THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED BY INDONESIAN EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO IMPROVE THEIR ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), with its social media platforms, is essential in the education field. This study aimed to discover ICT and its social media platforms used by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students to improve their English. The mixed-method was adopted. The findings revealed that 60% of the participants were using phones at home and 71% using phones in the classrooms. Regarding social media platforms, Google was the first preferred (M = 4.74, SD = .443), YouTube was the second (M = 4.49, SD = .781), TikTok (M = 3.51, SD = 1.442) and Instagram (M = 3.51, SD = .951) were the third preferred social media platforms to improve English. The participants affirmed that using phones is effective to improve English at home and in the classroom. Google, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are the common and easiest platforms that are helpful in empowering English. Language teachers are welcomed to use these findings to improve students' level of using ICT and its media platforms. The future researchers could undertake extensive research to identify new findings. The implications of this study are discussed.

Keywords*: improve English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), social media platforms*

INTRODUCTION

The innovation and development of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the twenty-first century have changed how human beings communicate and learn. In the education domain, the advanced use of ICT tools such as laptops and phones in learning English is widely recognized as one of the best strategies. On the one hand, most of the recent research has proved that English learners worldwide use laptops and phones as learning tools to improve their English. On the other hand, having multiple social media platforms and applications is also considered one of the most powerful and effective strategies for improving English language proficiency. Lowther et al. (2008) and Weert and Tatnall (2005) state that ICT is crucial to empower education quality and connect studying to real-life circumstances, and students engage in an ongoing, lifetime process of acquiring information that boots their hopes and dreams. They will need to be ready and willing to seek out new information sources as time goes on. This means that ICT has been rooted in the current development of teaching and learning and has influenced how teachers and learners interact and communicate both inside and outside the classroom.

Moreover, social media platforms are one form of ICT application that is very popular nowadays for sharing and exchanging information worldwide. In the context of education, social media platforms (SMP) play very important roles in exchanging information, new knowledge, and skills. In the field of teaching and learning,

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SMP facilitates both teacher and student communication more effectively and efficiently. Nevertheless, to achieve the highest points of success and progress from using SMP appropriately, one must learn from others who have succeeded in using SMP to improve their English and experiences with some strategies should learn from others, and principals and staff, play vital roles in facilitating communication among decision-makers, stakeholders, educators, and learners to achieve the common core and the highest goals of information exchange, including acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Online learning or hybrid classes were not a normal policy ante COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic, online classes or hybrid classes have been a mandatory strategy. New policies, laws, and rules for using online meetings were introduced. The pandemic totally changed human communications from being naturally offline to switching to virtual or hybrid, which forced all parties, with no exception, including both teachers and students, to afford ICT as the most effective solution to make meetings and learning possible. In this sense, ICT has become a useful tool that links people from different parts of the world through webinars.

Furthermore, what does it feel like when a university student has no ICT tools or apps for learning, for example, a cell phone or laptop? How can one interact with online learning materials that are available 24/7? How can one improve personal learning? How can one effectively participate in virtual and hybrid learning? How can one effectively interact with teachers and friends inside and outside the classroom? Hudson (2017) coined the term "social media platforms," which are applications and websites that allow humans to connect effectively in real life. On the other hand, social media platforms are aimed at social interaction (Baruah, 2012).

In addition, Mubarak (2016) and Shava and Chinyamurindi (2017) affirmed that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp facilitate learners to share ideas and promote their identities. Using social media platforms, particularly technology, gives learners a chance to sharpen their analytical experiences, and become competent in writing, communicative skills, and learning expertise (Rwodzi et al. 2020).

There are three relevant studies on ICT and its social media platforms that showed different results from the users. Almarwaey (2017), who tested 286 participants from Umm Al-Quran University (UQU) in Mecca, found that using social networking sites (SNSs) in an academic field with a regulated environment may promote effective learning of English. Arif (2019), who examined 67 participants from Jambi University, discovered that Facebook and Instagram are mostly used by students for general purposes rather than learning English. Hanim (2021), who assessed 50 students from Muria Kudus University, identified the top-down channels that were accessed the most as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Line, Google, and Tiktok.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher focused on finding out: what information and communications technologies (ICT) devices—a laptop and phone—do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use to improve their English. What social media platforms do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use to improve their English? Why do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use social media platforms to improve their English? The findings of this study is aimed at empowering Indonesian EFL undergraduate students and other EFL and ESL students to use ICT and social media platforms properly, effectively, and responsibly to empower their English language competencies.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Let us look at how effective and fast human communication is with the support of ICT and its social media platforms. We cannot imagine what it would be like if there were no ICT in our current civilization. In this study, the researcher focused on three information communication technologies (computer, laptop, and phone) that EFL Indonesian students use to improve their English. Khan et al. (2015) coined that information and communication technologies is the technology that serves as umbrellas for accessing information through communications by

using devices. Information and communication technology is a tool for global educational development (Kingsley 2017). ICT helps transform the classroom atmosphere into student-centered (Castro Sanchez and Aleman 2011). In the educational context, Fu (2013) notes that ICTs tend to expand access to education and enable learning to happen anywhere anytime. ICT strengthens learners' new comprehension in their learning domains (Chai, Koh, and Tsai 2010). In this sense, we should recognize that ICT is necessary in all sectors of learning and teaching development.

Moreover, Brush, Glazewski, and Hew (2008) affirmed that learners used ICT as a tool to find learning topics and to identify solutions for learning problems. ICT makes it possible for students to collaborate, exchange, and communicate from any location at any time (Koc 2005); for instance, a classroom using teleconferencing could ask students to congregate there simultaneously for a topic discussion. Therefore, EFL students should know how to use ICT properly and effectively to improve their levels of English, from the lowest or middle to the highest levels.

Social Media Platforms (SMP)

This research focused on several specific social media platforms, such as Facebook, Google, Instagram, Skype, TikTok, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube, and games that EFL Indonesian students used to improve their English. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) mentioned that social media is internet applications that internationally share different news and information. The platforms are recognized as the result of the advancement of high-tech in today's communications, and they are used mostly by college students (Monica & Anamaria 2014). Now, these platforms have been accessed by people of all ages in all different parts of the world. The context of using them effectively or not depends on each user. The more appropriate, efficient, and effective they are for learning, the better the result will be. Chou (2014) affirmed that social media has some traits, including interaction, high-quality platforms, and knowledge-sharing capabilities, that students could use to learn lots of things. Social media offers some chances for students to strengthen their abilities in using English. In fact, English is the international language that people use to connect with one another around the globe, and it is a common language in almost all social media platforms.

RESEARCH METHODS

A mixed-methods approach (Creswell 2012), both quantitative and qualitative was applied in this research. The collected data were combined and analyzed to point out the types of ICT (laptop and phone) and its social media platforms that were used by the Indonesian EFL undergraduate students to improve their English proficiency. The researchers used a five-point Likert scale; (1 = never do) to (5 = always do).

Table 1. Demographic information of Participants

Demographic	Type	Total	Percentage
Male	M	12	34%
Female	F	23	66%
Age	18-21	34	97%
	22-25	0	0%
	26-30	1	3%

According to Table 1, there were 12 (34%) male participants, and 23 (66%) female participants. Therefore, female participants were the dominant cluster. Regarding the ages of the participants, 18–21 (97%) was the dominant cluster compared to 22–25 years (0%) and 26–30 years (1%). The Indonesian EFL undergraduate students who were studying at Sanata Dharma University were the participants. The questionnaire was sent to the WhatsApp group of the participants in the format of a Google Form at Sanata Dharma University, and finally, 35 students voluntarily agreed to be involved as participants in this research. To assure participants' identity, pseudonyms were applied. The researchers coded male (M3, M5, M6, M7, M9), and female (F3, F8, F10, F17, F18). Ten respondents accessed semi-structureed interview questions via WhatsApp. The researchers collected the answers via WhatsApp to analyze and conclude.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The findings answered three research questions: what Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), laptops, and phones do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use the most to improve their English? What Social Media Platforms (SMP) do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use to improve their English? And why do Indonesian EFL undergraduate students use social media platforms to improve their English? The following tables show the participants' level of use of ICT and its platforms to improve their English.

Table 2. Participants' levels of using ICT at home

ICT (Home)	User	Percentage
LAPTOP	14	40%
PHONE	21	60%
TOTAL	35	100%

Based on Table 2, 14 (40%) participants were using laptops as their learning tools to improve their English, and 21 (60%) participants were using phones as their preferred ICT to improve their English. This means that the majority of the participants were using phones as their preferred ICT to improve their English while studying at home.

Table 3. Participants' level of use of ICT in the classroom.

ICT (Class)	User	Percentage%
LAPTOP	10	29%
PHONE	25	71%
TOTAL	35	100%

Table 3 shows that 10 (29%) participants were using laptops as their learning tools to improve their English, and 25 (71%) participants were using phones as their preferred ICT to improve their English. This means that the majority of the participants were using phones as their preferred ICT to improve their English while studying in the classroom.

Tables 2 and 3 proved that using phones as the preferred ICT to improve the English language was the dominant choice of the participants in this research. The following table illustrates the participants' levels of use of social media platforms to improve their English.

Table 4. The participants' levels of frequency of using social media platforms.

Frequency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
FB	35	1.69	1.132
GOOGLE	35	4.74	.443
INSTAGRAM	35	3.51	.951
SKYPE	35	1.00	0.000
TIKTOK	35	3.51	1.442
TWITTER	35	2.26	1.379
WHATSAPP	35	2.91	1.292
YOUTUBE	35	4.49	.781
GAMES	35	3.14	1.498

According to Table 4, Google has been used by the participants as the first most preferred social media platform (Google, M = 4.7). It means that the participants accessed Google mostly at home and in the classroom to improve their level of English.

The application of Google

As the findings illustrated, Google was the most preferred platform used by the participants. F17 mentioned how she used Google to improve her English.

Google is one of the best social media platforms, which enables me to access anything while learning to improve my English. In Google, I could search for information that is related to my assignments and tasks (F17).

F17 mentioned that Google is an excellent platform for improving English by accessing assignments and tasks. M6 mentioned how he used Google to improve his English.

I preferred using Google because it is one of the best search engines due to its multidimensional storage (M6).

M6 mentioned that Google is his preferred search engine due to its diverse methods. Moreover, YouTube is considered to be the second preferred platform (M=4.4). It means that after using Google to search for necessary information, the participants then use YouTube to watch what they have planned to improve their English.

The application of YouTube

The findings proved that YouTube was the platform used after Google by the participants. F10 mentioned how she used YouTube to improve her English.

YouTube has a variety of information, and whenever I have problems with definitions and examples, I can search for them (F10).

F10 mentioned that YouTube is a platform that offers multiple sources for definitions and examples. M9 mentioned how he used YouTube to improve his English.

To improve my English proficiency, I mostly spend my free time watching YouTube videos in English (M9).

M9 believes that to improve his English, he spends his free time watching English-language YouTube videos.

The application of TikTok and Instagram

Furthermore, TikTok and Instagram are categorized as the third most preferred platforms used by the participants (TikTok, M=3.5, and Instagram, M=3.5). It means the participants used TikTok and Instagram to improve their English after using Google and YouTube.

The findings proved that TikTok and Instagram were the third-favorite platforms used by the participants. The respondents confirmed their preferences for using TikTok and Instagram. F8 mentioned how she used TikTok to improve her English.

TikTok contains lots of games that help me empower my new vocabulary (F8).

F8 mentioned that TikTok is a social media platform that offers multiple games of new vocabulary in English that help her improve her vocabulary. M5 mentioned how he used TikTok to improve his English.

I think that TikTok is the most effective way to improve my vocabulary and grammar (M5).

M5 mentioned that to improve his vocabulary and Grammar in English, TikTok is the most effective one. Regarding the application of Instagram, F3 mentioned how she used Instagram to improve her English.

I love to use Instagram because I have followed several educational accounts that focus on helping their followers empower English, and from there I can practice even more (F3).

F3 mentioned that Instagram is a social media platform where she can join English experts or native speakers to help her learn and practice more. M3 mentioned how he used Instagram to improve his English.

To improve my grammar in English, I followed Instagram and created an account that helped to access English grammar content (M3).

M3 mentioned that Instagram is a social media platform that he uses to empower his grammar content.

In addition, Games are positioned as the fourth preferred social media platform used by the participants (Games, M = 3.1). This means the participants sometimes used games as one of the social media platforms that helped them improve their English.

The Application of Games

The findings pointed out that, Games were the second-favorite social media platform used. The respondents confirmed their preferences for using Games; F18 mentioned how she used Games to improve her English.

I like cooking games because it helps me a lot to know the ingredients of spices in the kitchen (F18).

F18 mentioned that Games is a social media platform that shares a vocabulary of cooking ingredients. M7 mentioned how he used YouTube to improve his English.

Since many of the contents of the games were in English, I loved to play them to improve my English (M7).

M7 believes that playing games with English content empowers his English a lot. Furthermore, WhatsApp was indicated as the fifth preferred social media platform used by the participants (WhatsApp, M = 2.9), while Twitter was selected as the sixth preferred social media platform (Twitter, M = 2.2). In addition, Facebook was chosen as the seventh preferred social media platform (Facebook, M = 1.6). Finally, Skype was selected as the least preferred social media platform (Skype, M = 1.0). It means that participants mostly used Google, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram as social media platforms to improve their English.

Discussion

This research applied mixed methods to identify the social media platforms used by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students to improve their English. Lowther, et al. (2008), Weert and Tatnall (2005) explained that ICT is crucial to improving learning quality and connecting it to real-life situations. The result pointed out that the participants used phones more than laptops to improve their English. In addition, Google was the most preferred social media platform used by the participants to improve their English, followed by YouTube, which was selected as the second social media platform used by the participants. Thirdly, TikTok and Instagram are both considered the third most popular social media platforms used by the participants to improve their English at home and in the classroom. It means that, Google was preferred by the participants to search for information to improve their English.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) commented that social media as application of internet that had foundation of Web 2.0 and permitted exchanging and formation of contents. In a virtual community, users of various applications can create, share, and trade information. The findings from this research are in contradiction with Almarwaey (2017) who found that using Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in an academic field with a regulated environment may promote effective learning of English. Arif (2019) discovered that Facebook and Instagram are mostly used by students for general purposes rather than for learning English. Hanim (2021) identified the top-down channels accessed the most as Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Line, Google, and Tiktok.

Regarding the findings of using ICT by the participants to improve their English, the results showed that at home, 40% of the participants were using laptops to improve their English, while another 60% were using phones to improve their English. On the other hand, 21% were using laptops and 71% were using phones to improve their English in their classrooms. This means the participants mostly used phones rather than laptops to improve their English.

Moreover, the findings of using social media platforms to improve English indicated that; Google (M = 4.7) was the preferred search engine to improve their English, YouTube (M = 4.4) was the second social media platform used to improve their English, and TikTok (M = 3.5) and Instagram (M = 3.5) were the third preferences. Games (M = 3.1) were the fourth preferred. WhatsApp (M = 2.9) was the fifth preferred, and Twitter (M = 2.2) was the sixth preferred. Facebook (M = 1.6) was the seventh most preferred. Skype (M = 1.0) was the least preferred platform used by the participants to improve their English.

Regarding the interview, two participants mentioned that Google was the most common search engine that could access any tasks and exercises they needed. The other two participants added that Google is always the easiest and most simple search engine that they use to search for anything related to English. In addition to the use of YouTube, another two participants mentioned that YouTube helped them improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at once. Moreover, two participants mentioned that they preferred using Tiktok and Instagram because they had accounts and they followed native speakers and experts to improve their grammar and vocabulary in English. It is in line with Rwodzi et al. (2020), who affirmed that using social media platforms,

particularly technology, gives learners a chance to improve their analytical skills, writing abilities, communicative skills, and culture of learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research was to point out ICT and its social media platforms used by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students to improve their English and their reasons for using them. The findings revealed that 60% of the participants used phones at home and 40% used laptops at home to improve their English. It means that the participants mostly used phones rather than laptops to improve their English at home. In addition, 71% of the participants used phones in the classrooms, and only 29% admitted that they used laptops in their classrooms to improve their English. It means that even in the classrooms, the participants preferred using phones to improve their English. Regarding the use of social media platforms, Google (M = 4.74, SD = .443), YouTube (M = 4.49, SD = .781), TikTok (M = 3.51, SD = 1.442), and Instagram (M = 3.51, SD = .951). Regarding the application of phones or laptops to improve English, the participants affirmed that using phones is more effective in improving English at home and in the classroom. In addition, the participants emphasized that Google is the most common search engine that provides all necessary knowledge and skills, then YouTube is an excellent channel to improve English four skills, and finally, TikTok and Instagram are the easiest platforms that are helpful in learning together with experts and native speakers through live discussion, dialogues, learning new vocabulary, and improving grammar skills. The findings from this research provide data on participants' levels of use of ICT and its social media platforms to improve their English both at home and in their classrooms. To present more similarities and contrasts, future researchers could expand this topic. Finally, these findings serve any language students on using the most effective ICT and its social media platforms to improve their levels of English.

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