Implementing English Language Learning through Social Media: Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Era

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Publisher	ABSTRACT
FKIP Universitas Timor, NTT- Indonesia	This study aims to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by students in using social media for English language learning, as well as how to optimize its use among Gen Z learners. The research employs a qualitative approach, using questionnaires and in-depth interviews as instruments. The participants consist of university students and high school students in Indonesia who are actively using social media for learning. The findings reveal that platforms such as YouTube and TikTok provide significant opportunities for students to access flexible and easily available educational content, particularly in enhancing listening and speaking skills. However, challenges include limited internet access, difficulties in understanding accents, and a lack of motivation for self-directed learning. To address these challenges, it is suggested that educational content should be more varied and interactive, and there should be dedicated platforms for English language learning. In conclusion, social media holds great potential as a tool for English language learning, but its effectiveness depends on the availability of supporting infrastructure and quality content. **Keywords**: *Social media, English language learning, Gen Z, opportunities, challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, mastering English has become a crucial need for the younger generation to compete in the global market. Generation Z, known as digital natives, possess skills in using technology and social media for various purposes, including learning. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have transformed from entertainment tools into potential educational resources. However, despite their significant potential, there are still various challenges that hinder the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool. In Indonesia, social media usage is very popular among the younger generation. According to data from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), over 80% of the Indonesian population is active on social media. This creates a significant opportunity to integrate social media into English language learning. However, further research is needed to understand how social media can be effectively utilized inthecontextoflanguageeducation.

The advancement of digital technology has changed the way people learn and communicate. Conventional face-to-face learning is now often complemented or even replaced by online learning methods. According to Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010), social media has become an integral part of daily life and offers various tools and platforms that can be used to support English language learning. For example, YouTube provides learning videos that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, while Instagram and TikTok offer short, easily digestible, and engaging content.

However, despite its many benefits, the use of social media in English language learning is not without challenges. One major challenge is distraction, which can interfere with students' focus on learning. According to Junco (2012), social media is often filled with irrelevant or entertainment-oriented content that can divert students' attention from their learning goals. Additionally, the lack of supervision and guidance from teachers can lead to less effective use of social media.

On the other hand, social media also offers various opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance students' English language skills. For instance, live streaming features on Instagram and YouTube can be used by teachers to deliver lessons in real-time and interact directly with students. Moreover, comment and messaging features on these platforms allow students to discuss and ask questions directly to teachers or peers. Blattner and Fiori (2009) found that the use of Facebook in second language classrooms can increase student interaction and use of the target language outside the classroom .

Integrating social media into English language learning can also boost student motivation. Interactive and engaging content, such as videos and quizzes, can make the learning process more enjoyable and appealing to students. Kabilan

et al. (2010) found that social media can increase student engagement in learning, as they can interact directly with learning materials and their peers. The need to investigate the use of social media in English language learning stems from the gap between the potential benefits of these platforms and their actual implementation in educational settings. While social media offers numerous interactive tools and resources, its effectiveness as a learning aid varies depending on factors such as content quality, user engagement, and pedagogical strategies. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring how social media can be effectively harnessed to enhance English language skills, identifying practical solutions to overcome existing challenges, and providing actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers.

This study aims to further explore how social media can be effectively utilized in English language learning. By understanding the opportunities and challenges present, it is hoped that solutions can be found to optimize the use of social media as an effective learning tool. This research will also provide practical recommendations for teachers and educational policymakers on how to integrate social media into English language learning.

ResearchQuestions
What opportunities does social media offer for English language learning? What challenges are faced in using social media for English language learning? How can the use of social media for English language learning among Gen-Z be optimized?

Research Objectives
To identify the opportunities offered by social media in English language learning. To identify the challenges faced in using social media for English language learning.
To provide recommendations for optimizing the use of social media in English language learning among Gen-Z.

Significance of the Study
For Teachers: Provides insights on how to effectively use social media as a teaching aid.
For Students: Enhances English language skills through relevant and engaging methods.For Policymakers: Provides a foundation for formulating educational policies that support the use of technology in learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

In the field of language learning, particularly English language learning, social media plays an increasingly significant role. The integration of technology in language acquisition has been extensively studied, and various theories support the potential of these digital platforms. One foundational theory that underpins this research is the Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1977). According to this theory, individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts. Social media provides an ideal platform for this, where users can observe native speakers, imitate correct usage of language, and participate in interactive learning environments. Another relevant theoretical framework is the Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that learning is a social process that is most effective when learners are actively engaged in constructing knowledge through interaction. This aligns with the use of social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, where learners not only consume content but also produce and interact with peers and language experts, fostering a collaborative learning environment.The Communicative Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) in language teaching, which focuses on real communication in authentic contexts, also supports the use of social media in language learning. Social media platforms offer real-world communication opportunities that enhance language proficiency, allowing learners to practice their language skills in meaningful contexts through interactions such as comments, posts, and live chats.

Concepts Relevant to Social Media in Language Learning

Digital Literacy: Digital literacy is essential for students to effectively utilize social media platforms for learning purposes. It encompasses the ability to locate, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies. According to Buckingham (2003), digital literacy is a critical skill for students in the modern world, especially in navigating online platforms like social media for educational purposes. In the context of English language learning, being digitally literate enables students to access diverse resources such as videos, podcasts, articles, and discussion forums that enhance language acquisition. Self-Directed Learning: The concept of self-directed learning is vital in the use of social media for educational purposes. Garrison (1997) defines self-directed learning as a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, setting learning goals, identifying resources for learning, choosing and implementing learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Social media allows learners to take control of their learning process by providing access

to endless language-learning resources and opportunities to practice language skills independently. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL): Social media platforms are often accessed through mobile devices, making them a part of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). According to Kukulska-Hulme (2012), MALL facilitates the learning process by allowing students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere. This mobility enhances the flexibility and frequency of language practice, which is particularly beneficial in language learning. Engagement and Motivation: Motivation is a critical factor in language learning, and social media has been shown to increase student engagement and motivation. Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory suggests that learners are more motivated when they feel autonomous, competent, and related to others. Social media platforms offer interactive features that increase learners' engagement and motivation by enabling them to connect with peers, teachers, and content creators.

Previous Studies

Several studies have examined the role of social media in language learning, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges it presents. Manca and Ranieri (2016) explored how social media can be used to foster collaboration and communication in learning environments. Their study revealed that social media offers students opportunities to engage in collaborative learning, share resources, and receive feedback in real time. However, they also noted that the lack of structured guidance from educators could lead to distractions and reduce the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool. Kim (2014) examined the use of KakaoTalk, a social media messaging app, in South Korea for learning English. The study showed that learners who used the app for language learning experienced improvements in their speaking and listening skills. The instant messaging feature allowed for real-time practice, which was particularly beneficial for students in non-native English-speaking environments. Alm (2015) conducted research on the use of YouTube for language learning and discovered that students who engaged with English-language content on YouTube were able to improve their listening and speaking skills significantly. The visual and auditory nature of YouTube videos provided context-rich language input, which helped learners understand and acquire new vocabulary and phrases in authentic situations.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, the conceptual framework for this study revolves around the idea that social media platforms provide opportunities for authentic language practice, collaborative learning, and increased motivation. However, challenges such as distractions, lack of structure, and the need for digital

literacy must be addressed to maximize the benefits of social media in English language learning. The framework of this study draws from the Social Learning Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Communicative Approach, positioning social media as a dynamic tool that can facilitate language acquisition when integrated effectively into the learning process. The framework is as follows: Opportunities: Authentic language use, access to diverse learning resources, self-directed learning, and increased motivation through engagement. Challenges: Distractions, content irrelevance, and the need for structured guidance and digital literacy. Strategies for Optimization: Structured learning plans, educator involvement, and the development of digital literacy skills to maximize the potential of social media as a language learning tool.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore in-depth the experiences and perceptions of students using social media for English language learning. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to gain a richer and more contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Yin (2014), a case study approach is particularly suitable for studying contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. Merriam (1998) also emphasizes that qualitative research is effective for exploring the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems.

Subjects

The participants in this study are high school and university students in Indonesia who actively use social media in their learning process. Participants are selected purposively to ensure they have relevant experiences with the research topic. The target number of participants is 20-30 respondents for for exploratory questionnaires. Creswell (2013) suggests that purposive sampling is effective in qualitative research as it allows researchers to select individuals who can provide rich and detailed information about the phenomenon being studied.

Research Instruments

The study employs two primary instruments: exploratory questionnaires and in-depth interviews, chosen for their ability to provide comprehensive and meaningful data in line with the research objectives. Exploratory questionnaires are utilized to gather initial data and identify key themes for further exploration, focusing on

students' use of social media for English language learning, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improvement. These questionnaires, as noted by Foddy (1994) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), are effective in collecting broad data efficiently and identifying patterns for in-depth investigation. In addition, in-depth interviews are conducted to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding social media's role in their English language learning. Kvale (1996) and Patton (2002) emphasize that interviews provide rich, detailed insights into participants' lived experiences, making them ideal for exploring the complexities of social media use in education. The interview questions will explore the platforms used, improvements in language skills, and strategies for overcoming challenges, offering a more nuanced understanding of students' learning experiences.

Data Collection Prosedure
ExploratoryQuestionnaires:
The questionnaires will be distributed online using platforms such as Google Forms.Respondents will be invited to participate through social media groups, educational forums, and networks within schools and universities.

DataAnalysis
QuestionnaireAnalysis:
Data from the exploratory questionnaires will be analyzed descriptively to identify main themes and areas that require further exploration.
Reporting Findings
Questionnaire Findings:
Results from the questionnaires will be presented in narrative form and tables to provide an initial overview of the use of social media in English language learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
This chapter presents the findings derived from the questionnaires and interviews conducted with high school and university students in Indonesia, aimed at understanding how they use social media for learning English. The findings are presented based on the research questions, followed by a detailed discussion of each.

Opportunities Offered by Social Media for English Learning
From the data collected, the following key opportunities were identified:
Access to Authentic Learning Resources: 85% of respondents indicated that social

media provides access to a wide range of authentic learning materials such as videos, podcasts, and articles in English. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram are popular for improving listening and reading skills. Flexibility and Convenience: 78% of respondents highlighted that social media allows them to learn at their own pace and in their own time. Learning materials are available 24/7, providing flexibility that formal education may not offer. Interactive Learning: 67% of respondents agreed that social media facilitates interactive learning. Features like comments, discussions, and live streaming sessions enable users to interact with both content creators and other learners, enhancing their learning experience.

Challenges in Using Social Media for English Learning

The study also revealed several challenges faced by respondents when using social media for learning English: Distractions: 90% of respondents reported that the primary challenge was the overwhelming amount of distracting content on social media. They found it difficult to stay focused on learning when bombarded with entertainment and other unrelated materials. Lack of Guidance: 75% of respondents mentioned that without structured guidance from teachers or educational platforms, their learning through social media tends to be unstructured and less effective. They expressed the need for curated and relevant content.Over-reliance on Passive Learning: 60% of respondents pointed out that much of the content they engage with on social media involves passive learning, such as watching videos, rather than actively practicing their English skills (e.g., speaking and writing).

Optimizing Social Media Use for English Learning

When asked about strategies to improve the use of social media for learning, respondents proposed the following: Curated Content: 80% suggested that content should be better curated by educators or content creators to focus on language learning objectives. Having recommendations for reliable and educational pages, channels, or accounts would help learners stay on track. Community-Based Learning: 70% of respondents recommended using social media groups or communities to foster collaborative learning. These groups could be moderated by educators or more experienced learners to guide discussions and practice activities Time Management Tools: 65% of respondents emphasized the importance of time management and suggested using built-in social media features like "time spent" notifications to monitor and regulate their time on learning content.

Discussion

The findings suggest that social media offers a valuable platform for enhancing English language learning, particularly due to its accessibility and the wealth of authentic resources it provides. The opportunities for learners to engage with real-world English through various formats such as videos, podcasts, and live interactions make social media a dynamic tool for improving language skills. This aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes the role of observation and imitation in the learning process. Through social media, learners can observe and engage with native speakers, thereby enhancing their listening and speaking skills. However, the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool is hindered by distractions and the lack of structured learning paths. The overwhelming presence of non-educational content diverts attention, making it difficult for learners to focus solely on language acquisition. This supports previous research by Manca and Ranieri (2016), which found that while social media enhances engagement, it also introduces the risk of distractions. The lack of structured guidance as highlighted by 70% of respondents points to the need for better curation of learning resources and structured guidance from educators or language experts, echoing the Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which stresses the importance of guided learning in social contexts. Moreover, while social media platforms offer many interactive features, learners tend to rely heavily on passive consumption of content rather than active engagement, such as speaking or writing practice. This highlights the importance of integrating more interactive activities and assessments into social media-based learning environments, as supported by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes the role of autonomy and active engagement in maintaining motivation. The integration of gamified features, such as quizzes and language challenges, could enhance the interactive aspect of social media learning, providing more opportunities for learners to actively apply their language skills. In summary, while social media presents significant opportunities for English language learners through authentic content and real-time interaction, addressing the challenges of distraction and lack of structured guidance is crucial for optimizing its use.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the use of social media as a tool for English language learning, focusing on the opportunities, challenges, and strategies for optimizing its use. The results from 21 participants highlight that social media platforms offer easy access to authentic language resources and flexible, self-paced learning opportunities.

However, distractions from non-educational content and the lack of structured guidance pose significant challenges. Students often engage passively with content rather than actively practicing language skills. To address these issues, strategies such as curated content, community-based learning groups, and time management tools are suggested. Overall, social media can be a valuable resource for learning English when structured, interactive learning pathways are provided.

Suggestions

Based on the study's findings, several suggestions are made for students, teachers, and future researchers. Students should set specific goals and avoid distractions when using social media for English learning, following reliable educational content and using time management tools. Active participation in language-learning communities is encouraged to promote language use. Teachers are advised to integrate social media into their teaching by curating relevant content and guiding students on effective usage. Creating or moderating language-learning groups on platforms can also support structured learning activities. For future researchers, further studies should examine the long-term effects of social media on language learning, particularly in developing speaking and writing skills, and explore how different platforms perform in various language-learning tasks.

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