Exploring The Use of Social Media As An English Learning Platform During Covid 19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT (10 PT)

Social media is one of the platforms that can be utilized in the teaching process during Covid 19 pandemic. Despite the challenge encountered by lectures in adapting virtual learning mode, social media offers several benefits for instance, it provides practicality, interactivity, and engagement. This study aims to explore the use of social media as a learning platform in the English education study program in UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. This study employed questionnaires and interviews in collecting the data. Sixty students participated to answer the questionnaires and ten students were randomly selected to be interviewed. The result of the study revealed that they showed a positive attitude in using social media as a learning platform. They shared that social media enhances their motivation in language learning and helps them in accessing other learning resources. However, several drawbacks were also yielded such as the absence of authentic language interaction and focus on learning English. Thus, despite the convenience offered by social media, having a lecturer in the classroom is still required to maximize the learning process.

1. Introduction

Before covid 19 pandemic, online learning has become a widespread method for providing an alternative education which requires new modes of presentation and interaction. For instance, home-schooling for primary and secondary education or Indonesia open university for undergraduate and graduate level. This type of learning was favored due to its practicality. The learners can study and access the learning materials without having to come to the classroom. The materials are also various from worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, or videos. Besides offering practicality, online learning also promotes interaction amongst the learners. Through online learning, the learners still can

interact with teachers and other learners through giving comments or asking questions. Educational researchers and practitioners agreed that interaction is the key variable in learning and satisfaction with distance education courses (Wanstreet, 2006). Thus, if online learning can facilitate interaction, it will affect learners' comprehension and contribute to satisfaction in learning.

During covid 19 pandemic, this method became mandatory to minimize the spread of the virus as instructed by the Government of Indonesia. This unplanned and unprecedented situation to society and education changed teachers' work in Indonesia and elsewhere (Atmojo and Nugroho, 2020). It obliges both teachers and learners to adapt with this new method of learning. The first months of the application of online learning yielded pros and cons. This fact comes from numerous studies and research conducted by researchers and practitioners during the pandemic. The cons come from the provision of school infrastructure (Rasmitadila, et.al, 2020). The minimal amount of online learning support remains an issue in Indonesia still now which causes frustration and demotivation for teachers and learners. For instance, although the Indonesian government recently issued a regulation which states that school operational funds could be allocated to buy data packages, the schools still could not fully apply this online learning. The main reason comes from the insufficient connection since the location of school or the students' house might be in a challenging condition.

On the other hand, this new method of learning offers several benefits. Several studies find that students show a positive attitude towards the use of the internet as a source of language learning for instance, to some learners who have anxiety talking directly to their teachers or having a discussion with their peers, this type of learning is favorable. Furthermore, it encourages the learners to become independent. They have a freedom to access any relevant learning materials besides their teachers. One of the tools that can be utilized is social media. It is practical and accessible for students to find references from open access to journals and e-book to finish their assignments. Moreover, by using social media, students are also able to communicate with people from around the world which will be a good chance for them to practice their English. Lastly, it helps students' language learning process as students are able to communicate with people from other countries using the international language.

Similarly, for teachers utilizing social media can help them in assessing students or in providing supplementary English materials (Ubaidillah, et.al;2021). This was also what the researcher tried to share during covid 19 pandemic. I asked the students to create an Instagram account for their class. This account functioned as their project as they are asked to create English learning videos according to the polling from their followers. From this experience, I witnessed that social media has a good potential to develop as a learning platform.

Social Media and English Language Learning

Social media nowadays has become a part of our daily lives. It allows its user to have conversations, share information, and create content. Recently social media gained its popularity because it is one of the media platforms utilized by educators for teaching and assessing students during covid19 pandemic. Likewise, students also get benefits from social media because it facilitates them in accessing other learning resources beside their teachers. According to Malerba and Barcelona (2015), social networks allow language

learners to cross-geographical barriers and help English language learners to interact with native speakers and to access distant places and cultures.

Recent study showed that there are five major social media platforms used for educational purposes. Firstly, is YouTube. This social media has been found to promote language development, intercultural learning, and motivation with an authentic L2 learning environment. It also could be used as an alternative or supplement to traditional teaching materials (Dizon, 2022). Secondly is Instagram. Instagram provides an effective platform for immersing learners in the English language and may be beneficial for teaching vocabulary. The learning content of Instagram is usually pretty simple and straightforward. In other words, social media accommodate the needs of students for having simple lessons and it is favorable. Overall, Instagram may be a viable educational platform for English learners to hold their interest and motivate them to learn. Thirdly is twitter. This social media platform is commonly used for providing instant feedback from the teachers or lecturers. It provides an additional channel for students to communicate in their virtual classroom during covid19 pandemic. Next is TikTok, which is really popular among generation Z. This platform enables its user to create short videos from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. Previous related research by English language learners showcased that English language education learners hold a positive attitude towards the application of TikTok in English (Xiuwen and Razali, 2021). The students feel an improvement in terms of their motivation, pronunciation skill, and vocabulary. Last is WhatsApp. Learning English by this application facilitates discussion which leads to a positive and engaging learning atmosphere (Mutofa, 2020).

Research focusing on the topic of social media and English language learning has been deeply explored and it generally divided into three big themes. First, related to the types of social media as an English learning support. Several studies revealed that Youtube and Instagram are the two major social media used for English language learning (Li, 2017; Arif, 2019; Handayani, et al., 2020). There is no surprise that YouTube is the students' most frequent tool for learning because it facilitates independent learning. Another social media commonly visited was Facebook and Whatsapp. The students can practice speaking in English with friends, teachers, parents, or whoever by using e-mail, video call, or social media (i.e., Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

Secondly is focusing on students' and teachers' perception in using social media teaching and learning English. A study conducted by Aloraini and Cardosu (2020) the literature on students' perception towards using social media for language learning revealed mixed findings. Majorly showed positive perception however others suggest that learners' perception might vary due to their proficiency in the language. In other words, the level of English proficiency of learners tends to affect the function of social media as a learning tool. Another study also showed different results. For academic purposes, the students tend to hesitate using social media. Likewise, from the teachers 'point of view, their engagement with social media did not necessarily favor pedagogical skills. The result of this study also resonates with Allam and Eliyas (2021) which state that although teachers consider social media as a critical learning tool in EFL classrooms, they seem to be hesitant in utilizing it as it might lead to a distraction among some students.

Thirdly is the application of social media in improving language skill, for example a study about the effect of game based, social media, and classroom-based instruction on the learning of phrasal verbs (Roohani and Vinchech, 2021). The game-based method was

the most effective one for learning English phrasal verbs. Thus, the integration of gaming applications into the English teaching curriculum to enhance foreign language lexical learning is suggested. Other studies also showed that social media can improve students' oral communication skills such as listening and speaking.

Despite sufficient studies having been conducted with the theme of social media, very little study is found focusing on exploring the use of social media as a learning tool during covid 19 pandemic in Indonesia specifically in the level of higher education under Ministry of Religious Affair. There is also very little study comparing non-English education and English education students using social media. Therefore, the researcher is intrigued to conduct this study. Thus, the result of this research is to fill the gap to the recent literature of using social media in English language learning. In addition, it also means to share researcher personal experience and thoughts about using social media as a teaching tool during virtual learning.

2. Method

This study employed a survey as a research design and qualitative study was used in this study to investigate a detailed and in-depth analysis of the use of social media in English learning. Survey research was conducted by distributing questionnaires using Google forms. The primary data collection of this research is by distributing questionnaires to respondents (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

To find participants, the researcher used purposive sampling. It means that the researcher chooses participants because they can help answer the researcher questions (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher decided to choose students from two different study program; English education study program and non-English education study program such as from faculty of Islamic based business, faculty of sharia. The rationale behind choosing these two types of students is because the researcher would like to examine if there is any difference in perception or attitudes amongst them about using social media in learning English. A total of sixty students from UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu participated in this study and completed the questionnaire. After that, the researcher chose ten students (five female and five male) to participate in the semi-structured interview. The students are from two different study programs, from English education study program and non- English education study program. The rationale behind selecting students from different majors is to gain more insight related to the topic of the research.

Instruments

The questionnaire is designed using Google form then distributed through WhatsApp group. Students had to fill out questionnaires which asked about their perceptions of using social media in English language learning during Covid 19 pandemic. For the semi-structured interview, it consisted of ten questions. The theme was the duration of accessing social media before and during covid 19 pandemic, the social media preferences for English language learning, the benefits and the drawbacks of using social media for English learning.

Questions in the questionnaire:
1. How many hours have you spent on social media during covid 19 pandemic?
2. What is your goal in using social media?
3. How many hours do you spend learning English through social media?
4. What is/are social media you frequently visit for learning English?

Statement in the questionnaire:
5. Learning English from social media is fun and engaging.
6. Learning English from social media can reduce my anxiety when I have to participate in the classroom.
7. Social media makes me more independent in learning English.
8. Learning English from social media is more understandable.
9. Learning English from social media helps me in accessing other learning resources besides from my teachers or lecturers.

The questionnaire adapted from the study conducted from Al Arif in 2019. In his study he focused on two questions about what type of social media and how the students' use it. While in this study the researcher was interested in exploring not only the type of social media and what are their perceptions about statements. The result of the questionnaire will be deeply explored in the interview.

The interview took around 20 to 30 minutes and it took place virtually via Google meet. The researcher uses pseudonyms for participants. Anita, Andri, Ryan, Yofa, and Dedi are from English education study program whilst Putri, Vida, Ayu, Fadli, and Hamdan are from non-English education study program. They also come from different semesters. Non-English education students were all in the second semester whilst English-education students were in their second and fourth semester. The researcher recorded all the conversations during the interview session as part of the data collection process. The interview questions consisted of several research themes, for instance: the frequency of using social media for English language learning, to what extent it helps the learners study English, and the benefits and the drawbacks of using social media for English learning.

Data Analysis Procedures

Exploratory research was used in this study to look at a systematic and in-depth review of the use of social media in English language learning by UIN Fatmawati Sukarno students. The finding of the survey was interpreted using statistical formulas such as frequency and percentage. The findings of the interview were interpreted using thematic labeling.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 Findings

This study aims to explore the use of social media as a learning platform during Covid 19 pandemic. According to the questionnaire collected, the results are summarized below:
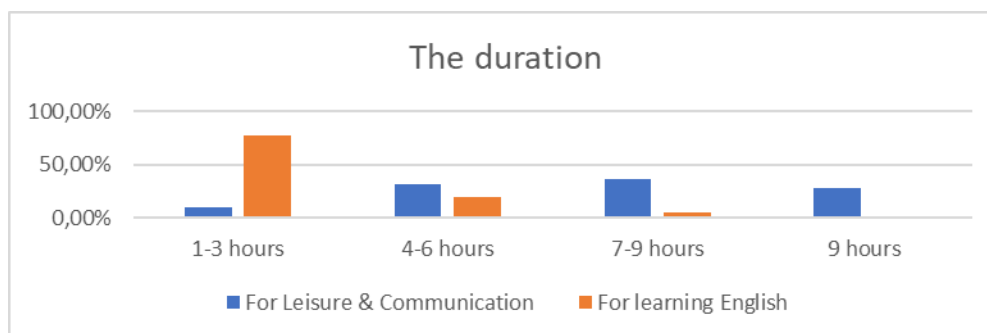
Chart 1. The amount of time using social media

The chart above explains the amount of time spent by students using social media. Overall, the goals of accessing social media are divided into two; for leisure or communication, and for studying. Majority of the students spent around four to nine hours playing with their social media (38 students) while the rest spent either until nine hours (1 students) or one to three hours (12 students). However, for learning purposes, the number was in the opposite direction. From the chart, the majority of students spent one- or three-hours learning English (46 students).
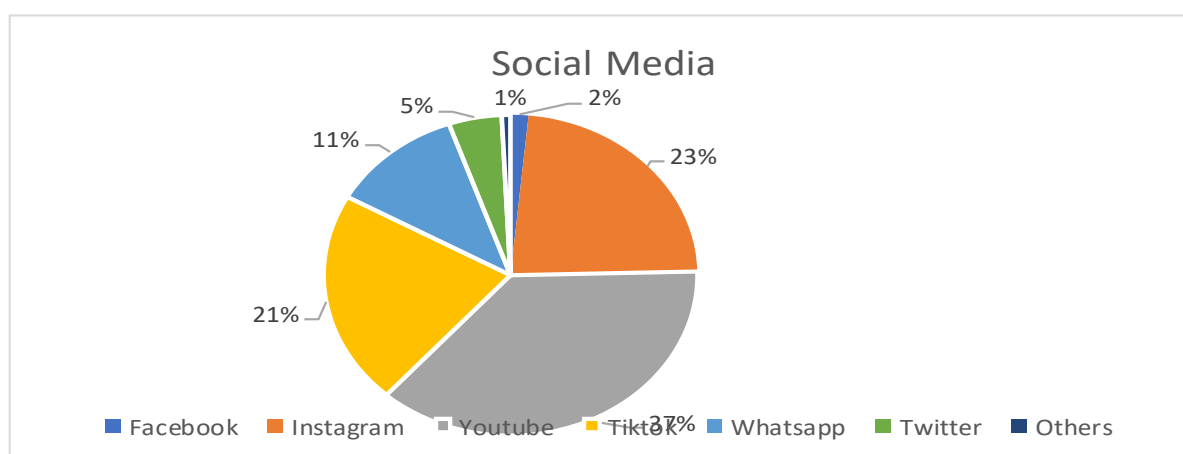

Chart 2. The types of social media used for English learning

The chart above explains types of social media accessed by the learners for learning English. There are five types of social media which are facebook, instagram, youtube, tiktok, whatsapp, and twitter. The term "others' ' refers to additional social media that students visit but not as often as the five above, for instance: line, messenger, etc. It also can be concluded that revealed Youtube was the most often social media accessed by the learners for learning English, followed by Instagram and Tiktok.

Furthermore, the result of the semi-structured interview yielded several results. The researcher organized the analysis and discussion around the students' perception, the extent of social media can facilitate learning, and the context in which the advantages and the drawbacks they perceived on using social media for English language learning. The following tables showed some key themes and sub-themes:

No	Themes	Sub-Theme	Examples
1	Kinds of social media	- Youtube - Instagram - Tiktok	I follow the IG account of Kampung Inggris, I also subscribe to the BBC learning English youtube channel. (Anita)
2	Learning activities	- Watching videos - Finding references - Looking for additional materials for course	Because during covid 19, we are studying from home. I have to find supporting materials from youtube, instagram, or tiktok. (Dedi)
3	Motivation	- Interesting - Engaging	It increases my motivation in learning English. if I watch videos, I feel I am interacting with the creator there (Yopa)
4	Advantages	- Practical - Time saving - Flexibility	It really helps me in writing assignments. I do not have to spent time creating, it is more like copying (Fadli)
5	Drawbacks	- Difficult to maintain focus - Too instant - Lack of authenticity & originality	If I learn English from social media, I get easily distracted sometimes (Ryan)
6	Learning autonomy	- Self-initiative - Independent learning	At least once a week, I learn English by myself. It can be anything but mostly I practice my communication skill (Putri)

Table 1. Themes and Sub-theme of the Research

In a semi-structured interview, there are ten participants, five male and female participants. These ten students' come from two different study programs; from English education study program and non-English-education study program. The comments that participants made during the interview, for instance:

"I have several social media accounts such as twitter, instagram, facebook, youtube, tiktok, whatsapp. For learning English, I mostly go to Youtube and Instagram." (Andri)

"For learning English, sometimes I learn from Tiktok." (Vida)

"For learning English I mainly watch youtube videos." (Anita)

For theme learning activities, participants expressed that they use social media as supplementary materials for learning English. This can be functioned as helping tools for finishing the assignments or in understanding the subjects by finding more references.

> *"It's really helpful. I like watching youtube videos. For example, if I do not understand pragmatics from the texbook, I usually search it on youtube." (Ryan)*

> *"Sometimes it is not only used for learning English,when we have a group project we upload our videos through social media such as youtube or Instagram." (Hamdan)*

For the motivation theme, students mentioned "interesting" and "engaging".

> *"What I like about social media is because it is interesting. It makes learning English less of a burden. The way the creator makes a video is also creative with simple explanations."*

> *"Social media facilitates me to give comments and sometimes the creator invites me to give them some ideas for the next content."*

The fourth category is the benefits the students' gained for utilizing social media as a learning platform.

> *"I feel like my listening and speaking skills are getting better after learning from social media."*

> *"Social media helps me in improving my vocabulary range and pronunciation skill."*

The fifth category is the drawbacks of using social media as a learning tool. Several students shared their views about this theme as expressed below:

> *"I think social media also decreases my focus because I can easily be distracted by other pop up videos. So instead of learning, I just keep scrolling."*

> *"Learning English through social media is fun but I missed having a real interaction between teacher and students."*

The sixth category is related to learning autonomy. This category reveals a unique result because students' from different study program has quite opposite responds about learning autonomy. For non-English education students, one of them shared

> *"I learn from social media but only if my lecturers asked me to or if she recommended me to other learning sources."*

Differently for English-education study program, they give respond such as

> *"At least once a week, I learn English by myself using social media. I practice like my speaking skills, how to speak fluently."*

> *" Using social media makes me become independent. It means that I can learn by myself at my own pace. I also adore the way creators make videos and can speak fluently. It motivates me to learn English more."*

> *"There is no one who suggests that I use it. Because I have a social media account so I just searched there."*

3.2 Discussion

The result of the questionnaire and interview reveals several insights. First of all, related to the duration of using social media for learning. During covid 19 pandemic, people accessed social media even more. On average, for learning purposes the majority of the students spend one to three hours. Other findings also showed they commonly accessed several types of social media such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, and others.

The finding from the questionnaire corresponded with the previous study conducted by Monica and Anamaria (2014) and Al Arif (2019), social media is the result of technology advancement. It offers convenience and flexibility for its users. That is why social media also can be utilized for educational purposes. However, this study yielded slightly different results in which TikTok was included as the top social media accessed by the learners for English learning.

TikTok is relatively current social media. It is launched in September 2016 by the Chinese startup company ByteDance. It hosts a variety of short-form user videos, from genres like pranks, stunts, tricks, jokes, dance, and entertainment with durations from 15 seconds to ten minutes. Due to its growth rapid of user, nowadays teachers and educators also utilize TikTok as learning media. Several studies focusing on Tiktok have also been conducted, for instance a study by Nabilah, et al., (2021) which resulted in a positive attitude towards this application because it helps and enhances their literacy and speaking skills. Tiktok also offers freedom for learners to express their ideas orally and can boost students' confidence in speaking English (Zaitun, et al., 2021)

Youtube is also one of the most visited applications for learning English. In comparison to tiktok in which only provides very short video, youtube enable its creator to upload video with longer duration. Sufficient study about the usage of youtube also has been explored. It showed that youtube offers benefits. Results revealed that the most highlighted purposes for learning English on YouTube were to explore supplementary learning resources, to seek the attraction of learning foreign language, and to explore cultural knowledge (Wang and Chen, 2021). It also enables its viewers to give comments, press like or share buttons as a form of interaction. It also can accommodate and personalize each student's need in learning foreign language. The student can locate videos and information relevant to her learning goals then create highly personalized learning contexts.

Similarly, Instagram also gave a positive attitude to English language learners. Some of them follow an account, for instance @kampunginggriswe, @bbclearningenglish, @gurukumrd, etc. According to them, the explanation from Instagram is simpler and there are a lot of fun games and quizzes they can do. The result of the interview has a similar response from the study conducted by Laksono, et al., (2019). From the survey of thirty high school students, it showed that 80,7% of them agree that instagram is utilized as an instructional media for English language learning. Another study also showed that blended learning with instagram is contributed to students' writing skill improvement because this application easess the learning process, facilitates discussion, and assists writing process (Wahyudin and Sari, 2018).

The use of social media also facilitates the students in improving their language skills, learning motivation, and self-confidence. As in the majority of the participants shared that

they experience improvement in their vocabulary range and their oral communication skills. The language skills that dominantly improved was pronunciation and speaking. It is because some of the videos were created by native English teachers so it gives them a model on how to speak English with an accepted and comprehensible pronunciation. In fact, learning English pronunciation through audio visual media is advantageous.

Although social media mentioned above offers several benefits in English language learning. To some extent, it can be said to be less effective as stated by one of the students that the practicality offered by social media somehow hinders critical thinking process, for instance in finishing an assignment, they can just search it and find hundreds of similar models of answers, they just modify them or maybe copy them. Likewise, this informal learning by the teachers or if they want to prepare for English exams as example. Also, according to my personal experience teaching using social media, the learners seem to have difficulty in creating and crafting their original ideas. For instance, in an ELT project class in which I tutored, the students are asked to create an English learning video. I noticed that each group has a similar style or pattern in designing videos as it makes assessment quite a challenge. So, in my class utilizing full social media cannot be applied. There are might be several factors contributed to these facts. One of my assumptions is because the data package is costly.

The evidence above is also affirmed by the result of the interview with the student from a non-English education study program. According to her, during covid 19 pandemic, the learning mostly took place online and the majority of the students went back to their village due to the expensive cost of living in the city. Thus, if there is some technical issue during online learning, they cannot attend it let alone participate in the learning via social media. Another response also stated that using social media for English learning is not necessarily effective if the learning environment is not meaningful. Having said that, the initiative to access English learning resources might be absent.

After that, using social media as a learning platform is beneficial however to some extent it still cannot replace the role of the teachers in the classroom. Thus some pedagogical implication for both teachers and students can be illustrated as follow: First of all, the use of social media in the classroom should be considered even if the covid 19 pandemic has been eradicated since it offers a lot of benefits. Secondly, social media can be utilized as a supplementary references especially if the English materials are complex and need a lot of practices. The teachers can suggest several verified social media for students to follow or subscribe so they can get better understanding. Thirdly, besides its function as supplementary materials, social media can be used as a learning project for more advanced students, for instance asking the students to create a video, asking them in virtual discussion, or analyzing the language style. Lastly, environment plays a vital role in raising students awareness in using social media. There is a significant response from two different study program students about their English learning habits. Therefore, suggesting social media as a learning tool is recommended with the goal to engage the learners in more relaxed and informal way.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to explore the use of social media during covid 19 pandemic. Social media beside its function for communication and leisure, it also can be utilized as a learning tool. The result shows that the students utilize social media as a learning platform for English. Besides youtube and instagram, tiktok is also considered one of the applications that oftenly accessed. According to the students', learning through social media helps them in improving their language skills and encourages them to become independent learners. There is also a significant response between English education and non-English education students about the theme of learning autonomy. Since non-English education students only have two credits for English courses, giving them an initiative to learn English is quite a challenge, let alone for utilizing social media for learning English.

For English language teachers, this study yielded several pedagogical implications. First of all, the teachers should adapt themselves with the advancement of technology. The covid 19 pandemic has taught us that incorporating technology and the internet in the classroom is unavoidable. Furthermore, 21st century learning is characterized by the use of technology and the internet, thus applying traditional methods might not be relevant with the realm of this century. Next, the teachers should maximize the utilization of social media for increasing students' motivation and engagement. From the result of the interview, it is clear that students favor learning from social media because it is simple and engaging. Thus, the teachers can consider incorporating social media into the lesson, for instance: having a group project where the students can create content and upload in their social media account or if the materials are too complex, the teachers can recommend several social media accounts to follow as supplementary materials. Thirdly, although several studies showed that there is no significant improvement in terms of English language skills, social media promotes authenticity in language learning. The learners can interact with native speakers and learn English from videos or content shared by the teachers.

On the other hand, the use of social media should also need to be carefully chosen because utilizing social media without creating a rich linguistic environment is also somehow less effective. Since the status of English in Indonesia is a foreign language, the presence of a teacher is still vital. The teacher-student interaction cannot be replaced by computers. Therefore, combining social media, teachers' assistant, and meaningful learning engagement can lead to a fruitful result.

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