On the Role of Social Media in Spanish Language Learning in Indian Context

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Abstract—Research on the use of social media in the foreign language classroom has increased significantly in the last decade especially during the pandemic due to quarantine and social distancing. The aim of the present research is to examine the learners' perception of the use of social media in learning Spanish as a foreign language in a non-native context. The research was carried out in Indian Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) where Spanish is taught as a foreign language at graduate and undergraduate levels. The objective was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of the students towards the use of social media platforms, in general, and Facebook, in particular, for learning Spanish as a foreign language and examine the differences in its use concerning gender, background and year of study. The research study was developed in the quantitative framework with the participation of 93 university students, and with the use of a comprehensive questionnaire as an instrument. The results showed that the students tend to use social media for enhancing and reinforcing their communication skills and language learning capabilities including reading, writing, and learning new phrases and structures. Moreover, the study also found the benefits of collaborative learning embedded during the use of social media, which helped in improving the learning process sophistically.

Keywords—social media, foreign language learning, Spanish, India, higher educational institutions

1 Introduction

Social media has been unceasingly transforming and informing daily life, with regard to information delivery, communication and visual culture [1]. In 2021, social media use saw an increase of 13.13% from the last year, which is 3.69 billion users in 2020 to 4.48 billion social media users globally [2]. According to Sopariya [3], social media has become even more accessible and appealing and this is especially noticeable among the younger generation. The Internet has become the main source of communication due to social networks and has proved to be a way to support a social life [4]. According to Griffiths [5], in the research, it has been found that people have a

huge addiction to social media. On average, an individual spends 12 hours per day on social media. Indian people spend an average of 26 min per day on the Internet and the top social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn in India [6]. India has around 622 million active Internet users in 2020, and is the second-largest online market, behind China. Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad [7], Indian Union Minister, informed that in India there are over 530 million users of WhatsApp and over 44.8 crores of YouTube. There are around 410 million Indian users of Facebook and about 210 million Instagram users.

The Internet and the social web have meant a fundamental change in how we communicate today. According to Cross [8], "the Network allows people from all over the world to be connected on an unprecedented scale in the history of humanity" (p. 177). The mode of relating, seeking and obtaining information, and even learning has changed and is conditioned by the new forms of interaction and textual production that the collaborative web offers. The network takes an important place in the lives of the students of this era, who trust and rely on it to obtain information and stay informed about social problems, as well as for interpersonal communication. Therefore, their needs for connectivity and interaction are met through social networks.

Social media is an association of different platforms to store and convey different data to other groups, which are available online. The objective is seen in terms of cooperation and connections with others. More specifically, social media can be understood as any platform that can unite people for dialogue or share opinions. Language Learning Social Network sites represent the body of those social media channels, which are mainly devoted to foreign language learning.

Investigation in the foreign language classroom on the employment of social media has grown significantly during the pandemic due to social distancing and switching to the virtual mode of education. The social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have an extensive presence among Indian users as indicated in the data earlier. These social media tools have the potential to serve the educational purpose of making the authentic Spanish language and culture more accessible to Indian students who learn this foreign language in a non-immersion context. Social media can be used to incorporate the Spanish language into the students' daily lives. The use of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp can provide learners with an appropriate platform for interaction with natives and among themselves and with their teachers. This shall have an overall impact on enhancing the communicative competence [9–11] of the learners and can assist teachers in making the teaching-learning process more motivating and engaging. The use of social media as an effective language-learning tool seems very interesting and quite motivating [12–15] for the students considering that they take control of their learning process by enhancing their autonomy [16–17].

It is a fact that in today's globalized world one can observe the noteworthy presence of social media, which has become an integral part of our lives [14]. Given the importance of the use of social media in the foreign language classroom, there arises a need to explore the attitudes and perceptions of the students towards the use of social media in the Indian context and at the same time examine the differences in the use of social media tools according to the learners' sociodemographic profiles. In India, research in the field of foreign languages has been carried out on different themes including language learning strategies [18, 19], foreign language teaching methodology [20],

interculturality [21], and the employment of literary text in foreign language classroom [22], among others. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research in the field of social media and its use in a foreign language context in India. The current investigation aims to fill this research gap by answering the research questions raised in the study related to social media use and its role in learning Spanish as a foreign language in the Indian context through a survey. In this research, we have used the survey to know the perceptions of the students towards the use of social media platforms, in general, and Facebook, in particular, as a case study amongst Indian learners. The study was carried out by analyzing the responses of the participants in five universities where Spanish is taught at the graduate level. This study aimed to understand the characteristics and affordances of social media tools in the learning and teaching of Spanish and to understand the implications of using the social networking site for students.

1.1 Objectives

Considering the aforementioned discussions, the aims of the current study are as follows:

1. To explore the attitudes and perceptions of the students towards the use of social media platforms for learning Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) in the Indian context.
2. To examine the differences in the use of social media in learning SFL concerning the year of study, background and gender of the participants with special reference to Facebook.

1.2 Research questions

The following research questions form the core of the current research in line with the objectives.

1. What are the learners' perceptions of the use of social media in the learning of SFL in Indian universities?
2. Is there any difference in the use of social media in the learning of SFL in Indian universities concerning the year of study, background and gender of the participants?
3. Is there any difference in the use of Facebook in the learning of SFL in Indian universities concerning the year of study, background and gender of the participants?

2 Theoretical framework

In terms of the theoretical frameworks, which have guided the current research and provided the theoretical base for discussion of the results are the social constructivist theory of learning [23], the input hypothesis of Krashen [24] and the theory of motivation [25]. Social media tools can be used to promote learning in the affective learning domain by enhancing learners' motivation and thus favoring learning. At the same time, these tools offer the possibility to enhance collaborative learning and

provide educational encounters for negotiating meanings, and conscious construction of knowledge. The integration of social media tools in the classroom helps in learners' engagement [12] and augments students' performance in various aspects. The use of social media may also help the learning process by supporting metacognitive learning.

3   Review of literature

Research on social media in the foreign language classroom has grown significantly in the last 10 years [26]. The use of social media has been investigated in various contexts providing insightful results in its application in the language classroom. Zakarneh *et al*. [27] in their study on Arab youths explored their attitudes to the employment of social media networking sites as learning tools in learning a foreign language. They found the predominant use of social media networks in the learning trajectory of the youth and recommended that teachers should support the use of these tools "to capture the interest of their students" to make learning more effective. Klimova *et al*. [28] in their qualitative study highlighted the benefits and drawbacks of using digital media in online foreign language teaching and its impact on learners' language acquisition. They underlined that the advantage included home comfort, not travelling to school, improvement of listening skills and time to review learning materials. The disadvantages comprised the absence of social contact (lack of face-to-face classes), absence of collaborative learning and teaching, health issues related to regular exposure to electronic equipment, and absence of the possibility to develop speaking skills. Further, Laborda *et al*. [29] in their study carried out during the pandemic times examined the attitudes of 22 pre-service English language teachers towards technology learning and implementation. Results shed a positive light on the use of blogs for these pre-service teachers and highlighted that the participating students rate the technological tools positively but not as expected by the researchers. Yekimov *et al*. [9] in their study on the formation of communicative competence in foreign languages rightly point out that the employment of social networks in foreign language classrooms allows teachers to make teaching more flexible and efficient, and convenient for students. This convenience leads to easy learning and thereby motivates students to learn a foreign language. In another quasi-experimental research study using Telegram as an online assistance tool, Motlagh *et al*. [30] found a significant improvement in the vocabulary score of the participants in the intervention. They concluded that online collaborative learning facilitates communication between teachers and students and thereby improves vocabulary.

Faizi *et al*. [31] examined the learners' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards using social media platforms. They found that the majority of the learners who participated in the study made use of social media applications to improve their language skills. The participating teachers noted that social media contributes to enhancing the four language skills. They recommended that teachers should employ these online tools in the online and face-to-face language-learning environment. Klimova & Pikhart [15] in their review to explore the impact of one of the social media tools, Facebook, on enhancing writing skills in the English language found a positive effect of using Facebook on the development of writing skills. They further mentioned that using Facebook in the EFL classroom helps in forming and shaping ideas, increasing

motivation, supporting collaborative learning among learners, enhancing vocabulary, and decreasing shyness. They recommended that experimental research should be carried out in the field of social media use to explore other aspects of language learning such as communicative language competence. Aloraini & Cardoso [32] carried out a mixed-method study to find EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of four social media tools, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter. They found a statistically significant difference between the advanced and beginner levels' perception of the usefulness of these social media tools in learning the language. However, there was no difference found in terms of their choice of social media application for learning. The qualitative analysis of the data indicated the reluctance of advanced-level learners to use social media tools for academic purposes. Miller *et al.* [33] conducted a study to examine social media use (Facebook and Twitter) in beginner-level courses in Spanish. They found that the participants showed an overall positive perception of enhancement of skills using these tools and regarded the social media platforms as an important pedagogical tool for using the target language and providing a better understanding of the target culture. At the end of the study, they concluded that the research findings confirm social media use as a pedagogical tool for language classrooms in this century. In another mixed-method research study using the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning, Fazlul Haque & Salem [34] reported that the participants believe that social media positively enhances their understanding of the target language, improves their language proficiency, and provides learning opportunities. Terantino [35] carried out mixed-method research with university teachers and students to examine their perception of using Facebook for foreign language classrooms. The researcher found mixed results regarding the employment of Facebook for foreign language classrooms in both groups. The qualitative data after the follow-up interviews indicated that Facebook contains a range of potentially useful tools for language pedagogy and the teachers pointed out the need for further training to apply these tools in their teaching process. These studies highlight the different research approaches, contexts, methodologies, and instruments used on the role of social media platforms in the learning of foreign languages. In this context, the present exploratory study on the use of social media will serve as a tool for exploring and furthering the research in this field in the context of foreign language classrooms in Indian universities. At the societal level, this research has the potential to make Spanish language learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more effective by highlighting the use of social media in the learning trajectory of university students.

4 Methodology

The current study is cross-sectional, descriptive type research within the quantitative paradigm. In this non-experimental study, an online questionnaire to know the learners' perceptions has been used as recommended by Liaw *et al.* [36], who state that surveying the attitudes of the learners and teachers regarding e-learning is a critical issue in learning and training. The self-reported questionnaire has been analyzed with statistical and interpretative scrutiny.

4.1   Participants and research instruments

The participants of this study were 93 undergraduate students (Table 1) learning Spanish as a foreign language. Out of these, 21.5% of the participants pertained to the first year, 43% from the second and 35.5% from the third. In terms of gender, 56% are males and 44% are female. Convenience sampling was selected for the present study, which is a non-probabilistic and purposive type of sampling. This was done because Spanish is taught as a full-time course in India at these five central universities providing a representative sample. In this type of sampling, the judgment of the researchers is also taken into account. These universities offer full-time courses in Spanish and have well-known centers imparting foreign language courses.

Table 1. Details of participants university wise

Name of the Universities	Number of Participants
Jawaharlal Nehru University	43
Doon University	28
Mahatma Gandhi Antarashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya-Vardha	11
Aligarh Muslim University	6
The English and Foreign Languages University	5
Total	**93**

In terms of age, 51% of the respondents are below 20 years of age, while 49% pertain to the age group of 21–25 years. Concerning the respondents' backgrounds, 40.9% are from the urban area, 34.4% are from semi-urban and the rest 24.7% from rural regions. In this study, the participants were asked online for permission through an informed consent form to carry out the survey. They were assured of the confidentiality, the anonymity of the surveys, and of the use of the collected data for this study only.

4.2   Data collection and ethical considerations

The self-reported closed-ended questionnaire containing a Likert scale, dichotomous and multiple-choice questions was employed to see the learner's perceptions of social media use in their learning. The questionnaire was prepared after a comprehensive discussion and keeping in mind the participants. Afterwards, the same was forwarded to 3 experts from the language education field for their comments and feedback and the subsequent changes were carried out based on their observations.

At first, one of the researchers informed through e-mail formally the directors/Heads of the departments by explaining the objectives of the research. Then, the researchers were provided with the email ids of the participants. All the participating students from all five universities were contacted online and were explained the purpose of the research. They were explicated that the study was designed to know their perception of the employment of social media in their learning trajectory. They were also explained that all the ethical measures like asking permission and confidentiality will be carried out through the research process. Google Form with clear instructions was used for the online survey and a consent form was placed in the Form. The participants had to read and accept before participating in the survey.

4.3   Data analysis

Microsoft Excel was employed for compiling the data, which was further, analyzed using the SPSS software. The results found were compared by employing different statistical tools available in SPSS such as ANOVA and independent sample t-test as a way to strengthen the result findings.

5   Results and discussions

Table 2. Use of social media in learning Spanish according to the year of study and background of the participants

Questions	Background		Year of Study	
	F	P-Value	F	P-Value
Do you use the Internet every day?	0.42	0.66	2.99	0.06
Do you use social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Podcast, etc.) for learning the Spanish Language?	3.92	0.02*	3.99	0.02*
Which of the following (if any) social networking sites are used by you?	0.09	0.91	0.72	0.49
How long have you been using social networking sites?	0.08	0.92	3.54	0.03*
How do you think you can improve your knowledge of the Spanish language?	0.20	0.82	3.11	0.05*
Do you prefer to learn Spanish through the Internet?	1.72	0.18	0.52	0.60
If yes, how frequently do you use the Internet for learning Spanish?	6.28	0.00*	3.30	0.04
If not, why do you not prefer the Internet for learning Spanish?	1.00	0.37	0.95	0.39
Which of the following tools of social media do you prefer for learning Spanish?	1.42	0.25	2.48	0.09
By the use of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) which skill in the Spanish language does improve the most?	0.05	0.95	2.28	0.11
Do you think teachers should use the platform of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and do activities related to the Spanish language in the classroom?	1.20	0.31	1.98	0.14
Social media makes you autonomous in learning the Spanish language	0.42	0.66	3.13	0.05*
Are you comfortable communicating in Spanish?	0.31	0.73	4.06	0.02*
If yes, please rate your frequency of communicating in Spanish on a daily basis	0.11	0.89	6.99	0.00*
If not, which one of the following is the reason for you not communicating in Spanish	0.60	0.55	1.02	0.36

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 2 presents the differences in the learning behavior of the students with the variation in their background (urban, semi-urban, and rural) and year of study (first, second and third year). In the case of background, students from rural areas reported using social media less for learning the Spanish language. There was a significant difference found (p=0.00) between these three groups when asked about the frequency of using

the Internet for learning Spanish. This may be because of connectivity issues, which is a continuous hurdle for learners from a rural background in India. In addition, they showed less awareness regarding the use of social media in comparison to the participants from semi-urban and urban areas. There was another significant statistical difference found (p=0.02) between the three groups regarding the usage of social media for learning the Spanish Language. It seems that students from rural backgrounds still have the traditional classroom setup mentality where the teachers are considered the only source of knowledge. This role of the teacher has to do with the tradition and culture of the country [37]. They do not take full advantage of the online setup, especially using social media tools in their learning trajectory. In all other questions related to the use of social media in their learning of Spanish, there was no significant difference found in these three categories based on the background of the participants.

It was found that only 21.5% of first-year students use social media to learn the Spanish language. This may be because of their dependence on class and teachers. In the case of the year (duration) of the study, there was a statistically significant difference in the group when asked about the use of social media in their Spanish learning process (p=0.02). There was another significant difference in the group on the question of the time period since they are using social networking sites (p=0.03). All students from the first year and the majority from the second year think that they can improve their knowledge of Spanish through teachers' lectures, books and face-to-face practice with friends. However, the third-year students contemplate that they can enhance their knowledge of the Spanish language by talking to natives on social media. This question on the improvement also has a statistically significant difference among the three groups (p=0.05). On the frequency of using the Internet for learning Spanish, there was a significant difference in the group (p=0.04). This may be because the advanced learners (in this case the third-year students) use the Internet for many reasons like learning grammar patterns, listening to Spanish songs, watching Spanish movies, etc. This shows that the frequency of the use of the Internet changes with the experience and learning needs. On the question of whether social media use makes them autonomous learners, there was a statistically significant difference (p=0.05), which again shows that experienced learners prefer to regulate their own learning process. First-year Indian students do not think that social media makes them independent because at the beginners level they are entirely dependent on teachers and their guidelines due to a lack of basic knowledge of the target language. In the last part of this section, they were asked to evaluate their confidence y to communicate in the Spanish language. The students from the first year and the majority of the second year reported not being able to communicate confidently in Spanish. That is the reason why a significant statistical difference (p=0.02) was found regarding this aspect. One of the explanations could be that the experienced learners have spent more time practicing the target language, for example, talking with their friends in class, and communicating with natives on the social media platform. Thus, they may have acquired this confidence while the newcomers have to struggle because they have just started to learn a new foreign language and do not find any Spanish-speaking environment to practice the target language.

Table 3. Use of Facebook (FB) in learning Spanish according to the year of study and background of the participants

Questions	Background		Year of Study	
	F	P-Value	F	P-Value
Do you have FB friends from Spain & Latin America where Spanish is spoken?	0.89	0.41	5.71	0.01*
How many foreign FB friends do you have from Spain and Latin America?	3.47	0.04*	4.83	0.01*
How often do you check your Facebook?	4.27	0.02*	0.60	0.55
Do you post stuff related to the Spanish language material on your FB wall?	1.49	0.23	2.87	0.06
Do you write comments in Spanish on FB?	0.86	0.42	3.32	0.04*
Do you feel that the Facebook group should be used as a platform for Spanish class assessments?	1.62	0.20	3.75	0.03*
Do you belong to any group, which is related to Spanish Language learning?	0.06	0.94	0.71	0.49

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 3 shows the use of Facebook (FB) in learning Spanish according to the year of study and background of the participants. The survey shows that the first-year students and the majority of the second-year do not have any Facebook friends from Spain & other Hispanic countries. When asked whether they have FB friends from the Hispanic world, there was a significant difference (p=0.01) in the group considering the year of study. This may be because as beginners who are starting to learn this language, this group hesitated to communicate in Spanish. After gaining confidence in the first two years, the third-year students make FB friends with native speakers to practice the language. The next question related to the first one was about the number of FB friends. Again, in this case, there was a significant difference in the group (p= 0.01). This may also reflect the introversion of the students when they start learning a foreign language. They may feel shy and not want to make friends. In another question related to writing comments on FB in Spanish, there was a significant difference in the group (p=0.04). This may be due to the confidence problem and shows that more experienced learners use social media more frequently than less experienced ones. Students from the first year and the majority of the second year do not think that the FB group can be used as a platform for Spanish class assessments. There was a significant difference regarding this question in the group (p=0.03).

In the case of the background of the participants, significant differences in their responses could be found in the two questions. The first one was concerning the number of FB friends from Hispanic countries (p=0.04) and the second one was about the frequency of checking their FB accounts (p=0.02). These two attributes of the three groups can be directed towards the network problem, not much awareness of the use of social media, lack of technological knowledge, and lack of mobile data for the internet, among others. In the big cities, students are much more conscious about these social networking sites and they do not encounter network problems, which facilitates them to continue using these social media networks with much ease.

Table 4. Use of social media in learning Spanish according to the gender of the participants

Questions	G	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2Tailed)
Do you use the Internet every day?	M	1.11	0.32	12.70	0.00*	1.658	0.101
	F	1.02	0.15			1.786	0.078
Do you use Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Podcast, etc.) for learning the Spanish Language?	M	1.63	0.86	61.13	0.00*	3.512	0.001
	F	1.12	0.39			3.795	0.000
Which of the following (if any) social networking sites are used by you?	M	3.32	0.96	1.22	0.27	1.597	0.114
	F	3.00	1.00			1.59	0.116
How long have you been using social networking sites?	M	3.21	0.99	0.00	0.96	0.307	0.759
	F	3.14	1.03			0.306	0.760
How do you think to improve your knowledge of the Spanish language?	M	3.92	1.82	2.54	0.11	0.481	0.631
	F	3.73	2.00			0.476	0.635
Do you prefer to learn Spanish through the Internet?	M	1.76	0.83	0.12	0.72	0.492	0.624
	F	1.68	0.84			0.491	0.625
If yes, how frequently do you use the Internet for learning Spanish?	M	1.69	0.67	0.23	0.63	−1.460	0.148
	F	1.92	0.87			−1.415	0.161
If not, why do you not prefer the Internet for learning Spanish?	M	2.30	1.14	9.36	0.00*	−2.096	0.039
	F	2.78	0.98			−2.134	0.036
Which of the following tools of social media do you prefer for learning Spanish?	M	3.71	0.89	0.89	0.35	−0.254	0.8
	F	3.75	0.76			−0.259	0.797
By the use of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) which skill in the Spanish language does improve the most?	M	2.88	1.71	0.03	0.86	0.621	0.536
	F	2.65	1.78			0.618	0.538
Social media make you autonomous regarding learning the Spanish language.	M	1.30	0.46	3.76	0.06	0.947	0.346
	F	1.21	0.41			0.959	0.340
Do you think teachers should use the platform of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and do activities related to the Spanish Language in the classroom?	M	1.25	0.43	10.90	0.00*	1.555	0.123
	F	1.12	0.33			1.606	0.112
Are you comfortable communicating in Spanish?	M	1.86	0.86	0.77	0.38	0.063	0.950
	F	1.85	0.91			0.063	0.950
If yes, please rate your frequency of communicating in Spanish on a daily basis	M	2.59	1.24	5.41	0.02*	0.904	0.368
	F	2.39	0.86			0.942	0.349
If not, which one of the following is the reason for you not communicating in Spanish	M	2.23	0.73	0.94	0.33	− 0.078	0.938
	F	2.24	0.88			− 0.076	0.939

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level.

The independent sample t-test is a statistical method to know the mean difference between 02 samples of the population. In the present study, this test was used to know the difference between the male group and the female group. Table 3 shows the score given by these two groups in the use of social media in learning Spanish. In the first question related to Internet use on a daily basis, a statistically significant difference was found (p=0.00) between the male (M=1.11 and SD=0.32) and female (M=1.02 and SD=0.15) participants. To Social Media use, again a significant difference (p=0.00) was noted between the male (M=1.63 and SD=0.86) and female group (M=1.12 and SD=0.39). In another question about the preference to learn Spanish through the Internet, there was no significant difference found between these two groups. However, asking the reason why don't they prefer the Internet for learning Spanish, there was a significant difference (p=0.00) between the male (M=2.30 and SD=1.14) and female (M=2.78 and SD=0.98) students. In another question on whether the teachers should make use of social media for teaching the Spanish language, a significant difference (p=0.00) was found between the male (M=1.25 and SD=0.43) and female (Mean=1.12 and SD=0.33) participants. When asked to rate their frequency of communicating in Spanish daily, there was a significant difference (p=0.02) between the male (Mean=2.59 and SD=1.24) and female (Mean=2.39 and SD=0.86) group. In all other questions related to the use of social media in learning Spanish, there was no significant difference found in these two categories. However, there was a minimal difference between these two groups and some differences in the mean values were noted.

Table 5. Use of Facebook in learning spanish according to the gender of the participants

Questions	G	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2Tailed)
Do you have FB friends from Spain & Latin America where Spanish is spoken?	M	1.78	0.41	0.03	0.86	0.092	0.927
	F	1.78	0.42			0.092	0.927
How many foreign FB friends do you have from Spain and Latin America?	M	1.25	2.66	5.06	0.03*	1.187	0.238
	F	0.71	1.36			1.273	0.207
How often do you check your Facebook?	M	2.30	1.16	2.83	0.10	− 4.298	0.000
	F	3.29	1.00			− 4.373	0.000
Do you post stuff related to the Spanish language material on your FB wall?	M	3.57	0.87	0.00	0.99	0.236	0.814
	F	3.53	0.74			0.241	0.810
Do you write comments in Spanish on FB?	M	2.48	0.61	3.12	0.08	− 0.694	0.489
	F	1.78	0.41			− 0.714	0.477
Do you feel that the Facebook group should be used as a platform for Spanish class assessments?	M	1.78	0.41	0.45	0.50	0.342	0.733
	F	1.25	2.66			0.341	0.734
Do you belong to any group, which is related to Spanish Language learning?	M	0.70	1.36	0.90	0.34	− 0.850	0.398
	F	2.30	1.16			− 0.848	0.399

Notes: M-Male, F-Female, *Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 5 shows the use of Facebook in learning Spanish according to the gender of the participants. There was a minimal difference between the males (M=1.78 and

SD=0.41) and female students (Mean=1.78 and SD=0.42), concerning FB friends from Spanish-speaking countries and found to be non-significant (p=0.86). In another question related to the number of FB friends from Latin America and Spain, a significant difference was found (p=0.03) between the male (M=1.25 and SD=2.66) and female participants (M=0.71 and SD=1.36). In the next question on how often they check FB, a minimal difference was noted between the male (M=2.30 and SD=1.16) and female categories (M=3.29 and SD=1.00) and it was found non-significant at 0.10. With respect to the question concerning posting comments in Spanish on FB, a minimal difference was noted between the male (M=2.48 and SD=0.61) and female (Mean=1.78 and SD=0.41) and found non-significant at 0.08. A close look at these two questions reveals that there was a difference in the mean values between these two groups. These mean values show that the female participants check their FB accounts more frequently, however, they do not comment in Spanish on FB. This may show the shyness, lack of exposure or anxiety amongst the female students, which hinders the process of posting comments in Spanish. For the question of whether FB Group should be used as a learning assessment, again there was a minimal difference between the males (M=1.78 and SD=0.41) and female students (M=1.25 and SD=2.66) and found non-significant at 0.50. In all other questions related to the use of FB in learning Spanish, there was no significant difference found in these two categories. However, some differences in the mean values were noted.

6 Conclusion

Although social media technology has a number of features for enhancing the learning process, the employment of social networking systems has not been carried out significantly in the classroom and formal education setup, especially given its importance in the learning of a foreign language in a non-native context. In the current study, the employment of social media, in general, and Facebook in particular, has been examined through the responses of the participants and analyzed the difference that might occur with other variables of the study.

The research studies on the learners' perception of the use of social media tools in foreign language learning report mixed findings. While most of the research indicates a positive perception, there are few studies, which show the variation in the learners' perceptions due to their background, proficiency and gender. The present study responded to the three research questions raised by analyzing the responses of the participants from various higher education institutions. The first research question was to explore the learners' perceptions of the use of social media in the learning of Spanish in Indian universities. The responses of the participants of the study showed a positive perception of the usefulness of various social media platforms in the foreign language classroom in the Indian context. Responding to the second research question, Tables 2 and 4 shows the differences in social media use in the learning of the SFL in Indian universities concerning the year of study, background and gender of the participants. The third research question on the difference in the use of Facebook in the learning of the SFL in Indian universities concerning the year of study, background and gender of the participants was responded to in Tables 3 and 5. We have discussed that these differences may have

occurred due to many internal reasons such as their proficiency level, temperament, their learning styles, and behavioral norms. In addition, external factors also may have caused these differences in the group, such as network connectivity, infrastructural problem, etc. Cultural differences could also be one of the factors guiding the usage of social media by these learners. A better comprehension of the underlying factors can assist the researchers to find, and employing diverse strategies for fostering the implementation of social media in both informal educational activities as well as formal educational settings.

6.1 Limitations and implications

The 21st-century learners are well-prepared with a lot of information. The new technology and the employment of social media tools help them to enhance their existing knowledge repertoire of different language skills. Thus, social media appears to be a facilitator that can assist them in the process of acquiring various skills in a better and easy way. Hence, social media can be a significant tool that would smooth the progress of the learning process of a foreign language in the Indian context. The current research study on social media use in the learning of Spanish as a foreign language has many implications for a better understanding of students' perceptions of social media and FB use. The research findings have a positive contribution to pedagogical practices in a foreign language-learning context. The incorporation of social media tools in the formal classroom set up by language teachers can be advantageous for an efficient language learning experience with the help of authentic materials. The present study is a cross-sectional quantitative study and perhaps a semi-structured interview of participants on the employment of social media could have provided deeper insights and explained their choices and use of various social media tools.

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