

Exploring English Learners' Engagement in Community Discussions on a Social Media Platform

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Abstract

Most studies have demonstrated that social media plays a significant role in facilitating the development of informal language learning. In recent years, social media has become more than just a medium for entertainment; it is also a space where individuals discuss, share ideas, and learn from each other. This study aims to identify the types of English-related discussions that occur on X (formerly Twitter) and to examine how these interactions affect learners' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement in informal language learning. Analysis was conducted on 15 selected tweets discussing English topics, specifically those involving replies and ongoing conversations. A qualitative case study approach was used because it is appropriate for exploring social phenomena in a natural digital context. The X platform was chosen because it enables spontaneous and realistic language practice in everyday situations. Data were collected through observation and interviews with two participants who actively use X to learn English. The findings show that EFL learners share expressions, idioms, and slang to be used directly in everyday communication, indicating behavioural engagement. They also exchange learning tips (cognitive engagement) and provide support to each other (emotional engagement). These interactions create an informal learning environment that fosters language development and self-confidence. The findings recommend that English teachers consider utilizing social media, especially X, as a means to encourage students to learn contextually and actively outside the classroom. In this way, learning becomes more relevant, enjoyable, and aligned with today's students' digital habits.

Key words: English language engagement, social media, informal learning, online interaction, online discussion

INTRODUCTION

Maximizing the use of digital media and the internet can support the online learning process in an era of increasingly advanced technology (Sari, 2020). One of the most widely known communication media in this digital era is social media (Arumugam et al., 2022). According to Matang et al. (2023), in 2020, the number of social media users worldwide had reached 3.8 billion. Amidst this development, this digital platform is not only used as a means of entertainment, but also as a place to improve their language skills informally. Arshad et al. (2022) stated that social media is now used in various fields, including education, and has opened up new opportunities for individuals to communicate more freely. Furthermore, Sundqvist (2021) emphasized the significance of the digital environment in language learning, as

it provides learners with opportunities to interact with peers and receive feedback. This allows them to practice the language in a real-world context, enabling their language skills to improve naturally. Additionally, Sundqvist & Uztosun (2024) stated that many English learners engage in informal digital activities, such as interacting on social media, as part of their language learning process. Social media platforms, especially Twitter—now known as X—have become a space for independent English learning. Although a number of studies have examined language learning through social media, the everyday and spontaneous interactions on platforms such as X are still under-recognized. Yet, these informal exchanges can provide unique insights into how learners interact and discuss directly on the platform. The Application serves as an informal learning platform by facilitating casual language practice interactions between users, encouraging knowledge sharing, and fostering community support (Gomez-Vasquez et al., 2021). Social media provides an informal learning environment that supports independent learning, rapid feedback, and exposure to commonly used language (Zhu, 2025). Through this platform, learners can learn together, enjoy the learning process, and feel satisfied with their achievements. As time goes by, X (Twitter) has become one of the interactive tools that support learner engagement in collaborative learning in informal learning environments (Pérez-López et al., 2020).

EFL learners often engage in informal learning through interactions on social media, so it is important to examine how this form of engagement is formed in everyday practice. In this study, the learning engagement theory by Fredricks et al. (2004) is used as the main basis to explain how learners interact in informal learning contexts. This theory divides engagement into three, namely behavioral engagement (such as liking or replying to learning posts), cognitive engagement (efforts to understand and process information), and emotional engagement (feelings of joy, motivation, or connection during learning). These three aspects are used as a reference in viewing the role of platform X in supporting the natural language learning process outside the classroom. In this study, the discussions analyzed are not limited to interactions that occur in one particular account or group, but also include conversations that occur spontaneously between X users. Indirectly, these interactions form an informal digital learning environment that allows students to share knowledge, experiences, and support more naturally. To address this gap, this study aims to identify the types of English-related discussions that occur on X and examine how

these interactions contribute to learner development. This study explores two main questions:

1. How do EFL learners engage in language learning discussions on X (Twitter)?
2. What types of interactions occur among EFL learners during X (Twitter)-based language learning discussions?

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to understand how English language learners use the X platform as a place for them to carry out informal learning activities. This approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity for researchers to explore learners' experiences and interactions in more depth in the context of using social media as a place to develop their abilities. Data collection was carried out through three main methods that have been selected, namely online observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Online observation focused on public interactions on X, including posts, replies, and comments related to English language learning. This method aims to see directly how learners use this platform as a place to develop language skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with English language learners aged between 18 and 25 years who actively use X to access learning content. The format of the interview questions was structured but still flexible so that participants could share their experiences while maintaining focus on the main topic, namely their motivations, strategies, and habits in using X to learn a language. In addition, document analysis was also conducted on several selected tweets related to English language learning. This analysis provides an overview of authentic language learning practices and how language is used in everyday digital contexts. Combining these three methods, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of X as an informal language learning space.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

This study collected the results of observations and semi-structured interviews with two English-speaking students. Emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement are the three main components of the learning engagement framework developed by Fredericks et al. (2004) to analyze the collected data. Table 1 presents a summary of

the results of observations on the content of uploads and user responses on platform X (Twitter), which were analyzed based on the type of interaction and category of engagement according to the framework proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004).

Table 1. Summary of Community-Based English Discussions and Learner Engagement on X (Twitter)

No.	Discussion Topic/Content	Post Type	Type of Interaction	Engagement	Description
1.	Request for speaking practice partner	Post (tweet)	Request for collaboration and initiating a learning network	Emotional engagement, Behavioral engagement	The user is looking for partners to practice speaking seriously and consistently.
	Responses to the speaking partner's request	Reply/ comment	Reply and offer collaboration		Users respond by sharing tips such as practicing by talking to themselves, changing phone language, and some offer to join video calls or chat for speaking practice.
2.	Vocabulary-building tips	Post (tweet)	Asking for tips and suggestions	Cognitive engagement, Behavioural engagement	The user asks the community for tips and ways to expand their English vocabulary.
	Responses to vocabulary-building tips	Reply/ comment	Community Sharing		Community members share strategies and tools.
3.	Challenges and difficulties in explaining the meaning of English orally	Post (tweet)	Asking for advice	Cognitive engagement, Emotional engagement	The user has difficulty explaining the meaning of English to others, even though they

					understand it internally, so users look for tips to improve their verbal explanation skills.
	Responses to challenges and difficulties in explaining the meaning of English orally	Reply/ comment	Peer explanation & advice		Users share explanations and suggestions to help clarify the meaning.
4.	Request for English slang examples and idioms	Post (Tweet)	Request for community input	Cognitive engagement, Behavioral engagement	The user asks the community for examples of popular and cool English slang.
	Response to the request for English slang examples and idioms	Reply/ comment	Sharing explanation, knowledge, and examples		Users provide lists of slang and idioms complete with meanings and examples of their use.
5.	Motivation for Learning English	Post (Tweet)	Request for opinions	Behavioural engagement, Emotional engagement, Cognitive engagement	The user asks for someone's reasons or motivations for learning English.
	Responses to motivation for learning English	Reply/ comment	Sharing personal motivations		Users mention career goals, personal passion, and the value of English as a life skill.

Table 2. English Post Interaction Statistics on X(Twitter)

Post	Comment	Repost	Like	Viewers	Bookmarks
1	29	4	66	10.000	37
2	100	156	1.572	98.700	1.223
3	18	57	979	21.300	129
4	52	167	1.627	72.900	1.162
5	129	10	273	38.000	49

The results of data analysis from posts and responses on the X (Twitter) platform show various forms of interaction and involvement of English learners in community discussions. Five main themes emerge based on the type of content and type of user involvement. First, there is a request to find a speaking practice partner. This post was created by user X to collaborate and initiate a learning network, which reflects the emotional and behavioral involvement of users who are serious about improving their speaking skills consistently. The responses to this request are in the form of various self-practice tips, such as talking to yourself, changing the language added to the device, and offering to discuss via video call or chat using certain applications that focus on developing language skills. Second, on the topic of tips for increasing vocabulary, users ask questions and ask for advice that trigger cognitive and behavioral involvement from the community. The responses given are in the form of sharing various strategies and learning aids to expand English vocabulary. Third, on the topic of challenges in explaining the meaning of English orally. In the post, the user admits to having difficulty in providing an understanding of the meaning to others which gives rise to cognitive and emotional involvement. The community responds by providing explanations and suggestions to overcome these obstacles. Fourth, requests for examples of English slang and idioms also emerged as an invitation for users to get answers from other users' participation. These posts triggered cognitive and behavioral engagement, where other users shared lists of slang terms and idioms along with their meanings and examples of their use, as a form of sharing knowledge and experience. Fifth, motivation to learn English was a theme that also received a lot of attention, with requests for opinions inviting behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The responses that emerged revealed a variety of reasons such as career goals, personal love of English, and recognition of the importance of English as an essential life skill. Overall, this analysis shows that interactions on social media are not only informative but also support collaborative learning that involves the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of English learners.

Based on Table 2, analytical data is obtained showing the number of user interactions on each post in the form of comments, reposts, likes, viewers, and bookmarks. This data provides a quantitative picture that supports previous qualitative findings regarding the types of interactions and engagement that occur. The results show a relationship between posts that reflects the level of interest and response of

platform users to certain topics. For example, the second post, discussing tips for increasing vocabulary, received the highest number of interactions, including 100 comments, 156 reposts, 1,572 likes, almost 99,000 views, and more than 1,200 saves. This figure shows that topics around vocabulary learning strategies are very relevant and interesting to platform users. In contrast, the first post containing an invitation to find friends to practice speaking only received 29 comments and 10,000 views, indicating a lower level of response and participation. This difference indicates that the type of topic and the way it is presented have an influence on the level of engagement created in online discussion spaces, although this could also be due to the influence of the algorithm. However, the results obtained still show significant emotional and behavioral engagement. These data show that topics that are practical and directly beneficial, such as learning tips, tend to get wider and more active responses than other topics. However, all posts still show forms of user engagement, both emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally, that support the process of informal English learning on social media.

In addition to observations of online discussions on platform X, data were also obtained through semi-structured interviews with two active English learners who use social media as part of their learning process. The results of these interviews reinforce previous findings, while also indicating the existence of complex and interrelated forms of learning engagement. Both participants indicated consistent behavioral engagement in using X for learning. The first participant stated, "Every day there is always something I retweet or save in bookmarks, especially if the discussion topic is interesting or I haven't known it before." This shows that activities such as saving and sharing content are not just passive consumption, but part of an informal learning strategy that they build themselves. The second participant confirmed this by saying, "I follow a lot of English accounts because the threads are usually useful and can be practiced directly, especially those discussing TOEFL or idioms." In terms of cognitive engagement, both admitted to being motivated to understand the material more deeply after being exposed to certain posts. One quote that reflects this is, "If I find material that I don't understand, I can continue looking for an explanation on Google, even on YouTube, because sometimes the explanations in the comments are also insightful." This shows that there is an independent effort to expand understanding beyond the content of the post, while also proving that learning does not stop at one source. In

addition, both participants also revealed that the use of X (Twitter) helped them to build a more enjoyable habit of learning English. They found it easier to access learning materials anytime and anywhere without being burdened by formal pressure. One participant stated that the content they saved in bookmarks and retweets that were interesting to learn often became independent learning materials that could be re-studied whenever needed. This shows that social media is not only a source of information, but also a flexible and personal learning tool. The existence of a community with similar interests also increases their motivation to continue actively learning informally. Emotionally, this platform also builds self-confidence and comfort for users. As expressed by one participant: "On this platform it feels freer, I'm not embarrassed to ask or make mistakes, because many people are also learning together and there is no pressure like in class." This shows that social media provides an emotionally supportive learning environment, where mistakes are not considered failures, but rather part of the process. This is related to the statement from Zadorozhnyy & Lee (2023), who explained that EFL students who are often involved in informal English learning activities through digital media tend to feel more confident in using English in real communication. In addition, the motivation to continue to engage seems to be strengthened by a sense of connection with the learning community. "What makes me excited is that many people have the same interests. Sometimes I see discussions about grammar or English-language films that can connect," said the first participant. This impression strengthens that affective aspects of learning, such as comfort, pleasure, and feeling accepted, play an important role in maintaining student engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that interactions on platform X (Twitter) are not only about exchanging information, but also forming an informal learning environment that actively supports the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of English language learners. Through various types of posts and responses, such as requests to be conversation partners, vocabulary building tips, discussions about learning difficulties, and sharing slang and idioms, users can collaborate, share strategies, discuss, and express their learning motivation more naturally by getting encouragement from the community. These online interactions foster a sense of

mutual support among platform users with similar goals, which is important for sustainable language learning outside of formal classes. The platform facilitates self-directed learning by allowing users to self-organize topics relevant to their interests and receive direct feedback from peers. This participatory environment can increase learners' self-confidence, especially when they engage in meaningful discussions and receive emotional support from others who share the same goals. The flexibility of time and place in accessing discussions on this platform allows learners to learn at their own pace, without any formal pressure. The use of this platform as a learning tool can strengthen independent learning, and learners can enjoy the process. This condition allows learners to determine personal learning goals, explore the desired material, and create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience according to their learning interests. X (Twitter), with its practical and concise usage format, offers a useful space for learners to access language usage, expressions, cultural exchanges, and current terms in everyday contexts. Thus, this platform provides not only language input but also cultural insights that are important for communicative competence. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to be a practical reference for English teachers, language program designers, and of course English learners. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating students' digital habits and interests into pedagogical strategies. Teachers can guide students in using platforms such as Twitter not only as a place to have fun or explore passively, but as an interactive, reflective, and enjoyable medium to develop their English skills in a way that is in line with the realities of the digital era.

Author Biography

Maulidia Zahrotus Sa'adah is a student of the English Language Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Kadiri Islamic University (UNISKA), class of 2022. She is interested in social media-based language learning and how technology can support informal learning processes. Her research, entitled "Exploring English Learners' Engagement in Community Discussions on a Social Media Platform," highlights the role of X (Twitter) in building emotional, cognitive, and behavioral English learning engagement. She hopes that these findings can be a reference for teachers and learners in utilizing social media as a relevant and enjoyable learning tool.

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