

Social media as a tool for effective language learning

It is estimated that on average a person spends two and a half hours on social media daily. This time can be spent on mindless scrolling and just passing time, but it can also be spent learning.

Social media is used by language learners outside of traditional learning environments. Informal language learning through social media can occur through personal social network use, language learning apps with a social component, reading articles on blogs and more.

Learning through apps

There are many learning websites and apps that rely on social interaction between learners or have a social component. These resources have varying levels of social media elements. Many of these apps require users to create their own profiles, share their language learning journey with others and inspire others to keep up with learning. Some of them are similar to electronic sources with various tasks, reading, listening materials. Others are more similar to traditional social media, incorporating a feature when users can practice their language skills in dialogs, talking to each other. In this way, these social language learning apps can facilitate language learning through real conversations with other community members.

Unconscious learning on social media

Although many would think it would take time reading, listening, and watching some useful and sourceful material, many people forget about unconscious learning. So think outside the box and justify your countless hours scrolling or watching content on the internet - you are also learning.

How you might ask? If you are watching a video in a foreign language, which you wish to learn and understand, you might be learning by listening or watching what is being done and shown on the video. For example, if you are watching a makeup tutorial on YouTube, you are learning the makeup technique, and also - the right words for completing the makeup: you learn that a liquid with coverage used to cover your face is called "foundation", a red color on lips - "lipstick" and etc. You learn colors, objects and actions just by watching and understanding the tutorial. When you can use various words which you learned because of the watched video in other life situations. If it's not a tutorial, but a more informative video or Tik Tok, even a video essay, you are able to put up generated subtitles and see the words used in sentences on the video. If you are unsure of the meaning of some, you can search up a translation. Sometimes, you can find a function to translate a video into your native language subtitles, which can be helpful as well. Even if you are not watching closely and intentionally, just putting up something on the screen to fill the silence - you can still unconsciously learn a few words or how it is used in the sentence.

Online communities

Thus watching videos might not be the only way to learn. There are various types of content shared on many platforms - live translations, podcasts, guides, text posts and many more.

Many social networks include the ability to join virtual groups that either have other language learners as group members or group members with an external shared interest that they communicate about in the target language. It might be the same blog readers, people who have the same interests or are passionate about the same topic and can engage in discussion in another language to express their opinions and feelings about the topic.

Social media like many other sources can be helpful in learning as well. It's a big part of our life nowadays and many people can't go around their day without using it. Just give it a chance and one of your habits can be transformed into a simple yet great learning tool.