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Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my
Social Media Use for English Learning in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Review

Farah Fazlinda Mohamad*
Khazaila bt Zaini**
Nur Syahidatul Idany***

Abstract: Of the many uses of social media, educationists advocate its use for teaching the English language. The traditional method of learning the English language is associated with inattention among learners. The adoption of social media in teaching the English language can create a fun, stress-free, and pleasant environment that is able to cultivate a positive attitude among the learners. Hence, this study carried out a systematic review to assess the use of social media for English learning in the Southeast Asia context. The study systematically searched the peer-reviewed literature using the SCOPUS database and identified 46 articles. After thorough reading, 21 articles met the inclusion criteria. Articles that were excluded from the analysis were conducted outside Southeast Asia, do not focus on Southeast Asia’s English learning, and do not engage with social media usage. The findings suggest that the use of social media for English learning was associated with improving communication skills, enhancing collaborative learning, encouraging self-directed learning, enhancing writing skill and learning experience.

Keywords: Communication skill; English; social media; Self-directed learning; Southeast Asia; Systematic review

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Kata kunci: Kemahiran komunikasi, Bahasa Inggeris, media sosial, Pembelajaran kendiri, Asia Tenggara, Tinjauan Sistematik

Introduction

English education is very essential and crucial for everyone, especially primary, secondary, and tertiary learners. The learning of English should be conducted in an enjoyable environment and not just confined behind the four walls of a classroom (Rahmah, 2015). The learning process should be conducted in a fun, stress-free, and pleasant environment that is able to cultivate a positive attitude among the learners. In creating a fun and enjoyable environment for the learners, the educators, teachers, and lecturers can implement the 21st century learning which focuses on the student-centred approach over the teacher-centred approach.

The 21st century learning highlights three different kinds of competencies which are learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. The learning skills are comparatively crucial as it cultivates students’ innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication and collaboration skills. Similarly, literacy skills highlight the information, media, and ICT literacy, while the life skills teach students to have adaptability, flexibility, initiative, and self-direction. In order for the students to develop these competencies in the 21st century learning,
the learning environment should be supportive and has the ability to communicate ideas and concepts that can stimulate students’ interests to study (Rigolon and Alloway, 2011).

Correspondingly, the Malaysian education system should focus on implementing the 21st century learning by equipping the students with ICT knowledge and utilising interactive platforms like social media, social network sites (SNS) and application for the learning process. Undoubtedly, scholars have identified various benefits of social media for English learning. Opportunities arise for students as they can develop their own learning styles using different interactive media platforms (Girma, 2012). Besides, social media is ubiquitous, accessible, convenient and receive high engagement compared to the other media platforms (Chen & Xiao, 2022; Kamnoetsin, 2014).

This systematic literature review aims to respond to a research question – Why students prefer to use social media for English learning? This study’s objective is to provide a systematic literature review on students’ preferences using social media for English learning in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian region was selected for several reasons. Firstly, Malaysia belongs to the Southeast Asian region and it is important to study the use of social media for English learning in non-native English-speaking countries. Secondly, the researchers would like to examine social media preferences for English learning among Southeast Asian learners.

Social media for English learning

The use of social media in English education has grown and will continue to develop as a strategic teaching approach during the post-pandemic recovery phase. In scholarly works on social media, social media refers to a number of online platforms, such as blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks (SN), forums, microblogs, photo sharing, product reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing, and virtual worlds.

Social media platforms are ubiquitous, and research into their use has grown enormously. Social media has been used extensively in the education context as it provides the learners and educators with plenty of benefits in the learning process, such as providing assistance, enhancement of educational processes, communication and
collaboration and customising the learning styles (Zachos et al., 2018). In the educational context, a variety of social media platforms have been used to facilitate the learning process such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, Snapchat, WeChat, Line and TikTok (Ganapathy et al., 2020; Hafifah & Sulistyo, 2020; Maulina et al., 2021; Nuraihan et al., 2020; Octana & Priyatno, 2020; Salehuddin et al., 2020).

Despite the benefits of social media for English learning, other scholars have stated that university students’ usage of social media is more detrimental than good. Social media is not always used for learning purpose, as students were drawn towards chatting and subjects that had nothing to do with their education (Slim & Hafedh, 2019; Chen & Xiao, 2022). The increase in social media use and the opportunities it has provided necessitate a research that will reveal social media use of English learning among students in Southeast Asia.

Methods

The review protocol – Established Guidelines

For completing the systematic literature review, there are several review protocols that can be applied by the scholars, such as BEME Collaboration, Joanna Briggs Institute, and Campbell Collaboration, which are commonly used in health-related fields. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA), created by Moher et al., (2009), is one of the review processes that can be used in non-health studies that involve the arts, humanities, engineering, computer science, and architecture. In addition, several scholars in fields like social sciences and supply chain management have developed established guidelines as a guide for systematic literature review (Durach et al. 2017).

The current investigation was guided by a review methodology based on published principles. The established guidelines are intended for systematic literature review in social sciences and management (Shaffril et al., 2020; Kraus et al., 2020). The purpose of established criteria is to encourage researchers to provide genuine and correct material with a high level of details. The researchers began this systematic literature evaluation based on this review process by developing appropriate research questions. Following that, the researchers must complete
the systematic searching approach, which includes three major subprocesses: identification, screening, and eligibility. Finally, the data were examined and validated.

**Formulation of research questions**

The formulation of research questions for this study involved the Research Question Development Tool (RQDT). For this study, the researchers utilised Population or Problem, Interest, Context (PICo). PICo is a tool developed to assist researchers in developing suitable research questions for the review. Based on PICo, the researchers have finalised three main aspects in the review, namely: use of social media (Problem), English language (Interest), and 21st century and Southeast Asia region (Context), which then direct the researchers to formulate the main research question – How has the use of social media benefited learners in learning English in the Southeast Asian region? This method determines how much the current studies have progressed toward clarifying the use of social media in studying English in the 21st century in the Southeast Asian context. It also helps to identify relations, gaps, and contradictions in the literature and explores reasons why researchers keep exploring the research area. Conclusively, it helps to formulate research questions and directions for future research (Shaffril et al., 2020).

**Systematic searching strategies**

Three main processes involved in the systematic searching strategies namely identification, screening and eligibility as depicted in Figure 1.

---

**Fig.1.** Review Flow Diagram (adapted from Shaffril et al., 2019)
Identification

The first step involves with identification. In this step, the researchers looked for synonyms and related terms, which are social media, English language and the twenty-first century. It provides more alternatives for the selected database to look for more related articles by searching for synonyms and related phrases. As a result, the previously established study topic can create keywords, as indicated by Okoli (2015). As shown in Table 1, the researchers enriched the existing keywords and created a full search string using several functions available in the databases, including the Boolean operator and phrase searching on a database, SCOPUS. The searches in the database, SCOPUS yielded a total of 86 articles.

Screening

This study screened all 86 articles by filtering the criteria for article selection, which was performed using the database’s sorting function. It is critical to identify the time period. Hence, the use of Kraus et al.’s (2020) idea of study maturity to establish the appropriate range of publication for review. By referring to Table 1, the inclusion criteria for this study were a publication timeline ranging from 2016 to 2022. In addition, the empirical data and published journal articles were also included. Only publications published in English that cover Southeast Asia will be included in the review. This resulted in the exclusion of 46 articles because they all failed to meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 40 articles were used in the eligibility phase.

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Before 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Document type</td>
<td>Article journal</td>
<td>Article review, chapter in book, conference proceeding, report</td>
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<tr>
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<td>English</td>
<td>Other than English</td>
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<td>Region</td>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
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</table>
Eligibility

In this phase, the 40 articles were examined in terms of their titles and abstracts. An article was judged to eligible if it is full text version and focus on the social media use of English learning. As a result, 19 articles were removed due to their emphasis on Chinese rather than English, on traditional learning methods rather than the use of social media, and on the Western region rather than the Southeast Asian region. After screening the titles and abstracts, 21 articles were chosen.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

According to Whittemore and Knafl (2005), the ideal strategy to synthesise integrative data is to use qualitative or mixed method techniques that allow the researchers to perform iterative comparison across primary data sources. The qualitative technique was chosen for this study. The researchers attentively reviewed the 21 articles, paying special attention to the abstract, findings, and discussions sections. The data abstraction was carried out based on the research question, which means that any data from the examined studies that could answer the research questions was abstracted and placed in a table. Following that, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis, identifying themes and sub-themes based on efforts connected to recognising patterns and themes, clustering, numbering, noting parallels and relationships that existed within the abstracted data (Flemming et al., 2019).
<table>
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### Social Media Platform

| IG= Instagram | WC=WeChat |
| FB= Facebook  | LN= LINE  |
| T= Telegram   | YT= YouTube |
| TW= Twitter   | SC= Snapchat |
| WA= WhatsApp  | TT= TikTok  |
Findings

Background of the articles

This study reviewed 21 articles, where 10 articles were written from Indonesia, nine from Malaysia, and two from Thailand. A total of 19 articles employed quantitative research methodology and two articles employed qualitative research design.

The themes

Five themes were created: (a) improved communication skill (b) enhanced collaborative learning (c) encouragement for self-directed learning (d) enhanced writing skill and (e) enhanced learning experience.

Improved communication skill

Using social media for English learning has numerous advantages for both students and teachers, including improved communication skills and abilities. Using Instagram as a learning tool in the writing process allows students to collaborate and communicate with others by providing criticism and remarks in the comment section (Octana & Priyatno, 2020). As a result, it fosters a sense of courage in the learners and improves their interpersonal abilities. It also enhances understanding between learners and lecturers, as well as learners with learners.

The significance of WhatsApp as a platform for speaking practice via audio and video recording was acknowledged by the students (Sun & Asmawi, 2023; Maulina et al., 2019; Sutasini & Melor, 2020). The demand for a platform where students may connect in a natural way is significant. Students in the WhatsApp group felt free to voice their thoughts and reply to those of their classmates and teachers through their recorded audio and video. Students enjoy learning English through the WhatsApp Based Speaking (WABS) platform. The majority of them choose to strengthen the vocabulary component of their basic speaking via WABS (Maulina et al., 2021). This strategy not only encourages students to speak out in class, but it also indirectly encourages students to actively participate in the class discussions (Maulina et al., 2021; Khalid, Linda & Zanariah, 2015).

Additionally, using YouTube in English-speaking classes helps students perform better in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and details (Anggraini et al., 2022; Riswanto et al., 2022; Rou
Students are inspired to work on their pronunciation and broaden their vocabulary while listening to a native English speaker with an authentic accent, both of which assist them to increase their overall fluency. This helped them in building their confidence to interact using English language with others (Arumugam et al., 2019). The videos on the channel were utilised by the students as a discussion starter when they watched them, giving them something to speak about. This has resulted in improving their communication skill.

There is a substantial and positive correlation between the students’ proficiency in speaking English and the frequency they consume English-language information on social media. Students have the opportunity to contact with individuals from all over the world by using social media, which gives them an additional opportunity to practise their speaking skill (Anwas et al., 2020).

**Enhanced collaborative learning**

Correspondingly, English learning through social media platforms enhance collaborative learning among students. The collaborative learning happens when students discuss ideas or finding answers to challenges in pairs or small groups. By implementing pair work strategy, students have real-time practice with the teacher as well as their partners. As they participate in more pair work activities and answer questions from the teacher, they have more chances to engage with one another (Riswanto et al., 2022).

The use of Instagram in writing exercises allowed students to collaborate and interact with others by giving feedback and comments in the comment section. By leaving comments, the students could edit each other’s writing. As a result, individuals were able to receive writing-related comments. Consequently, the students may review and edit their own work in light of input from their friends (Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020). The peer review on social media has helped the students to learn English grammar and structure (Arumugam et al., 2019).

Additionally, Facebook would allow students to efficiently collaborate and learn. They were free to exchange any written resources they wished, including documents, assignments, and lecture notes. Receiving feedback and comments from peers gave them more
concepts, information, and processing abilities to consider (Kitchakarn, 2016).

**Encouragement for self-directed learning**

It is crucial for students to involve in self-directed learning when they engage with social media. Self-directed learning refers to the students’ ability to identify their own learning needs, setting their own learning objectives, defining the resources they need to learn from, selecting and applying the best learning techniques, and assessing their progress whether they receive outside assistance (Knowles, 1975). Students may practise self-directed learning when they learn at their own pace and it fosters independence in them like in the use of WhatsApp Based Speaking (WABS) content (Maulina et al., 2021; Haida et al., 2019).

Besides, the use of Instagram in the class writing project encourages self-directed learning among students. This implies the goal setting, self-planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and revision. Students are allowed to plan their own learning styles that suits their needs and moods at the particular time. Hence, they are responsible towards their own learning and would complete the writing project at their own pace. At the end of the project, students revise their work based on the feedback received from their teacher or peers (Octana et al., 2020; Khusnul et al., 2019). Furthermore, using Instagram during the learning process offers a stimulation to students that explore their potentials, passions, and interests. This means students have control over the learning process (Salehuddin et al., 2020).

**Enhanced writing skill**

Most traditional learning techniques do not incorporate technology, which has increased learners’ fear of writing. One study suggested that using technology in writing lowers learners’ writing anxiety (Nuraihan et al., 2020). The broad audience on social media gives users an authentic setting in which to use the language. What was once a tedious chore for a language learner is now an integral part of their daily life. According to El Said Abdul Fattah (2015), students enjoy writing with instant messages and status updates. They were also found to write in English more frequently on Edmodo, a worldwide education network; massive open online courses (MOOC); and Google Classroom, which were commonly used for teaching (Nuraihan et al., 2020).
Instagram integration in writing classes promotes student engagement in various ways, including allowing students to be more active in the writing processes; creating a new learning environment; providing more target readers; and ensuring student participation and interaction (Octana & Priyatno, 2020). Moreover, most students admit that the use of WeChat for writing is good since it helps them to interact more with their peers, enable sharing of experiences and problems in writing (Sun & Asmawi, 2023).

Furthermore, in order to help students grow and improve their writing skills, English teachers might take use of this unique interest. For a writing class, the English teachers can provide students the option of selecting a topic from the social media (Bayoung et al., 2019). The replies will undoubtedly be used as opportunities for students to write better English. The replies, on the other hand, can expand their vocabulary by copying interesting words or phrases from social media into their books. Evidently, interactions in the social media help students write better when they are moderated by teachers.

**Enhanced learning experience**

Using social media to learn English improves students’ learning experience. According to Razak and Din (2020), the majority of respondents in their research feel that edutainment video delivers an interesting sensory experience and that the video content can improve their level of proficiency. Similarly, using a video blog (vlog) can boost learners’ interest and involvement in learning (Haida et al., 2020, Suprato & Sidupa, 2019; Alawiah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, primary school students believe that social media has influenced their reading habits since they can read items of interest to them and share them with their classmates (Wong, Ashairi & Melor, 2019).

Additionally, students believed that the use of WeChat in writing has enriched their learning experiences. The online interaction helped them to share their experiences, collaborate with and enhanced their critical thinking in writing. As a result, students’ passion for learning Business English Writing grows over time, resulting in increased learning efficiency (Sun & Asmawi, 2023).

On the other hand, students feel satisfied with the integration of Instagram in the EFL writing. The students were interested in completing
their writing assignments on Instagram as it offers an appealing user interface and intriguing features. This has encouraged and pushed them to write their opinions and complete the task given. Similarly, some students admitted that they acquire new experience with the use of Instagram for writing (Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020). Previously, they normally worked their writing projects on paper. With this technique, they were given the opportunity to create and share their writing on Instagram. As a result, the students could upload the images or videos and add the captions from their writing assignments. In this way, students gain new experience for writing and it stimulates their interests for writing (Arumugam et al., 2019).

Discussion

This systematic review elaborates on the thematic analyses, which were divided into five themes. The fundamental theme explored throughout the literature was the improvement of communication skills. Notably, most students prefer to use social media for English learning since it helps them enhance their communication abilities, which can be measured by using a variety of components such as oral communication, written communication, nonverbal communication, and visual communication. Learners can improve their communication abilities by using social media to learn English. They may express themselves online without having to deal with the awkwardness of speaking in front of others. The learners will soon be able to respond to and comment on their own and others’ posts, as well as receive feedback from the other learners.

Furthermore, the use of social media for English learning has increased the learners’ communication skills by allowing them to improve and expand their vocabulary. Adult learners choose to use WABS, Instagram, and video blogging sites to overcome grammar challenges and enhance their vocabulary. Meanwhile, young students pick up new vocabulary from social media comment sections (Maulina et al., 2021; Octana & Priyatno, 2020; Haida et al., 2019). Although this has been seen positively by young learners, the negatives of others’ inappropriate and imprecise language on social media remain a problem.

Nevertheless, different types of learners will benefit from the social media platform, including those who are introverted and reticent learners (Chew and Ng, 2021; Xin and Yunus, 2019; Halif et al., 2020). Introverted and reticent learners prefer to use social media to learn
English rather than in the classroom as they fear being mocked by their peers, making mistakes, or being judged by others (Cunningham & Watson, 2018; Shao & Gao, 2016). Thus, they remain reticent as an avoidance strategy in the classroom (Tian, 2022). However, recent research revealed that Thai learners are considered to be reticent and shy in the classroom as this is an embedded personality trait (Vinitwatanakhun, 2019). Additionally, Vietnamese learners were more inclined to speak English spontaneously in online environments where they felt they had less social presence. They used text and voice chat as both were perceived as less face-threatening than video chat. As a result, they were more inclined to speak in situations with less social presence (Cunningham & Watson, 2018).

Besides that, learners prefer to use social media to learn English as they can personalise their learning process. Learners can design the content, duration, and time based on their schedules. This allows the learners to have some flexibility over their learning process. Recent research reveals that learners engage in out-of-class learning activities more frequently. Out-of-class learning has been used in personalised learning to refer to the efforts of learners enrolled in classroom-based language courses to locate and exploit chances for language acquisition outside of class (Changzhen, 2018). When the learners are involved in self-directed learning, they can freely express their thoughts and respond on social media. This enables them to customise their learning style in terms of time and modes of learning (Slim and Hafedh, 2019).

However, learners need to also be aware of the drawbacks of the social media, such as the limited characters on Twitter force users to use abbreviations or shorten words, which is grammatically incorrect (Al-Sharqi and Abbasi, 2020). Hence, to be able to use social media effectively to boost their language learning process, learners would require well-prepared instructional supervision and specialised exercises (Lin et al., 2016). Other than that, annotated video technology in education has a growing research base that shows its potential role in student learning (Lam & Habil, 2021). Learners will be taught analogous practises through annotated video learning, which will help them concentrate and focus on their learning.

The government, schools and other related organisations can use the findings to improve language learning through social media. When
students use social media as an English learning tool, such as Facebook and Instagram, they study the language and communicate with people all over the world and complete language functions without ever seeing native speakers in person. Hence, the government through its Ministry of Education can leverage these platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, for English learning in the classroom. For example, Instagram use for photo essays.

Besides, other organisations such as the telecommunication providers can continue to provide special discount for students through education subscription plan. Students can enjoy special benefits such as YouTube for Education and Meta for Education to encourage the informal learning of English

Conclusion

This systematic literature review highlighted the social media use concerning English language learning in the Southeast Asian context, which was divided into five main themes: improved communication skills, enhanced collaborative learning, encouragement for self-directed learning, enhanced writing skill and enhanced learning experience. The variables derived from this study could contribute to the body of knowledge by highlighting the role and features of social media in facilitating the English learning process. Hence, it is hoped that this systematic review could provide learners with a better understanding of how to leverage social media applications for the learning process, especially in the English language.

Despite its contributions, this review has several limitations. Firstly, only one database was used, so the results could not be generalised. It was intended to gather data from additional databases. However, during the selection stage, the articles gathered did not meet the title and selection criteria. Thus, only one database was selected for the final stage. Secondly, this study is intended for the Southeast Asian context. However, data presented in this review merely covers several countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand since in the selection process, only literature on these countries meet our selection criteria. Other Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and Brunei are not included in this review because articles from those countries are not related to students.
This study proposes some suggestions for future scholars’ consideration. Firstly, this study mainly focuses on English for learning purposes in Southeast Asian context. It is recommended to study and include the impact of social media on English language learning in the East Asia region, including Japan and Korea. This is because Korea has considered English as a global language and it has been recognised as a must-learn language based on the national agenda, *Segyehwa*, or globalisation in the Korean language. Secondly, several factors need to be considered when promoting social media as a learning platform. The researchers would suggest future studies to concentrate more on the challenges of using social media as a tool for teaching English. There is a concern over the use of ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot that mimics human speech in the process of English learning. The ChatGPT can be helpful for the learning process. However, some people were concerned that ChatGPT will complete the tasks that the students is expected to do. This would sap students’ inspiration, creativity, and ability to think critically (Learning Network, 2023).

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