from learning materials to unrelated content. For this reason, teachers should design focused tasks with clear instructions, time limits and expected outputs.

The second challenge is unequal participation. Some students may actively post and comment, while others may remain silent. This may be caused by low confidence, weak language proficiency, lack of internet access or fear of public mistakes. Teachers should therefore offer different forms of participation, including written responses, voice messages, private submissions and group tasks.

The third challenge is the dominance of informal language. Social media communication often includes abbreviations, emojis, slang and incomplete sentences. While this can make communication friendly, EMI students also need academic English. Teachers should help students understand when informal language is acceptable and when formal academic style is required.

The fourth challenge is digital literacy. Students may know how to use social media socially, but not academically. They may need guidance on evaluating sources, avoiding plagiarism, citing digital materials and protecting privacy. Digital literacy should therefore become part of EMI support.

The fifth challenge concerns assessment. It is not enough to count the number of posts or comments. Assessment should focus on quality, relevance, clarity, use of academic language, interaction and improvement. Teachers may use simple rubrics to make expectations transparent.

Privacy is also important. Students should not be forced to use personal accounts for academic tasks. Closed groups, academic accounts or institutionally approved platforms may be safer options. Rules about respectful communication and responsible sharing should be established from the beginning.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS. The effective use of social media in EMI contexts requires careful planning. First, social media activities should be aligned with course objectives. If the aim is to improve listening, students may work with videos or podcasts. If the aim is to improve speaking, they may record short explanations. If the aim is vocabulary development, they may create shared glossaries.

Second, tasks should integrate language and content. EMI students need to learn subject knowledge through English. Therefore, social media tasks should require students to use English to explain concepts, summarize readings, ask questions and discuss disciplinary issues.

Third, teachers should provide models. Students need examples of good posts, clear explanations, academic phrases and constructive comments. Models reduce uncertainty and help students understand quality expectations.

Fourth, feedback should be regular but not overwhelming. Teachers can correct common mistakes, highlight useful expressions and encourage revision. Peer feedback can also be used if students are given clear criteria.

Fifth, social media activities should encourage interaction. Students should not only post individually; they should respond to peers, ask questions, compare ideas and continue discussions. Interaction is one of the main benefits of social media networks.

Sixth, reflection should be included. Students can reflect on what vocabulary they learned, which activity helped them most, what was difficult and how they improved. Reflection supports learner autonomy and makes language development more visible.

CONCLUSION. English-Medium Instruction creates valuable opportunities for academic and professional development, but it also places high linguistic demands on students. In EMI contexts, students need more than general English proficiency. They need academic listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and interactional competence. Since EMI classroom time is often limited and content-focused, additional spaces for language practice are necessary.

Social media networks can provide such spaces when they are pedagogically guided. They offer authentic input, multimodal resources, peer interaction, low-anxiety communication and opportunities for frequent practice. They can support listening through videos and podcasts, speaking through voice messages and short presentations, reading through digital texts, writing through comments and reflections, and vocabulary development through shared glossaries and repeated use.

However, social media should not be used without clear educational purpose. Distraction, informal language, unequal participation, digital literacy gaps and assessment difficulties must be considered. Teachers need to design structured tasks, provide feedback, protect students' privacy and connect activities to EMI learning outcomes.

In conclusion, social media networks should be viewed not as a replacement for EMI instruction, but as an extension of EMI learning. When used thoughtfully, they can help students use English more confidently, frequently and meaningfully. They can also support the integration of language and content, which is one of the central goals of successful EMI education. Future research may further explore specific platforms, task types and assessment models that best support language skill development in EMI higher education contexts.

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