



THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO FACILITATE ENGLISH LEARNING: A SURVEY OF GAYONESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: Social media is a technological advancement in information and communication used by people of all ages and around the globe. Even though social media platforms were not initially designed for education, they have captured the attention of some educators, particularly those who teach and study the English language. This study aimed to determine what kinds of social media English students at the State Institute of Islamic Studies Takengon utilize and how social media assists students in learning English. In this study, a descriptive-qualitative methodology was employed. The researcher used open-ended response surveys, interviews, and written records to collect data. This research utilized data analysis techniques involving data reduction, presentation, conclusion, and verification. To ensure the validity of the information, the writer employed both reliability and source triangulation mechanisms. According to the findings of this study, students improved their English skills by utilizing eight different social media platforms, including Blogger, Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. In comparison, most students prefer media-sharing platforms (MMS) to social networking sites (SNS) to enhance their English skills. Students mainly use social media features such as viewing videos, listening to podcasts, and conversing with native English speakers. In addition, they also utilize personal chat, group chat, comment sections, photos, descriptions, stories, and biographies to enhance their English skills through peer interaction. The study's conclusions may have an impact on curriculum development, instructional strategies, and educational policies that support language acquisition and cross-cultural communication in digital environments, both within and outside of Gayonese universities.

Keywords: Social Media Assisted Learning, Educational Technology, English Language Learning

Abstrak: Media sosial adalah kemajuan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi yang digunakan oleh orang-orang dari segala usia di seluruh dunia. Meskipun platform media sosial pada awalnya tidak dirancang untuk pendidikan, mereka telah menarik perhatian beberapa pendidik, khususnya mereka yang mengajar dan mempelajari bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis media sosial apa saja yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris di IAIN Takengon dan bagaimana media sosial tersebut membantu mahasiswa dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metodologi deskriptif-kualitatif. Peneliti menggunakan observasi, survei, dan wawancara untuk mengumpulkan data. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan teknik analisis data yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian, penarikan kesimpulan, dan verifikasi. Untuk memastikan validitas informasi, penulis menggunakan strategi reliabilitas dan triangulasi sumber. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa mahasiswa meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka dengan memanfaatkan delapan platform media sosial yang berbeda termasuk Blogger, Facebook, LinkedIn, Whatapps, Telegram, Youtube, Instagram, TikTok. Sebagai perbandingan, mayoritas siswa lebih memilih platform berbagi media (MMS) daripada situs jejaring sosial (SNS) dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris nya. Mereka cenderung menggunakan fitur media sosial seperti melihat video, mendengarkan podcast, dan berbicara dengan penutur asli bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, mereka juga memanfaatkan obrolan pribadi, obrolan grup, bagian komentar, foto, deskripsi, cerita, dan biografi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka melalui interaksi teman sebaya. Kesimpulan penelitian ini mungkin berdampak pada pengembangan kurikulum, strategi pengajaran, dan kebijakan pendidikan yang mendukung pemerolehan bahasa dan komunikasi lintas budaya dalam lingkungan digital, baik di dalam maupun di luar perguruan tinggi yang ada di dataran tinggi Gayo.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Menggunakan Media Sosial, Teknologi Pendidikan, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

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INTRODUCTION

Examples of products in information and communication technology include social media websites. According to Purvis et al. (2020), social media refers to online tools and applications that facilitate rapid, effective dissemination of information. Until now, the expansion of various social media platforms has been tremendous. All ages, from infants to senior citizens, utilize social media. Today, people's lives cannot be separated from using social media. Arafah and Hasyim (2019) pointed out that social media platforms serve four primary functions: making social connections, encouraging collaboration, self-revelation, and providing a means of creative expression. Social media has a variety of effects on the educational process. For instance, it facilitates the dissemination of knowledge, the exchange of ideas and instruments, and the facilitation of collaboration. People can learn without being required to be in a specific location or time, thanks to online learning aids. Students rely on social media to communicate with one another. Due to this, social media can be utilized in various methods to enhance learning.

There are two main categories of social media: social networking sites (SNS) and media sharing sites (MSS) (Mercy & Christa, 2020). The former are websites allowing users to share content and site settings, limited to those listed as "friends" within a group. The platforms that fall into this category, among other things, include Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Blogger, and LinkedIn. In comparison, the latter are YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. These websites allow users to create, modify, and share multimedia content unlimitedly. The commonality between these two types of social media is that even if they are not physically in those locations, students can learn about other countries and languages and gain a deeper understanding of them using social media (Purvis et al., 2020).

Given how crucial it is for students to learn English effectively, they may encounter some difficulties. For example, students have difficulty developing ideas on effectively acquiring English proficiency through social media (Islamiah, 2021). English teachers need to direct students that by visiting social media websites, they can find friends who can help them make changes or provide feedback on their writing and encounter a suitable place to write that makes it simpler to communicate with one another. They can also excel in speaking ability by speaking directly with native speakers on YouTube (Suci et al., 2022). Still, students can use English podcasts on TikTok or Instagram to enhance their English listening skills. Therefore, it is essential to seek the best solutions to these issues. Some teachers, particularly those who teach English as a foreign language, are interested in social media platforms despite their non-educational origins. Numerous studies have examined whether social media could be used to assist individuals in learning English. Holilulloh and Youssef (2020) conducted a study demonstrating how social media can aid children's education. In addition, numerous studies have shown positively facilitates foreign language learning. For instance, Nasution's (2022) study

reveals that it was discovered that social media provides a space for students to concentrate on acquiring the necessary language skills. As a result, there is a need for additional research on the use of social media in teaching English as a second language.

In the past decade, a great deal of research has been conducted on the educational applications of social media. Mustafa (2022) studied how social media can enhance English writing abilities in Pakistan. The study aimed to determine how students feel about social media and how their feelings are affected by one another. In the Indonesian context, Puspita Dewi et al. (2022) conducted a study to determine the impact of social media on learning English writing. Similarly, Ulfa (2020) study examined how social media can assist English language learners. Two other researchers have conducted similar studies on the same topic, including Inderawati et al. (2019) and Prasetyawati and Ardi (2020). Meanwhile, other researchers have examined social media from a variety of perspectives. Isti'annah (2017) examined how language is used on social media, whereas Mercy and Christa (2020) investigated the coherence and cohesion of social media writing. On the other hand, some researchers have focused on media sharing sites (MSS) content, as evidenced by the most current research of Dabamona & Yunus (2022), Syafiq et al. (2021), Sirait et al. (2021), and Islamiah (2021).

As no research has been conducted to examine the use of social media among Gayonese EFL students, this study aimed to widen the existing literature by examining how various social media platforms enhance the English of Gayonese students. It also fills a gap by finding students' preferences on social media types in their learning of English, whether they favor Social Networking sites (SNS) or Media Sharing Sites (MSS). This topic has received little attention in previous research mentioned above. In the context of the current investigation, the researcher has identified the two issues enumerated below.

1. Which social media platforms do English department students at IAIN Takengon use to enhance their English proficiency?
2. How often do English students at IAIN Takengon use social media to enhance their English skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media platforms enable users to engage in various activities online, such as creating and sharing information and discussing their interests, ideas, and opinions. According to Power (2014), social media is a collection of web-based applications founded on the concepts and technologies of Web 2.0 that enable users to create and share their content. In essence, social media platforms are a form of social technology that facilitates information sharing across various media formats. Wolf et al. (2018) classified social media tools into two categories. The first category consists of instruments operated by companies or individuals, typically in the form of a website or blog. Third-party applications such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are in the second category. Faizi et al. (2013) point out that there are seven types of social media that individuals around the globe widely use. These categories, among other things, include social networking sites (SNS) and media-sharing sites (MSS). Individuals can select the

social media platform that best suits their requirements, regardless of whether they prefer to speak or write.

Zam Al Arif (2019) contends that learning entails acquiring new information, enhancing old skills, and altering a student's behavior. According to Hamat and Hassan (2019), learning is acquiring knowledge, skills, experiences, or instructions about a particular subject to enhance their English language and skills abilities. Also, proficiency in English is essential to learning English because it equips students with the tools they need to express their thoughts, opinions, emotions, and feelings. English skills are composed of speaking, writing, reading, and listening. However, some skills, such as writing and speaking, are often difficult for children. This issue can be resolved by developing a comprehensive plan to enhance students' writing and speaking skills. Simulations and controlled assignments can be used to demonstrate the operation of the method. These two tasks could be completed via social media or in a traditional classroom. The norms for composing and conversing on social media platforms are not overly stringent, so users are not required to have flawless English. Students can use digital writing and speaking methods on social media platforms to enhance their English writing and speaking skills. This is in addition to acquiring new words and spelling correctly.

Furthermore, media-sharing and social media sites facilitate students' access to educational materials anywhere and anytime. Social media in education spans various platforms tailored to different needs. Microblogging sites like Twitter foster real-time discussions, while visual platforms like Instagram promote creativity. Professional networks such as LinkedIn aid in career development, and collaborative tools like Google Classroom streamline communication and project management. These platforms enrich engagement and learning outcomes for both educators and students. Furthermore, in English language learning, social media platforms like Twitter enable real-time practice and interaction. YouTube and Instagram offer immersive experiences through videos and images, aiding vocabulary acquisition. Language exchange apps like Tandem connect learners with native speakers for practice. Communities on platforms like Facebook provide forums for sharing resources and receiving feedback, accelerating the language learning journey. According to Haque (2023), making educational instructions comprehensible is possible. It is an excellent example of how media-sharing and social media can assist children in learning English outside of the traditional educational context. With the increasing expansion of new media-sharing platforms such as TikTok and YouTube Shorts, EFL learners are exposed to unlimited multimedia learning sources, including posters and videos. This availability and easy access have enabled students to learn English, especially writing, to enhance and improve their learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study used a descriptive-qualitative approach to examine the various social media platforms students use. Participants in this research were 100 English Department students at IAIN Takengon. Throughout this investigation, the researcher utilized three different instruments. The three components are open-ended response

surveys, interviews, and observations. Although surveys are often associated with quantitative research, creating open-ended response surveys can answer the question raised qualitatively (Isti'annah, 2017). In this study, the surveys are implemented to find out what types of social media the students use in their pursuit of English proficiency. After discovering two students utilizing social media to enhance their English skills, the researcher selected two individuals to examine in greater detail. Thus, the information used for this investigation originated from two primary sources. Students' survey responses and interviews with students were used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire is adapted from the social media query framework Faizi et al. (2013) developed.

Data Collection and Analysis

After data collection, the information will be analyzed to aid comprehension. This study will collect data through open-ended response surveys, which will then be analyzed. The researcher used the concept of trustworthiness to determine the veracity and dependability of the facts. Triangulation necessitated that multiple sources verify the collected data. Triangulation was used to increase the reliability and precision of the gathered data. There are three approaches to conducting an investigation: source triangulation, method triangulation, and time triangulation (Helaluddin & Wijaya, 2019). Additionally, source triangulation allows researchers to obtain additional information about their research topic from multiple sources or individuals. In this instance, the researcher will interview some English students using social media to enhance their English skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

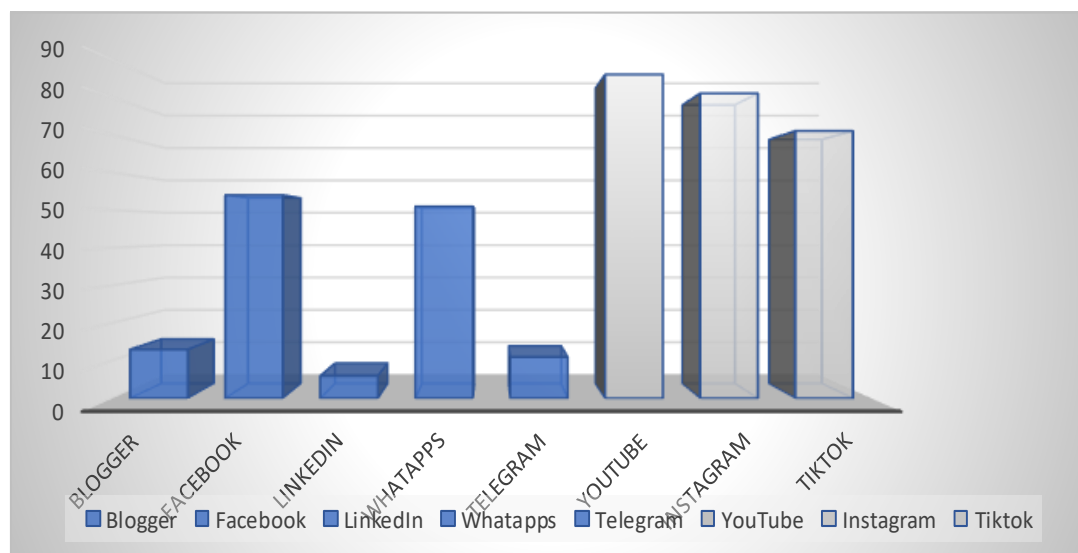
The researcher administered a survey questionnaire to English Department students at IAIN Takengon to determine which social media sites they used. The survey contained queries regarding the conceptual framework for social media classes that Faizi et al. (2013) established. Participants were asked how they use various social media sites and, if applicable, which sites they use. The survey results are displayed in the table below. The blue-colored bars indicate social networking (SNS) typed platforms, while the grey-colored bars indicate media sharing sites (MMS) typed platforms.

Table 1. Types of social media used by students

No.	Platforms of Social Media	Use	Not Use	Use (%)	Not Use(%)
1.	Blogger	13	87	13%	87%
2.	Facebook	54	46	54%	46%
3.	LinkedIn	6	94	6%	94%
4.	Whatapps	51	49	51%	49%
5.	Telegram	11	89	11%	89%
6.	YouTube	86	14	86%	14%
7.	Instagram	81	19	81%	19%
8.	Tiktok	85	15	85%	15%

The results show that media sharing sites (MSS), namely YouTube, followed by TikTok and Instagram, were the respondents' most popular social media platforms. LinkedIn, which belongs to social networking sites (SNS), was the least popular. In addition to the table, the writer has included a bar chart to facilitate comprehensive data analysis. The data is presented as a chart, as shown below.

Chart 1. Types of media-sharing social media platforms used by students



From the chart, as many as 100 EFL learners utilized various online resources to enhance their English skills. Specifically, 86 students utilized YouTube, 54 students utilized Facebook, 51 students utilized WhatsApp, and 85 students utilized TikTok. Moreover, 81 students utilized Instagram, 13 students used Blogger, and only 6 used LinkedIn. In conclusion, the study results indicate that English Department students at IAIN Takengon preferred media-sharing sites (grey-colored bars) to social networking sites (blue-colored bars) in learning English skills. This is in line with the research finding conducted by Tahmina (Tahmina, 2023), and Sembiring and Katemba, (2023). They found that most students favored using YouTube to improve their speaking and listening skills given the fact that the platform enabled them to interact and communicate as well as gain limitless language input with native speakers of English.

DISCUSSION

Furthermore, according to the interview data, the subjects utilize YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. In addition, they utilize numerous sites for writing, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Blogger, and LinkedIn. The most recent document data confirmed the findings of the previous instrument, namely that students use media-sharing platforms (MMS) and social media sites (SNS) to enhance their English skills. Therefore, this study's primary conclusion is that many students use all categories of social media specified by Faizi et al. (2013). However, it was also found that students favored MMS over SNS in enhancing their English learning. It demonstrates that other students have significant room for improvement in using social media to learn English. Similarly, Samah A. Alenezi, (2022), revealed that MMS platforms were mainly used by English learners to enhance their writing ability. For instance, using Blogging and

LinkedIn constantly allows them to write in English and build their confidence in their writing ability. Meanwhile, a platform such as Facebook is predominantly used by students to improve their Reading skills as they are exposed to an abundance of written English conversations on the platform (Kasuma & Tan, 2019)

YouTube, a video-sharing platform, has become the most popular media-sharing website for enhancing English abilities. A student opined that YouTube is superior to other social media sites due to its extensive video library and many educational accounts dedicated to English learning. According to Hendriwanto et al. (2022), using YouTube to acquire English can assist students in achieving their learning objectives. Actively and collaboratively engage in the process of learning. Modern students rely significantly on the internet for information and entertainment, so incorporating YouTube into the classroom can increase student engagement. How teachers utilize this tool can be altered to accommodate the interests and requirements of their students. Similarly, Suci et al. (2022) mentioned that utilizing YouTube as a teaching instrument is crucial for assisting students in comprehending English language instruction. This method can assist students in enhancing their English language skills and academic performance. YouTube had a significant impact on the extent to which children comprehended English.

Furthermore, Nasution (2022) stated that using videos can help students avoid having to ponder too much and accommodate various learning styles. According to the statement, it was believed that using the video would be beneficial because students are likely familiar with YouTube, which could increase their motivation. Similarly, according to Dabamona and Yunus (2022), YouTube could be a beneficial learning instrument in the classroom, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students, by facilitating their comprehension of various topics through effective teaching aids. Students must therefore utilize social media platforms, particularly YouTube, to enhance their English language skills.

Based on what students said in their interviews, the findings of this study indicate that students felt comfortable learning English language skills through social media platforms, emphasizing the use of media-sharing sites such as YouTube and TikTok. Due to its adaptability, social media can be employed in various contexts. Also, social media sites enable people to communicate with one another, which is believed to reduce student anxiety by providing them with positive experiences. Students acquire the confidence to independently study and exercise their English language skills in various locations and at their own pace. Social media sites have become more valuable learning resources as they have improved and gained popularity. Given the prevalence of social media use, Mismara (2019) argues that teachers should be able to identify various opportunities or possibilities for incorporating social media into the classroom. She further elaborates that social media platforms facilitate the teaching process by making it more straightforward for instructors to explain complex concepts. Using the appropriate instructional materials can boost students' interest in their learning experience.

CONCLUSION

According to the study results, students use Eight distinct social media platforms to learn how to write in English. Digital platforms include social networking sites Blogger,

Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. The interviews revealed that most students utilized social media platforms to enhance their English writing skills. Among other interactive features, they utilized personal and group chats, remark sections, captions, descriptions, stories, and biographies to achieve this goal. It is concluded that all individuals in this research use media sharing and social media platforms as learning instruments to enhance their English writing abilities. This study's explanation of how students responded will assist instructors, lecturers, and coaches in comprehending how to utilize social media in English lessons. This study aims to provide students with an overview of the various social media sites that can be utilized to enhance their English writing abilities. The study aims to equip students with sufficient knowledge to select a social media platform that suits their needs and preferences concerning future periods.

The research also has several advantages, such as its applicability to current problems, addition to the body of knowledge on technology-assisted language acquisition, offering useful recommendations for teachers, and use of a survey approach to gathering quantitative data. Nevertheless, it has drawbacks such as possible sample bias, dependence on self-reported data, shallow comprehension, and reliance on quickly changing social media platforms. The study's shortcomings also include its possible lack of generalizability to various cultural contexts, its inability to take into consideration participant differences in language ability and access to technology, and the lack of a long-term impact assessment concerning the viability and efficacy of using social media for English language learning. The research implies that integrating social media into English learning could benefit Gayonese university students by enhancing language acquisition. Educators and policymakers can use the findings to understand preferred platforms and effective teaching methods, considering students' technological preferences. However, further research is needed to explore long-term impacts and applicability to other cultural contexts, guiding educational practices and policies in Gayonese universities.

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