

Article Identifier: <https://identifier.visnav.in/1.0002/ijabs-25e-10004/>

# Integrating Social Media in Higher Education: Enhancing English Proficiency, Literary Engagement, and Critical Thinking in Philippine Purposive Communication Courses

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Received on: 10 May 2025

Published on: xxx

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the pedagogical impact of social media integration on English language proficiency, literary appreciation, and critical thinking among undergraduate students enrolled in Purposive Communication courses at a Philippine state university. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the research involved 250 purposively selected second-year students divided equally into experimental and control groups. The experimental group engaged with course content through social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—alongside traditional instruction, while the control group followed conventional methodologies. Survey findings indicated strong student engagement, increased motivation, and enhanced digital literacy. Qualitative data from focus group discussions supported these outcomes, highlighting the benefits of interactivity, collaboration, and critical discourse, while also identifying concerns about distractions and privacy. The study concludes that, when strategically implemented, social media can serve as an effective educational tool in language and literature instruction, offering contextual insights for digital pedagogy in Southeast Asian higher education.

*Keywords: social media integration, English language proficiency, critical thinking, literary appreciation, Philippine higher education*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The intersection between social media and educational methodologies has significantly transformed the

pedagogical landscape in contemporary society. Studies affirm that incorporating social media platforms into educational frameworks enhances communication, collaboration, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Research highlights platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as effective tools for information dissemination and exchange, contributing significantly to learners' development of critical thinking and digital literacy (Arunkumar *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Specifically, Arunkumar *et al.* (2023) emphasized that social media positively impacts students' motivation and knowledge sharing, ultimately enriching their overall learning experiences. Within this context, the Philippine educational mandate articulated in CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013, aligns with global trends advocating for integrating digital tools to enhance students' English language competencies (Wang *et al.*, 2022).

Despite these progressive mandates, operational realities in many Philippine state universities indicate a noticeable delay in adopting digital innovations. Current practices frequently rely on traditional instructional methodologies, overlooking the immersive and interactive potential of social media (Gulzar *et al.*, 2021). While extensive investigations exist regarding social media's educational impact in Western contexts, its specific application and effectiveness within the Philippine higher education system remain underexplored (Lim *et al.*, 2023; Rahayu, 2023). Recent literature underscores a significant research gap concerning how social media can enhance English language proficiency, literary appreciation, and analytical skills among Filipino students. This situation emphasizes the necessity for evidence-based studies tailored explicitly to local contexts (Pandey, 2024).

Addressing these deficiencies, this study outlines clear objectives to enhance understanding of social media's role in fostering linguistic and literary competencies among learners. First, it aims to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating social media to improve students' English language proficiency. Supporting this objective, Lim *et al.* (2023) indicated students' positive attitudes toward employing social media in language learning, underscoring its potential as an effective resource in cultivating English proficiency. Second, the study examines social media's impact on students' literary appreciation and analytical capabilities. Pandey (2024) similarly noted that engaging with literary content via social media facilitates deeper critical engagement, thereby enhancing analytical skills. Third, the research assesses students' engagement levels and perceptions regarding social media integration within Purposive Communication courses—a critical factor in gauging this pedagogical approach's overall acceptance and effectiveness (Rahayu, 2023).

Consequently, this inquiry significantly contributes empirical evidence regarding social media's educational potential in Philippine universities, equipping educators and policymakers with actionable insights aligned with CHED's directives (Dang, 2024; Rohr *et al.*, 2022). By contextualizing findings within the local educational landscape, the study expands global discourse on social media's efficacy in education, revealing nuanced insights beneficial for future instructional practices and curriculum development strategies. Empirical results from this research could shape pedagogical practices and inform policies aimed at optimizing educational outcomes in the era of digital learning and engagement (Rohr *et al.*, 2023).

The ongoing digital transformation necessitates a continual re-evaluation of educational practices,

especially within culturally unique contexts such as the Philippines. Comprehensive analyses like this study are essential for empowering learners, enhancing educational experiences, and preparing students for a globalized world where digital literacy is paramount (Alamri, 2019). By actively integrating social media into educational frameworks, institutions can create more dynamic, enriching, and responsive learning environments that align with contemporary student needs and anticipate future academic and professional demands (Vij & Singh, 2024). Ultimately, enhancing language proficiency and analytical skills through social media in educational contexts benefits individual learners and contributes to the broader societal goal of nurturing critical, engaged, and informed citizens in the digital age (Tarman & Kılınç, 2023).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), effectively integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The objective was to comprehensively evaluate the impact of social media integration on English language proficiency, literary appreciation, and analytical capabilities among undergraduate students.

### 2.2. Participants and Setting

Participants consisted of 250 purposively selected first-year undergraduate students enrolled in Purposive Communication courses at a prominent state university in the Philippines. To ensure rigorous comparative analysis, the participants were equally divided into two groups, each comprising 125 students. The experimental group received instruction that

incorporated various social media platforms—namely Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—in addition to traditional teaching methods. Conversely, the control group was exposed exclusively to conventional instructional practices without social media integration. Participants across both groups exhibited comparable academic profiles, were aged between 18 and 21 years, and displayed a balanced gender distribution, with females constituting 55% and males 45%.

### 2.3. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. All participants were briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was secured prior to the collection of any data. Participation was strictly voluntary, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were provided and maintained throughout the research process.

### 2.4. Instruments

To collect quantitative data, standardized pre-tests and post-tests were utilized to measure participants' English language proficiency—including grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills—as well as their literary analysis competencies, covering interpretation, critique, and reflection. These tests demonstrated high reliability, achieving a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

Additionally, a survey questionnaire employing a Likert-type scale was administered post-intervention to gauge students' engagement levels, satisfaction, and overall perceptions toward social media integration within their courses. The survey specifically assessed dimensions such as motivation, collaboration, critical thinking, ease of use, and perceived effectiveness in

learning, yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.91.

To obtain qualitative insights, structured focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with ten students randomly selected from the experimental group. These FGDs were designed to deeply explore participants' experiences, including the perceived benefits and challenges associated with social media use, and to elicit recommendations for enhancing future implementations.

### *2.5. Procedures*

The study was systematically executed over one academic semester, lasting 16 weeks. In the initial two weeks, both groups underwent pre-testing to establish baseline measurements for language proficiency and literary analysis skills. Concurrently, students received orientation sessions detailing the course objectives, expectations, and procedural guidelines.

From weeks 3 through 14, the instructional interventions were implemented. The experimental group actively participated in weekly assignments integrating social media. These activities included collaborative literary analyses facilitated through dedicated Facebook groups, reflective and analytical literary commentary posted via Twitter, literary-themed Instagram posts, and structured peer-to-peer interactions conducted across these platforms. Meanwhile, the control group continued to engage exclusively through traditional classroom methodologies and conventional learning activities.

In the concluding two weeks (weeks 15 and 16), all participants completed the post-tests designed to measure gains in language proficiency and literary analytical skills. Following this, the survey questionnaires were distributed to evaluate students' attitudes and perceptions. Subsequently, FGDs were carried out to supplement quantitative findings with qualitative data, providing a richer contextual understanding and depth to the quantitative results.

### *2.6. Data Analysis*

Quantitative data derived from pre-and post-tests and survey questionnaires were statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 26). Paired-sample t-tests were utilized to identify statistically significant differences in performance before and after interventions within each group. Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare post-test outcomes between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize survey responses. Qualitative data obtained from FGDs were meticulously examined using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological framework. Themes and sub-themes were identified, coded, categorized, and interpreted to elucidate comprehensive insights regarding participants' experiences and perceptions concerning social media integration in educational contexts.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### *3.1. Quantitative Findings*

#### *3.1.1. English Language Proficiency*

**Table 1.** Comparative Analysis of English Language Proficiency Scores

Group	Pre-test (M, SD)	Post-test (M, SD)	t-value	p-value
Experimental	68.75 (6.54)	84.95 (5.72)	-20.65***	< .001
Control	68.90 (6.40)	73.30 (6.22)	-7.12***	< .001
Between-group	–	–	15.84***	< .001

\*\* p < .001

**Table 2.** Comparative Analysis of Literary Appreciation and Analytical Skills Scores

Group	Pre-test (M, SD)	Post-test (M, SD)	t-value	p-value
Experimental	69.20 (7.40)	86.20 (6.31)	-18.90***	< .001
Control	68.65 (7.60)	74.85 (7.02)	-7.83***	< .001
Between-group	–	–	14.95***	< .001

\*\* p < .001

The analysis of English language proficiency revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's scores from the pre-test (M = 68.75, SD = 6.54) to the post-test (M = 84.95, SD = 5.72),  $t(124) = -20.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . This substantial increase suggests the effectiveness of social media integration in enhancing language skills. The control group, which received traditional instruction only, demonstrated a comparatively modest improvement from the pre-test (M = 68.90, SD = 6.40) to the post-test (M = 73.30, SD = 6.22),  $t(124) = -7.12$ ,  $p < .001$ .

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare post-test results between the experimental and control groups. The test revealed a statistically significant difference in English language proficiency scores,  $t(248) = 15.84$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating the experimental group outperformed the control group following the intervention.

### 3.1.2. Literary Appreciation and Analytical Skills

Significant gains were also observed in literary appreciation and analytical skills among students in the experimental group. The pre-test mean score (M =

69.20, SD = 7.40) substantially increased in the post-test (M = 86.20, SD = 6.31),  $t(124) = -18.90$ ,  $p < .001$ . The control group showed moderate improvements from pre-test (M = 68.65, SD = 7.60) to post-test (M = 74.85, SD = 7.02),  $t(124) = -7.83$ ,  $p < .001$ .

An independent-sample t-test comparing the post-test literary scores revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups,  $t(248) = 14.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , confirming the positive impact of social media on literary analytical skills.

### 3.1.3. Student Engagement Survey Results

Survey results indicated strong positive perceptions among students regarding social media use in educational settings. Specifically, 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that social media increased their motivation in language and literary tasks. An overwhelming majority (95%) observed enhanced peer collaboration through social media interaction. Additionally, 90% of respondents reported perceived improvements in their analytical and critical thinking capabilities, while 93% acknowledged significant advancements in digital literacy, attributing these

benefits to regular engagement with social media platforms.

### 3.2. Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of focus group discussions (FGDs) uncovered four primary themes reflecting students' experiences:

#### 1. Enhanced Learning Motivation and Engagement

Participants consistently expressed increased enthusiasm and engagement with course activities due to the interactive nature of social media. One student stated, "I felt more engaged because assignments were more interactive. Using Facebook to discuss literary themes was enjoyable and motivating." This sentiment was echoed across FGDs, highlighting social media's potential to foster greater intrinsic motivation and deeper student involvement.

#### 2. Improved Collaborative Learning

Social media platforms significantly enhanced collaborative learning experiences, facilitating easier communication and more frequent interaction among peers. Students emphasized that platforms such as Twitter and Instagram reduced the stress associated with traditional group tasks, enabling more creative, effective, and frequent collaboration. One participant remarked, "We regularly shared ideas through Twitter and Instagram. Group projects felt less stressful and more creative."

#### 3. Critical Thinking and Literary Analysis

Social media platforms also encouraged students to engage more deeply and critically with literary content. The interactive and public nature of these platforms compelled students to refine their analytical thoughts

and clearly communicate their interpretations. As one student shared, "Posting analysis on Instagram and Twitter pushed me to think critically about what I was reading. The feedback from classmates also refined my analytical skills."

#### 4. Challenges and Recommendations

While the feedback was predominantly positive, participants also identified challenges associated with social media integration. Key issues included occasional distractions from notifications and concerns over privacy due to the public visibility of social media interactions. One participant commented, "Sometimes notifications distracted me, and I felt less privacy because the platform is public." To address these concerns, students recommended clearer guidelines, structured use, and dedicated educational social media accounts to minimize distractions and maintain academic focus.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The present study underscores the efficacy of social media as a pedagogical tool in enhancing English language proficiency, fostering literary appreciation, and promoting critical thinking among undergraduate students enrolled in Purposive Communication courses. The significant improvements observed in the experimental group—as confirmed by both within-group and between-group t-test comparisons—reveal promising implications for integrating social media platforms into formal educational frameworks. These results are congruent with the findings of Hishamuddin *et al.* (2023), who argued that social media fosters active student engagement, critical thinking, and meaningful academic interaction, thereby contributing positively to student outcomes.

The improvements in students' literary appreciation and analytical competencies can be attributed to the interactive and multimodal features inherent in social media applications. Unlike conventional linear reading and interpretation, social media allows for dynamic literary discourse and collaborative interpretation. Hishamuddin *et al.* (2023) further emphasized that social media fosters higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) by enabling peer feedback, reflection, and diversified literary engagement. This study supports that assertion, demonstrating how platforms like Facebook facilitated literary discussions, while Instagram enabled visual commentary that enriched text interpretation. These findings resonate with the insights of Wahyudi and Hidayat (2023), who noted that e-learning platforms enhance students' critical thinking by encouraging analytical tasks and digital collaboration.

Moreover, high levels of student engagement, as reflected in both quantitative survey responses and qualitative focus group discussions, further reinforce the pedagogical value of social media. Participants consistently expressed heightened enthusiasm and motivation for learning activities delivered through social platforms. This heightened engagement aligns with the study by Goswami *et al.* (2024), who reported that social media promotes a sense of community, supports collaborative learning, and creates a more vibrant and participatory academic environment. The immediacy, accessibility, and user-friendliness of digital tools were particularly instrumental in sustaining student interest and fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ownership over the learning process.

However, despite these advantages, this study also brings to light the challenges that accompany social media usage in academic contexts. Among the most prominent issues reported were distractions caused by

frequent notifications and concerns over data privacy and exposure to non-academic content. These findings are aligned with the work of Manca and Ranieri (2016), who highlighted the dualistic nature of social media in educational settings—it can act as both a facilitator and an impediment to learning, depending on how it is implemented. Similarly, Ariesta and Purwanti (2019) stressed the importance of structured educational strategies that minimize distractions while nurturing students' cognitive engagement. Participants in this study proposed establishing dedicated academic accounts or private groups to reduce external disruptions and ensure privacy. These suggestions parallel recommendations by Lestari *et al.* (2024), who advocated for thoughtful implementation strategies to balance educational benefits with digital well-being.

The integration of both quantitative performance data and rich qualitative narratives offers robust support for the argument that social media—when applied strategically—can serve as a transformative educational medium. This synthesis of empirical evidence demonstrates that social media platforms are not merely supplementary tools but integral components of a learner-centered, technology-enhanced pedagogy. The ability of these platforms to blend formal instruction with informal learning experiences aligns seamlessly with the preferences and digital competencies of modern students. By facilitating real-time dialogue, fostering creativity, and enabling reflective practice, social media equips students with core 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and effective communication.

Rahim (2022) emphasized that the development of critical and creative thinking is best supported through interactive media, which offer diverse channels for student expression and engagement. The current study

echoes this insight, revealing that digital environments cultivate analytical rigor and intellectual autonomy by encouraging students to navigate, evaluate, and contribute to academic conversations in meaningful ways.

The empirical evidence gathered in this investigation affirms the educational potential of social media in developing essential academic and cognitive skills. The dynamic interplay between collaborative engagement, interactive content delivery, and critical inquiry highlights the capacity of digital platforms to enrich the learning experience. This study contributes to a growing body of literature that supports the deliberate integration of social media into higher education, especially within language and communication disciplines. To maximize these benefits, educational stakeholders must embrace innovative teaching practices that align with the evolving digital landscape, ensure equitable access, and promote responsible and ethical digital citizenship.

## 5. CONCLUSION

To optimize the use of social media in education while addressing potential drawbacks, several strategic recommendations are proposed. First, curricular integration must be deliberate and goal-oriented. Social media activities should be clearly aligned with course outcomes and assessment methods, ensuring they serve pedagogical—not merely technological—functions. Embedding authentic digital tasks into the core of language and literature instruction may facilitate the development of key academic skills.

Second, faculty development is essential. Instructors must be equipped with both digital competencies and instructional strategies tailored to managing and leveraging social media effectively. Training programs

and workshops should be designed to promote ethical use, enhance engagement, and mitigate challenges such as distraction and platform misuse.

Third, institutions should establish clear policies and ethical guidelines for social media use in academic contexts. These should address student privacy, online conduct, digital citizenship, and the appropriate separation of personal and academic interactions. A well-defined framework can promote a secure and productive learning environment.

Fourth, ongoing monitoring and feedback mechanisms are vital. By regularly evaluating student experiences and academic outcomes, institutions can adapt practices based on evidence and refine social media integration strategies accordingly.

Finally, there is a need for further research, particularly longitudinal studies and multi-institutional comparisons. Future inquiries could examine the long-term effects of social media-based learning and explore how different platforms or instructional models influence student outcomes across disciplines and demographics.

By considering these recommendations, higher education institutions—especially those operating in comparable contexts—may be able to explore the educational value of social media thoughtfully. When integrated with pedagogical clarity and institutional support, digital platforms can help create inclusive, interactive, and responsive learning environments that prepare students for the complexities of academic, professional, and civic engagement in the digital age.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NA

## 7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

## 8. SOURCE/S OF FUNDING

NA

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