SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENGLISH LEARNING INVESTMENT AMONG BRAZILIAN MILLENNIALS

by

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Submitted to Faculty of Extension

University of Alberta

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for

Master of Arts in Communications and Technology

August 2019

Acknowledgement

First, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Dr. Martin Guardado for his guidance and feedback throughout this project. Thank you for believing in my work since the beginning and for always being supportive and encouraging.

I am also thankful to Dr. Thomas Barker for his orientation during my graduate studies, and for having introduced me to Dr. Guardado. A special thanks to Stephen Kuntz for his writing feedback and insightful discussion about language and culture.

A further thanks to all the MACT 2017 cohort and professors who have walked with me throughout the past two years. Thank you to Dennise, Kelly, and Sara for always being a supportive and motivating group. I am also grateful to the participants who took the time to provide their valuable input for my project. Muito obrigada!

My special thanks go to my friends and family members:

My dear parents and sister for their love, respect, and trust.

Christophe and Isaac, for the inspiration, affection, and for always cheering me on.

Rodolfo for the encouragement and support to pursue my master's studies.

My Edmontonian friends for being a constant supportive presence.

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ABSTRACT

While technology increases communication and autonomy, it also presents an opportunity for learning. Likewise, social media increases Brazilians' exposure to the English language. Previous studies have shown the positive outcomes of technology in education, and researchers have argued that the use of social media can increase student's engagement. This study sought to help increase our understanding of how technology and social media influence English language learning investment among Brazilian millennials. Qualitative data was gathered through one-on-one interviews and analyzed by applying Norton's sociocultural investment theory. Findings emphasize participants' increased reliance on technology for education, work and personal purposes. Participants seemed to place high value on English, and they perceived English as an essential factor in their future needs. However, findings suggested that participants did not actively take part in interaction with people of other cultures. Furthermore, the study revealed an indirect effect of social media on the participants' language skills, suggesting that social media can be used to facilitate second language development and enhance intercultural skills. Results of this study shed light on how technology and social media impact Brazilians' investment in the English language. Recommendations for future research include taking a longitudinal approach with a larger sample.

Keywords: Social Media, English learning, language investment, Brazilian millennials

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Language and culture – the heart and lungs of humanity. The human being is distinguished by the fact that they have contrived language and developed culture. From language and culture are born multiple languages and groups of civilizations.
~ Benoît Cazabon, 2005 ~

Background

As a communicator, I have always been passionate about language and culture. I have had the opportunity to live in four countries, travel to a couple of others, and experience how multicultural experience has a positive impact on peoples' lives. Additionally, I have observed how the English language can bring people together and empower those who can communicate in this language. The same phenomenon can be observed with social media, which "allow people to interact and communicate regardless of their locations to share ideas and opinions which benefit L2 learners" (Shafie, Yaacob & Singh, 2016, p. 53). Brazil, like most countries which do not have English as a primary language, values English as a second language, and Brazilian millennials seem to be more motivated than ever to learn the language. Moreover, motivation is undoubtedly a critical condition for second language learning. According to Ryan and Deci (2000) people can be engaged, curious, and self-motivated, depending on the social conditions in which they develop; and when motivated, they strive to learn and master new skills.

To complement and enhance the notion of motivation in second language acquisition, sociocultural theorists address the notion of investment, adding that "an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (Peirce, 1995, p. 18). A study by Norton (1995) demonstrates that people who can cultivate a positive identity are self-motivated, and Norton's sociological establishment of investment is an essential addition to psychological theories of motivation. Today,

the English language is continuously present in the lives of an entire generation of young adults, and social media has opened a world of possibilities and global connectivity. Accordingly, we need to think of both – English and social media – as strategies in the face of a globalized world.

Defining Social Media

The term "social media" is subject to different interpretations, and there is no one absolute definition. For example, Hanson (2016) refers to social media as (1) the technical aspects, including smartphones and laptops; (2) the content and programs, including Facebook and Instagram; and (3) the features of Web 2.0 which allow the Internet to be used as a means of two-way communication. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61).

According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008), the main reason for millennials to use social media is to interact and stay connected to friends, family and colleagues. For this study, I considered the general definition of social media as an online service where users can share, participate, communicate, interact, or consume content.

The English Language in Brazil

Brazilian students have learned the English language for over 200 years in different contexts, and nowadays, English is highly regarded as a second language. Latin and Greek were taught in schools until 1809 when a reform in the curriculum came to prioritize the teaching of French and English. Due to political, economic, and commercial reasons, the hours of teaching in Latin were reduced, and modern languages – French and English – received more attention. At that time, language learning had an "instrumental purpose, characterized by its illustrated character,

since it enabled people to have access to the intellectual production of the European cultured nations" as well as "an utilitarian purpose, in the case of the English language, which was effective in a moment in which the country had just opened its harbors to foreign business, principally with the English people" (Oliveira, Santos & Fonseca, 2014, p. 41). At that time, the English language was taught using a traditional approach, focusing on the translation method.

Contrasting with the traditional method, in 1931 the "direct method" was instituted in Brazil, as part of the educational reform proposed by the minister of education and public health, Francisco Campos, in the provisional government of Getúlio Vargas. This was an important milestone for foreign language teaching in the country, since it was the first time that a teaching method was defined and detailed through legislation, a method with a more intuitive approach, through contextualized practices that bring communicative situations (Gomes, 2016). The direct method had, among its principles, an emphasis on orality and communication, establishing that the teaching of foreign languages should be eminently practical to help young Brazilians to communicate in the foreign language that was being studied, in practical situations.

Brazil has a long history with English language learning. However, experts, teachers, and even the government recognize that teaching English in the school system alone cannot produce students with a good level of proficiency in the language. According to data released by Education First (EF), Brazilians have low proficiency in English. In the 2018 English proficiency index (EPI), a report that measures the English reading and listening proficiency levels of students enrolled at partner schools and universities, Brazil occupied the 53rd position of 88 countries analyzed. The study also compared English proficiency with other factors, revealing that high gross national income per capita, as well as strong internet penetration in a country correlated with a higher English level among participants.

Purpose of the Study

English is the language of choice for business, culture and science, and it is also clear that social media has become vital in millennials' lives. Many researchers recognize the importance of the use of social media to learn a second language, but overall, most of the literature on social media and English learning motivation focuses on those phenomena individually. Although questions related to how individuals use social media as a tool to learn English have been examined, very little research has explored the link between English learning motivation and investment with social media use and behaviour.

Thus, the objective of this study was to understand how social media influences Brazilian millennials' investment in learning English and to better comprehend if social media can be considered an intrinsic motivation factor for students to pursue English as a second language. This study looked at the influence of social media in the acquisition and process of learning English among Brazilian millennials. The research used a qualitative approach where six volunteers were interviewed about their experiences in social media use and the English language. The following research questions guided this investigation:

RQ1: How does the use of social media in daily life influence Brazilian millennials' investment in learning English as a second language?

RQ2: In what ways does social media facilitate intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials?

This study was divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the research questions. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology chosen to conduct the study. Chapter 4 summarizes the study findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the key findings and concludes the study with recommendations for future investigation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Social media use has quickly grown in the past decade, increasing exposure to English content and bringing people from different cultures together. Researchers recognize the importance of social media use to learn a second language (Akbari, Naderi, Simons & Pilot, 2016; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018; George, 2015; Junco, 2012; Villafuerte & Romero, 2017; Vurdien, 2014). Additionally, I have observed that people who spend time on the internet and use more social media tend to be more motivated and determined to learn English. Therefore, in this study, I intended to identify if the use of social media might be considered an influential factor for students who decide to invest in English learning.

The purpose of this literature review is to present a comprehensive and focused selection of academic work regarding social media, technology, Brazilian millennials, and English learning as a second language. The literature review provided the basis for my Capstone Project by establishing and analyzing existing global academic research, and it was divided in social media use and influence, technology and intercultural engagement, English as a global language, language learning and investment, and Brazilian millennials. Furthermore, the literature review strategically informed the choices of my research population, as well as the theoretical framework, and was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the use of social media in daily life influence Brazilian millennials' investment in learning English as a second language?

RQ2: In what ways does technology facilitate intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials?

Through this chapter, I developed a systematic review, examining prior research studies pertinent to my research questions, and identified gaps in the studies that analyzed the extent to

which social media and technology contribute to Brazilian millennials investment in learning English as a second language.

Social media use and influence

Technology has completely changed the way we communicate, and as it reshapes language and identity, language learning also continues to evolve (Darvin, 2015). In recent years, social media has received worldwide attention from researchers in the field of communication for its capability to connect people and increase their opportunities for intercultural communication. Moreover, those tools can also provide an engaged learning environment by connecting groups of students from various countries and cultures, resulting in a richer language learning experience, with students more committed and motivated (Akbari et al., 2016). Astin's engagement theory considers that a more successful student is one who is more engaged while participating in the learning process, and one of his five tenets states that the "effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the ability of that practice to increase student engagement" (Astin, 1984, cited in Junco, 2012, p. 164). Therefore, if social media provides a more productive learning environment, and encourages students to have an intercultural interaction, possibly it will result in more investment in their language acquisition.

Several studies on social network sites indicated the positive outcomes in interest, motivation, support and success in language learning. However, most of them focused on how those tools can assist professors (Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018). Akbari et al. (2016) found that students who used a Facebook group had higher outcomes in the Test of English as a Foreign Language post-test and reported significantly higher levels of engagement, compared to a face-to-face group. They concluded that the group which used Facebook presented higher degrees of learning, engagement and motivation than the face-to-face group. The results of this study with

Iranian Ph.D. students demonstrated that students who used more social media were more engaged to learn English as a second language, and therefore, they could have more successful learning achievements.

According to diverse scholars, the use of social media as an educational tool could increase student engagement (Anneta, Minogue, Holmes & Cheng, 2009; Chen, Lamberg & Guidry, 2010; Dunne, Wren & Janes, 2012; Junco, 2012; Patera Draper & Naef, 2008, as cited in Akbari et al., 2016). Junco (2012) conducted an extensive study with 2368 college students to examine the relationship between the frequency of use, participation in Facebook and student engagement. Junco's pioneering work on using social media in higher education has shown that social media could be used to increase student engagement in an academic environment. According to his findings, even when social media is used only for information sharing, it showed the benefits of being a teaching tool.

Technology and intercultural engagement

Studies conducted in various countries have accessed the effects of the use of social media on second language learning. As stated in many studies, social media allows students to express and share their views, to participate in online communities, and it supports online intercultural interaction between people from different countries. Thus, this way of communicating makes students more interested and motivated to learn since it encourages interactivity in authentic ways (Vurdien, 2014). Furthermore, online contact between students from different countries increases intercultural communicative competences.

Chun's (2011) study with German and American university students showed that online connection between the students from diverse universities significantly improved their communication skills and intercultural communication acquisition. Similarly, Basharina's (2009)

study with Russian, Mexican and Japanese students showed that international computer-mediated communication (I-CMC) has the potential to provide students with opportunities to develop their second language skills and intercultural awareness. Her study focused on how to increase intercultural competence in the global online environment, and her findings showed an increase of critical reflections and identification leading to a strong ability of communication between the participants from all three cultures. Additionally, students reported being more aware of other cultures after participating in online interaction. She also found that the use of I-CMC increased the students' investment in English knowledge, as "students who used a deep approach to online interaction engaged in critical reflections and invested more effort in writing messages of good quality that stretched their proficiency in the L2" (Basharina, 2009, p. 401).

In another international study, Vurdien (2014) argued that the use of social media focused on collaboration and sharing of information can increase the motivation in language learning. In her research with Spanish and Mauritian students, Vurdien reported that participants mentioned an increased level of motivation in online social interaction, which led to advanced collaborative and independent learning skills. Her study suggested that the use of social networks and online interactions enriched the learning experience as well as cross-cultural communication, which could lead to an increase in student motivation. Vo (2107), in his study with Khmer students, also observed that students' interests in learning English developed through access to English websites and interaction with the Internet. Likewise, evidence of students' motivation as a result of the sense of belonging to a community was found in a Chinese study on the use of Twitter to train communicative and cultural competence (Borau, Ullrich, Feng & Shen, 2009).

Indeed, intercultural communication fosters an understanding of the influence of culture on peoples' behaviour and communication tendencies. This enhances respect, diversity, healthy relationships, compassion, and unity. According to Basharina and Carey (2007) "communication

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across cultural and linguistic boundaries is essential in the twenty-first century for resolving common global problems and potential intergroup conflicts in both domestic and international arenas" (p. 41). When students are presented with the opportunity to engage with other cultures, they become more interculturally competent and aware. "In the field of language education, international computer-mediated communication (I-CMC) is used to give learners access to new environments, where they can gain intercultural communicative competence for developing a broader sense of identity associated with global citizenship" (Cummins, 1996 as cited in Basharina & Carey, p. 41). This kind of competence brings personal growth, which reflects in several parts of people' lives. "New media fosters a new culture in human society, in which the degree of ambiguity and uncertainty has been reshuffled and has reached its highest point, especially in the process of intercultural communication" (Chen, 2012, p. 4). In sum, social media can be used for the purpose of understanding different cultures and establish new communities without barriers.

English as a global language

Advanced communication technologies facilitate the proliferation of capitalist social relations. At the same time, individuals influence values and social processes, which, in turn, increases the worldwide spread of English as a global language. English language learning was formerly associated with status and culture or only represented one more subject in the old school curriculum (Bambirra, 2017). Today, learning a second language is a pressing need for an individual's character formation. It allows one to broaden their knowledge about world events, get better work opportunities, and meet people through new technologies. English is the predominant world language, as it is extensively used as a lingua franca for international communication.

> In addition, a lingua franca which extends over several languages can be given more weight than a language of bilateral asymmetric use. It is such usage, as lingua franca, that distinguishes English most noticeably from other languages. (Ammon, 2010, p. 103)

Also, according to Ammon (2010), "one of the seemingly best indicators of the internationality or globality of languages is the extent of their study as a foreign language" (p. 105).

In recent years, access to international websites, social networks, movies, TV shows, music, and games has resulted in more significant exposure to the English language. Furthermore, in the globalized world, the access to information is available through different languages, and even people who do not have the opportunity to learn a second language have access to passive English presence on social media. The dominance of English as the preferred medium of global communication is part of the phenomenon of globalization. English is "the code of choice for encoding information in science and technology and for transacting economic and cultural exchanges supranationally" (Bruthiaux, 2003, p. 11). Specifically, English is the language of choice in various areas, such as science, politics, business, media, and sports, and those who want to communicate in such domains frequently need to adopt English (Ammon, 2003).

Perhaps even when it is not necessary to communicate in English, students are also inclined to use English as a primary language. George (2015) analyzed the relationship of students using English on social networking through data collected by survey and interviews. The results showed that Japanese students who used social media, even to communicate with Japanese peers, increased their English language use. He also argued that Facebook contributes to the students' desire to use English, what he called "Facebook effect," as Japanese students associate Facebook and Twitter with the English language, making them inclined and encouraged to use English as the principal language on these social networking sites. In another study regarding language use and identity investment, Bellinger (2007) affirmed that "previous studies have shown that immersion students tend to speak the majority language during peer interactions, regardless of the language of instruction or their dominant language" (p. 184). Those studies demonstrated that social media made students more engaged, which probably contributed to English learning investment, a concept

explained in a section below.

Language learning and investment

Research around the psychological aspects of language learning uses social psychological theories to understand group and individual behaviour, and some frameworks of motivation in language learning attempt to summarize motivational factors relevant to second language learning. Gardner's Motivation Theory (Gardner, 1985) suggests that learning a second language does not depend only on people's aptitude or competence; it is also essential to consider the cultural contexts that influence people's attitude and motivation. Likewise, social-psychological perspectives also emphasize the role of social interactions on the motivation to second language acquisition, which is highly encouraged by social media.

The psychology of second language acquisition has been extensively studied, and some theories point out motivation as an essential factor for language learning. Akbari, Simons and Pilot (2015) considered social media as an optional tool to enhance learners' autonomy. According to their findings, autonomy, competence and relatedness were higher when learning English via Facebook versus via a face-to-face classroom. According to Villafuerte and Romero (2017), social media like Facebook and WhatsApp "can be used to motivate reading, writing, and speaking practices in English" (p. 145). Their work assessed learners' attitudes toward English language practice on social network sites, and the results demonstrated a positive attitude regarding how students use social network sites in their academic activities. Using media to support learning is not unusual. Webb (2015) reminded us that old media, such as television, have been previously identified as having an important role in language acquisition, as it helps with vocabulary development and listening comprehension.

To better understand language practices in the digital age, Norton introduced, in 1995, a

model of language learning that establishes investment at the intersection of identity, capital and ideology. Responding to advances in technology, this model recognizes the capacity of learners and teachers to adapt in an increasingly digital world (Darvin & Norton, 2017). With this, Darvin and Norton (2015) proposed a switch on the common question: "Are students motivated to learn a language?" to "are students and teachers invested in the language practices?" (p. 37). Thus, they stressed the fact that if students invest in a language, they understand that they are increasing the value of their cultural capital and social power. According to Darvin (2016), the objective of this proposed model is to "draw attention to how ideologies collude and compete, shaping learners' identities and positioning them in different ways, as learners move fluidly across online spaces" (p. 534). From January to December 1991, Norton (1995) collected data from diaries, questionnaires and interviews to illustrate how a group of immigrant women in Canada behaved in opportunities to speak English. Drawing on her data, she developed the concept of investment, where language learners have a complex social history and many desires, integrating language learners and the language learning context. Thus, she developed the sociological construct of "investment" as a complement to the psychological construct of "motivation."

Norton (1995) used the concept of investment to argue that when investing in a second language, the student understands that through this language he or she will expand his/her symbolic and material resources which in return will increase the value of their cultural capital. She emphasizes motivation and learner investment in a more individualized approach, arguing that the learner has a complex and changeable identity. In her research studies she noticed that "if learners 'invest' in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a broader range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money) which will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power" (Norton, 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, according to her, identity is constructed socio-culturally and

refers to the way people understand their relationship to the world. Norton, while emphasizing the social dimension, also addressed the problem of desire when she stated that investment involves linking the desire to learn the target language and the act of putting it into practice.

The concept of investment demonstrates that learners invest in a new language because they recognize that this will help them achieve extensive symbolic and material resources, and as they have an intentional desire, it makes them committed (Darvin & Norton, 2017). To validate this concept, Norton and her colleagues have observed students from different countries, and they have noted that those who developed valued digital skills have also extended their cultural capital and social power. Additionally, with globalization, the twenty-first century is being marked by a growing population that uses English as a second or a foreign language (Wu & Marek, 2018). To better understand the investment of students in the English language, it is essential to examine how new technologies shape student investment to learn a second language in the context of global networks. After all, social media shapes the way people behave and communicate, as it enables different kinds of relationships that were previously impossible (Jones & Hafner, 2012). Also, the organic integration of identity, capital and ideology is the key to investment, as learners nowadays engage in multilingual online and offline spaces (Darvin & Norton, 2017).

Vo's (2017) study with Khmer students support Norton's (2000) arguments on investment, and it indicated that students' motivation to learn English was correlated with their investment in the language. His qualitative research found that students "imagined community and desires to live abroad where people often communicate with one another in English or learn English for future benefits pulls them to invest more in learning English by asking their teachers difficult questions or practicing English on the internet" (p. 185). In addition, Vo (2017) reported that students "understand that with good English, they may find a good job, have opportunities to pursue higher education or even study abroad" (p. 181). And he concluded that "Their motivation and desires to

learn English may lead to more investment in acquiring this language accordingly" (Vo, 2017, p. 183).

Brazilian millennials

Although nowadays, access to information and communication tools is widely available, it looks like in Brazil, it is still a privilege of the few. The British Council, an organization specializing in international cultural and educational opportunities, together with the Data Popular Institute, a reference in research consumption and knowledge of Brazilian reality, presented a report in 2014 about learning English in Brazil, with an emphasis on the middle class. One of their findings demonstrated that only 5% of Brazilians claim to have English knowledge; however, among youths aged 18 to 24, this number reaches 10.3%. Nevertheless, countries where English is dominant, such as Canada and the United States, have always had a significant cultural influence over Brazil. Therefore, English has a massive presence in diverse cultural manifestations, such as in the fashion industry and pop culture, and Brazilians associate the English language with prestige (Bambirra, 2017). One can also argue that the advancement of technology assists the spread of English. The presence of the English language and culture in social media is enormous, as many platforms and content are available in this global language.

According to Lugo-Ocano (2008), several authors have examined Latin America's dependence on the United States of America's media and cultural industries, and its massive presence in Latin America media systems. "The emergence of the Internet in the 1980s and its growing strength in the 1990s expanded the possibility of direct and largely unmediated exchange on a worldwide scale" (Tonkin & Reagan, 2003, p. 3). Fifteen years ago, in 2004, the predicted usage of the internet was 60.6 million users, with internet access reaching 65% of the total population in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (Shaw & Dennison, 2005).

Social media has proved to be a successful tool, and it is a comfortable and pleasant path for professors and students to achieve English learning goals. Castilho, de Paula, de Lima and da Fonseca (2014) conducted a study among Brazilian students to investigate the teaching and learning process through social media - in particular, via Facebook. The study demonstrated the effectiveness of using Facebook as a tool to support the pedagogical practice of the English language, and implied that social media use in the classroom could motivate students and can also be a practical support for professors.

Although there are similarities in social media usage worldwide, each country has its own preferences and trends (Singh, Lehnert & Bostick, 2012). Findings indicate that social media and websites most utilized by students include YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Wikipedia, Netflix, Spotify, TED Talks and online games. The informal environment enables students to seek knowledge and learning autonomy; moreover, all those tools can help students to develop autonomy and increase their level of proficiency (Pontes, 2017). Indeed, the social network is a worldwide phenomenon and Brazil is one of the countries with the most significant number of users, especially among young people (Rabello & Haguenauer, 2011). Definitely, there are potentialities of using social media in the education context, yet, there is a lack of research on the use of social media in education in Brazil.

Thus, in this study, I investigated Brazilian millennials. For this study, anyone born between 1982 and 1996 was considered to be part of the millennial generation (Dimock, 2019). Since millennials shaped the digital age, as they grew up during the internet explosion, this generation is considered the best choice to examine technology use and attitudes. In the educational environment, millennials "collective personality, thought processes, and educational tendencies are unique to traditional classroom practices and educational environments" (Monaco & Martin, 2007, p. 42). Moreover, millennials quickly adapted to the changing of how people communicate and

interact.

Summary

This literature review included academic journal articles, conference papers and unpublished theses accessed through the University of Alberta Library and Google Scholar. The global academic literature lacks research on social media use and English learning investment among millennials. Given this apparent gap, I chose to focus my Capstone research on the engagement and investment dedicated to learning English as a second language by Brazilian millennials, as well as, Brazilian students' perceptions and attitudes toward using social media and English language.

Research from around the world indicated the potential benefits of using digital support for language learning. As a result, the use of social media, if used appropriately, can potentially generate student engagement, more learning opportunities and foster active learning. The literature determined common trends in the adoption of social media by students and teachers around the world. Due to its popularity, Facebook is the most popular social media studied concerning language acquisition. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) used studies in Asia and Australia to frame the necessity of more research on ways that Facebook can benefit student learning. Vurdien (2014), also pointed out the lack of research in the use of social media for intercultural exchange. Findings denoted the lack of studies on the involvement and learning outcomes of students using social media for second language learning, and how the use of social media may influence learners' engagement, motivation, and learning success (Akbari et al., 2016).

In sum, social media has been extensively studied, and the adoption of technology to improve language learning has proven to be a trend. Nevertheless, there are few studies on the relationship between these two phenomena in the literature, which underlines the importance of my

research. Thus, I proposed a study focusing on the influence of social media on students' investment in English, which I hope to contribute to debates on second language acquisition and social communication research. Norton's investment theory primarily informed my study, which assumed that investment plays a fundamental role in language acquisition. According to Norton (1985), the notion of investment aims to "capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world" (p. 17), considering that language learners are "constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 18). One of the assumptions on which I relied in my research questions is that social media gives broad access to the English language, which will increase students' investment to learn English as a second language.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, a review of the current literature presents a limited body of research on this topic, with the majority of the studies looking at social media as a tool to learn English and other languages. In order to analyze to what extent social media contribute to English as a second language learning investment, my research adopted an exploratory design to collect qualitative data, using individual interviews. By using interviews, I looked to contextualize, interpret and understand participants' perspectives.

The exploratory study provided an opportunity to understand social media use and language learning investment. I utilized a semi-structured interview guide design; thus, I used purposive sampling to select participants for this study. Furthermore, a qualitative research approach was chosen to ensure the legitimacy and distinctiveness of the data collected, rooted in Norton's (1995) investment theory.

Thus, the purpose of this research was to understand how social media influence Brazilian millennials' investment, and to better comprehend if social media can be considered an intrinsic motivating factor for students to pursue English as a second language. Using a qualitative approach, I focused on the research questions already discussed:

RQ1: How does the use of social media in daily life influence Brazilian millennials' investment to learn English as a second language?

RQ2: In what ways does technology facilitate intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials?

Before the interviews were performed, the study received ethical approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (REB).

Design

When I considered whether to use a quantitative or qualitative approach, first, I examined the types of questions that I sought to answer. In quantitative research, the research problem section is used to direct the types of questions or hypotheses asked in the study, whereas in qualitative research the research problem discussion is typically used to establish the importance of the central idea (Cresswell, 2012, p. 19).

A quantitative methodology was first advised, considering that "quantitative methods allow us to go beyond the identification and linear description of language acquisition phenomena and to draw formal inferences from the data about expected frequencies of occurrence, to assess the likelihood that phenomena are generalizable beyond a given instance, or to compare adequacies of existing theories and models to account for the phenomena in question" (Henning, 1996, p. 702). But this method was found to be a less ideal approach for three factors. First, with my research questions, I seek to explore, explain and understand the use of social media and the English learning investment, not to confirm a hypothesis about those phenomena, which would have been more suitable for a quantitative approach. Second, "problems best suited for quantitative research are those in which trends or explanations need to be made. For qualitative research, the problems need to be explored to obtain a deep understanding" (Cresswell, 2012, p. 19). Third, the sample size needed in order to adequately represent the population of this study would demand a time not advisable for the purpose of the Capstone Project.

Thus, qualitative research was chosen as the most suitable method to address my research questions, as the nature of qualitative research allows us to focus on the meanings and interpretations of social phenomena (Jupp, 2006). As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe, qualitative research considers "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 15), so it is the most appropriate research design to explore the questions

posed in this study. In addition, in order to understand how Brazilian millennials use social media and its influences in language learning, this study adopted an exploratory design. While it cannot provide generalizations, exploratory research can help understand and suggest directions for future researchers (Jupp, 2006).

Participants

In this study, the population of interest was young Brazilian adults, born between 1982 and 1996, who use social media daily. The participants had different backgrounds, and they all lived in a different region in Brazil. Participants must be considered millennials, as for analytical purposes, to look at technology use and attitudes. Millennials, in particular, shaped the digital age, as they grow up during the Internet explosion.

Six Brazilian millennials were interviewed. With this sample size, I could focus on the history behind each participant and their experience with English learning and social media. I used a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling methods (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016), based on my accessibility to Brazilian millennials who were willing to participate, and also with the goal of identifying participants who could provide the most fruitful information and insights about the topic (Merrigan, Huston & Johnston, 2012). The purposive sampling method allows the researcher to decide what needs to be known, and to find people who can provide unique and rich information; moreover, convenience sampling enables the researcher to select participants that are readily available (Merrigan, Huston & Johnston, 2012). Therefore, with a combination of both methods, I can obtain comprehensive knowledge and reduce the limitations of each method (Patton, 2001). Initially, I contacted them for messages to check their availability and interest to participate in this study. I then sent them the information letter and consent form. Participation was

voluntary, and the identity of all participants was kept anonymous, by assigning a letter code to each participant.

Data collection

After receiving the ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, the proposed study was conducted in the Spring of 2019. The participation was voluntary, and the identity of the participants was kept confidential. Before conducting the interviews, participants were informed about the details of the research, confidentiality, rights, and they were asked for permission to record the interviews. Participants were also informed about the procedures of the study.

To collect quality data that best address my research questions, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews, with open-ended questions. The interviews were performed in Portuguese to accommodate all participants (Liamputtong, 2010). The data was gathered using WhatsApp voice calls, as those new technologies are practical, time and cost-effective, and can provide synchronous interactions between research and participants (Redlich-Amirav & Higginbottom, 2014). Likewise, semi-structured interviews help to guide the interview, keeping the flexibility to change the order of the questions, and asking for probing questions or details. The interviews were recorded to allow the research to engage with the participants with more attention, as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012). Additionally, a script was developed to guide the process and shared relevant information with the participants.

Analysis

Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed in order to conduct thematic analyses, which allow initial coding, highlighting words and phrases (Mayan, 2009). Furthermore, I

looked for recurrent themes, patterns, trends and possible contradictions found in the data. To analyze the data collected and assess the results, I used Norton's (2004) theoretical perspective of investment to help me to explain observed behaviours. My study "fits the assumption of the discovery paradigm that researchers should produce generalizable conclusions about communication and culture" (Merrigan, Huston & Johnston, 2012).

My analyses followed a set of analytic methods proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 9):

- "Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observation or interviews."

- "Noting reflections or other remarks in the margins."

- "Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences."

- "Isolating these patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection."

- "Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that covers the consistencies discerned in the database."

- "Confronting those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories."

Validity and reliability

As part of the methodology, validity and reliability were considered to ensure credibility in the formulation, development and results of this study. According to Creswell (2012) "validity is the degree to which all of the evidence points to the intended interpretation of test scores for the proposed purpose" (p. 159), while "to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of

trustworthiness is crucial" (Golafshanip, 2003, p. 601).

To lessen bias and enhance trustworthiness, a list of several questions proposed by Günther (2006) were considered, such as: Are the research questions clearly formulated? Is the research design consistent with my objective and my questions? Are methodological and analytical procedures well documented? Does the analysis detail consider unexpected and contrary to expected results? Does the discussion of the results consider possible alternatives for interpretation? Was the theory explained and can it be used in other contexts? These questions guided the evaluation of the validity of my qualitative research.

Furthermore, to reduce the potential of participants to try to please the researcher by answering in the way that he/she believes I would want them to answer, or even "to make things seem better or worse than they are" (Brink, 1993, p. 36), I took the following measures suggested by Brink (1993):

- Making sure that the participant has all the information regarding the study, and all the questions were answered prior to the interview started.

- Building a trust relationship with the participants, making them comfortable talking about their experience.

- Keeping accurate and detailed notes during the interview process, noticing if there is any discrepancy in the answers.

- Decreasing informant bias introduced by factors within-subjects themselves by letting the participants choose the best day and time for their interview.

Summary

The study adopted a qualitative approach with an exploratory design to answer the research questions. Looking to help participants to share their ideas comfortably, I used a qualitative one-

on-one interview. Moreover, I used semi-structured and open-ended questions, as with this method, the participants can best voice their experiences and ideas free of the researcher's perspectives or past findings (Creswell, 2012).

Data were gathered through voice calls, using the WhatsApp platform, with Brazilians who use social media daily and who have an interest in the English language. Once the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and analyzed following the six steps frequently used to interpret this type of data: 1) Compile and organize all data, such as transcription and notes taken during the interviews and prepare the data for analysis; 2) Explore all the data to have a general idea of the material and code the data; 3) Look for the themes; 4) Report the findings; 5) Discuss the findings, and compare with the literature and theory; 6) Validate the findings (Creswell, 2012). As I was analyzing a small sample, I chose to hand analyze the data, using colour coding to highlight words and phrases at the text. After coding, I looked for potential themes, ideas and interesting quotes from the participants. The themes are in the qualitative research is considered interpretative, "in which you make a personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information" (Creswell, 2012, p. 238).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, the proposed study looks at the influence of social media in the acquisition process of learning English among Brazilian millennials. The literature review revealed a gap in the study of social media as an influential factor which could lead students to invest in English language learning. When reviewing related studies, the following research questions (RQs) were raised to improve understanding of social media influence on English learning among Brazilian millennials:

RQ1: How does the use of social media in daily life influence Brazilian millennials' investment to learn English as a second language?

RQ2: In what ways does social media facilitate intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials?

The four main themes that emerged from coding and discussed in this paper are 1) Social media use; 2) Technology, learning and education; 3) Perceived benefits and challenges in English learning; and 4) Multiple perspectives of English and technology. To provide some context, background information about the participants was included, while keeping their identity confidential. Thus, this chapter will summarize the key findings by themes and discuss the analysis results in relation to the RQs and the theoretical framework.

Participants' background

The six participants are Brazilians, four women and two men, with different backgrounds, from different regions of Brazil. They are all young professionals, and some are also students. All are considered millennials, born between 1988 and 1996. They use social media daily and

have some interest in or knowledge of English. The participants were asked to classify

themselves by their level of English from 1 to 10, 1 being "I do not understand anything in

English" and 10 "I consider my English level fluent." The same self-assessment was used for

frequency of social media use, from 1 "I look at social media once a day," to 10 "I use social

media all the time, for at least 5 hours a day." Thus, the table below shows the level of English

and frequency of social media use, according to their perception.

Participant	Birth year	Level of English (scale of 1-10)	Frequency of social media use (scale of 1-10)
A	1988	6	8
B	1989	6	8
C	1994	2	5
D	1990	10	10
E	1991	5	10
F	1996	5	8

The table indicated that participants with a higher level of English declared higher use of

social media. By contrast, participants with inferior levels of English declared lower use of social

media. This may indicate a positive correlation between those two variables. There is no significant

difference in age between the participants that could interfere with the data analysis.

Social media use

The interview data suggested that participants were frequent users of technology, and they

embraced social media for personal, educational, and professional purposes. As one participant

said,

> Social media is my primary work tool. For instance, at my workplace, I use WhatsApp to
> keep contact with my co-workers and clients, to send or receive a document, and to receive
> approval for a project. Also, I use social media to keep track of the competition and to
> brainstorm ideas. (Participant A)

The participants were unanimous in affirming that WhatsApp is the platform that they most

used and the one that they found most valuable. This data matches with the 2019 report from The Reuters Institute which revealed WhatsApp as being the most substantial social media used by Brazilians. According to participants in the present study, benefits and reasons for choosing this platform were quite diverse. It was seen as the best application for the workplace, as it provided a convenient way to share documents with coworkers and clients. It was also seen as fast and efficient, and helpful for communicating with family and friends. Participants also mentioned the practicality of sending photos and videos and the economical way to make calls as well as the usefulness of creating groups. The second most cited application was Instagram, whose use was highlighted as for more personal purposes and "to be up-to-date with fashion and pop culture." Other platforms mentioned were Facebook, LinkedIn and online games. Participant D expressed that online gaming helped him to improve English learning, as he needed to make use of guides in English and interacted with people from around the world, which according to him was "a way of immersion in the language (English) without being overseas." Furthermore, gaming can be observed as an intrinsic motivation factor to learn English.

It is important to note that online games create a new way to build relationships and increase communication, which according to Hinton and Hjorth (2013) is difficult to ignore when we research social media. To succeed in these games, players need to have a knowledge of English to understand the quests and goals. Additionally, multiplayer games require an interaction between the players, in the form of writing or speaking (Uuskoski, 2011). Guedes (2014) conducted a qualitative study with Brazilians to verify if participants who declared to have learned English through online games were able to communicate in English outside of the online environment. Her findings showed that participants who had an interest in English and who had had contact with games and other inputs – like movies and music – were able to communicate in an off game context, beyond what they might have learned in the classroom. Moreover, it was

shown that the higher the interest in seeking information about the gaming world, the higher the participants' language proficiency.

In another study, Uuskoski (2011) used a questionnaire to access 495 students from ages 16 to 20 from two different urban upper secondary schools in Southern Finland. The results pointed out that mastery of English language was higher with students who played videogames compared with those who did not play. The findings also showed that the length of time a student had been playing correlated with the strength of their language skills. Thus, these studies indicated that online games make learning English more accessible, and being able to communicate in English was an integral part of the social gaming experience, which represents a high potential for language learning.

Four participants in the present study commented that they used some social media platforms just as spectators: they read Instagram posts, watched YouTube videos, listened to podcasts, looked for open positions on LinkedIn, and checked Facebook posts, but they did not engage with content or other people. When asked about their experiences using social media and interacting with people from other countries and cultures, participants revealed that they had to interact at least once recently. Two of the participants had engaged with non-native English speakers with whom the common language was English. This shows that English is a dominant language and that being able to use the language is helpful to bond with people of different nationalities, not only with English native speakers.

Technology, learning and education

Among the participants, it was consistent that technology helped and facilitated education development. Participant F was categorical in saying that "technology had opened my eyes to new opportunities, new possibilities, and new perspectives." Participant B also viewed technology as

an eye-opening phenomenon and said that "technology helped me to have access to diverse information, news in real-time, and to learned new things." When asked about examples of the learning experience, specific situations were discussed, and they all highlighted the facility and speed of learning something. For them, the video-sharing platform of YouTube worked as a "one-on-one class" where you can learn anything, from how to cook the perfect omelet to specific topics in physics. They also claimed that using the internet was better and faster when attempting to learn something more specific or to get more in-depth information on a given subject. Participants made other claims with regards to the online learning experience:

- I have learned how to edit photo and video, watching YouTube tutorials about this topic (Participant A).

- I have been doing online courses on specific topics related to the career I am pursuing. There is this website where the courses are in video classes, and you have access to the forum to ask questions and exchange ideas with professors and other students. Through this platform, I have certifications that are important in my field (Participant C).

- By having access to different points of view, and essential information, I now can have a better view of specific topics, such as history and politics (Participant F).

The immediacy of the internet was another factor mentioned many times, for example, in discovering new things, verifying information, or finding out about something that had recently happened. The feeling by participants of being more knowledgeable also grew with the use of the internet and social media. One mentioned that

> the internet had enabled me to develop a critical capacity to analyze a situation, check the facts, and draw my own conclusions. I can notice, see, and perceive different points of view, from people from different backgrounds, which enriches me. I feel that social media has helped me to develop critical thinking, which makes me more knowledgeable. (Participant F)

Another participant also mentioned having developed a more critical political vision, as the online environment allowed him to keep himself informed, learn about the opinions of others and shape his own ideas. Since the advance of internet technology, people have started to consume more content, and they have more autonomy to situate themselves in relation to diverse interests and positions. Yet, having immediate and convenient access to extensive information can have drawbacks as well. A longitudinal study investigating the behaviour of young adults born after 1993, growing up as digital natives, reported:

> It is clear that users are not reading online in the traditional sense; indeed, there are signs that new forms of "reading" are emerging as users "power browse" horizontally through titles, contents pages and abstracts going for quick wins. It almost seems that they go online to avoid reading in the traditional sense. (Rowlands et al., 2008, p. 295)

In a recent report from the Reuters Institute (2019), a think-tank within the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, it was verified that misinformation in social media platforms remains high. In Brazil, 85% of the population were concerned about what is real and fake on the internet, compared with 55% of the total sample across 38 countries. The highest concern in Brazil can be related to how Brazilians have used WhatsApp groups. In Brazil, almost six in ten WhatsApp users (58%) take part in groups with people they do not know, and 18% discuss news and politics in public WhatsApp groups, which increased the chances of misinformation and disinformation being spread. Furthermore, one could agree that in the same way that technology makes us more knowledgeable, it also makes us more passive. The internet is more about information than knowledge. The information is present, democratized and free, and if it is well accessed and critically interpreted, it has the potential to promote education and wisdom. Technology empowers learners by putting them in control of their learning process and democratizing information. Thus, the constructive implications noted in my study suppress any conflict over online learning effectiveness.

Perceived benefits and challenges in English learning

Most of the participants mentioned that their main reason to invest in English learning was the job market; they stated that knowing how to communicate in English provided an advantage and was indispensable in the present era. When talking about English, phrases like "it is the most important language," "if I know English I can travel anywhere," "I need to know English to have a good job," and "it is a universal language" were used to describe the importance of learning English.

> it is essential to know English nowadays. When working in a good company, even if I do not work directly with other countries, I need to know English to read manuals or to know more about the market. (Participant C)

On the other hand, participant B stated that "I know that it is important to know English, but this is something that isn't my priority as I don't need it in my daily life." It seems that they understood that English make their cultural capital more valuable, but when the return on investment is not tangible, which is to say when the language is not being used immediately, the investment in the language learning does not take place. Norton (2013) has argued that learners invest in the new language considering the material and symbolic resources they will obtain.

All the participants linked English knowledge with positive feelings. Participant A pointed out that communicating in English brought a feeling of accomplishment. Similarly, three other participants stated that they would feel happier and more confident in many aspects of their lives if they could communicate better in English. Participant F even declared

> there aren't words to describe the feeling of communicating in English. I am very grateful for knowing another language besides Portuguese. Knowing a second language is gratifying. It's amazing the feeling of understanding another person who doesn't speak the same language as you.

When asked about their perception of what helped or could help them to have success in English acquisition, participants mentioned extended periods of contact with the language. Among

them, two of the participants also declared that watching TV shows and listening to music helped

contribute to their English learning process. Also, most participants suggested that being

immersed in an English-speaking country made a significant difference in the learning process.

Participant D was the exception, stating that focusing on grammar and pronunciation while

learning the language was what made a difference in their level of success in English learning.

Significantly, this participant was the only one declaring to have Level 10 English, the highest

possible measure on my scale. Communication is a primary goal of many individuals studying a

new language, and its fluency is a result of a set of language skills. Yet, virtual environments,

such as online groups, can work as powerful allies to mastery of a language.

Multiple perspectives on English and technology

When asked how they dealt and interacted with English content on the internet, all

participants responded that first, they tried to understand the content. And when needed, they used

an online translator in different scenarios. Google Translate dominates this landscape, as all the

participants used this application.

- I always leave Google Translate open during my meetings, and I can quickly find a word or term if I need it (Participant A).

- The best scientific articles are in English. And I always go to Google Translate to check the words whose meanings I don't know (Participant C).

- When I post a photo on my personal social media, I like to write the photo caption in English. So, I always use Google Translate to see if I misspell any word (Participant E).

Most participants talked to some extent about the quality of news you can find in English

rather than in Portuguese, and how one can find global news faster and more completely in

English. Yet, the widespread use of English is even more dominant in academia and was noted by some participants. As Gordin (2017) described, English is considered a hegemonic language in science and it is dominant in scientific communication. Ammon (2003) also pointed out that English is widely used for research worldwide. Thus, in the field of science, English is the foundation of academic work. The use of a lingua franca in the scientific field carries certain advantages, as it increases communication between scientists from various countries, which contributes to the progress of science and the dissemination of ideas within and beyond the scientific community.

All participants were aware that English is essential, and they mentioned the prestige that English ability could bring, which was noted in previous studies (Bambirra, 2017; Gomes, 2016). Likewise, participants showed respect and admiration towards English for its reputation and association with success and social influence. It appears that in Iran, English has a similar status, particularly with younger generations. Iranians are looking to learn the language due to economic, educational, and political reasons as well as for better educational and work opportunities and its prestigious status (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015). English, as a form of cultural capital, provides an advantage in achieving a higher status in society. Additionally, it is beneficial in maintaining excellent professional and educational opportunities and in familiarizing one's self with world cultures.

Four out of the six participants expressed that social media had a considerable influence on their motivation for learning English. Participant B stated, "No doubt, social media is fundamental to my English learning process. Nowadays, I have access to English words and slang because of social media." However, others noted that they started to use social media when they already had a good level of English; thus, they did not link the influence of social media with their English learning process. Despite the fact that Participants A and D affirmed that social media did not

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motivate them to learn English, both acknowledged the importance of social media in keeping them in contact with the language.

With the exception of participant B, all participants reported having interacted with an English speaker in the past month. The analysis revealed that while engagement with people from different countries put them in contact with English, it did not seem to motivate them to invest in language learning. In contemporary Brazil, it is common to work within the country while being put into constant contact with people from abroad, and this exchange unlocks peoples' true potential to become global citizens.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings revealed insights into the use of social media by six Brazilian millennials and their perception of the English language. Based on the four themes that were raised with the data analysis, the following considerations inform my study:

I.   The six Brazilian millennials relied on social media for its convenience, speed and opportunities. When needing to use English to access specific information - for instance, in online games - participants seemed to be motivated to overcome this barrier. The online environment also seemed to work in favor of creation, interaction, and bonding.

II.   Technology facilitated learning, and all six participants perceived the importance of technology in their English learning process. Social media is perceived as an essential tool for education development, with free and broad content. Nevertheless, it is important to be wise and responsible when using these online platforms.

III. The six Brazilian millennials perceived the English language as essential. The lack of ability to speak clearly in English is often perceived as a competitive

disadvantage when it comes to professional growth and international experience. However, despite the English language being recognized as a tool for success, investment in the language does not always occur.

IV.   Quality content is more widely available in English, as opposed to Portuguese, especially in academia. English increases the prestige and social capital for those who master the language. Furthermore, online groups can bring together people of different backgrounds and languages, which can benefit intercultural communication.

The subsequent section discusses the main findings pertinent to my research questions and the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion of findings

The findings of this qualitative study address the purpose of the study to understand the influence of social media on the English learning investment among Brazilian millennials. As outlined in the literature review and echoed in the findings, technology has revolutionized communication worldwide and has had a significant impact on education for several reasons. Among other things, now it is possible to access the collections of libraries and news from around the world; there are YouTube channels on various topics, where one can learn anything; and there are websites dedicated to the most diverse topics.

In examining how the use of social media in daily life influences Brazilian millennials' investment in learning English as a second language, the findings suggested that social media might play a positive role in language acquisition. Similar to many studies that recognized social media as an important tool for education development (Akbari, Naderi, Simons & Pilot, 2016; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018; George, 2015; Junco, 2012; Villafuerte & Romero, 2017; Vurdien, 2014), the data indicated that Brazilian millennials perceived the importance of technology in their English learning process, and technology supported new ways of learning and communicating. In contrast, for Beetham and Shargue (2013) technology brings a new model of education, not a new model of learning. The authors noted that

> Some of the habits of mind associated with these technologies are regarded by teachers as unhelpful, particularly the often uncritical attitude to Internet-based information, and the cut-and-paste mentality of a generation raised on editing tools rather than pen and paper. The brevity of chat and text pose a challenge to traditional standards of spelling and grammar, and there is no doubt that the use of personal technologies creates new inequalities among learners (p. 5).

The Internet enables us to look up anything we want, and it is unselective, which can lead to inaccurate data. But this concern was not noticed in the results of this study, which may imply

that for Brazilian millennials, the benefits outweigh the concerns.

The study of the English language has changed significantly in recent years. Those who studied English years ago did not have access to the vast amount of resources that today's students have. In Brazil, the simple access to audio or video material was very scarce, and most students never had the opportunity to talk with an English native speaker. Similar to Ammon (2010), one of the findings of this study is the strong correlation between science and English. According to the participants' opinion, access to more complete and accurate information sometimes is available only in English. Most of the scientific papers are available in English; as for publishing in international journals or for presenting at international conferences, the researcher must use English. Thus, people frequently need to adopt English to communicate in specific domains, and global companies "have adopted English as their official, or at least co-official, company language" (Ammon, 2010, p. 113).

The findings also highlighted the participant's attitudes toward the use of social media. Brazilian millennials used a mix of social media, depending on the content they were seeking. At the same time, they could use Facebook to talk with friends, YouTube to learn something, WhatsApp to send photos, Instagram to follow trends, Pinterest to seek for ideas, and TripAdvisor to read recommendations while simultaneously engaging in a discussion on Reddit. As might be expected, millennials tend to spend a lot of time with a range of different social media platforms, and the increased reliance on technology demonstrates a promising trend, defining how they consume news, communicate and learn.

In relation to the ways that technology facilitates intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials, most academic studies in social media and language learning discussed the use of technology for language skills instead of cultural understanding (Wu & Marek, 2018), and researchers who have examined intercultural skills,

conducted methods to supervise the interaction between different groups of participants. Although Wu and Marek's (2018) study clearly indicated an improvement of participants intercultural competence with the use of social media, the present study only implied similar findings. Although participants were communicating in English, and sometimes across countries, they did not mention increased awareness of other cultures.

The power of English within the context of globalization pulled Brazilian millennials to learn and practice the language, and as stated by Vo (2017), students' interest in learning English can be developed through websites and social networks. The use of social media contributed positively to improving Brazilians' English language knowledge. According to participants in this study, technology had provided access to new and different explanations for different topics, and they perceived themselves as more well-rounded. In addition, it looks like traditional or offline media still have a role in language acquisition. Music and television shows were mentioned by some participants as being useful tools for vocabulary acquisition and in the development of language skills. Webb's (2015), findings showed similar evidence that extensive television viewing improved second language learning. In my view, the most significant value of traditional or offline media, as well as social media, relies on its potential to develop learners' vocabulary and comprehension independently, beyond the learning environment.

Similar to previous studies (Akbari, Simons & Pilot, 2015; Pontes, 2017), it is evident that participants improved their learner's autonomy through social networks sites and other online platforms. Furthermore, all the participants of this study mentioned that social media was a great way to stay in contact with friends and family. This is broadly indicative of participants' improvement of their communication skills, for instance, through writing posts and news feeds, participating in multicultural online groups, watching television shows in English, and communicating with foreign friends.

Participants generally found that using technology had helped them with their intercommunication skills, as well as keeping more connected. Yet, social media were perceived as a more accessible and more comfortable way to connect with people. Previous studies (Che & Zhanng, 2010) supported the idea that social media have a global reach and increase the likelihood of interacting with people of other cultures, supporting and encouraging online intercultural communication. According to Chen (2012), "with its distinctive and unique nature, new media has brought human interaction and society to a highly interconnected and complex level" (p. 2). This happened because technology shrinks the world, and the creation of virtual communities is redefining collective identity. For most of the participants, spontaneous opportunities to communicate with native English speakers were rare and occurred on a few occasions, such as in international travel or spending time with students in exchange programs. Those who communicate with English speakers more frequently on the internet did so for work meetings using video calls or through voice chats when using online games. Unlike many other studies in which students were put into contact with other cultures to analyze their improvement of English and intercultural communication skills (Basharina, Guardado & Morgan, 2008; Chu, 2011; Wu & Marek, 2018), this study only investigated participants' perceptions of their experiences. For this reason, the findings regarding my second research question – In what ways does technology facilitate intercultural engagement and communication skills among Brazilian millennials? – are inconclusive.

To conclude, as discussed in the literature review, the concept of investment is an extended concept of motivation, which involves the desire to learn and to put it into practice. Darvin and Norton (2017) observed that learners invest in a language knowing that this will enhance their cultural capital and social power. Cultural capital can be defined as an individual's social assets, such as intellectual skills, style, knowledge, behaviour, and although it is passively inherited, it

can be acquired (Bourdieu, 1986). The study findings within the context of Norton's theory of investment showed that participants invest in English with the understanding that they will achieve their goals, which will bring them an advantage regarding knowledge, skills and cultural competence. Furthermore, participants perceived themselves as more motivated to learn English as they understood the importance of the language, and what this would bring to them. It can be inferred from the results of the data analysis that Brazilian millennials know that investing in English will enhance their cultural capital and social power. This sort of cultural competence gives an advantage in achieving social status, and thus, one's investment in the language. While Norton and colleagues recognized in their research that Ugandan students were highly invested in the English language "because the use of digital technology extends the range of identities available to them and expands what is socially imaginable in the future" (Darvin & Norton, 2017, p. 4), the same is not observed with Brazilian participants in this study. As some indicated, having English proficiency helped with professional opportunities, studying abroad, and travelling, but this is not enough to recognize the commitment expected of them. Interestingly, almost all participants described social media as an aid tool – a support in the achievement of English learning – rather than a motivational tool regarding English. Those findings suggested that online platforms are used to help and support Brazilian millennials in their endeavour to understand and have contact with English, but do not help them to take the action of investing in language learning.

These findings support broader knowledge about social media and English learning. As previously exemplified, mastering the English language is an important skill for Brazilian millennials, and technology can be an excellent aid for this.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the use of social media in the daily lives of Brazilian millennials in relation to learning English, as well as the role of technology in intercultural communication. Several areas have been positively impacted by technological advances, especially in the educational sector. This is due to the ease of obtaining information faster, which improves and evolves learning in very innovative ways. As Norton argued,

> The spaces of socialization and information exchange continue to multiply, in both face-to-face and virtual worlds, locally and globally. As learners move across transnational borders, or even remain within their own national borders, they are able to learn and use English in exciting new ways. (Norton, 2015, p. 379)

These new ways expand our range of communication and become essential tools for regular interaction. Thus, this study was undertaken because social media have become a go-to for communicating, and I was interested in looking at its relationship regarding English language investment.

In addition, this study engaged in an exploratory analysis of the English language and social media benefits, in particular among Brazilian millennials. Overall, the findings provided useful insights into the connections between social media use and English learning investment and answered the research questions identified for the study. The findings suggested that Brazilian millennials perceive English as an essential element for their present and future needs, and technology contributes to Brazilian millennials having extended contact with the English language and increasing their learning autonomy. Moreover, although the findings in this study might not represent all Brazilian millennials, they do shed some light on the attitudes and perceptions of Brazilian millennials regarding social media.

Recommendations for future studies

Technology has the possibility to expands learners' abilities to understand cultural

behaviours and increase their cultural awareness to be more sensitive to cultural differences. Language and culture are connected; as observed by Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003), "the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool" (p. 237). Therefore, the absence of this theme in the participants' discussion might indicate a weakness in this study. In future studies, the interviews should include more questions that explore intercultural communication.

This study deals with millennials, and as millennials are a diverse cohort, with people in different stages of life, the need for defining additional participants' backgrounds is necessary. Moreover, further research could be carried out on post-millennials, as they may have different perceptions and attitudes towards using online social media and investing in the English language. In a country such as Brazil, it is indispensable to consider social categories, such as ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status.

Future research can be directed toward the exploration of language investment using a longitudinal approach to identify the change over time and space. Furthermore, future studies might be interested in analyzing a larger sample to better represent the population. Additional data could have revealed different trends in the use of social media and language learning investment.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER

Social media and English learning investment among Brazilian millennials
Invitation Letter

Hello,

My name is Ariane C. Monaco, I am a master's student at the University of Alberta, and I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

I am conducting interviews as part of my research study to increase the understanding of the relationship between social media use and investment in learning English as a second language, among Brazilian millennials.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in one individual interview where I will ask about your motivation to learn English and your use of different social media channels. The interview will be via online audiovisual media (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp), and it will take about 30 minutes.

The goal of this project is to understand how social media influence Brazilian millennials' investment to learn English as a second language.

Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary. You can choose not to participate.

If you are interested in this project or would like more information, please email me at monaco@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Social media and English learning investment among Brazilian millennials

Principal Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Ariane C. Monaco	Dr. Martin Guardado
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB	Edmonton, AB
monaco@ualberta.ca	guardado@ualberta.ca
(780) 885-0511	(780) 655-2176

Background
You are being invited to participate in a study I am conducting as partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Communications and Technology at the University of Alberta. In this study, I attempt to understand how social media influence Brazilian millennials' investment in learn English, and to better comprehend if social media can be considered an intrinsic motivation factor for students to pursue English as a second language.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to explore if the use of social media might be considered an intrinsic motivation factor for students who decide to pursue English courses successfully. This study will look at the influence of social media in the acquisition and learning process of the learning of English.

Study Procedures
Your participation will consist of a 30 to 40-minute interview, via online audiovisual media (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp), where you will be asked to reflect and talk about your motivation to learn English and your use of different social media channels. Interviews will be recorded for further data analysis. If I should require further information, I will seek your consent once again to obtain the additional information.

Benefits
You will not benefit directly from being in this study. I hope that my research will give insight into the connections between social media use and English learning investment, as well as may inform future studies in second language acquisition. Results of this study will be used to write my capstone project. There are also no costs associated with taking part in this interview. Your participation is voluntary, and it does not include any compensation.

Risk
No risks, discomforts or inconveniences are expected as a result of your participation.

Voluntary Participation
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to be in the study the latest date for participants to withdraw from the study is the day after the interview. After this date, I will continue to use the data I have collected. Withdrawal from the study requires communicating this intention verbally to the researcher or in writing.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Information collected from this interview will be handled with confidentiality and anonymity to protect your privacy. Outstanding care and diligence will be taken to ensure that your name and other personally identifiable information will not be used. Dr. Martin Guardado and I will be the only ones with access to this information and will be used strictly for the intended purpose.

Data will be stored on my personal computer (password protected) for five (5) years after the results of the study have been published and will then be destroyed. The use of a password on my personal computer will be in place always, and the data collected will be placed in a file password protected. I will be the only person with access to this computer.

Further Information

If you have any further questions, concerns or complaints regarding this interview, please contact:

Investigator: Ariane C. Monaco email: monaco@ulberta.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Martin Guardado email: guardado@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

Consent Statement

The consent statement will be given orally, and it will be recorded. At the beginning of the interview session, the participant will have the opportunity to ask any question about the consent form and the interview process. Once the participant agrees to participate under the conditions described, the oral consent is recorded using a cellphone.

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you can decline to participate?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the Information Letter	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that the last day to withdraw from the study is the day after the interview?	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information?	Yes	No
Are you aware that the interviews will be audio-recorded?	Yes	No

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENGLISH LEARNING INVESTMENT

I have read this form, and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
Participant's Name (printed) and Signature   Date

_____   _____
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date