

THE CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS) IN TEACHING ENGLISH

(Cabaran Menggunakan Halaman Sosial Dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris)

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Abstract

Social Networking Sites (SNS) enable human to communicate and make connections with people within as well as outside specific environment. SNS can also be a great tool for learning especially in learning languages. This research aims to identify the challenges in teaching English via social media platforms. The methodology applied in this research is qualitative study and the data are collected using an interview method. A social media influencer who uses social media to teach English is selected as the subject of the study. The influencer is chosen based on the high number of social media followers and the factor of using social media to teach English. Data of the study are analysed manually using content analysis method. The results of the study indicate the different challenges of teaching English using social media. Despite the advantages of teaching English using social media, online educators should be prepared to face negative remarks and criticisms as the widespread access to internet allows everyone to access the contents. It will be wise to face the negative remarks with calmness and strictness so that the learning session may proceed without disturbing other audiences. There will also be hindrance from the application's guidelines. It is important to ensure that the contents posted are accurate language-wise, which will always keep the educator's motivation high and ensure higher engagement with the target audience, making the post successful. The findings of this study can be utilised for equipping English teachers in using social media as an alternative in teaching English to students especially in facing educational constraints such as during the spread of COVID-19, dealing with the advancement of technology and providing a new way of teaching in this education world today.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites (SNS), social media, Teaching English

Abstrak

Halaman sosial (SNS) membolehkan manusia untuk berkomunikasi dan berhubung dengan orang lain di dalam mahupun di luar lingkungan sosial kita. SNS juga boleh menjadi alat yang hebat untuk belajar terutamanya pembelajaran bahasa. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti cabaran dalam mengajar bahasa Inggeris melalui platform media sosial. Metodologi yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah kaedah kualitatif dan data dikumpulkan menggunakan kaedah temuduga. Seorang pempengaruh media sosial yang menggunakan media sosial untuk mengajar bahasa Inggeris dipilih sebagai subjek kajian. Pempengaruh media sosial ini dipilih berdasarkan jumlah pengikut media sosial yang tinggi dan factor penggunaan media sosial bagi tujuan mengajar Bahasa Inggeris. Data kajian dianalisis secara manual menggunakan kaedah analisis kandungan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pelbagai cabaran mengajar bahasa Inggeris menggunakan

media sosial. Disebalik kelebihan mengajar Bahasa Inggeris menggunakan media sosial, para pendidik dalam talian perlulah bersedia untuk menghadapi komen negative dan kritikan kerana akses internet yang berleluasa akan membolehkan sesiapa sahaja mengakses kandungan yang disampaikan secara dalam talian. Adalah bijak untuk menghadapi komen-komen tersebut dengan tenang dan tegas supaya sesi pembelajaran dalam talian akan boleh diteruskan tanpa mengganggu audiens lain. Terdapat juga halangan daripada garispanduan aplikasi yang digunakan. Adalah penting untuk memastikan kandungan yang dimuatnaik sentiasa menggunakan tatabahasa yang tepat. Ini akan membantu memastikan motivasi pendidik dalam talian sentiasa berada di tahap yang tinggi dan memastikan keterlibatan dalam talian yang tinggi dengan para audiens sasaran sekaligus memastikan kandungan yang dimuatnaik dianggap berjaya. Penemuan kajian ini dapat digunakan untuk melengkapkan guru bahasa Inggeris dalam menggunakan media sosial sebagai alternatif dalam mengajar bahasa Inggeris kepada pelajar terutamanya dalam menghadapi kekangan Pendidikan seperti penularan COVID-19, mendepani kemajuan teknologi, dan menyediakan cara baharu pengajaran dalam dunia pendidikan masakini.

Kata kunci: Halaman Sosial (SNS), Media Sosial, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to techopedia.com (May 30, 2022), a social networking site refers to an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users. A social networking site allows its users to establish connections with whom they already have a connection, and it can also suggest further connections based on a person's established network. Social networking sites (SNS) have their own niche functions, for instance LinkedIn is used for establishing professional connections, while Facebook can be used to establish both private as well as professional connections. There are also social networking sites that are built for a specific user base like cultural and political groups, or even traders in financial markets.

Social Network Sites (SNS) are a new emerging genre of community-based websites, which provide an ideal platform for sharing the interests and social interaction amongst various ethnic groups having common thoughts on a particular topic or theme (Goh, Lada, Muhammad, Ag Ibrahim, & Amboala, 2011). Bartlett-Bragg (2006) defined social networks as a "range of applications that augments group interactions and shared spaces for collaboration, social connections, and aggregates information exchanges in a web-based environment." Similarly, Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social networks as web-based services allowing individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The Internet and social networking sites have become so integrated in the lives of young people nowadays. It is reported that in 2020, 71 percent of the world's youth (aged between 15 and 24 years) were using the Internet, compared with 57 percent of other age groups (itu.int, February 17, 2022). Meanwhile, surveys show that 90 percent of teens ages 13 to 17 have used social media. 75 percent report having at least one active social media profile, and 51 percent report visiting a social media site at least daily (aacap.org, updated March 2018). As the Internet has become so important to the lives of today's youth, we can see that it has greatly influenced the way they think and how they do things. One of the things that has gone through a big change nowadays is the way how education is being perceived and experienced by these young people.

According to Rishika Nasta (May, 2019), social network tools afford students and institutions with multiple opportunities to improve learning methods. Learning

institutions like schools and universities can incorporate social networking sites in teaching and learning activities that enable sharing and interaction among teachers and students. Some examples of the benefits that students can get from the use of social networking sites in learning include online tutorials through YouTube, online courses delivered by universities abroad through Skype and a wide array of resources that are shared through social networks.

A study by Jamal Abdul Nasir Ansari and Nawab Ali Khan (2020) proves that the application and usefulness of social media in transferring the resource materials, collaborative learning and interaction with the colleagues as well as teachers would facilitate students to be more enthusiastic and dynamic.

1.1 Problem Statement

Even though the use of social media or social networking sites as a tool of education began more than a decade ago, the progress had been accelerated by the great health crisis of the 21st century that was the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many countries including Malaysia, had taken the strict measure of bringing the whole country into lockdown. Due to the lockdown and movement control order, all people had to stay home and do all their activities including attending classes from their respective homes.

Some of the key findings reported by OECD (September 24, 2020) include the need for most education systems to adopt alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning, that is to move activities online, to allow instruction to continue despite school closures. In addition to that, teachers need the support to incorporate technology effectively into their teaching practices and methods and help students overcome some of the difficulties that are associated with this form of learning environment.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to identify the challenges of teaching English using different social networking sites. The interview focuses on the following aspects: 1) the challenges of posting on social media, 2) the challenges faced during teaching English online, and 3) the challenges most present among students.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Transitioning from the traditional face-to-face interaction, social networking sites (SNS) have played a significant role in our daily life over the last decade. From the purposes of sharing ideas, stories, information, photos, and videos; social networking has inspired interaction and collaborative communication as well as participation among its users via world wide web connection (Deepmala & Khan, 2014). Regardless of its vast development and changes, it is still relatively difficult to provide an accurate definition of SNSs because these sites have exponentially grown over the last few years and have continually upgraded their features and services for its users especially in this post-pandemic era.

Since their introduction, SNS such as MySpace, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. Beginning September 2005, Facebook has expanded to include high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and, eventually everyone as its users (Ebrahimpour, Rajabali, Yazdanfar, Azarbad, Nodeh, Siamian, & Vahedi, 2016). This is in line with reports provided by datareportal.com (2022), which found that on average there were 1.97 billion daily active Facebook users in July 2022. The same website reports that Facebook is the most popular social networking site

among netizens (internet citizen) followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, Tiktok and other sites according to ranking based on the number of monthly active users (MAUs).

2.1 Social Networking Sites in Malaysia Perspectives

In a study conducted among 283 students in a higher education institution in Malaysia, it was found that most of the respondents surf the internet more than 15 hours weekly (Goh, et. al., 2011). This shows that Malaysian youths spend a lot of time being on the internet, particularly surfing the social networking sites for various reasons. In another study conducted on 233 Muslim undergraduate students, it was found that Malaysian Muslims are not reluctant to use social networking sites due to factors such as technological, social and educational purposes (Jan, 2017). As Malaysian youth are exposed to technological advancement these days, the blossoming of social networking sites allows its use to be multi-faceted and serves more purposes than merely for socialising and communicating with others.

Celebrating the advancement of technology for educational purposes, changes in various pedagogical and technological applications and processes can be seen as the results of rapid development of information and communication technologies (Mazman & Usluel, 2009). They stated that using social networks in educational and instructional contexts can be considered as a potentially powerful idea simply because students spend most of their time on these online networking activities and this trend has been getting more attention post-pandemic era these days.

In a study among university students in Jordan by Al-Jarrah, Talafhah and Al-Jarrah (2019), it was revealed that most participants felt comfortable using SNS for English language learning. However, the study found that less than half of the study participants used SNS on a regular basis to learn English. In addition, the participants tended to read and observe discussions in English rather than participate in them or produce language output. This shows the roles of social networking sites in English language learning among students.

Ismail and Shafie (2019) conducted a study on undergraduates in public universities in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan and found that most of the respondents learned English informally by saving interesting English quotes or images posted on social networking sites as well as by paying attention to the sentence patterns and accent while watching videos on those sites. The respondents of this study also perceived that they informally learned listening skills and vocabulary the most from the social networking sites. This shows that social networking sites are not only useful for entertaining purposes, but they could also be used to informally learn and improve one's English language skills.

2.2 English Teaching in Malaysia

The Malaysian education system has seen changes and shifts in its medium of instruction since pre-independence to post-independence era up until the modern world today. The use of English as a medium of instruction in schools which then was replaced by Malay language has brought about impactful changes in the Malaysian education system. Today, English in Malaysia is officially acknowledged as a second language. It is considered second in importance to the Malay language and is regarded as a vital link with the rest of the world (Talif, 1991).

English language education in Malaysia has undergone several reforms in the last three decades with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 and the English Language Education Reform Roadmap 2015-2025 set to bring definitive

transformations to the way English as a second language is taught and learned in Malaysia in the 21st century from primary to tertiary levels (Azman, 2016).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study utilises qualitative methodology which purpose is to explore and understand the meaning of an individual's thoughts about human problems (Cropley, 2022). The participant of the research is an English lecturer who frequently uses social media like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter to teach English to the students. The selection of the study participant was based on the number of followers that the participant has and the quantity of likes that the participant received. The high number of followers and likes reflects on the effectiveness of the lesson by the participant as this indicates acceptance and affirmation amongst the study participant's followers on social media.

The selection of the social networking sites is based on the study conducted by Kutlu, Çeken, Mutlutürk and Turkmen (2018) which found that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the most popular social networking sites used for learning among students. The study by Kutlu et. al (2018) analysed 152 articles published between 2008 and 2017 and the findings were analysed through content analysis. This determines the social networking site that was selected for this study.

3.1 Research Sample

This study adopted purposive sampling in selecting the participant. The criteria of participant selection are: 1) English language instructor (teaching English as a second or foreign language) in Malaysian higher institutions, 2) uses social media platforms in teaching English language, and 3) teaching experiences from diverse organisations and institutions.

The participant selected in this study is a lecturer with 15 years of experience from Universiti Selangor. The participant obtained his degree from Universiti Selangor and pursued his master's degree in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Currently he is pursuing his doctoral studies. He uses his social media to share his knowledge in the field of English language. The duration of his videos is normally between 10 to 15 seconds. His topics are general knowledge in English language and the posts would be on random topics that are appealing to the society. His preferred social networking sites are TikTok, Instagram and Telegram.

3.2 Research Procedure

Prior to the interview session, the participant was required to sign a consent form which described the purpose of the study, its risks and benefits and the participant's right to withdraw from the study. The consent form also includes the basic information of the study and explain the main study theme, without indicating expected results. The interview was conducted online due to movement restriction in Malaysia during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the participant's audio was recorded for the purpose of data analysis.

In this research, the interview method is the primary data source. The interview questions cover the aspects of the practice, experience and challenges of using SNS in teaching English. Nonetheless, only the challenges aspect will be discussed in this paper. The interview questions were adapted and modified from Gamble and Wilkins (2014), Isaksson (2020), and AlSaif (2016). These researchers conducted studies on the use of social media or social networking sites for the purpose of teaching English. The researcher uses Lincoln and Guba's criteria (1982) as guidelines to ensure that the collected data are reliable and trustworthy. This research uses Lincoln and Guba's

four criteria of credibility, transformability, dependability, and confirmability to judge the quality of the collected data. The data collected in this study were then analysed manually using conventional content analysis method in order to determine the presence of words pertinent to answer the research questions and meeting the research objective John and Dana (2000). The interview transcript was analysed for the presence of meaning and relationship of words to gain insight into the meaning and context of the content gathered in the interview.

4.0 FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings is based on the research objective to identify the challenges faced in teaching English using different social networking sites. The discussion in this section will be divided according to the following sections:

- a) The challenge of posting on social media
- b) The challenges faced during teaching English online.
- c) The challenges most present / measure target audience's comprehension.

4.1 The Challenge of Posting on Social Media

From the interview, the researchers have managed to uncover many important points in relation to challenges on using social networking sites for teaching English. Despite being known for its wide access to users across the globe to the teaching contents, the study participant admitted that the access is sometimes a hindrance rather than a benefit.

I think the downside of using social media is the access it has... I received negative comments before from toxic cyber-bullies, that's common...

The participant shared one of the few comments he received from posting on social media. One of the comments was when the audience criticised him for teaching and using English language for his posts and social media contents. The audience stated that the participant should be proud of using Bahasa Malaysia instead of using English language as what was referred to as *bahasa penjajah* (language of the colonials). The negative comments he received would normally come from fake account users (users who are not posting using their actual name or profile pictures). The fake account users will say negative comments apart from trying to give bad impression to the social media influencer, apart from trying to influence others to follow their views and opinion.

He also faced an issue in uploading contents on social media where his video was once taken down by TikTok. According to him, TikTok stated that the content was against 'community rules' even though the content was following the community guidelines.

4.2 The Challenges Faced during Teaching English Online

The study participant always conducts live-streaming session for teaching English online, apart from posting posts or contents in the form of videos on his social media accounts. As seen in the excerpt above, it can be seen that receiving negative comments are quite common due to the access gained by everyone on social media. He admits that only a handful of audience would give negative feedbacks or comments during his live-streaming sessions or on his video posts.

If you don't like my live (streaming session), you can leave...

During teaching online, he would respond to negative comments by asking the negative commentator(s) to leave the session. He also admits that there are many other audiences who want to learn new things, to get knowledge and get acquainted with people with the same interest. For those who are influencing other in negative ways, the study participant would ask them to leave the live-streaming session. Apart from that, he also needs to ensure that his posts or video contents are free from grammatical errors. This is because there will always be people who would point-out his grammatical mistakes and make it a big issue.

4.3 The Challenges Most Present among Students / Measure Students' Learning

The participant mentions that there is no obvious problem among the audience he was teaching. The audience are all keen to learn. In measuring the success of a content in assisting students' learning, the study participant mentioned that the success of the post can be seen by the number of likes, comments and the video being saved as 'favourite' in determining the success of the content. One of his most successful videos was one when he was teaching the English term for the Malay word 'gotong-royong'. He mentioned that the audience were overwhelmed to know the English term for the word which was previously being mistaken as cooperative work, community work and other related terms when the actual and accurate term for 'gotong-royong' should be 'communal work'.

When someone hits the 'favourite' button, you will be able to see the number of times the video is being stored as favourite. That video will stay in the user's social media account. Once you are able to see this and the number of 'likes' the video gets, you will be able to know that the video is successful in teaching the intended audiences.

From the interview conducted, it can be seen that the challenges exist either in teaching face-to-face or online. This is evident when the study participant faced hate comments and negative feedback for sharing knowledge. The stigma of being cocky (*berlagak*) just because one is speaking English still exists even though we are living in the modern era of the world without any boundaries.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Social networks are currently used by highly heterogeneous people with different ages, education levels, gender, social status, language, and culture who participate and incorporate social networks into their daily lives. There are both positive and negative impacts for being online educators. Apart from focusing on the advantages of technological advancement and ease of using technology for the purpose of teaching, one who aspires to become online educator should be aware of the challenges it presents in ensuring the success of teaching using social networking sites.

As found in this study, the widespread access of social networking sites is sometimes a hindrance rather than a benefit. Anyone with internet can access the content being posted. Hence aspiring online educators should be ready to face criticism and negative remarks when posting contents online. Adhering to the social guidelines of the applications used may also become a hindrance to online educators as there are occurrences when the academic content would be taken down due to cases such as the content was against 'community rules'. It is wise to

face negative comments and negative commentators with wit and composure. The participant asked the negative commentator(s) to leave the live session so as not to disturb other audiences; hence this is a good practice to ensure the learning session continues despite unfavourable remarks by other disagreeing audiences. Online educators should also ensure that the posts or video contents are free from grammatical errors as the contents will always be judged to the closest scrutiny. Ensuring the contents are free from errors would help learners or the audience as well keeping the educators' motivation high. The online audience are always keen to learn and this will be a good factor in ensuring the educators are motivated to create more contents. The success of the post can be seen by the number of likes, comments and the video being saved as 'favourite' which can be used to determine the success of the content.

Teaching English language especially in Malaysian educational landscape is challenging but can be interesting at the same time. The benefits brought by the use of technology will always be an added advantage to aspiring future educators. It is recommended that future research should shed light on all aspects and dimensions of social network sites especially by considering their place in college students' lives who happen to be the most active users of the social networking sites. Different dimensions of learning occurring in social network sites can be examined with a shift from a structured (often traditional) environment to an informal and flexible environment in which students feel more comfortable (Mazman & Usuel, 2009).

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