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Social media usage among English language learners in Primary School

Uso de Redes Sociales Entre Estudiantes de Inglés en la Escuela Primaria

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ABSTRACT

Social media has becoming a game changer among primary learners, adhering to the transformation and integration of ICT in education. Social media as a part of pupils' daily life routine is being used widely in and out of English classrooms. Apart from education purpose, they actively use social media for interaction, fun and entertainment. Therefore, this survey explores the use of social media by 20 primary learners at the ages of 10 and 11 in English classrooms in the district of Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia. Respondents responded to survey questionnaires and open-ended questions. Data collected revealed that the primary 4 and 5 pupils highly used YouTube as their mainstream social media platform for language learning, communication, skills building and gain knowledge. They also infused social media to enhance their English language skills. Hence, social media is being one of the main choices of language learning tools among primary learners to keep themselves updated with latest knowledge and skills in performing the ever-challenging education world.

Keywords: ICT, Social media, English classroom, primary learners, YouTube.

RESUMEN

Las redes sociales se han convertido en un cambio de juego entre los alumnos de primaria, adhiriéndose a la transformación e integración de las TIC en la educación. Las redes sociales como parte de la rutina de la vida diaria de los alumnos se utilizan ampliamente dentro y fuera de las aulas de inglés. Además del propósito educativo, utilizan activamente las redes sociales para la interacción, la diversión y el entretenimiento. Por lo tanto, esta encuesta explora el uso de las redes sociales por parte de 20 alumnos de primaria a las edades de 10 y 11 años en las aulas de inglés en el distrito de Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malasia. Los encuestados respondieron los cuestionarios de la encuesta y las preguntas abiertas. Los datos recopilados revelaron que los alumnos de 4 y 5 principales utilizaron YouTube como su principal plataforma de medios sociales para el aprendizaje de idiomas, la comunicación, el desarrollo de habilidades y el conocimiento. También infundieron las redes sociales para mejorar sus habilidades en el idioma inglés. Por lo tanto, las redes sociales están siendo una de las principales opciones de herramientas de aprendizaje de idiomas entre los alumnos de primaria para mantenerse actualizados con los últimos conocimientos y habilidades en el desempeño del mundo de la educación siempre desafiante.

Palabras clave: TIC, redes sociales, aula de inglés, alumnos de primaria, YouTube.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English skills in the 21st century is being integrated through fun and creative manner by educators. The use of various technology-based strategies (Lenkaitis, 2019) in classrooms are interesting young learners to explore and share new knowledge (Leonard, 2014) efficiently. Knowledge and learning can be facilitated through a variety of digital resources (Chandran et al., 2019; Suswati & Saleh, 2019) such as e-books, electronic devices, interactive games and apps. As the gadgets and access to digital content increase, social media has taken an ultimate role in being utilized widely by students.

Nowadays, students of almost all schooling ages have social media accounts to fulfill educational and entertainment needs (Karadkar, 2015; Lange, 2016). Social media is defined as the collective of online communications channel dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration (Karadkar, 2015; Yunus & Salehi, 2012). It facilitates sharing of ideas, thoughts and information through the building of virtual networks; making it a popularized choice by students (Suana et al., 2019). Social media provides quick electronic communication of content including personal information, documents, videos, photos and messages.

As of January 2019, Facebook with 2.27 billion active users, ranked as world's first social network, followed by YouTube in the second ranking with 1.9 billion users and WhatsApp in the third rank with 1.5 billion users (Statista, 2019).

Surprisingly, interesting research findings by Karadkar (2015) and (Bakar et al., 2018) wondered with the increasing number of student users on social media sites. Research by Pew Research Center (Karadkar, 2015) revealed that 70%-78% students spend time on Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram. These values indicate high involvement of student community in the virtual world of social media. This is due to the freedom (Chandran et al., 2019; Yunus et al., 2016) students persist to do things they like on social media like uploading and following their favourite contents, expand friends circle and most importantly, create personal profiles that upholds their identity as global citizens (Bal & Bicen, 2017; Reinhardt, 2019; Szeto, 2016;). In fact, social media allows them to do all possibilities within a fraction of seconds (Crick, 2019; Suana et al., 2019).

Though, there is a need to research to explore on how various social media sites being used by the primary pupils in English lessons, which eventually allows for the survey of this paper to be carried out. Due to age and content restrictions, pupils below 18 years old are encouraged to use social media with teachers and parents' supervision (Chen, 2019; Yunus et al., 2012). So, learning knowledge and information sharing could be more meaningful, wise and safe for them.

Primary learners also use social media to attain purposes other than education. The use of multiple languages in social media attracts pupils to be engaged (Kaushik et al., 2018; Roopchund et al., 2019) throughout the activities. Especially, English being one of the most preferred language choices, social media has ample student users. They feel free to bring their thoughts and imaginary ideas into real actions (Reinhardt, 2019; Wang & Chen, 2019) through the spontaneous medium.

Thus, this paper aims to discover the use of social media in improving learners' English language skills and competence. Researchers believe that social media positively provokes learners' English and socializing skills, knowledge bank and enthusiasm to be moulded into character-driven individuals besides achieving academical expectations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media in English Language Learning

The use of social media in English classrooms is strongly related with the Theory of Motivation by Abraham Maslow, that social need (Karadkar, 2015) of human being is the third utmost important requirement after physical and safety needs. It is highlighted as one of the main reasons billions of learners use social media to interact, make friends, satisfy their social needs and improve language acquisition (Domingo & Gargante, 2016; Greenhow & Lewin, 2015).

Learning English as a second language is facilitated by socializing tasks as been identified by Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory of Human Learning (Hashim et al., 2018). Therefore, social media is suggested as the best tool for pupils to learn English language. Globally, the social process continues to develop and extend through messaging, commenting and sharing contents and knowledge among peers, teachers and parents. Significantly, the use of social media apps creates active, confident, engaging and collaborative learning (Suana et al., 2019) environment among young learners (Kaushik et al., 2018; Leonard, 2014).

Similar findings in other rural areas portray that when students used social media continuously for certain duration, it improved their English skills by giving and accepting instant feedback, exchanging ideas and staying connected in their social circles (Chintalapati & Daruvi, 2016; Ghorbani & Golparvar, 2019). It promotes language learning (Bakar et al., 2018; Li, 2017) whereby students are free to express positive emotions and involve in self-directed learning (Abdurahman et al., 2016; Bakar et al., 2018).

YouTube and WhatsApp Usage among Learners

Recent discussions (Kabooha & Elyas, 2015; Kaushik et al., 2018; Snelson, 2016) share about YouTube and WhatsApp being most popular educational media and user-friendly for retaining learners' attention, active participation and stimulate student-centered learning. YouTube indeed, contains English language materials (Suswati & Saleh, 2019) real happenings,

live streaming, offline videos and provides services such as watch, like, share, comment and upload and download videos (Lange, 2016; Orus et al., 2016). Thus, the social media prompts learners to keep updated every second.

In fact, newest and latest issues in YouTube (Li, 2017; Thang et al., 2016) create awareness and refresh pupils' knowledge about surrounding events. Moreover, free, instant and authentic results support independent learning (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015) among students. Hence, its use in non-academic engagements indirectly leads to academic performance (Abdurahman et al., 2016). During leisure hours, students tend to access previously saved videos and store the learnt language skills to be employed during a speech or brainstorming session in English classroom. That is how the social media bridges gaps between non-academic and academic achievements.

Inculcating students' performances in both fields, parents play an utmost significant role in assisting towards their success. In this digital century, most families adapt social media to assist learning and stay connected with children (Chen, 2019). This is done by parents creating suitable environments to learn together with children through social media. Parental support and supervision highly encourage and motivate young learners (Suana et al., 2019) to use social media effectively. So, parents could guide children to use apps wisely and educate them to utilize them at school for English learning purposes (Chen, 2019; Yunus et al., 2012).

Eventually, the role of educators and parents in encouraging learners to use social media is highly efficient considering their achievement in academic and non-academic fields. They can perform well by being connected with social media materials and peers collaboratively (Yeop et al., 2019). Researches have been proving to identify learners regularly using social media to involve deeply in meaningful and interactive learning environments. This shows the positive impact of social media in students' routine as a continuous involvement for successful knowledge and skills grasping.

3. METHODOLOGY

This survey research design study involved 20 Year 4 and 5 primary participants aged 10 and 11 from the rural demographic location in Cameron Highlands, Pahang. The survey instrument consisted of self-administered questionnaires and open-ended questions.

Pupils were distributed paper based self-administered questionnaires that contained items related to four main areas of social media namely access to ICT tools, social media usage, social media competency and reasons of using social media. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed to the statements given.

Whereas, the 13 open-ended items contained questions and statements related to social media insights. Pupils listed their responses in the spaces given below each item. Data were then analyzed through the SPSS Statistics software. Quantitative data of the valid percentages for each category and the qualitative data in terms of most common responses for the open-ended items were tabulated and further discussed to draw conclusion.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

GENDER	MALE	60%
	FEMALE	40%
PRIMARY	FOUR	40%
	FIVE	60%
DURATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE	1-3 YEARS	40%
	4-6 YEARS	40%
	7-9 YEARS	20%

Table 1 shows the respondents consisted of 60% male and 40% female. They were from primary four (40%) and primary five (60%). Participants of 40% have been using social media for 1-3 years, another 40% for 4-6 years and 20% for 7-9 years.

Table 2 Access to ICT tools

	ACCESS	YES (%)	NO (%)
1	COMPUTER	85	15
2	SMART PHONE	90	10
3	IPAD	35	65
4	INTERNET	85	15
5	USING SOCIAL MEDIA	65	35

Table 2 contains accessibility of respondents to ICT tools such as computer, smart phone, IPAD, internet and usage of social media. In terms of the accessibility, 90% respondents were found to own smartphones and followed by 85% having computer and internet. Indeed, 65% respondents have been using social media.

Table 3 Social Media Usage

	SOCIAL MEDIA	NEVER (%)	SELDOM (%)	SOMETIMES (%)	ALWAYS (%)
1	FACEBOOK	60	10	15	15
2	TWITTER	85	0	5	10
3	WECHAT	85	10	5	0
4	LINE	70	0	25	5
5	INSTAGRAM	50	20	25	5
6	YOUTUBE	0	10	40	50
7	WHATSAPP	20	20	40	20
8	TELEGRAM	60	20	15	5
9	TIK TOK	70	10	15	5
10	SNAPCHAT	55	10	25	10

Table 3 displays various social media usage by the respondents. YouTube has been used always by 50% participants, followed by 20% for WhatsApp, 15% for Facebook, and 10% for Twitter and Snapchat. Whereas, LINE, Instagram, Telegram and Tik Tok equally shares 5% for always usage. However, Twitter and Wechat has never been used by 85% respondents, followed by 70% for LINE and Tik Tok, 60% for Facebook and Telegram, 55% for Snapchat, 50% for Instagram, 20% for WhatsApp and 0% for YouTube.

Table 4 Social Media Competency

	SOCIAL MEDIA	NOT APPLICABLE (%)	WEAK (%)	MODERATE (%)	GOOD (%)	VERY GOOD (%)
1	FACEBOOK	40	15	10	10	25
2	TWITTER	70	20	5	0	5
3	WECHAT	75	5	5	10	5
4	LINE	60	15	15	10	0
5	INSTAGRAM	25	20	30	15	10
6	YOUTUBE	0	5	10	10	75
7	WHATSAPP	5	10	25	15	45
8	TELEGRAM	45	15	5	20	15
9	TIK TOK	55	20	5	10	10
10	SNAPCHAT	60	5	20	5	10

Table 4 displays social media competency among primary respondents. Participants of 75% were very good using YouTube, followed by 45% for WhatsApp, 25% for Facebook, 15% for Telegram, 10% for Instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat, 5% for Twitter and Wechat and 0% for LINE.

Table 5 Reasons of Using Social Media

	ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1	I USE SM TO COMMUNICATE WITH MY FRIENDS	10	0	10	80
2	I USE SM TO COMMUNICATE WITH MY FAMILY	0	0	25	75
3	I USE SM TO LEARN NEW THINGS	0	0	10	90
4	I USE SM TO FOLLOW MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS	10	0	35	55
5	I USE SM TO LEARN ENGLISH	5	5	20	70
6	I USE SM TO FILL MY FREE TIME	0	0	35	65
7	I USE SM TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE	0	0	35	65
8	I USE SM TO FOLLOW THE CURRENT TREND (FASHION, MOVIE, MUSIC)	0	10	10	80
9	I USE SM BECAUSE MY FRIENDS USE IT	10	5	40	40

10	I USE SM TO DO BUSINESS	50	30	15	5
11	I USE SM BECAUSE IT IS EASY TO USE	0	5	25	70
12	I USE SM BECAUSE IT IS USEFUL TO ME	0	0	35	65

Table 5 shows reasons of the primary learners using social media. Respondents of 90% strongly agreed that they use social media to learn new things, followed by 80% to communicate with friends and follow current trends. 65%-75% respondents strongly agreed for using social media to communicate with family, learn English, fill free time, gain knowledge, easy usage and useful for them. Learners of 40%-55% strongly agreed that they use social media due to influence of friends and follow their favourite artists. However, only 5% strongly agreed for using social media to do business.

Table 6 Social Media Insights

	ITEM	MOST COMMON RESPONSES
1	How Do You Use Sm For Education Purpose?	To Complete Homework, Google English Vocabularies, Watch Educational Videos And Cartoons In English
2	For Which Subjects Do You Use Sm The Most And Least?	Most-English, Science And Arts Least-Mathematics
3	Which Language Do You Choose When Using Social Media?	English
4	Why Do You Think You Need Sm In Your Daily Life?	Communicate With Friends And Teachers, Keep Updated With Latest News, Helpful To Get Instant Information In English LanguagE
5	What's Your Favourite Education/Entertainment Sm App/Websites?	Youtube
6	Why Do You Use The App/Website Stated In Item No 5?	For Experiments Guidance, Crafts Making, Projects, Learn English Words Pronunciation And Life Skills
7	In What Ways The Sm App Suits Or Fulfills Your Needs?	Easily Accessible In English Language, Knowledge In Fingertips, Instant News
8	How Does Sm Help You As A Primary English Learner In Your Daily Life Routine?	Gain New Knowledge, Be Updated With Latest Happenings Around The World
9	Do You Have Accessibility To Use Sm In Your English Classroom?	Yes
10	How Many Hours Per Week You Have Access To Sm In Your English Lessons?	1-2 Hours
11	Do Your Parents Encourage You To Use Sm?	Yes
12	Why Do Your Parents Encourage You To Use Sm?	Expand English And Life Skills And Be Equipped With General Knowledge
13	I Would Continue/Discontinue Using Sm In My Daily Life Because	Continue Using Sm Because It Is Helpful For Studies And Improves Quality Of LivinG

Table 6 shows 13 open-ended responses answered by respondents on social media insights. Most common responses for each item were identified, gathered and tabulated above. Respondents mostly use social media for education purpose in order to complete homework and Google English vocabularies. English, Science and Arts are the mostly discovered subjects using social media. Whereas, Mathematics is the least explored subject through social media.

Respondents use social media in their daily life to communicate with friends and teachers, keep updated with latest news and get instant information. Participants also mentioned YouTube as their favourite education or entertainment social media app. They mainly use YouTube to get guidance to do experiments, crafts, projects and learn life skills. Importantly, they learn pronunciation of English words that assist them to improve their speaking skills. Social media is highly preferred by the primary learners because it is easily accessible, they could gain instant news and knowledge in fingertips.

As primary learners, social media helps pupils to gain new knowledge and be updated with latest happenings around the world. Participants also have access to social media in their English lessons for 1-2 hours per week. Respondents stated that their parents encourage them to use social media to expand their English and life skills and be equipped with general knowledge. They agreed to continue use social media in their daily life because it is helpful for studies and improves quality of living.

Findings revealed that respondents were from rural demographic location, consisting of primary four and five. Though they come from rural areas, most of them have been using social media since they were 4-6 years old. It is due to having access to ICT tools such as smart phone, computer, Internet and social media likewise findings gained by Chen, 2019 and Lenkaitis, 2019. Hence, easily available and reachable digital tools allow learners to expand their social circle (Karadkar, 2015) while being enthusiastic in learning their favourite subjects.

Besides, the primary learners were found to be frequently using a variety of social media such as YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook through the available devices. Similarly, research by (Chintalapati & Daruvi, 2016; Domingo & Gargante, 2016) found that students preferred using YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook for language learning purposes. Among them, YouTube and WhatsApp (Karadkar, 2015; Statista, 2019) are highly used by learners since they possess very good competency in utilizing them. Indeed, the flexibility and functions (Domingo & Gargante, 2016; Greenhow & Lewin, 2015) of these social media apps allow them to be highly utilized by primary learners. So, they easily access their favourite videos in YouTube to keep updated with latest trending and contents which assist with language and skills acquisition (Hashim et al., 2018).

However, WhatsApp being the second top favoured social media app by learners because they can be connected with their family and peers while sharing useful and helpful information through text messages, pictures, videos and audio messages. Discussion of knowledge, new happenings and daily routines were instantly done through audio and video calls. In this way, pupils tend to communicate better and proper English; indirectly allowing gradual improvement in language fluency. The findings are supported by open-ended items' responses that learners stated YouTube as their favoured education or entertainment app or website. According to Thang et al., (2016) pupils favour YouTube as regularly used social media to learn language. Accessing social media in English language, learners tend to enhance their English skills. Content in terms of interactive questions and responds, fun and attractive visual elements, comments and subscription facility further interest learners to continue use YouTube in fulfilling everyday learning opportunities.

Findings also highlight that they use social media to improve their English language, learn new things, communicate with friends and follow current trends such as fashion, movies and music. Research by (Statista, 2019; Thang et al., 2016) articulates that learners (Karadkar, 2015) favour YouTube and used it regularly in a language classroom. Through communication with friends and teachers, learners collaborate actively (Suana et al., 2019) and interact to gain feedback and be engaged actively to complete certain tasks (Bailey, 2019; Yunus & Salehi, 2012). In this way, their free time is occupied wisely for beneficial activities (Chandran et al., 2019; Roopchund et al., 2019).

Significantly, young learners use social media because it functions easily and useful for them in a variety of context (Chandran et al., 2019). Social media sets an ultimate platform for learners to gain knowledge, instant news and information in fingertips (Leonard, 2014). New videos in huge amount being uploaded and accessed daily by millions of users (Karadkar, 2015; Snelson, 2016; Wang & Chen, 2019). They contain latest content, updates and useful knowledge needed for pupils' learning and improvement. Therefore, pupils prefer social media in their daily life since it provides materials and learners to assist them with their homework and learn new vocabularies (Yunus & Salehi, 2012).

Due to social media's flexible features settings, learners get opportunity to explore English subject widely besides completing experiments, crafts, projects in classrooms. Hence, they could perform in academic and non-academic tasks (Bailey, 2019; Hashim et al., 2018) efficiently at their level best. Easy and instant access (Abdurahman et al., 2016) at times and places are unique insights of social media that fond learners to utilize them to expand knowledge and life skills in the target language.

Indeed, parents are being stimulators in encouraging children to apply social media to guide them with exploring English language vastly, studies' needs and discover life skills. However, it is advisable for parents to supervise (Chen, 2019; Yunus et al., 2012) children's usage of social media is under parental control and they are exposed to the right content. Learners prompt to continue the usage of social media in their daily life since it is helpful to fulfill education demands and improve quality of living (Bailey, 2019; Kaushik et al., 2018).

Therefore, social media allows learners to involve in independent and virtual learning (Yeop et al., 2019), express ideas clearly and communicate socially in English to increase productivity (Abdurahman et al., 2016) so they could face the current digital world challenges (Yunus & Salehi, 2012). However, the researcher identified limitation in the study. The findings were more likely to represent the use of social media by fewer number of respondents in the rural area. Therefore, research findings may be not generalized for pupils using social media in the urban areas due to differences in availability of facilities and advanced technology features. Further research would employ in exploring the issues and types of YouTube based materials in encouraging English learning skills among urban pupils.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey on the use of social media among primary learners in the district of Cameron Highlands is significant considering the impact of social media on learners' education and daily routine. Aspects of social media positively influence them to learn English language skills, new knowledge and discover the world happenings instantly. Demands of English as global language in education and futuristic job fields are increasing social media effect among learners. It is effective in assisting knowledge grasping to heighten living quality. Education policy makers with join efforts with educators in schools could integrate more social media insights in English syllabus to ease learning in creative ways and motivate learners to endure life skills for successful futuristic endeavours.

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