

THE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EFL HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOM CONTEXT

Bunga Citra Dewi

English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia
Email: dewibungaaaa@gmail.com

Sherly Agustiana

English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia
Email: agustianasherly16@gmail.com

Riska

English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia
Email: riskaadiman@gmail.com

Hanif Nurcholish Adiantika

English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia
Email: hanifadiantika@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aims to explore how EFL students use social media to learn English. This exploratory study investigated the use of social media platforms for English language acquisition. The data were obtained through a survey and a semi-structured interview. Sixty-seven students responded to the questionnaire and ten students were purposively selected from the participants who responded to the questionnaire for an interview. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using basic statistical methods, whilst interview data were evaluated using phenomenological case analysis and thematic coding. Students utilize numerous social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook, according to the research. The findings indicate that students spent more time utilizing social media for non-academic objectives than for English study. However, they demonstrated a favorable attitude toward the use of social media in English language acquisition. Students believe social media has a significant influence in enhancing their English language skills. In addition, it encourages students to use social media to improve their English language skills.

Keywords: *EFL classroom; ICT; social media.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language, in particular, has been revolutionized by technology advancements. Students can benefit from the usage of technology in English language instruction (Bicen & Beheshti, 2022; Ho, 2020; Kurniawati *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, students' use of Information and Communication Technology (henceforth: ICT) has the potential to both enable and inspire them while they study English. Improve their students' capacity for critical thinking by encouraging teachers to adopt more engaging, adaptable, productive, and student-centered approaches to the classroom (Karakaş & Yükselir, 2021; Lee *et al.*, 2022; Vögelin *et al.*, 2021). In addition, the use of ICT can open up possibilities for group work and conversation for those studying English, but students will require support in order to make the most of these

resources (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Andrei, 2019; García-Gómez, 2022).

In the last ten years, the use of ICT has increased in the field of linguistics, both for teaching and learning purposes. ICT encompass all methods of producing, storing, presenting, and disseminating data in the digital age. Information and communication technologies set the stage for the creation, presentation, distribution, and exchange of knowledge between humans and machines. E-mail, social media like Facebook and Instagram, and video-based communication like Skype all offer excellent chances for EFL students to practice their English communication skills with native speakers (Aldukhayel, 2021; Andrei, 2019; Karakaş & Yükselir, 2021).

As a byproduct of technological development, one kind of ICT is social media (Sun *et al.*, 2021; Tragant *et al.*, 2020; Tsai, 2022). As a collection of

resources, social media facilitates communication and interaction between individuals. The majority of people of all ages, from the youngest students to the oldest retirees, regularly engage in social media. In many aspects of their everyday lives, college students regularly turn to social media (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021; Tragant *et al.*, 2020; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018). Among the many ICT tools at our disposal, social media facilitates real-time, cross-cultural contact over the internet. In addition, social media has become a widely-used venue for people of all ages and professions. The development of modern technology has made social networking possible (García-Gómez, 2022). Various forms of content can be generated through the use of social media, as stated by Aloraini and Cardoso (2020) and Vivakaran and Neelamalar (2018). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube are just a few examples. One can sign up for these social networking platforms with little effort and at no cost. That is why so many people are on Facebook and Twitter and other social networks.

Many kinds of social media appear in the previous decade, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc. (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Tragant *et al.*, 2020; Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik, 2022; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018). People, especially young people and college students, spend a lot of time on these social media platforms because they are enjoyable ways to pass the time. Aloraini and Cardoso (2020) argue that social media can be characterized by its interaction, platform quality, and information exchange mechanism. Because of this, there are several opportunities for student engagement in the realm of social media. They can connect with people from all around the world and establish friends wherever they may be. Students can use social media platforms like Instagram to learn more about the global situation by seeing photos and videos posted by people in other nations. Using social media, today's students may keep themselves and their peers better informed about current events than they could with traditional media such as newspapers. Furthermore, the students can use social media to study the English language.

There are some ways in which EFL students can use social media to improve their English language skills. It is no surprise that English is one of the most popular languages for online communication, given its status as a *de facto* global language. People, and especially students, in Indonesia often utilize English as a foreign language; students can study English in a variety of settings, including

schools, courses, and universities. Students of English feel that mobile learning may help them study anywhere and at any time, and they frequently use their phones to communicate with each other via social media (Kurniawati *et al.*, 2018). As a whole, they contribute favorably to how people think about utilizing digital tools to improve their English language skills (Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik, 2018; Kurniawati *et al.*, 2018; Lai, 2019). The participants of this study are college freshmen enrolled in an English Education program. This study is conducted based on the importance of incorporating social media in EFL classroom particularly in higher education context. The results of preliminary observation indicate that university students enrolled in the English Education Study Program are uninterested in learning the language by, among other things, reading English books in the library, having conversations about English-related topics with their peers, or consuming English-related media like television or educational videos. In spite of this, empirical evidence demonstrated that most students in this major utilize social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to learn new English vocabulary and expressions. The students may occasionally employ the vocabulary and expressions in casual conversation with their peers. Those are the most common key phrases used in online discussions. It is possible that this occurs since the default language of most social media platforms is English. Then, because of their demographic, college students are heavy users of social media. This method is more effective than others in helping pupils retain vocabulary while they learn a new language (books, go to a library, newspaper, and so on).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to investigate how English education students enrolled in one private university in Cirebon make use of social media to improve their English language skills. The research aims to address the following questions in order to accomplish this goal: (1) How do students typically utilize social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to enhance their English language learning? (2) To what extent do students utilize social media platforms to enhance their English language skills?

METHOD

The purpose of this exploratory study was to undertake a detailed and in-depth analysis of the usage of social media by students of English

education in one private university in Cirebon. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify the participants because they were enrolled in an ICT for Education course during the 2019-2020 academic year. It denotes that the researcher chooses participants because they can contribute to the comprehension of the research concerns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The questionnaire was completed by 56 participants of the third semester of the English Study Program at Jambi University during the 2018-2019 academic year. The researcher selected 10 students (5 male and 5 female students) who responded to the questionnaire for semi structured interviews.

The data were gathered by a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with 65 participants who had been invited to participate in the study. This section of the interview contained questions regarding the types of social media used to study English (five) and the methods by which they were learned (six). In a span of 20-30 minutes, we asked each participant our series of questions. The researcher videotaped all of the dialogue during the interview in order to collect accurate data. The protocol for the interviews is to follow up on the questionnaire and delve more deeply into respondents' social media habits. In addition, the following questions were addressed by those who took part in the interview session: (1) What kind of social media do you have? (2) What kinds of social media do you use mostly in learning English? (3) When do you usually use your social media in learning English? (4) How frequently do you usually use your social media in learning English? (5) What are the disadvantages of using social media in learning English for you? (6) What are the advantages of using social media in learning English? (7) In what learning English activities do you use social media for the academic purposes? (8) Who recommended you to use social media in learning English? (9) How can the social media help you in learning English? (10) How can the social media influence you in learning English? (11) How the effectiveness of using social media in learning English for you?

The information obtained from the questionnaire was evaluated using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency and percentage. The data obtained from the interviews were examined by employing phenomenological case analysis in conjunction with thematic coding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Result

In order to address the first research question, "Which types of social media are most frequently used by students in learning English?" Data were collected via a survey conducted by the researcher. Analysis of survey data revealed that Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms among students using it to practice their English skills. It can be seen from the Figure. 1 as follows:

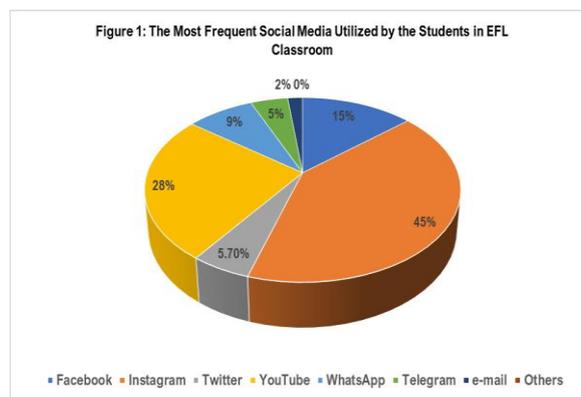


Figure 1. *The most frequent social media utilized by the students in EFL classroom*

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the extent to which students utilize various social media platforms in order to advance their English language skills. A significant number of respondents, 45%, stated that they use Instagram for the purpose of improving their English language skills. The second finding was that 28% of respondents said they use YouTube for learning English, and 15% said they use Facebook for studying English. On the other hand, only a small percentage of participants (5% and 2% respectively) learn English through the usage of electronic mail and telegrams. An intriguing tendency has been seen in regard to the utilization of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook for the sake of English language learning. Instagram is typically used more frequently by students than either Facebook or YouTube combined. It would appear that there are some students who utilize Telegram for English Language Learners reasons.

Qualitative result

This study's analysis and discussion are structured around students' perspectives and the environment in which the benefits of using social media for EFL learning were perceived. Some major categories and categories within categories were outlined in the table below.

Table 1. *Theme and sub-theme of the study*

No. Themes	Sub-Theme	Example
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1.	Sorts of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook • Twitter 	It's become routine for me to log on to Facebook and participate in an online English discussion group. <i>(Student 1's Interview Excerpt/S#1'sIE)</i>
2.	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Discussion 	Whenever we have a question or concern regarding our English studies, homework, or projects, we consult with one another using various social media platforms <i>(S#7'sIE)</i>
3.	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed learning/autonomous learning • Stimulating 	Through the use of social media, we are able to share not only our experiences and information, but also our tasks... in addition, we have the ability to educate or train ourselves independently. <i>(S#8'sIE)</i>
4.	Enhancing Students' English Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Speaking Skill • Enhancing Writing Skill • Enhancing Reading Skill • Enhancing Listening Skill • Enhancing Pronunciation • Enhancing Grammar 	Every single day, I engage in activities on several social media platforms. Reading, writing, and using the English language in conversation and in listening are all rather simple for me to practice. <i>(S#3'sIE)</i>
5.	Usefulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to comprehend • Easy to apply • Effective 	I believe that my use of social media helps me learn new things in a more efficient manner. <i>(S#10'sIE)</i>

There were 10 students involving in this interview stage; five of them are female volunteers, while the other five are male participants. A pseudonym was assigned to each of the participants. They were Student #1, Student #2, Student #3, Student #4, Student #5, Student #6, Student #7, Student #8, Student #9, and Student #10.

A variety of social media platforms were utilized by the participants in order to improve their English language skills, which led to the development of new forms of social media. The apps of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are three examples of different sorts of social media that are frequently utilized by

students. The observations that were made by the participants during the course of the interview, for example;

“I am active on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. On the other hand, it's become second nature for me to fire up Facebook and sign up for an English language discussion group” *(S#1'sIE)*

Participants stated that they always make a conversation and communication in the English language learning process by using social media. This was in response to the activities category question. According to the findings of the investigation, all of the participants frequently converse with one another using English. One of the participants, who identified themselves as student #7, provided the following example:

“Whenever we have a question or concern regarding our English studies, homework, or projects, we always consult with one another through various forms of social media” *(S#7'sIE)*

Students spoke about their interest in self-directed learning and in improving their English language skills through the use of social media in the context of the motivation category. According to the words of one of the other students:

“Through the use of social media, we are able to share not only our experiences and information, but also our tasks... in addition, we have the ability to educate or train ourselves independently.” *(S#8'sIE)*

The fourth category was focused to help students improve their English skills. This was understood to mean that students were taught through a variety of social media and online video platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The students will benefit from some of these tools, which will help them improve their English language abilities. As was mentioned by a fellow student;

“Every single day, I engage in activities on several social media platforms. Reading, writing, and using the English language in conversation and in listening are all rather simple for me to practice.” *(S#3'sIE)*

The final category was considered as usefulness, which was described as the learning that students accomplished through the use of a variety of ICT platforms such as websites, online

materials, and YouTube. The use of these technologies confers a number of advantages upon students, facilitating their capacity to comprehend English linguistic content in an approach that is both simpler and more powerful. For example, one of the other students mentioned;

“I believe that the use of social media makes my efforts to improve my English language skills more productive. Because social media and other forms of media present us with some opportunity to easily investigate English, we can say that.”
(S#9'sIE)

The aim of this research was to investigate the perspectives of students regarding the benefits of utilizing social media for English language learning. As it is well known, the two primary components of this research are the information and data pertaining to the application of social media platforms to the process of acquiring English as a second language. Both a questionnaire and an interview with a semi-structured format were utilized to collect the aforementioned required data. According to the results of the survey, the vast majority of the students made use of Instagram for the goal of improving their English language skills. but just a small percentage of students rely on telegram in their EFL classroom.

As a consequence of the interview session, it became clear that there were five overarching themes. They include: 1) Different forms of social media. Students' interactions with various forms of social media, including Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, with the overarching goal of improving their English language skills; 2) Participating in activities: The activities including the use of social media in English language learning, with the subthemes of discussion and communication; 3. The ability to motivate oneself the utilization of social media can enhance the motivation of students, with the subthemes of self-directed learning and appealing content; 4. Strive to improve one's command of the English language. The usage of social media can help students enhance their English skills in a variety of domains, including reading ability, speaking ability, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary; 5). The effectiveness is the final consideration. The use of social media can make EFL classroom more effective, with subthemes that are efficient, easy to grasp, and easy to practice.

The results of the questionnaire corroborated what Ma *et al.* (2022) and Taghizadeh and Hasani

Yourdshahi (2020) had found in their earlier research; namely, that social media is a well-known phenomenon that is utilized by people of varying ages and educational backgrounds. The rise of social media can be attributed to the rapid advancement of technology in recent decades (Ding *et al.*, 2019; Nazari *et al.*, 2019; S. C. Tsai, 2022). Within the scope of this study, seven distinct forms of social media are analyzed. These include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in addition to WhatsApp, Email, and Telegram (Ma *et al.*, 2022; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018)(Etemadfar *et al.*, 2020; Jiang & Eslami, 2021; Wongsu & Son, 2022). The results of the questionnaire, on the other hand, revealed that the majority of the individuals who took part in this investigation utilized Instagram for the purpose of improving their English language skills. When I was in school, only a small percentage of my classmates used electronic communication like email and telegram to assist them in improving their English language skills.

Instagram is one of the most well-known social media platforms available today, and a lot of individuals, especially younger students and EFL students in general, utilize it (Erarslan, 2019; Nazari *et al.*, 2019; Raygan & Moradkhani, 2020; Y. R. Tsai, 2021). This also became the fundamental premise that demonstrated that the majority of participants in this study used Instagram as a means of improving their English language skills (Erarslan, 2019; Gao, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2022; Park & Son, 2022; Smith & Townsend, 2021; S. C. Tsai, 2022). Additionally, he clarified that Instagram is a form of social media that includes both still images and moving images. It is possible that this is the reason why many people are interested in using Instagram to improve their English language skills.

The students can get the opportunity to practice their English language skills by utilizing various social media platforms (Tai & Brandt, 2018; Timpe-Laughlin *et al.*, 2022; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018). The use of social media helped students tremendously in terms of developing their capacity for critical thinking (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021; Kurniawati *et al.*, 2018; Lambton-Howard *et al.*, 2021; Luan *et al.*, 2020; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021). The vast majority of participants reported that their use of social media provided them with the opportunity to improve their English language abilities (Ho, 2020; Timpe-Laughlin *et al.*, 2022; Zhang & Zou, 2022). This is due to the fact that participants are able to have conversations and communicate in both the spoken and written

forms of the English language (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021; Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Eisenlauer, 2020; Judy Shih & Huang, 2022). After that, the use of social media can also be noticed in any sort of activities that take place in the classroom because it is common knowledge that learning through the utilization of social media can enhance the students' understanding, particularly with regards to the learning of English (Lai, 2019; Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik, 2022; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2021; Zhang & Zou, 2022). A discussion group is the activity for which the members can use social media in order to learn English (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021; Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Tragant *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the findings of this research indicate that the use of social media can assist students in learning English for the purposes of communication, discussion, interaction, and completing or submitting assignments (Gao, 2020; Jadallah *et al.*, 2020; Park & Son, 2022; Roohani & Heidari Vinchek, 2021; Vögelin *et al.*, 2021).

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this research and the subsequent discussion, one can draw the conclusion that students frequently use social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook for the purpose of improving their English language skills. Instagram is the social media platform that is utilized by students learning English at a higher rate than any other. When they have some extra time at home, or when the lecturer lets them use it in class, the students at the university use social media to learn English. This is very helpful for group discussions. Students are able to improve their English abilities through the use of social media due to the content of social media being more diversified, which also motivates students to study English through the use of social media. It is also important to think about how students' access to and use of social media might have a positive effect on their English language skills. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) college students, the incorporation of social media must be counted to increase the students' linguistic competence through the use of suitable forms of social media in EFL instruction and study.

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