

Social Media Utilization for Self-Regulated English Learning during COVID-19 Outbreaks

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Highlights

Social media has a positive and essential role in helping improve students' English skills and their motivation to study independently in flexible ways.

ABSTRACT: It is quite challenging at this moment for students to study from home (SFH) during the COVID-19 outbreaks. Social distancing practices applied during the coronavirus outbreaks to most of the public settings, including at academic activities at university. Fortunately, there have been many platforms of social media provided and accessed easily in this digital era. This current study aimed at investigating and understanding higher education students' perspectives on social media in learning English independently during the COVID-19 pandemic. An online survey was the main research instrument to gather data from 147 potential students to be the respondents to fill out the survey from three universities in the Sulawesi region, Indonesia. The result showed that 81% of respondents used WhatsApp as the medium to study autonomously at home during the pandemic. Besides, YouTube (77.6%), Instagram (57.8%), Facebook (29.3%), and Twitter (24.5%) also became the additional choices. They used those friendly-users and cheap accessed social media platforms to watch and to listen to English videos (79.6%) also to have the written chats in English with friends and teachers (67.3%) as well as to have the audio and video calling in English (36.1%). Further, during the pandemic, respondents improve their speaking skills (37.4%), listening skills (29.3%), reading skills (17%), and writing skills (16.3%) through social media. Even though the world is distracted, university students in this region keep their motivation to learn English from home autonomously.

Keywords: social media, self-regulated learning, COVID-19, learning English

Introduction

Today the world is sick. Life, especially in the education field, is facing a challenging time during the COVID-19 outbreaks. Fortunately, people have been familiar with social media in this digital era. Students, particularly higher education students, get much assistance from social media during the time of study from home (SFH). Kimmerle et al. (2015), Franklin, et al. (2016), Sakkir (2016), Maulina, et al. (2019), and Brown & Pederson (2020) argue that social media are popular to college students and it is used for educational purposes in the classroom and beyond the classroom to share relevant experiences to social care as well as language learning interest. During the conflicts and crisis like today's COVID-19 outbreaks phenomenon, social media is an essential element for communication (Yu et al., 2020).

Kaufhold et al. (2020) explain that social media allow emergency services to reach people easily in the context of crisis communication and interaction and receive valuable information. In education settings, social media use is for information sharing outside the classroom and lead for the self-regulated to study independently (Matzat & Vrieling, 2016; Wang & Chen, 2019; Lar et al., 2021). The informal language learning setting at home utilizing social media as the tool to support the connectivity and collaboration with colleagues also with lecturers in accomplishing the tasks given create more self-regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Self-understanding the learning independently during the outbreaks enables the development of students' autonomy and the growth of target language proficiency, mutually supporting and fully integrated for students' English language learning through social media. Also, being independently learning the English language in a restricted situation like a social distancing support the higher education students to self-derived the third fundamental principles such as self-involvement, self-reflection, and target language use. According to Andrade and Bunker (2009) state that distance language learning helps students gain communicative competence for self-regulation and autonomy. Distance learning through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the ways for facilitating greater student control in these critical aspects of their studies.

COVID-19 pandemic has changed higher education students' position as the decision-maker in their studies. Before the pandemic, educators need to develop a better understanding of learners by considering the suitable media technologies in their studies (Kirkwood, 2003). Also, he said that media technologies like social media could provide many new educational opportunities. Social media are relevant for individual learning and collective knowledge construction for independent informal learning environments (Meyers et al., 2013; Tan, 2013; Kimmerle et al., 2015, Alshammari, et al., 2017; Maulina, 2015; Maulina, 2019; Maulina & Rusli, 2019; Maulina et al. 2019; Maulina et al. 2020; Maulina et al. 2021; Saputra et al., 2021; Rasyiid et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2021; Zainal et al., 2022). Self-accessed in learning English as a foreign language from home stimulate much probability for students to enrich their insights during the outbreaks.

Studying from home enables students to get more language transactions. Kara (2020) explained that transactional distance language learning significantly predicts learner outcomes of perceived learning and satisfaction. Besides, the rapid connections through social media make communication faster (Bouvier, 2015; Andriyani et al., 2022; Maulina et al., 2022; Maulina & Sari, 2022). Further, Bouvier (2015) and Thulin et al. (2019) explain that social media brings a new form of communication in shaping every day's cultural values, knowledge, and social structure. This current study examines higher education students' perspectives about social media they use, and English skills improved in leading themselves to study from home independently during the COVID-19 outbreaks.

Method

The data for this study gained through the online survey. We asked EFL teachers from three universities in the Sulawesi region, Indonesia, to spread the survey to their students. The survey, as the main instrument in this study, was used to figure out types of social media used to study independently as well as their responses on the English language skills improve during the COVID-19 outbreaks. One hundred forty-seven (147) students participated in filling the online survey in a Google Form. There were 89.6% of students from the bachelor's degree, 6.9% of students from master's degrees, and 3.5% of students from doctoral degree. Female students (76%) were the majority of respondents and male students (24%).

Respondents in this study were aged 19-20 years old (66.9%), 21-22 years old (20%), 25-26 years old (2.8%), and >30 years old (8.3%). They shared the same perspectives in filling out the survey. The presented results were in figures and tables, in percentages and frequencies.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The presented results of this research explain the respondents' perspectives on the social media that they frequently used to assist in studying and exploring things in English independently at home as well as the English skills improve during the COVID-19 outbreaks.

Types of Social Media Utilized in Helping Students' Learn English

There have many platforms of social media available and are easy to be accessed and displayed through mobile phones and computers. Social media enable students' everyday learning routines and experiences in time and space flexible. Students in this study have been familiar with some social media such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Line, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, and Pinterest as the platform where they get to connect and communicate with their peers.

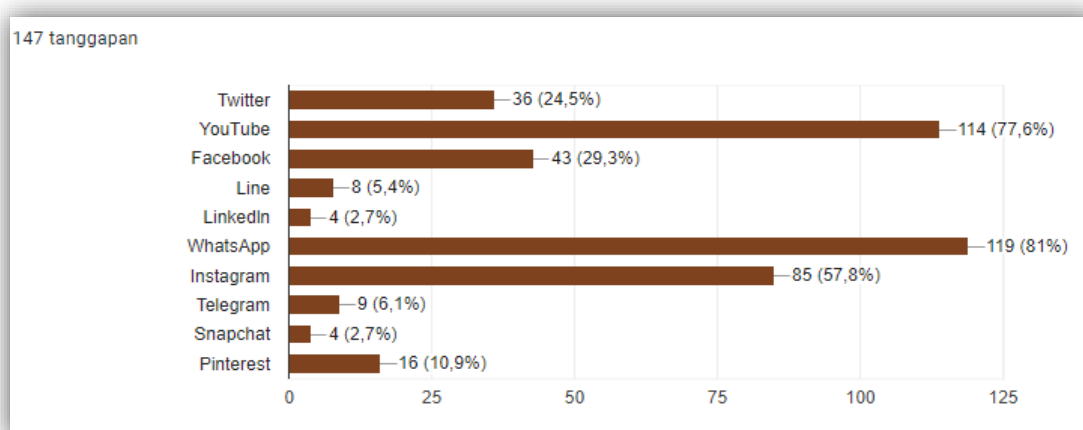


Figure 1 Social Media used to Study English Independently during the SFH

In daily life, during the outbreak showed in the Figure 1, 81% of respondents use WhatsApp frequently to communicate and study English independently. WhatsApp is particularly popular because its enhanced capabilities allow users to interact in a variety of ways. For example, WhatsApp allows users to exchange text messages one-to-one or as group conversations. Additionally, students can share documents and a variety of multimedia types as well as making voice or video calls. They also access YouTube (77.6%) to watch and listen to English videos to improve their vocabulary. Other social media such as Instagram (57.8%) and Facebook (29.5%) also Twitter (24.5%) become the additional social media in varying connection and communication. Continuity to study even it is during the COVID-19 pandemic raises college students' awareness to survive and keep going the learning. In addition, among of those mentioned popular social media used, LinkedIn and Snapchat appeared as the least preferred utilized platforms.

Reason using Social Media Platforms

This current research reveals that students use particular social media to connect and communicate to improve their English skills independently at home. Reasons using that social media such as the platform is easy to use, it has a good feature for language learning, it enables them to connect fast even though the internet connection is limited, and it is low cost to have calls and text messaging.

Table 1
Reasons Stated in Utilizing Particular Social Media Platforms

Statements	Frequency
It is easy to use	123
It has good features for language learning	76
It enables me to connect fast	67
It is the cheapest medium to have calls and text messaging	55

From 147 respondents represented at Table 1, 123 respondents use particular social media frequently because of its friendly-user provided on the platform. Social media provide a convenient way to connect with friends easily during the COVID-19 outbreaks. Also, good features for language learning provided in the social media platform attract students to be attractively involved in the STF learning setting. During the COVID-19 pandemic, internet connection and internet data plan availability become essential items considered. There are 67 respondents out of 147 use social media that enable them to connect fast, and 55 respondents out of 147 use the low-cost medium to have audio and video calls and do the text messages.

Self-Regulated Strategies Utilizing Social Media

Social media as a tool for learning independently during the outbreaks within the informal language learning setting at home, higher education students seek to engage actively in the cyberspace to form and build as well as to offer personal insights to develop comprehension in English learning.

Table 2
The Preferred Strategies

Methods	Frequency
Watch and listen English videos	117
Have written chats with colleagues and lecturers in English	99
Share and describe pictures in English	67
Share and describe files in English	60
Have video calling speaking in English	53
Take and describe photos in English	50
Record video in English	40
Have audio calling speaking in English	34
Voice recording in English	29

Based on the survey, we found that 117 respondents out of 147 watch and listen to English videos through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other self-directed English learnings occur during the pandemic, such as texting, video calling, audio calling, picture sharing. Take another example from the result of the survey at Table 2 that 50

respondents tend to take pictures and post them to social media by describing in English is one way that those higher education students control the self-learning and minimize the mental problem also stay motivated during the SFH. The self-directed activities in improving the English learning beyond the formal setting, like nowadays condition, enable them to heal and promote the autodidactic activity.

In addition, self-mitigation in developing the English language skills through social media during the COVID-19 outbreaks leads higher education students to have the ability to self-managing the needs in English language learning. Some specific English learning self-access during the COVID-19 outbreaks displayed in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3
Specific Activities for Self-Access English Learning during the COVID-19

Statements	Percentages
I listen and watch English audios and videos to improve my listening skills on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.	64.6% of respondents agree
I talk in English by audio and video calling through social media to improve my speaking skills during the COVID-19 pandemic.	69.2% of respondents agree
I learn new vocabularies then send messages and upload new status in English on social media during the COVID-19.	55.8% of respondents agree
I am interested in reading new posts in English on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.	65.3% of respondents agree

It reveals that 69.2% of respondents agree to get in touch with friends through audio and video calling through social media. One of the social media used commonly for the audio and video calling at a low-cost price is, for instance, WhatsApp. Besides, students are interested in reading new posts in English posted on social media such as on Facebook. Reading texts enrich their insights towards English vocabularies and knowledge in today's pandemic. Even though restrictions happened in all settings, students could still get many languages and knowledge input. Another activity that 64.6% of respondents like to do during the COVID-19 is listening and watching English audios and videos. One of the most audio and video content social media providers is YouTube.

English Skills Improved during the Outbreak

Higher education students studying independently during the SFH improve four English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing through the social media.

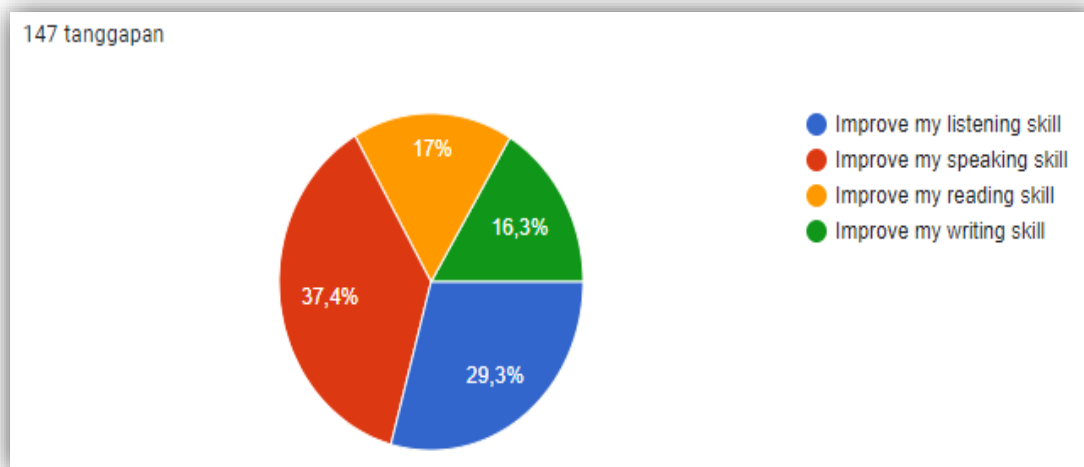


Figure 2. English Skills Improved during the COVID-19

Figure 2 shows that higher education students do more oral communication during the outbreaks. It shows that 37.4% of students improve their speaking skills. The rest improved skills such as listening skills (29.3%), reading skills (17%), and writing skills (16.3%). Distance oral communication with colleagues enables college students to connect ideas, share positive attitudes, and develop language learning autonomy during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach could result in the self-healing and protection mentally during the outbreaks. Besides, higher education students play self-control in self-encouraging their cognitive independence and social interdependence simultaneously.

Discussion

The findings of this current study show that social media provides real-life language and models how students study independently and interact with each other, like in the situation of study from home (SFH). It is in line with Wang and Chen (2019), stating that in utilizing social media for independent learning, students are considered more flexible, more interesting, and more interactive than formal learning in the classroom. It is similar to Kirkwood (2003), arguing that independent students value the richness and flexibility they derive from having a range of media components in their courses who wanted to improve their English or prepare for English exams. Practically, students who use social media for learning courses increase their communication and technology skills in a more creative and more open to diverse ideas; for instance, in the informal setting of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is showing effective supporting the students' outcome. According to Kara (2020), students satisfy with their outcomes in transactional distance learning.

Dealing with the preferred social media users such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Line, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat, all these digital platforms enable them to connect and communicate in an easy and more accessible way through mobile phones and computers with the most of the requirement of internet connection. It is similar in the context of daily use of social media. For instance, Thulin et al. (2019) explain that social media enable people's everyday routines and experiences in time and space to be flexible. Moreover, in line with the educational setting, Franklin et al. (2016) argue that students promote themselves for learning sustainability and continuity

through social media. Besides, Tan (2013) said that some language content in social media like YouTube plays community formation and supports informal peer learning.

Social media's convenient accessibility, reliability, and sustainability strengthen students' motivation to study English independently and actively engage with colleagues and lecturers. It is in line with Tan (2013), who explains that the nature of informal learning spaces, being that their focus is not solely on education but also entertainment, leads to a variation in quality, reliability, and suitability of content. Self-directed English learning occurs during the pandemic of COVID-19, such as texting, video calling, audio calling, picture sharing, and even collecting and sharing relevant documents as sources of English learning. According to Wang and Chen (2019), students learning in an informal setting tend to be more flexible, interesting, and interactive than informal learning in the classroom. In addition, social media help encourage students to learn autonomously and do peer learning and develop learning communities (Alshammari et al., 2017; Maulina & Sari, 2022).

Conclusion

The findings show that social media presence in this digital era helps give students space to study English as a foreign language independently from home during the COVID-19 outbreak that forms the students' self-regulation. The friendly user, good features, fast connection, and the cheapest social media platform become why they utilize the medium frequently. Also, during the study from home (SFH), higher education students improve their English skills independently by watching and listening to English videos, having text messages in English with colleagues and teachers, having audio and video calls in English, uploading photos, and describing them in English, and posting status in English. Besides, those ways are to enable them to stay connected with colleagues and teachers outside to stay in academic nuances and enrich the English skills knowledge.

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