

Social Media in Out-of-Class Language Learning

Possible Learning Opportunities to Promote Digital Literacy

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Abstract— This study reports preliminary overview on the possibilities of utilizing social media in Indonesian out-of-class language learning, mainly focusing on exploring how university students define the kinds of social media and examining the potential uses of social media to be promoted. The study employed a small-scale survey to students in three different classes in Bandung. The results of the study were that 1) autonomous learning is relatively an exclusive mode of learning in that only some noteworthy students have been internally aware to reflect on how they should learn autonomously and utilize low-cost digital sources to enhance their learning, but have not been able to evaluate their strategies in enhancing their autonomous learning, which further indicates the need for external guidance; 2) social media defined by female students were mostly on the mainstream instant-messaging platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp, while some other students, mostly males, favor the use of online games and social networking platforms in their free time to assist their language learning; and, 3) majority of the students positively perceive social media in providing learning environment beyond its normal use, including female students focusing on utilizing English in their social platforms and male students actively engaging in online English language PC/Android games, though some students are against the use of it due to the lack of formal language engagement.

Keywords—: *social media; out-of-class learning; autonomous learning*

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has become a widespread culture in life in this era of globalization. All people who are literate with social media spend a lot of time with social media. In the report of Nugroho and Syarief [1], Indonesian citizens who access the Internet itself were as many as 55 million inhabitants. Furthermore, in the Indonesian context, at least statistics show that the average Indonesian person spends about 5.1 hours in his/her life to access social media [2]. In the same report, Indonesia is also categorized as a country of high social media consumer compared to other countries. To access social media, a widely used medium is a smart phone with Android and iOS operating system. Despite much relying on the use of smart phones, access to social media can now also be enjoyed through personal computer or laptop. Social media provides more opportunities than using simple messaging apps

provided by default on used phones, such as collaborating online and sharing files wirelessly. Such conveniences are able to make social media users continue to show its existence in expressing and communicating directly.

In relation to the potential of social media as reported by Kemp [2], the field of language teaching and learning also has great potential to be explored as an opportunity to develop language teaching and learning processes. The context of the use of mobile devices or known as Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) in language teaching has started to attract many parties [3], [4]. Many studies have shown that social media is able to promote the process of teaching and learning English becomes more interesting and fun, such as the use of Twitter [5], [6], Facebook [7], [8], and WhatsApp [9]. This opportunity can be used both in the process of learning the language in the classroom as well as in the process of language learning outside the classroom. Unfortunately, as Richards [10] explains further, the focus of the learning process is still on the process of language learning in the classroom only. Meanwhile, focusing on language learning in the classroom has not provided an opportunity and has not promoted development in the learning process of language outside the classroom.

This paper, thus, reports an investigation focusing on exploring how university students defines the kinds of social media and examining the potential uses of social media to promote autonomous language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Lifelong Language Learning in Digital Era

Language learning outside the classroom itself is a concept that has emerged long in the world of education. Although the role of learning still occurs only in the classroom, the real learning role is oriented toward long-term learning [11]. In the context of mapping out language learning outside the classroom, especially in English learning, there are similar concepts sharing the same goals, such as the concept of out-of-class language learning itself [12] and autonomous learners [11], [13].

Out-of-class language learning is more or less influenced by the concept of 'lifelong learning', in which language learning itself does not stop after the language learner completes language lessons in his formal institution,

but should be continued wherever and whenever they can [11]. The role of context in which the process of learning the language itself is very important. The context of learning that has been known for a long time has first used various media to promote language learning outside the classroom. Pickard [12] mentions some of the media used by language learners to streamline their language learning process outside the classroom, such as newspaper and novel, to assist the learners read and listen to radio and watch television or movies in theaters to help them hear. In addition, the role of community or community learning, whether in the form of task-based groups, groups of the same age, or groups formed in their neighborhoods, also has an important role in promoting the role of language learning outside the classroom [14]. Unfortunately, although the role of language learning contexts outside the classroom is important, there is very little discussion of the role of foreign language learning with the use of foreign languages in the context of promoting lifelong language learning [15].

The context of English language learning in Indonesia as a foreign language, to some extent in several places, still holds the notion of collectivism [16]. In collectivism, learners are expected to learn how to do something and that perspective is considered the only 'most appropriate' perspective. Maulana et al. assert that the students need to uphold the idea in that they must agree and support their teacher at all times. In such a dialectical situation, the role of teachers becomes crucial because teaching and learning focus only on teacher activity. The pitfall, of course, lies on the lack of students' active involvement in the learning process, where it is being held back by the teacher to maintain the knowledge being transferred appropriately through, for example, lecturing.

Regardless of how the role of the teacher in operating his role in the classroom, the disposition of teachers in preparing language learners to be able to operate the language outside the classroom still needs to be pursued. Without consideration to be able to prepare for the language learning process outside the classroom, the dependence on the role of 'teacher' outside the classroom will continue to be bound in the minds of the learners. Therefore, the preparation of teachers to train and assist the role of learners as language learners outside the classroom is needed and it is eagerly awaited by all learners for the creation of a more humanistic and humane learning process.

B. Social Media in Language Learning

The term social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies that serve to transform the function of communication into an interactive dialogue [17]. The communication functions emphasized here also include written communication and oral communication. The technologies in question include many things, such as digital magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, and so on. In following up the concept of social media in learning, the concepts of what is mobile learning, the typology of social media, and consideration of the use of social media in learning will be raised further.

Learning languages using mobile devices themselves have started to be used in the process of obtaining English either through teaching or learning. Learning in the context of language

education, especially college, shows a positive acceptance for learning using this mobile device itself [18]. This learning pattern is also known as Mobile-assisted Language Learning (from now on MALL terminology will be used) [3], [19]–[22]. In dealing with mobile learning, the definition adopted by this research is a mediated learning through the use of handheld devices and available anywhere, anytime [23, p. 3]. This handheld device itself refers to the use of technologies such as smart phones, MP3 / MP4 players, tablet computers, and so on, yet in this context, it refers to smartphone (Android-based or Iphone).

In understanding the classification of social media app devices suitable for learning, Conole and Alevizou [24] classify social media into several kinds, namely media sharing for uploading and downloading different materials to the Internet; instant messaging, chat, and conversational arenas where users are able to post their contributions to the discussion forum; online games and virtual worlds where interaction patterns apply mutual familiarity to its foreign users between one user and another in an online game; social networking that becomes a medium of interaction online that can interact synchronously; blogging where many blog owners or known bloggers provide space for sharing information (such as blogspot or livejournal); social bookmarking where multiple sites collect and use tags that have been shared by users; recommender system where users are able to vote for something that needs to be introduced to the public; wikis and collaborative editing tools where the content of a thing is reconstructed by several collaborators; and, syndication where the use of RSS feeds is maximized to deliver new content from sites that are followed without having to visit the site of origin. In the classification of Conole and Alevizou, the form of social media that is widely accessible in Indonesia is more to applications easily accessible via mobile devices, such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp [2].

Many consider the use of mobile learning concepts to be used in language learning outside of this class because they are more oriented towards social communication needs [17], [25]. As Toetnel [26] describes, the activity on mobile learning that is applied can promote the use of more participative and interactive language. Research conducted by Jones [27] also supports Toetnel's opinion that the role of mobile learning becomes a trend that is able to promote the combination of the role of online activities and networks used, resulting in an initiation to meet other learners, either face-to-face or online.

Given the crucial role of social media, the consideration of developing the right social media concept in learning becomes crucial. Without contributing to the development of the role of social media and mobile learning, education will be less able to accommodate the development of learners increasingly based on mobile devices. Therefore, the role of researchers and educators need to continue to be improved in order to support the learning process that is not left behind the times.

III. METHOD

This research model used survey design, where the study mainly relied on survey method. This research was conducted in three different classes in a private polytechnic in Bandung. The research site being in Bandung was chosen

because the city is one of the cities that promote the use of social media in the context of the implementation of the wheels of governance in the region [28].

Data were collected using questionnaires. Questionnaires are used to obtain information massively in a short time. The questionnaire will consist of approximately 20-30 questions consisting of closed and open statements. The Likert scale of 1-4 will be used with a very strongly agreeable range to strongly disagree. For open-ended questions, the questionnaire is intended to clarify answers to closed statements.

The data were analyzed in the quantitative manner. In the quantitative phase, the analysis is performed using SPSS 21.0 for Windows software to view descriptive descriptions of the responses that have been given and filter out potential respondents for follow-up in the qualitative phase.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on examining the kinds of social media used by students to assist their English learning outside the classroom and examining the potential uses of social media to promote autonomous language learning.

In the first part is the form of social media used by students in helping English learning autonomously outside the classroom. In general, the social media classification used in this study is the one proposed by Conole and Alevizou [24]. Here is the kinds of social media defined by students.

TABLE I. TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USED

Type of Social Media	Percentage
Media sharing	9.08
Instant Messaging, chat and conversational arenas	13.63
Online games and virtual worlds	9.70
Social networking	13.42
Blogging	11.15
Social bookmarking	10.74
Recommender systems	11.84
Wikis and collaborative editing tools	10.74
Syndication	9.70

From the table above, social media type instant messaging to be excellent in the definition of social media used by students with a percentage of 13.63 percent. In the next rank, social networking and recommender system became the next social media facility used with 13.42 percent and 11.84 percent respectively. In the bottom three types, media sharing is a rarely used social media category, since it involves files that are uploaded specifically for a particular purpose, not for public consumption, such as self-photo activities or photographic activities done specifically for public consumption. Online games and syndication (a special network that users use to filter information from a site in a particular format without having to visit the site) has a fairly low usage of 9.70 percent.

As many studies [9], [29], [30] suggest, instant messaging may be possible to be used in the language learning. It offers many handy features that allow the teacher to conduct the class in a relaxing manner. Yet, some features limit the potential of using this kind of media social, which are the small screen and the inability to simply edit the messages. Social networking may be another potential as it can be used

in PC or laptop through the access of Web browser. Facebook is one of the prime examples of the widely-used social media, as reported in [7], [8], [30]–[32]. Many features can be accessed by the use in PC or laptop to avoid the limitation in the mobile version. Yet, as what Fewkes and McCabe [31] argue, many teachers are still unable to maximize the features in Facebook, which further results in forbidding the use of this social media in the classroom. Students are also reported to wish that social media to be used in the classroom as it may allow them to expand the classroom potentials to the fullest.

Related to the potential form of social media use, this study focuses on four types of social media, namely online games, instant messaging, media sharing, and social networking. Findings related to four studies can be seen in the following table.

TABLE II. FREQUENCY OF USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AUTONOMOUS ENGLISH LEARNING

Online games	
I play online games on my mobile phone	2.74
I play online games on PC or console	2.33
I interact with others through the games I play	2.44
Instant messaging, chat and conversational arenas	
I try to respond to other people's messages in English if the situation allows	3.13
I write an English article on blog or Facebook	2.41
I joined the English learning group at Whatsapp/Line/Telegram	2.24
Media sharing	
I use social media to share what I think	3.00
I use social media to share links of interesting articles in English	3.13
I just enjoy social media without any active participation	2.22
I share English songs via social media	2.65
Social networking	
I commented in social media using English	2.67
I actively read in the English online forum	2.39
I actively read the articles in English	2.33
I actively discussed in the English-language online forum	2.09

From the above findings, students attempt to respond to other people's messages in English if the situation allows and likes to share engaging English articles to their friends into learning activities with an average frequency of 3.13. Playing online games is also less attractive to students, where they only choose to play (2.74) with less communication in the games they play (2.44). The low participation in English-language online forums is also visible, where they are less active in participating in English-language forums (2.09) or even reading postings in English-language forums (2.39).

Instant messaging and media sharing simply show the involvement of learning English, even though the involvement of students is still low. The lack of identifying the needs to actively participate in those situations may require the help of the teacher or other persons [33]. Compared to the two types of social media, online games and social networking are less attractive to students. In some studies conducted by Godwin-Jones [34] and Turgut and Irgin [35], online games have been

thought to be an interactive media to promote language learning subconsciously. Games allow the learners to play in accordance to the defined goals and rules that they should follow [32]. In such situation, Godwin-Jones further explains that some particular games requires a pre-assessment towards vocabulary use, syntactic structures, and other linguistic characteristics that the learners require to learn in advance. Yet, despite the benefits offered by the games, commercial features for a game to be played may be further considered both by the teacher and the learners.

Furthermore, language involvement in the social networking may further enhance their language learning. As what Hanna and De Nooy [36] discuss in their book, despite the obstacles of using public Internet discussion, such as culture clash, being involved in a public Internet discussion provides the learners to play social roles different from they usually act in the classroom and the asynchronous feature that allows the teacher to provide intervention to assist the learners in conducting communication in the forum.

In short, social media have been used and will be used in the future. Students have used and accessed social media in their daily life. As it is being actively used by students, the pedagogy should be expanded to allow these technologies to be used in a positive manner. Despite the obstacles encountered in the application, it is better to slowly implement and evaluate its application in the classroom.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore how university students define the kinds of social media and examine the potential uses of social media to promote autonomous language learning. Instant messaging becomes one of the most potential social media to be used in the learning, along with social networking, recommender systems, and blogging. Despite the use of instant messaging and social networking, the lack of active participation in English is the problem to be solved. Teachers should better explore and implement it in the classroom. Evaluation will be the core where such e-learning may become an additional learning tools to promote autonomous language use.

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