

The Impact of Social, Locative, and Mobile Media on Communication and English Learning

Luying Wang*

Xi'an Eurasia University, Xi'an, 710000, Shaanxi Province, China

*Corresponding author: Luying Wang, floraluying@outlook.com

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract:

This paper aims to study the significant impacts of social media, location-based services, and mobile media on people's communication and lifestyles, with a particular emphasis on how these changes integrate into English language learning. The widespread use of smartphones and applications has transformed the ways people interact and access information. By examining the development of social media and location-based technologies, this research highlights the influence of these technologies on human social interactions.

Keywords:

Mobile media
Communication
English Learning
Social media communication

Online publication: September 6, 2024

1. Introduction

Taking TikTok as an example, as one of the fastest-growing social media apps, TikTok provides different online and offline functions to engage users and promote regional community interactions. Because of the process algorithm of the TikTok app, it can help users who are willing to study and practice English with more similar and useful recommendations while they are scrolling through the content on TikTok. With the location-based service (LBS), English learners are likely to engage the online content with the offline events. Hinton and Hjorth suggest that such technologies "overlay space with digital information", creating a fusion of geographic and digital environments ^[1].

2. Smartphones transforming lives

With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), smartphones have become integral to daily life, holding a significant share of the global mobile subscriber base. In China, for instance, mobile phone subscriptions reached one billion by March 2012. Green and Haddon view ICT progress as evolutionary, noting that people adapt their technology use when new tools emerge, although both old and new technologies temporarily influence lives ^[2]. The new generation of smartphones features capabilities like photo-taking, video-making, gaming, and most crucially, Internet access. Hinton and Hjorth remark that mobile phones have evolved from mere communication devices to mobile multimedia technologies, significantly altering

how people live and work ^[1].

By 2011, three-quarters of Chinese Internet users accessed the Internet via mobile devices. This shift towards smartphones and apps has profoundly changed daily life, with Goggin describing it as a “bewildering and proliferating array of cultural activities” shaping new self-perceptions ^[3-4]. Devices like iPhones and iPads have become crucial for communication, gaming, and sharing everyday life ^[5].

The rise of smartphones has not only changed how people communicate but also how they learn and consume information. English learning, in particular, has been significantly impacted by the widespread use of smartphones. Mobile apps, online resources, and social media platforms have made English learning more accessible to different sources of learning. Apps like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise offer gamified language lessons that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, making it easier for learners to practice and improve their English skills. Social media platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram also provide opportunities for learners to engage with native speakers, join language learning communities, and access a wealth of language learning resources.

3. LBSs, mobile, and social media

Mobile devices enable social media to integrate with technologies like location-based services (LBSs), merging imagined, psychological, and geographic spaces. Hinton and Hjorth define LBSs as technologies that determine user location through GPS and triangulation methods ^[1]. Although LBSs existed in devices like car GPS systems since the late 1990s, their integration with social media on smartphones revolutionized communication. Berry and Schleser argue that LBSs and apps on smartphones offer new social, creative, and emotional opportunities for self-expression and exploration ^[4].

Hinton and Hjorth summarize media mobility as the expansion of cartographies via LBS devices and mobile apps, developing location-based social apps that blend social relationships with geography ^[1]. This leads to changes in place attachment and meaning, but extensive LBS use also raises privacy and safety concerns. For instance, while LBSs can enhance social interactions

by allowing users to check in at locations, share their whereabouts, and find friends nearby, they also pose risks related to stalking, unwanted tracking, and data breaches.

The use of LBSs in social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and Instagram has created new ways for users to interact with their environment and connect with others. For example, Facebook’s “Check-In” feature allows users to share their location with friends, creating a digital map of their activities and experiences. Similarly, Instagram’s “Location Stories” enable users to explore and contribute to stories from specific locations, fostering a sense of community and shared experience. These features not only enhance social interactions but also provide valuable data for businesses and advertisers, who can target users based on their location and preferences.

The integration of LBSs with social media also has implications for English learning. Language learners can use location-based apps to find language exchange partners, join language meetups, and explore cultural experiences in their area. Apps like Meetup and Tandem connect language learners with native speakers in their area, providing opportunities for face-to-face practice. Additionally, travel and tourism apps like Airbnb and TripAdvisor offer language learners the chance to practice their English skills while exploring new destinations and interacting with locals.

4. Case study: TikTok’s locative function

TikTok provides an online space for recording lives, sharing experiences, and socializing. With LBSs, TikTok introduced features like location tags, nearby content discovery, and localized challenges, blurring online and offline communication boundaries. Hinton and Hjorth suggest that these technologies overlay space with digital information, creating new places rooted in geographic space yet existing partly online and offline ^[1].

LBSs on TikTok enable functions like location tags, nearby content discovery, and localized challenges, connecting online and offline communication. This integration makes social media more sociable and LBSs more valuable. Josh Williams comments that location services become interesting at a certain scale, prompting TikTok’s local search, rating, and recommendation sites

based on LBSs ^[6-7].

TikTok's locative features also have significant implications for English learning. By connecting with local communities and events, language learners can indulge themselves in real-life English-speaking environments. For example, English learners can attend local events and join language exchange groups. All those offline events allow learners to practice their English skills in authentic contexts.

5. Influence on lifestyle and English learning

Smartphones have become the most effective way for people to access and share information. Various apps, including LBSs and social media, provide creative opportunities for self-expression ^[4]. Social connections can form anywhere via smartphones, with LBSs gaining value from social media functions. Sharing locations on different platforms facilitates new social relationships ^[8]. For example, relocating to a new city updates the location on all social media, prompting platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and food rating apps to tailor recommendations based on the new location. This integration of social and locative media helps build connections with current locations, fostering emotional attachment ^[9].

The combination of social, locative, and mobile media has also revolutionized English learning. Language learning apps, online courses, and social media groups provide English learners with opportunities to interact and engage in ways to learn English ^[10]. Taking college students as an example, they are more likely to use social media to learn and practice English. For most college students, language learning apps like Duolingo offer interactive lessons and exercises that can help them adapt

to their level and progress.

The influence of social, locative, and mobile media on lifestyle and English learning can be seen in various aspects of daily life ^[11]. For example, the use of LBSs and social media has transformed how people discover and engage with local events, businesses, and services. This has led to increased opportunities for social interaction, community building, and cultural exchange. Similarly, the integration of these technologies into English learning has made language acquisition more accessible, interactive, and engaging. By leveraging the social and locative capabilities of smartphones, language learners can immerse themselves in authentic language environments, connect with native speakers, and access personalized content ^[12].

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of social, locative, and mobile media has significantly transformed communication, lifestyle, and English learning. Smartphones and their associated applications have reshaped how people interact, access information, and engage with their surroundings. The incorporation of LBSs into social media platforms like TikTok has created new opportunities for localized content discovery, community interactions, and collaborative language learning. As technology continues to evolve, it is essential to embrace the potential of mobile media to create dynamic and interactive learning ecosystems that cater to the diverse needs of language learners. By leveraging the social and locative capabilities of smartphones, learners can immerse themselves in authentic language environments, form study groups, and access personalized content, ultimately enhancing their language acquisition and overall learning experience.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Hinton S, Hjorth L, 2013, *Understanding Social Media*. Sage Publications, New York.

- [2] Green N, Haddon L, 2009, *Mobile Communications: An Introduction to New Media*. Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- [3] Goggin G, 2006, *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life*. Routledge, England.
- [4] Berry M, Schleser M, 2014, *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones*. (pp. 54-65). Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 54–65.
- [5] Hjorth L, Burgess J, Richardson I, 2012, *Studying Mobile Media: Cultural Technologies, Mobile Communication, and the iPhone*, in *Routledge Handbook of New Media*. Routledge, England, 76–90.
- [6] Wilken R, 2014, *Locative Media: From Specialized Preoccupation to Mainstream Fascination*, in *Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 54–65.
- [7] Considine J, 2012, *Social, Locative, and Mobile Media in Youth Lives*. *Journal of Digital and Media Literacy*, 7(3): 45–67.
- [8] Sui XH, Yan SH, Yin YK, 2020, *Research on the Influence of Mobile Internet Social Media on College Students' Psychology and Countermeasures*. *China Market*, 2020(10): 197–199.
- [9] Meng HY, Yan SH, Yin YK, 2020, *Research on the Influence of Mobile Internet Social Media Use Behavior on College Students' Socialization Behavior and its Strategies*. *China Market*, 2020(11): 190–191.
- [10] Zhang MM, Huang BT, Liu J, 2021, *The Influence of Short Video Social Media Burnout on Users' Non-continuous Use Behavior: A Case Study of College Students in Guangdong Province*. *Journal of Shantou University: Humanities and Social Sciences Edition*, 37(4): 14.
- [11] Zhang CL, 2020, *A Study on the Impact of Social Media Use on Chinese Language Learning by International Students in China — A Case Study of International Students from Chongqing Vocational College of Electronic Engineering*. *Journal of Chongqing Electronic Engineering Vocational College*, 29(005): 69–71.
- [12] Zhu HW, Huang YD, Xu WY, 2017, *A Review on the Design and Application of College English Mobile Learning Resources based on Social Media*. *Education: Higher Education*, 2017(9): 62–65 + 68.

Publisher's note

Art & Technology Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.