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Utilizing Social Media in EFL Blended Learning: Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom settings, the rapid evolution of digital technology has had a substantial impact on educational methodologies. This paper investigates the potential of social media to improve EFL blended learning instruction, with a particular emphasis on the higher education context of Indonesia. Innovative tools for promoting student engagement, motivation, and autonomous learning are available on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Nevertheless, the implementation of these social media platforms also presents obstacles, such as potential privacy concerns, distractions, and unequal access to digital resources. This investigation examines the current body of literature regarding the utilization of social media in EFL blended learning purposes. Social media can significantly improve the EFL learning experience by offering flexible, interactive, and engaging learning opportunities when strategically implemented, according to the results. The paper concludes with suggestions for policymakers and educators to facilitate the successful integration of social media into EFL education, thereby guaranteeing that technological advancements have a beneficial impact on student learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The world is progressing and transitioning toward a digital era where technology plays a crucial role in driving invention and innovation. As a contemporary human, it is evident that new gadgets or concepts are regularly being brought to the world on a daily basis. Technology is a factor that enhances the ease and convenience of human life. Conversely, digital technology plays a crucial role in offering convenience to people worldwide. From a broader standpoint, it has been noted that technology plays a crucial function in not only assisting individuals but also in bolstering the economy of the country in which it is utilized (Ergas, 1987). The primary objective of this essay is to demonstrate the significance of utilizing social media, a component of digital technology or digital media, as a tool for providing education to pupils. The utilization

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of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, as well as social applications like Whatsapp, SnapChat, and Instagram, has significantly risen in recent years (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ilham et al., 2024). Social media serve as platforms for individuals to connect, as well as instruments for communicating and achieving certain goals (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008).

Social media, in this context, serve as instruments that can be utilized to create easy and effective learning environments. Research has shown that both males and females utilize social media platforms not only for connecting and communicating with others, but also for acquiring information (WordStream & Lister, 2017). Furthermore, social media platforms, along with social media in general, have become an integral aspect of the lives of millennials and Generation Y, which typically include persons born in the 1980s and 1990s. The concept of delivering education and learning through social media is appealing to today's age and convenient for university students.

As technology progresses, so do the techniques of acquiring knowledge and learning. Universities, particularly in poor nations, should transition from the conventional approach of imparting knowledge through academic articles and presentations to utilizing innovative media formats for educational purposes. Social media is seen as a valuable tool for enhancing the learning experience. Social media has introduced a novel concept in the field of education, with the potential to revolutionize the way university curricula are developed and delivered. Priorly stated, the utilization of social media for educational purposes can also serve as a diversion for students. Therefore, it is crucial to carefully implement and utilize the mechanism (Ali, Yaacob, Endut, & Langove, 2016).

Social media is widely used in Indonesian society, especially among teenagers. According to a survey by Chaffey (2017), social media is incredibly popular in Indonesia, ranking in the top 10 when it comes to usage. The scenario presents both opportunities and obstacles for educators in Indonesia, particularly at the university level, as university students have greater access to social media for educational purposes compared to students at lower levels of education in the country. The researchers have over three years of experience as an EFL instructor, instructing students of all age groups. However, my primary focus and preference are with university-level students. EFL learning focuses on enhancing students' ability to effectively communicate and interact in real-life situations using their target language (Huang, 2015; Levy, 2009). Indonesian colleges prioritize the instruction of essential abilities like pronunciation, grammar, reading, listening, speaking, writing, and cultural understanding. The objective is for students to proficiently utilize English as their primary means of further education and interpersonal communication. An approach is to incorporate social media into EFL instruction, where instructors create learning activities that optimize the use of social media to actively involve students in the learning process and achieve the desired learning outcomes.



Therefore, this article contend that educators and researchers must comprehend the potential advantages and obstacles presented by social media in educational environments in order to optimize its use for EFL learning. Further, the paper then analyzed the prospects and obstacles of EFL learning through the use of social media. First, we commenced by providing an overview of the prevailing perspectives on the utilization of social media for educational purposes as an introductory segment. Following that, an analysis of the utilization of social media in higher education is presented, highlighting the potential opportunities and challenges, as well as our suggested instructional design strategies. Ultimately, we provided a summary and discuss the potential impact of using social media into instructional design for EFL learning. By comprehending the advantages and disadvantages, we may develop optimal instructional strategies for utilizing social media in EFL learning and evaluating its effectiveness.

METHODS

This paper conducts a thorough review and an analysis of over 70 research articles to investigate the use of social media in blended learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The data was collected from a variety of sources, including academic journals, books, and other scholarly publications. The data was then condensed into a coherent synopsis that summarizes, analyzes, and interprets the findings, arguments, and insights. This review is critical to the study because it provides both a theoretical foundation and contextual background (Rowley & Slack, 2004). This synthesis seeks to provide a comprehensive summary of current knowledge in the field of using social media in EFL education by methodically reviewing existing literature. It methodically organizes and analyzes data to clarify the various aspects and processes involved in this integration.

This study not only emphasizes the potential opportunities associated with incorporating social media into EFL blended learning settings, but also discusses the challenges and strategies required for successful implementation. The study conducts a thorough examination of existing literature to identify significant opportunities, challenges, and strategies for improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction through social media. This analysis is useful for educators and policymakers in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Opportunities

Several research have been undertaken in the university setting about the utilization of social media to enhance the process of teaching and learning. Multiple studies have demonstrated the beneficial impact of social media on teaching and learning in colleges. For example, social media has the ability to improve pupils' learning and motivation. A study conducted at Griffith University, Gold Coast, examined the use of Facebook



in four distinct courses. The findings indicate that the majority of students (78%) saw Facebook as a valuable tool for learning. Facebook facilitates the improvement of their learning, facilitates conversation, enables engagement with friends and lectures, and provides access to posted assignments and notes (Irwin, Ball, Desbrow & Leveritt, 2012). A recent study has investigated the impact of Facebook Groups on students' learning progress, aiming to understand how these groups can contribute to their educational development. The study suggests that Facebook Groups provide students with an amazing platform for discussion and participation. As a result, it contributes to boosting their enthusiasm to learn and improving their decision-making abilities. The utilization of social media facilitates students in socializing and engaging with others (Ahern, Feller & Nagle, 2016). In a similar vein, McCarthy (2017) examined the utilization of Facebook as a supplementary virtual learning environment for students to submit their assignments and offer feedback on their classmates' work. The majority of students reported that Facebook enhanced their social engagement with peers and facilitated collaborative work.

Social media can facilitate the creation of an engaging learning environment for teachers. The study conducted by Lumby, Anderson, and Hugman (2014) found that the usage of cohesive learning tools and content on social media can create a new opportunity for students to actively participate in their own learning. A study has also suggested that the utilization of social media grants students not only the independence to acquire knowledge but also the opportunity to engage in discussion forums, thereby enriching their overall learning experience. It not only facilitates communication but also establishes connections between individuals (Borštnar, 2012). He saw that pupils developed enhanced self-management skills when working in groups, and he motivated them to become independent learners even in the absence of teacher supervision. Furthermore, social media provides learners with the convenience of accessing, downloading, inquiring, and engaging in discussions with their peers, so enriching their learning experience.

In addition to that, students can readily communicate with their teachers to address any learning difficulties they may encounter (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2015; Jankauskaite, 2015; Selwyn, 2012; Liu, 2010). Flexible learning is very conducive to modern education due to the increased accessibility, convenience, and ease of use of the internet and technology. Educators should transform their conventional teaching approach into a more interactive model that promotes the utilization of technology and devises instructions that facilitate students' involvement with the subject matter and their peers (Collis & Moonen, 2002; Isma et al., 2023). Social media platforms assist students in managing their social life and prioritizing their academic obligations (Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie & Liew, 2017; Evans, 2014). They enable students to stay organized and stay informed about course requirements and deadlines, so helping them stay focused on their studies (Henderson et al., 2015).

Furthermore, research indicates that social media platforms have a substantial impact on the level of involvement of students with lower self-assurance. Social media platforms provide a means for students with



various personalities in the classroom to freely express their thoughts and interact with friends in an online environment (Yuzar et al., 2023). This is particularly beneficial for students who may feel intimidated, bored, or shy (Faizi, El Afia & Chiheb, 2013; Sobaih, Moustafa, Crabil, Youngquist & Cayanus, 2012). A study conducted by Rankin (2009) at U.T Dallas examined the utilization of Twitter as an educational tool. The study revealed that students who were initially disengaged in the class became actively involved in various online activities. Additional research indicates that when students experience a decline in their confidence and passion for traditional in-person learning, online social media learning can serve as a valuable alternative for them to express their ideas and creativity (Faizi et al., 2013; Moskaliuk, Kimmerle & Cress, 2009; Yuzar et al., 2023; Ilham et al., 2023). In addition, Kabilan et al. (2010) and Ningsih & Rahman (2023) conducted a study in Malaysia and Singapore to investigate the use of Instructional Media for English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition. They discovered that Facebook had a positive impact on students' language skills, including reading, writing, vocabulary, and communication.

Additionally, a majority of students (72.2%) expressed that Facebook had a positive impact on their self-assurance and drive to engage in English reading and writing. Initially, social networks, blogs, and wikis are used by learners as instruments for reading and expressing ideas. However, with continuous use, students develop an autonomous habit and their language abilities improve (Faizi et al., 2013; Suwanto & Rahman, 2022). The studies have shown that social media offers numerous advantages that can be beneficial for all types of learning activities, including EFL learning. This is because it allows learners to increase their motivation and engagement. Students can enhance their language skills, including pronunciation, reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammatical correction, and cultural awareness, by being motivated and involved in studying and communicating with peers or group members in a social media-based learning setting.

Challenges

Contemplating the concept of utilizing social media as a tool for learning naturally leads to considering the limitations it may impose on both educators and students. Selwyn's (2016) survey of 1518 university students unequivocally demonstrates that social media can significantly hinder students' ability to focus on their academic activities, assignments, and duties. Many students are often distracted from their actual learning by engaging in activities that are unrelated to learning, such as viewing movies, conversing, and updating social media feeds (Allam & Elvas, 2016; Balakrisnan et al., 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2017; Selwyn, 2016). This situation could worsen if pupils are unable to control themselves and lack the willingness to become autonomous learners and take responsibility for their own learning. Researchers view this phenomena as the students' inability to cope with the demands of university life, which requires them to be



self-directed learners in order to succeed (Lairio, Puukari & Kouvo, 2013; Macaskill & Denovan, 2013; Selwyn, 2016). Another difficulty pertains to the utilization of academics. Social media platforms allow users to freely contribute, edit, and download content, which can lead to concerns over privacy, authority, online plagiarism, cheating, cyberbullying, and other forms of online criminal activity (Balakrisnan et al., Çelik and Odaci 2013, 2017; Liu, 2010; Shek and Cheung 2013). In addition, the presence of erroneous and biased online content might pose challenges for students while conducting research and accessing pertinent resources (Liu, 2010; Taylor, King & Nelson, 2012).

Concerns regarding the improper and destructive utilization of technology in educational settings have prompted certain institutions and policymakers to impose limitations and even prohibit its usage in certain situations (Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010; Quinn, 2011). In order to address these problems, it is essential for educators to cultivate students' disposition towards social media. Students should be cautioned about the importance of exercising caution while choosing and revising information obtained from free web sources (Liu, 2010). In addition, teachers can enhance students' learning experience by curating and vetting educational resources for online platforms, ensuring that students have access to the most reliable and accurate sources of knowledge and information. Furthermore, teachers should be cognizant of the capabilities, constraints, and objectives of social media in order to assist their students in becoming astute and efficient users of social media for educational purposes (Burbules, 2016).

When considering the use of social media for learning in a developing country like Indonesia, it is important to acknowledge the enormous challenges that students and instructors in these places encounter. The main limitation is associated with the pupils' level of literacy and the availability of learning resources. The literacy level in poor countries is typically low. According to the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test results, numerous emerging nations are facing significant challenges. Indonesia, like other nations, ranks sixty-fourth out of seventy-two participating countries in terms of math, science, and reading skills according to the PISA 2016 report. In addition, the limited resources available to meet the educational demands and requirements of their inhabitants are impeding educators and learners from fully utilizing the benefits of technology. Another limitation is that numerous educators have the perception that the curriculum does not provide them with sufficient chances to use technology, such as social media, into their teaching practices (Allam & Elyas, 2016).

Although the government explicitly encourages teachers and educators to use technology into their daily teaching practices, they do not provide substantial support (as stated in Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 65, 2013). The learning content, methodology, and evaluation instruments utilized in the program adhere to traditional methods. Educators are facing significant challenges when it comes to integrating technology into the process of teaching and learning. In



addition, the technological challenges of inadequate infrastructure, unreliable internet connectivity, and intermittent electricity supply impede and discourage the use of social media applications for educational purposes (Selwyn, 2016). While it may not completely halt the usage of technology, it undoubtedly hinders the process of implementing technology in the country (Selwyn, 2012).

Moreover, the inadequate technological proficiency of teachers poses a significant obstacle. The world is rapidly evolving and progressing, and amongst this dynamic environment, the significance of education is increasing. Nevertheless, a considerable number of educators remain uninformed about the importance of technology in education, leading them to be hesitant in improving their technological literacy and knowledge in order to enhance their teaching methods (Buchanan, Sainter, & Saunders, 2013). Despite its reputation as a widely accepted platform for accessing a diverse range of information, social media is hindered by various challenges that prevent academics from utilizing it for educational purposes. In order to facilitate the integration of social media into teaching and learning, it is imperative to garner support from all stakeholders involved in education, including government officials, educational institutions, and the overall education system.

Strategies

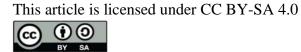
In order to attain the advantages of incorporating social media into the EFL classroom in higher education, teachers must develop a highly efficient instructional design that actively engages and motivates learners. In this essay, the term "social media usage" pertains to the utilization of social media both during and after classroom sessions in a blended learning setting. The conventional method is no longer considered helpful in enhancing students' proficiency in using English as a second language in Indonesia (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012; Bachrudin, 2001). Teachers must employ contemporary and efficient pedagogies for EFL learning, such as integrating the conventional approach of in-person instruction with online learning or Blended Learning (BL) (Graham, Woodfield & Harrison, 2013).

Multiple research have determined that BL has the ability to improve students' interest and involvement in the EFL classroom (Liu & Yu, 2012; Liu, 2013; Graham et al., 2013). When creating instructional design, teachers require a modern framework for constructing a learning model. Moreover, it is essential to comprehend the capabilities and advantages of social media in order to successfully utilize them to accomplish instructional objectives and cater to the demands of learners (Conley & Sabo, 2015). The term "affordances" refers to the specific qualities and capabilities of educational technology that enable the creation of certain learning behaviors within a certain setting. This concept was defined by Kirschner, Strijbos, Kreijns, and Beers in 2004. Several social media affordances that can enhance language acquisition include the ability to connect, interact, and create (Conley & Sabo, 2015).

Instructional design encompasses not only the creation of a well-structured and content-rich learning experience, but also the facilitation of effective communication and cooperation, as well as the implementation of evaluation and feedback mechanisms. I will utilize the ADDIE (analysis, design, develop, implementation, and evaluation) paradigm to create a social media instructional design for EFL learning. The reason for selecting this model is its demonstrated efficacy in the context of online language learning (Yuping, 2014), as well as its successful utilization by educators, instructional designers, and training developers (Forest, 2017). In addition, this instructional design method is straightforward to follow since it presents distinct phases for building the instruction. Furthermore, it may be effectively utilized in conjunction with a blended learning environment (Shibley et al., 2011). ADDIE is a general model that lacks specific specifics for the processes of each stage, allowing the designer to determine the level of detail required for each stage (Linh & Suppasetseree, 2015). Despite its age, the old model still serves as a valuable foundation for constructing an instructional model.

Step 1. Analysis

The analysis phase is often regarded as the fundamental component of the ADDIE model, according to Sugie (2012). At this step, teachers must ascertain the overall attributes of their pupils, including their ages, gender, level of experience, number and location, cultural backgrounds, attitudes, and proficiency with social media (Kanel, 2004). Secondly, it is important to create instructional objectives that are contingent upon the specific language abilities that are necessary, such as writing, speaking, listening, reading, or pronunciation. The focus lies on the capabilities that students will possess upon completing the courses. Given the difficulty in evaluating language performances, teachers are advised to utilize the Bloom's taxonomy learning domain to formulate learning objectives using measurable language that describes the required knowledge, attitude, or ability. Examples of such language are "describe," "summarize," "demonstrate," "show," "create," and "judge." Furthermore, determine the specific materials that will be utilized during the learning process. The resources available for learning include content resources such as syllabi, papers, texts, and videos, as well as technology resources like tools for accessing social media. Additionally, facilities such as rooms and internet availability are provided to support the learning process (Shibley et al., 2011; Branch, 2008). Forest (2017) also proposes that during this stage, teachers should choose the extent to which they wish to incorporate a blended learning environment in the classroom. They should also establish the duration of both face-to-face and online classes for each meeting. According to Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin & Rapp (2010), in order to create a blended learning environment, teachers should dedicate a minimum of 30 percent of the teaching and learning process to online methods.



Step 2. Design

During the design phase, all the information collected from the analytical phase is consolidated and organized in a structured and precise manner. During the design phase, teachers convert learning goals into precise learning objectives, develop the lesson plan, and establish assessment techniques (Branch, 2008). This step demonstrates the methodology for delivering the content (Alonso, López, Manrique & Viñes, 2005). Teachers have the ability to construct a storyboard that showcases the EFL learning tactics to be used in both face-to-face courses and online. This storyboard will outline the specific content that will be utilized and specify when it will be released on the chosen social media platform. It is necessary to develop assessment processes and criteria that specifically address how the students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in EFL will be evaluated. An important factor to consider is that the evaluation should be in line with the learning objectives, as previously indicated (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2005). The design phase will prioritize instructional tactics that can optimize students' engagement with the subject, such as video presentations, interactive discussions, and creative writing (Trindade, Fiolhais & Almeida, 2002).

Step 3. Development

Teachers will utilize the prepared storyboard as a foundation and then expand upon it to create the learning content for a course. The selection and production of the relevant learning resources, materials, tools, and techniques are carried out (Alonso et al., 2005; Branch, 2008). When generating EFL content, teachers should select resources that promote active student participation in both in-person and online settings, with a particular emphasis on student-centered approaches. Examples of collaborative activities include group writing projects or presentations, reading an essay and formulating individual questions, and engaging in discussions with friends. Teachers have the ability to choose from a variety of social media platforms that can potentially improve distinct learning skills by utilizing diverse resources for different stages, situations, or activities. One way to incorporate listening and speaking activities in a small group environment is by utilizing YouTube. On the other hand, for writing and reading education in a large group setting, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs can be used (Jankauskaite, 2015; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017). After determining the platforms, the teacher then contemplates whether specific material would be efficacious in delivering the courses. In order to accomplish this, Branch (2008) proposes that teachers can conduct a pilot test of the instructional plan to determine the most effective learning materials and highlight any possible challenges. Additionally, it is possible to perform a formative revision prior to the deployment phase. Teachers will therefore be prepared and confident in their ability to teach because the curriculum has been expertly crafted (Legault, n, d).



Step 4. Implementation

All the design and development plans are being implemented in this step. The tutor's responsibility is to create suitable learning environments and upload EFL materials and resources on a chosen social media platform to actively include students in the learning process (Branch, 2008). The instructor must ensure that students can view, access, download, and share the content available on the online platform. Additionally, it is necessary to continue providing support to students in order to enable them to utilize social media in a productive manner, hence enhancing their level of involvement and motivation. It is important to encourage students to ask questions when they encounter difficulties in learning. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the "social dimension" of their education, as this will enhance their interaction with both their classmates and instructors (Al-Rahmi, Othman & Yusuf, 2015, p. 197). As the interaction progresses, learners will become increasingly interested and motivated in the learning process. In group collaborative activities, Borštnar (2012) asserts that it is essential for each member to possess trust in one another. Prior to assigning collaborative work, tutors must cultivate students' confidence in working with their peers in both physical and virtual settings. The implementation stage involves making ongoing adjustments to the instruction in order to ensure that the learning goals and objectives are successfully met. This includes modifying the content, course, techniques, and media as necessary (Forest, 2017). The tutor will revise and alter any instructional components that impede students' learning objectives. Upon finishing the implementation phase, teachers will have data that can be utilized to ascertain the progress of learners in attaining the objectives and goals of learning.

Step 5. Evaluation

During the last phase of the ADDIE process, the teacher will perform a thorough evaluation of the students' learning status, learning materials, teaching methods, and assessment. Wu, Wang & Chen (2015) propose that teachers employ a comprehensive assessment method in EFL classrooms to evaluate learning objectives. The benefit is in the utilization of various activities and diverse methods of evaluation, which can effectively analyze student results more comprehensively compared to relying just on a single type of activity and evaluation method (p. 707). For instance, following a written test, teachers can conduct an interview to enhance their assessment of students' achievements. Furthermore, the provided evaluations should adequately equip students with the skills necessary to effectively utilize the target language in actual real-world situations. The objective of this procedure is to gather feedback in order to enhance the quality of the education. In addition to assessing the learning outcome, the tutor, in their role as evaluator, must also expand the scope of evaluation to include the learning process (Long, 1984). The tutors may analyze, synthesize, and interpret the data to make informed decisions about the process and product of their instructional design (Branch, 2008). In addition to administering formative and summative assessments, teachers must also



conduct evaluations from the students' perspective to assess the success of the education, gather their opinions, and identify any necessary additions or omissions. Obtaining the opinions and feedback of learners regarding e-learning instructions provides numerous advantages for teachers to assess the effectiveness of the instruction in achieving the desired learning outcomes and to identify ways to improve it.

CONCLUSION

Essentially, social media has significant potential to be incorporated into university settings to enhance English as a Second Language (EFL) learning. Nevertheless, the fulfillment of such promises can only be attained through the establishment of efficient classroom instruction that is capable of generating stimulating, captivating, and triumphant learning experiences (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012). By actively participating, one can improve the learning process and curriculum to the point where it assists the learner in acquiring the needed knowledge and abilities. Social media can serve as helpful tools for learning or as an additional learning channel that complements the current curriculum delivery. Nevertheless, the incorporation of social media presents several problems and risks. An effective approach to address the situation involves adequately training and arming learners with the necessary skills, information, and understanding of the potential dangers associated with social media (Henderson, Zwardt, Lindsay, Phillips, 2010). Given the effectiveness of social media in aiding learning, it is imperative for teachers to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to properly construct instructional materials that align with students' learning goals and objectives. However, it is important for teachers to bear in mind that technology should not and will not substitute education, but rather aid in educational methods, boost teaching effectiveness, and improve student learning experiences.

Therefore, it is also imperative for the institution, staff, and administration to wholeheartedly support instructors in utilizing technology for instructional purposes by offering ample resources, training, and technological infrastructures. In addition, with consistent and effective support, teachers can transition from a traditional top-down method to a student-centered approach while educating the new generation. This paper focused solely on the usage of social media for teaching broad abilities in EFL context. However, further research can be undertaken to explore how media platforms might be utilized to specifically enhance different aspects of language learning through instructional design. For example, Facebook can be used specifically to develop speaking and listening skills, while YouTube can be utilized to improve reading and writing skills. Additional instructional design (ID) models, such as the Dick and Carey, ASSURE, Backward Design, and Kemp models, can also be utilized for comparison.



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