Using Social Media for English Language Learning by EFL University Students: A Mixed -Methods Study

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the usage of social media for English language learning by students at a state university in Jambi, Indonesia. a mixed-method approach was applied in this study. To collect data for this study, a survey and a semi-structured interview were used. The questionnaire was completed by 137 students, and 10 were interviewed randomly from those who completed the questionnaire. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using basic statistical analysis, while the data from the interviews were analyzed using phenomenological case analysis combined with coding thematically. This study investigates students' perceptions towards the use of six popular social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter) in learning English as a foreign language. The results of this study revealed that students utilize a variety of social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook. They showed positive attitudes towards the use of social media for learning English. The students perceived that social media plays an important role to improve their English language skills. In addition, the social media which are mostly used for learning English by EFL university students is Instagram, and they use the social media for learning English as additional (optional) language learning tools in their spare time.

Key words: EFL university students, English language learning, mixed-method, social media

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui penggunaan media sosial untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris oleh mahasiswa di sebuah universitas negeri di Jambi, Indonesia. Pendekatan mix-method digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Untuk mengumpulkan data untuk penelitian ini, survei dan wawancara semi-terstruktur digunakan. Kuesioner diisi oleh 137 siswa, dan 10 diwawancarai secara acak dari mereka yang menyelesaikan kuesioner. Data kuantitatif dari kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan analisis statistik dasar, sedangkan data hasil wawancara dianalisis menggunakan analisis kasus fenomenologis yang dipadukan dengan pengkodean secara tematis. Penelitian ini menyelidiki persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan enam media sosial populer (Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram dan Twitter) dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa siswa memanfaatkan berbagai platform media sosial, khususnya Instagram dan Facebook. Mereka menunjukkan sikap positif terhadap penggunaan media sosial untuk belajar bahasa Inggris. Para siswa merasa bahwa media sosial memainkan peran penting untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka. Selain itu, media sosial yang paling banyak digunakan untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris oleh mahasiswa EFL adalah Instagram, dan mereka menggunakan media sosial sebagai alat pembelajaran bahasa tambahan (pilihan) di waktu luang.

Kata kunci: Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Mixed Method, Media Sosial

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have had a significant influence on the field of education, particularly in the field of English as a foreign language. The pedagogical use of technology has the potential to assist students in improving their language skills (Khaloufi & Laabidi, 2017; Lai et al., 2016). In addition, information and communication technology (ICT) utilization may empower and motivate learners in English language learning. The ICT use can provide some opportunities for collaboration and interaction in the English language learning process, and also the learning needs to be a scaffold for learners to benefit from such opportunities (Murray, 2005; Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2019). Over the last decade, ICT has become increasingly widely employed in language learning and teaching. ICT refers to computer-based technologies and internet-based technologies which are used for creating, storing, displaying, and sharing information. ICT provides a

context for human-human and human-machine communication, and it provides a context for information production, display, delivery, and sharing. In the context of EFL, ICT can provide English language learners with opportunities for interaction with native speakers through ICT tools such as e-mail, social media like Facebook (Annamalai, 2017), Instagram, and video-based communication like Skype.

One form of ICT in social media is one of the results of advanced technology (Liu, 2010). Social media is also a set of tools that allow people to establish and engage in a relationship. Social media is one of the technologies that is mostly used by people around the world, starting from young learners to old people. In addition, the students are also users of social media who use it in various situations. Many kinds of social media appear in the last decade, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc. (Monica, & Anamaria, 2014). These types of social media are often utilized by people, particularly college students, because it is an enjoyable activity for them. As stated by Chou (2014), social media has some characteristics such as interactivity, platform quality, knowledge sharing mechanism. As a result, students may accomplish a great deal via social media. For example, they can communicate with others all over the world. On social media sites such as Instagram, university students may also access images or videos about the world's situation from different countries. Students can get more up-to-date information about what is going on in their surroundings through social media. In addition, students can learn English through social media.

In this study, we focused on describing how EFL university students utilize social media for learning English. Consequently, this study was intended to investigate the use of social media in English language learning by the students of a state university in Jambi, Indonesia. This study investigated the pedagogical use of six common social media applications (Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter) in an EFL learning context. The ultimate goal of this research is to inform EFL teachers who are contemplating the adoption of social media for extending classroom practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Media

Social media is a tool of information and communication technology used by people to communicate online. Social media is also one famous

platform used by people of every age and level. Social media is a thing as a result of advanced technology nowadays (Monica & Anamaria, 2014). According to (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), social media is a group of internet applications that allows the creation of various content in the world. There are many kinds of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. These kinds of social media are easy to be signed up for free. It is also one of the reasons why most people use these social media.

People all over the world utilize social media for a variety of reasons. For most people, social media may be used to assist people to communicate with one another even if they are in various locations such as a different city, province, or nation. People may also interact and maintain relationships through social media; they can stay up to date on what is going on in society even if they are not physically present. It may also let individuals contribute a lot of information about news or information from all over the world. Furthermore, social media may aid to reconnect people and identify those who haven't seen one other in years.

The most essential aspect of social media is that practically all of it is provided in an international language such as English. Then, because people of all ages, particularly students, are highly interested in utilizing social media in every situation, students may acquire a language such as English through social media. This is what makes social media more enjoyable than traditional forms of media such as books. They do not yet communicate in a second language. However, not all language learners especially English learners begin as silent learners. Some learners become speedy speaking learners. Even though, this learner is still like imitating another or native speaker. Then, for the second stage, in the early acquisition, the students can speak or produce short words perhaps like one or two words. In these stages, the learner might have some mistakes in using the words or the phrases. This learner is more active than the previous stage who mostly just keeps silent and listens to people talking using the foreign language.

On social media, students can learn English through various information in form of text and/or videos like short text, news, educational video, etc. Although the content is in English, the students will find it more interesting and enjoyable to utilize than learning from a book in the classroom or the lecturers' presentations or explanations written on the whiteboard. Furthermore, utilizing social media to learn English is quite beneficial. It can assist students in developing their reading, listening, speaking, and writing abilities.

B. Social Media in English Language Learning

There are several social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram. Almost all social media platforms provide the same purpose for individuals or students who utilize them. However, social media is beneficial to students, particularly for English language learning.

Facebook is a popular social networking platform used by many people of all ages. Children, teenagers, adolescents, adults, even old people used Facebook to interact with each other. People on Facebook may express themselves in the form of status updates at their profile home, which all of their friends in that account can view and comment on. In every situation, numerous individuals write the status in English.

Twitter is another famous social media used by people of every age. It is also a social networking and micro-blogging service that was created by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone, and Noah Glass in 2006 (Monica & Anamaria, 2014). Similar to Facebook, Twitter focuses on distinctive words and statements. Furthermore, we may add and view comments from individuals all over the world who speak English. That is why Twitter makes it easy for people or students to learn English.

Instagram is another popular social media platform that many people use nowadays, particularly young learners, and it was launched in 2010. (Al-Ali, 2010). Users of this social networking platform may share photographs and videos. Students may also browse images of everyone and everything in the world from every country on this social networking platform. There are also descriptions for the photographs created by the account's users who post pictures that explains the image or just communicating ideas. Furthermore, there are also captions in English, which makes the reader or students who see the caption and picture more interested than text in a book or handout during the learning process. Although Instagram has a limited function by only providing pictures and videos, it can still help with language learning. Since Instagram offers visual elements that can help the learners, it helps the students to connect to the community of learners in communicating and socializing with each other. Salomon (2013) discussed that Instagram can reach young learners better and can become a library for some students.

C. Previous Research

Some previous research has been conducted worldwide with regards to forms of social media for learning. For instance, a research that was done by

Monica & Anamaria (2014) entitled: The Impact of Social Media on Vocabulary Learning Case Study- Facebook. This research aims at investigating the impact of computer and social media in improving students' knowledge of the English language namely vocabulary acquisition (focused on Facebook) with intermediate and upper-intermediate first and second-year ELT students in Economics at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea. The study was conducted with 127 students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, who were first and second-year students from the specializations of International Business, Management, Marketing, Finances; and were studying in the academic year of 2013-2014. The development in each group was measured and it demonstrated that a more significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge of the group were exposed to the Facebook group. The results of the study did not support the assumption that the experimental group would outperform the control group, as the differences between the two groups were not that significant. However, there was an improvement in both of the groups from pre-test to post-test scores.

Next, research by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) entitled: Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media informed that the concept of social media is the agenda for many business executives today to use, for example, Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, second life, and Twitter. This research also provides some clarification which begins by describing the concept of social media and discusses how it differs from related concepts such as Web 2.0 and User-generated Content.

Meanwhile, Balbay & Kilis (2017) conducted a study entitled: Students' perceptions of the use of a YouTube channel specifically designed for an academic speaking skills course. The study was conducted involving 70 students taking the compulsory Academic Speaking Skills course offered to students from varying disciplines in Middle East Technical University. Students were asked to fill out a Google Sheets survey at the end of the course on their perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of the aforementioned YouTube channel. The data was analyzed based on both descriptive statistics and deductive content analysis. The results indicated that the majority of the students benefited from using a large variety of videos on the playlists of this specifically-designed supplementary material YouTube channel. The findings can contribute to further guiding university language instructors by suggesting the abundance of alternative ways to benefit from YouTube and similar online video source platforms.

There are similarities and differences between this study and the previous study. The similarity comes from the same topic that both discuss using social media in English language learning. Whereas, the difference comes from the limitation of the research design, the participants, the number of participants, and the site of the research.

METHOD

For this study, a mixed-methods approach of qualitative and quantitative were applied to develop detailed and deep analysis on the use of social media in English language learning by the students of a state university in Jambi, Indonesia. The researcher used purposive sampling to find the participants. As many as 137 respondents of the English Study Program at Jambi University in Academic Year 2019-2020 were involved in this study to answer the questionnaire. For the qualitative data, the researcher has chosen 10 participants (5 male and 5 female students), who have answered the questionnaire. For sampling, the concept of purposeful sampling is used in a qualitative study. It means that the inquirers select participants because their participants can purposefully inform an understanding of the research issues (Creswell, 2014).

The data of this study were collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews; a total of 137 respondents who were previously and officially invited by the researcher completed the questionnaire voluntarily. For the interview session, there were some questions in this part which includes 5 questions about the kind of social media used in learning English and 6 questions regarding the use of social media in learning English. The questions were asked to each participant in around 20 to 30 minutes. In the process of getting data through the interview, the researcher recorded all the conversations during the interview session. The interview protocol was designed to follow up on the questionnaire which explored respondents' use of social media in greater depth.

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using basic statistical analysis. The data from the interview were analyzed using phenomenological case analysis combined with coding thematically.

RESULTS

A. Quantitative Result

To address the first research question, What types of social media are most commonly utilized by students to learn English?, the data was gathered through a survey conducted by the researcher. According to the results of a survey data analysis, Instagram is one of the social media platforms that students utilize the most when studying English. (Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter)

Table 1:
Students' Preference for Types of Social Media in Learning English

Kinds of Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	116	84.6%
WhatsApp	104	75.9%
Snapchat	35	47.9%
Instagram	130	94.8%
Telegram	61	44.5%
Twitter	81	59.1%

Table 1 depicts the frequency with which social media is used for English language learning. The majority of respondents (94.8 percent) stated that they use Instagram for English language learning. Following that, 84.6 percent of respondents said they use Facebook to learn English, and 75.9 percent said they use WhatsApp to learn English. 59.1 percent of those polled said they utilized Twitter to learn English. On the other hand, just a small percentage of respondents utilize Snapchat and Telegram in learning English (47.9 percent and 44.5 percent respectively).

There is an interesting phenomenon about social media use among Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook for English language learning purposes. The majority of the students tend to use Instagram than Facebook and WhatsApp. Some students use Telegram and Snapchat for English language learning purposes.

B. Qualitative Results

The oral interviews (n=10) were designed to examine students' use and perceived advantages and disadvantages of social media-based English

learning. The focus here will be on the themes that persisted during the interview, or that exposed different aspects of learners' perceptions.

Analysis of the interviews revealed that participants prefer to use social media as additional (optional) language learning tools, which they can access anytime and anywhere to complement their classroom learning.

> I usually use social media on my own in my spare time, for indirect learning, but not for formal classroom learning (St_3).

> I love the idea of learning English through social media likes Instagram or Facebook and I am even excited for it... (St_5)

The participants expressed that they always make a discussion and communication in the English language learning by using social media. The analysis found that all participants often discuss and communicate with each other in English.

> I like to communicate with my friends and sometimes discuss homework through Instagram (St_2)

> We always discuss with our friends about English learning, assignment or task by using social media (St_7)

Using social media for learning English can improve students' motivation. As some participants mentioned self-directed learning and interest in English language learning using social media. As some students expressed;

> With social media, we can share our experience, knowledge, even task and we can learn or practice by ourselves. (St_2)

> I enjoy learning English through social media, I can join the discussion forum, so I can ask questions that I don't know the answer (St_3)

Using social media can improve English language skills. This was learnt from students' learning via various sort of media social tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These tools provided some benefits to help the students develop their English skills.

> Social media, I use it every day. I can practice, reading, speaking, and listening to the English language easily. (St_1)

> With social media, I can learn vocabulary, there are many new vocabularies in social media (St_5)

The last aspect was effectiveness. This was defined from students' learning via various sort of social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. These tools provided some benefits to help the students understand English learning materials easily, and make English language learning more effective. For instance, two students mentioned:

> With social media, I can learn English effectively. I can learn more about daily expressions through social media (St_6)

> I think that social media helps me to learn English more effective. Because social media provide some opportunities for us to explore English easily (St_9)

Although participants were aware of the limitations of social media, including lack of privacy and a potential invasion of their social space, they perceived that the pedagogical use of social media positively in many aspects such as; can be accessed anytime and anywhere, to discuss homework, to communicate to each other, motivation, and effectiveness.

DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' preferences for different forms of social media as well as their opinions of the benefits of utilizing social media for English language learning. This study employed two instruments (questionnaire and semi-structured interview) of data collection about the use of social media in learning English as a foreign language. The result of the questionnaire showed that the majority of the students used Instagram for English language learning purposes. and the minority of the students use telegram for learning English.

Then, as found in the result of the interview session, it indicated that there were 5 themes. First, social media was an additional (optional) language learning tools in learning English. Second, social media provided discussion and communication activities in learning English. Third, social media could improve students' motivation in English language learning. The next was how social media help in improving English language skills. The last was how effective was the use of social media in learning English.

This finding was in agreement with the previous study by Monica & Anamaria (2014), where social media was also one famous thing that was used by people of every age and level. There were six kinds of social media discussed in this study: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Telegram. However, the result of the questionnaire showed that the participants of this study mostly used Instagram for learning English. Then, the minority of the students used Snapchat and telegram to help them in English language learning.

This current study indicated that the majority of respondents utilized Instagram to learn English. Which is in line with another research (Al-Ali, 2010). Al-Ali (2010) highlighted that Instagram is one of the widely-used social media that many people use nowadays, especially for young learners. He also stated that Instagram is a social networking platform that contains photographs and videos. This might be one of the reasons why so many people are interested in using Instagram for English language learning.

The use of social media provides some opportunities for the students to practice their English skills. Social media was very beneficial for students in improving their ability of critical thinking. The majority of participants stated that the use of social media enabled them to practice English skills because they can make discussion and communication both oral and written the English language. After that, the use of social media also can be seen in any kind of activities in the class, since it is known that learning using social media can improve the knowledge of the students' especially in learning English (Balbay & Kilis, 2017).

The activity that the participants can use social media in learning English is a discussion group. In addition, as found in this study that social media can help the students in learning English for communication, discussion, interaction, and doing or submitting the assignment (Habibi et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The use of social media in language learning is the latest method, which comprises the usage of applications to promote EFL learning. As EFL university students were required to enhance their English language skills, they tend to use social media in improving their language skills. This study focused on students' perspectives, particularly on social media utilization among EFL university students. Therefore, Indonesian policymakers,

curriculum designers, and educators must take into account students' perceptions when applying changes to teaching techniques and methods. It is clear that educators play an important role in effectively applying social media in English classroom practice, and, for this reason, it is essential to consider their views on it. University students in Indonesia have positive attitudes toward social media use in English language learning.

Based on the study's findings and discussion, it can be concluded that students tend to use social media including Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook for English language learning. Instagram is the most popular social media platform used by students in learning English. They use social media for learning English in their spare time at home, or when the lecturer lets them use it in the class, especially for group discussion. The various content material from social media helps students enhance their language skills, and thus motivates students to learn English through social media. Furthermore, positive attitudes about social media usage should be explored to increase the quality of students' English learning. In the context of EFL university students, the integration of social media must be counted to improve the students' language abilities through the usage of appropriate types of social media in English language learning and teaching.

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