

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (SMALL) FOR READING CLASSROOM: EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract

Addressing the issue of the dynamics of social media as tool for learning, the present study aims at investigating the perception of English language learners towards the use of social media in the teaching learning activities especially for reading classroom. By using qualitative research, this study focuses on learner's perceptions towards social media assisted for language learning (SMALL) in reading classroom. A total of 72 English language education learners at Universitas Pembinaan Masyarakat Indonesia participated in this study through 5 point Likert scale survey and interview. As the result, social media got positive perceptions from the learners. The dominant social media platform used was Instagram then following Youtube, Tiktok and Whatsapp. These learners believed that social media could be used as a tool for language learning that enhance learners' language skills especially reading and engage them better with lecturers and classmates in learning activities.

Keywords: *perception, reading, Social Media Assisted Language Learning (SMALL)*

INTRODUCTION

The existence of technology has created massive user participations in virtual communication. Application of digital technology-based learning media is not only to maximize their language skills in both face-to-face and distance learning but also their interest and self-efficacy. (One of product of the development of technology is social media. The latest data available on Digital 2021 report for Indonesia (2021) indicates there are 170 (one hundred and seventy) million social media users in Indonesia or 61.8% (sixty-one point eight) percent of the total population of Indonesian, use social media actively. Through mobile phone, people can access social media easily so that people can convey idea, collaborate and communicate efficiently. Further, social media are used for finding information, maintaining friendships, and expressing multiple identities advertising or promoting, educating people, creating awareness and innovating the way people live, and helping others (Shin, 2018; Akram & Kumar,2018).

Recently many youngsters are connected to social media due to the ease of its platform. Two common features that define what social media is (Manning, 2014). First, social media enables a form of participation. Social networks allow others to passively view your posts, namely it is needed for every individual to create a profile account before starting to post. Second, social media involves interactions. It can be done with established friends, family, or new people who share common interests. People can virtually communicate with others, create images, videos, or other information, or share with the community. Nevertheless, several educators and parents think to keep it out of the classroom since the learners would use social media for status updates and divert from educational experiences. Thus many schools blocked internet access to social media sites.

Initially, communication with technology was only one way, but then it evolved into two-

way interaction. One-way communication is also called old media, such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and so on while new media offers chances to interactions such as the internet (Watie, 2016). Social media is categorized as new media since it is social networking provide interaction among users to select the information consumed, while controlling the information to be shared.

Social media is not directly created for educational purpose, however it has been paid attention by educators, one of them is in English language teaching. Several studies have been conducted to find out whether social media can be used in English classroom. Social media aims to provide an active English language environment for students to support their learning process (Baföz, 2016). It has been observed that Twitter can help students improve their language not only in formal settings (e.g., teacher directed), but also in informal ones (Rosell-Aguilar, 2018). With its great features, it can improve the chance to learn in interesting ways.

Social media can assist language teachers and learners in the learning process. Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Tiktok etc. are social media applications and message sending media that can be used as means of learning foreign languages. Through Whatsapp, language learners can find in groups to discuss the content of the target language they want to learn. YouTube also provides foreign language learning content videos. It can be used by foreign language learners.

The emersion of social media in the field of foreign language learning raises different perception among learners who are also digital natives. Some learners claim that social media actively supports second language learning, while others limit social media only as social interactions that does not necessarily involving learning. Several ELT studies investigated social media not only provided space for students to be exposed to the English environment, but also found that social media is a tool for reducing student emotional filters. It is also known as a negative psychological factor that has a significant impact on a student's language learning process, such as anxiety, lack of motivation, boredom, and frustration (Zayed & AlGhamdi, 2019). Social media allows students to focus on learning the language skills they need, reducing the emotional variables of students when learning English (Sharma, 2019). In addition, social media promotes empowerment and motivation for students to use English in their daily lives (Mubarak, 2016). By knowing the above excellence, it is inspiring to conduct a research about social media. Activity of learning has become more comfortable and more independent with mobile phone (Fauzi & Anindiati, 2019).

This study tries to explore the perception of university students toward the use of social media for learning English. Learners' perceptions are very crucial to be known in teaching and learning process since educators need to know their learners' preferences in terms of their learning style, interest, and others which can influence their learning outcome. Researches on the students' perception toward social media in learning as above has been studied in the field of English learning. Arabic language education students at the State Islamic University of Malang. have positive perception toward social media in learning process or the contrary, used the social media only for private interaction.

Another finding about the use of social media have been widely studied among second language activists like Salih and Elsaid (2018) who study about students' attitude toward the use of social media for learning purpose in Al-Baha University. He found that the students' have positive attitude toward social media on their English language learning. There are some benefits gotten from the researches related to the use of the social media. Firstly, potentials for better learning. If social media are used in teaching, the opportunities to express oneself, participate, collaborate, find information, knowledge sharing and storage, process writing, student's production, teacher feedback, reflect and learn together are expanded (Crook 2008; Moody 2010; Liburd 2011). Secondly, engage students in the practice of English. Based on research, students who use social media in their courses increase their technology and communication skills are more creative and more open to diverse ideas (Greenhow, 2010). Thirdly, provide more authentic input. Social media provides real life language how native speakers actually interact with each other. Teacher can suggest the students keep the unfamiliar vocabulary or structure they find on social media sites to discuss in class. Fourthly, encourage students to interact with each other in class and online. Students who use social media tend to support each other and even act as mentors (Halverson, 2010). Fifthly, it can develop

critical thinking skills. Online discussion forums are proved able to increase students' critical thinking skills. By creating a online group, posting questions for discussion, monitoring the discussion to clarify or encouraging students to think more deeply about a topic. Sixthly, personalize learning. The amount of time spent engaging with digital technology has actually changed the structure of our brains. About 30% of our brains are involved in processing visual images as opposed to 3% for auditory input. Although nowadays students may still have different learning styles or preferences, however more and more are either visual or kinesthetic learners. A teacher talks to a classroom of students is not the best way to teach today's students (Thomas, 2009). Based on above researches, this study is conducted to investigate the perception of EFL learners towards social media assisted language learning in reading classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

People utilize social media as a sort of information and communication technology to communicate at any time. It is fashionable among people of all ages and socioeconomic levels all across the world. Apart from that, social media serves as a tool for communication. media builds community online to exchange knowledge, ideas, personal chats, even pictures and videos (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014). Similarly, social media are web-based platforms where users create and share messages via virtual communities and social networks (Chen et al., 2017).

Manning (2014) stated that there are two common traits that define what social media is. To begin with, social media allows for some kind of participation. Even if social networking services like Facebook allow for passive perusal of other people's posts. Typically, a profile account must be made in order to begin the process of prospective contact. Second, social media necessitates participation. This engagement can take place with long-time friends, relatives, or new acquaintances who have common interests. In a word, social media is a collection of Internet-based applications that are built on the Web 2.0 platform and allow users to create and share content. People can electronically communicate with one another and create or share photographs, movies, and other types of information with their peers.

Students' interest and motivation can also be increased through the use of social media. Introverted students may find it difficult to contribute in class but may feel at ease expressing themselves on social media (Ivala & Gachago, 2016). However, some students become bored in the classroom fast since the materials are not always interesting or relevant. Social media platforms can be used to create social and interactive learning activities such as discussion, debate, group projects, and so on. Students would be able to learn from one another and interact with others outside of the classroom through these varied learning opportunities (Faizi et al., 2013). To summarize, social media is beneficial to us in a variety of ways.

Integrating social media in English language teaching is not an easy way to do. It requires teachers to have sufficient knowledge both on social media and language learning pedagogy. However, in order to assist teachers in combining social media and language activities in EFL classrooms, the researcher presents some social media applications that are commonly used in English classrooms, along with additional suggestions for how to effectively implement those social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Whatsapp and so on. Some social media application is proved able to apply for teaching in English classrooms.

Nofrika (2019) found that students develop their listening skills by watching English videos and songs, students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is improved as they watch grammar video, and they also practice their pronunciation after watching native speakers. La Hanisi et al. (2018) did a study on collaborative learning in the English classroom using WhatsApp. The findings point to the potential for WhatsApp to be used in the English classroom because it is simple to use and allows students to communicate in English with other students and teachers at any time and from any location. It can be used by the teacher to check whether pupils comprehend the themes and to get to know them better. Language skills practice can be done on WhatsApp, and teachers can provide real-time feedback to students. Instagram, according to Erarslan (2019), allows students to build a cooperative, collaborative, and sharing environment in the classroom,

in addition to sharing instructional materials. Sending and receiving private messages, creating groups, offering applications to attract opportunities for collaboration, assisting the class in the involvement of keywords and materials, setting up a video conference for members, and joining groups to share similar interests in Facebook are all features mentioned by Blattner & Fiori (2009). This will make it easier for students to communicate in English, especially while reading and writing. To summarize, the preceding paragraphs outline the most common social application investigated by many educators, notably in the field of language learning.

Reading Interest

Interest in a subject, according to Alderma (2004), can boost motivation and learning. If kids are interested, they will learn, and if they are not, they will not learn or do well. As a result, interest is a crucial part of motivation that influences students' attention, learning, thinking, and performance.

Hidi (2001) asserted that our reading interests are crucial in shaping how we select and process certain types of information in order to comprehend others. The literature's empirical studies show that all sorts of interest tend to aid reader comprehension and retention. So, in order to pique the reader's interest in reading, good information must be chosen. It is concern the effects of interest on reading performance. Language comprehension is influenced by elements such as engagement and motivation. It is clear from these statements that reading interest is a significant factor in the decision to read and should not be overlooked. Students are more inclined to read reading materials that they find interesting.

METHOD

This study used social anthropology approach in qualitative research since this study focuses on learner's perceptions towards social media as their assistant for learning English. 72 university students were recruited from English Language Education Department at Universitas Pembinaan Masyarakat Indonesia. 54 respondents (75%) are female, and 18 respondents (25%) are male. The learners were required to do the task of reading and share it by their social media since it was online learning. At that task, the learners were asked to read news text. Then, the researcher distributed the online questionnaire's link to the learners. The questionnaire was designed using Google Form application and became the main instrument for collecting the data in this study. It consisted of 17 closed-ended items developed from previous surveys on technology (Henderson et al., 2017; Li & Ni, 2011; Tri & Nguyen, 2014).

The researcher used self-made questionnaire as a research instrument for collection of data, and then the data was statistically analyzed in order to find out reliable result of the study. The questionnaire was in closed- and open-ended format. The open-ended questionnaire was arranged in 5 items while the close-ended questionnaire was 12 items while the responses were measured by using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree= 1, strongly disagree= 5). The data were statistically computed to find out the percentage of each statement and then was interpreted descriptively. The link of online questionnaires was distributed through online learning groups.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study were obtained from the learners who have shared reading task by using social media. The distribution of the EFL learners participating in the survey is presented in the following diagram.

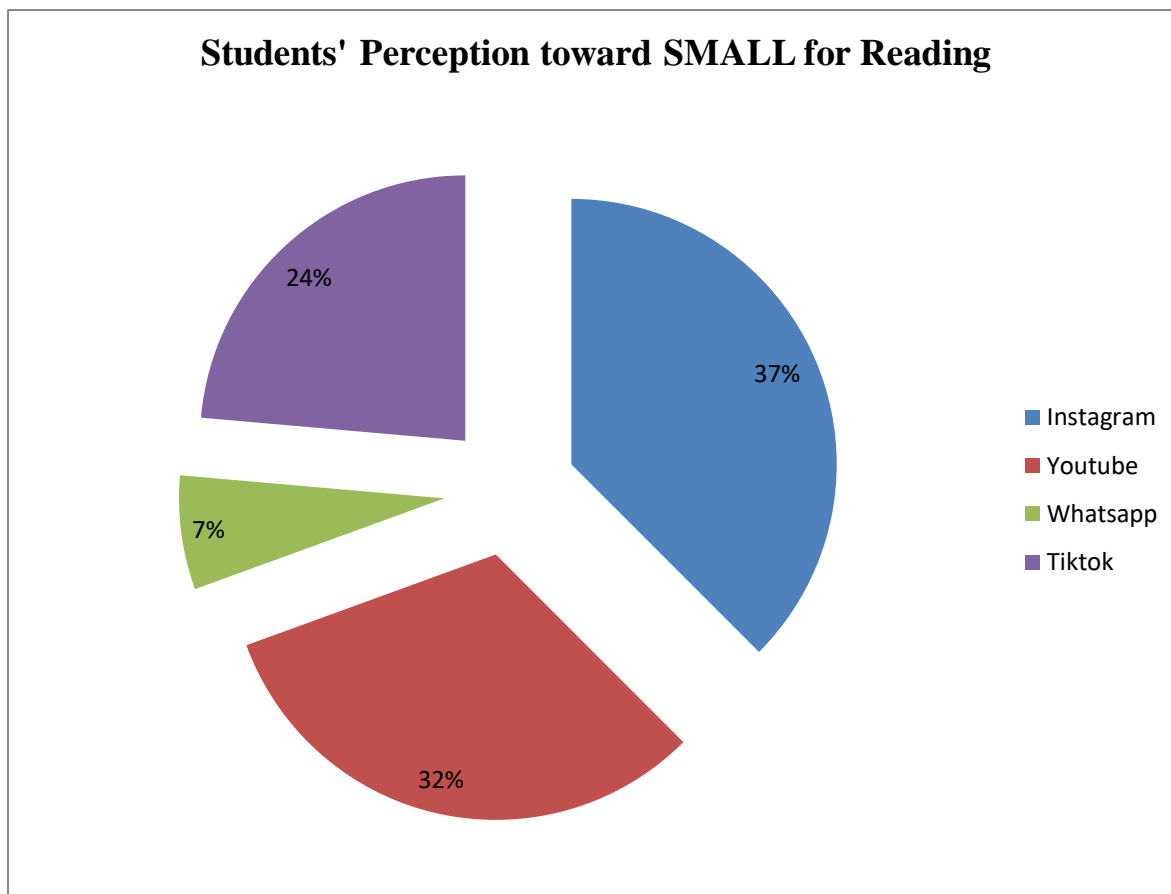


Figure 1. The Students' Perception towards SMALL in Reading

There were 72 respondents in total. From some social media that the learners had, most of them were interested in using Instagram media with 27 respondents. The second dominated respondents were interested in Youtube with 23 participants. The least respondents were interested in Tiktok and Whatsapp as social media for language learning with 17 and 5 participants.

Based on the questionnaire about the learners perceived advantages and disadvantages of using social media as a tool to learn English. The data obtained from the closed questionnaire the students learning English by using social media expressed that social media is exciting for language learning especially for reading skill since it allowed them to share and connect with people with attractive visual display such as video and pictures. Furthermore, social media included the participants' ability to learn efficiently and effectively in anywhere-anytime. They also expressed that social media (SM) help learners to practice the language well rather than traditional method by using textbooks. In addition, based on the open-ended questionnaire they showed that mostly the reasons lie on the benefits of platform. Whatsapp is a tool that the learners like reading less, might provide less feedback and less sharing to public since it has limitation of access.

The results and findings of this study revealed that social media plays an important role in improving the learners' reading interest in learning English. The reasons are social media facilitates the English learners to learn new words and vocabulary suitable for them in the ability of English language learning; it was easy for EFL learners as compare to books reading and other text materials; and arouse the interest of English learners towards the English language learning; and the EFL learners could use social media tools for a long period of time without any hesitation or boredom. The findings of the study also revealed that the use of social media was easy for learners while studying. Hence, the learners mostly use social media sources like Instagram, Youtube, Whatsapp, and Tiktok as tools of social media to improve their interest in learning

English especially reading not only in the text form but also in the pictures of things through online media. The most frequent and favorable platform used by the learners was Instagram since it displayed attractive visual and easy to be used then following by Youtube, Whatsapp and the newest application for youngster, Tiktok. Thus it was concluded that social media has a great effect in improving the learners' interest in learning English Language especially for reading.

CONCLUSION

The study comes to the main conclusion that based on learners' preferences that Instagram is the most useful technology that the learners used frequently. It is the one that the learners find useful to help them meet their interest in reading. Based on the conclusions, the researcher would like to provide some recommendations, specifically for English Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers. The learners need to know about some drawbacks of the technology, so they do not depend entirely on the technology to improve their language skills. The learners should keep these drawbacks in mind and wisely use the social media for their learning activities. Besides, Whatsapp is a tool that the learners like reading less, might provide less feedback and less sharing to public since it has limitation of access. Therefore, the lecturers can emphasize that Instagram can make their learners' tasks better for English language learning.

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