

Using Social Network Sites in English Language Learning: Voices from Indonesian Higher Education Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the Indonesian EFL students' practices on using Social Networking Sites (SNS) and understand their experiences with SNSs as a tool for English language learning. The study used a qualitative case study. Forty-four participants were purposefully recruited and interviewed during the qualitative phase of data gatherings in order to further explain the qualitative results, develop a richly descriptive picture of their lived experiences utilizing social networking to enhance their English language learning, and identify the benefits of using SNSs. The report claims that students prefer to learn English through social networking sites. According to the interview, the majority of participants felt comfortable using YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook for English language acquisition. However, the participants found disadvantages of using the SNSs. Furthermore, they were more interested in viewing other people's items than in having participated in a discussion or producing linguistic output. The findings also revealed that learners' practices or behaviours in the SNS environment varied depending on variables such as situation, community, and the students' interests and needs.

Keywords: EFL students, English learning, Indonesia, social networking sites

Introduction

As forums for language-learning development, social networking sites have quickly gained significance. Different social networking platforms emphasize different sorts of learning. They are *Busuu*, whose websites facilitate intercultural contact among their users. Using autoethnographic records and multimodal semiotic analysis of the website, Alvarez-Valencia (2016), in analysing the social networking sites for language learning (SNSLL) *Busuu*, demonstrates that its contents and learning activities are informed by different views of language (structural, interactional, and ecological) and learning (behavioural, cognitive, and constructivist) In formal education, there are common interest networking sites such as Live Mocha. According to Brick's (2011) research, SNSLLs provide benefits such as the chance to practice oral skills with native speakers of various languages and to receive immediate feedback. Due to its heavy emphasis on vocabulary and the unfavourable interactional dynamics generated by cyber-flirting behaviours within the online community, Live mocha's learning materials were nevertheless limited.

The hegemony of these trimming technology in society is altering our way of life. The most popular emerging technology is Web 2.0. Blogs, wikis, media sharing (*YouTube, Flickr, etc.*), bookmarking services, and social networks are examples of these technologies. Because adults, particularly students, have integrated this technology into their daily lives, educators worldwide are paying attention to it (Kale & Goh, 2014). Social networking sites (SNS), which are defined as sites that build and maintain relationships with other people, are one of the most popular Web 2.0 tools. Students and teachers use these websites widely worldwide. Although social networking sites are primarily used for social interaction, their structure and various features allow them to be used for various other purposes, including education.

To incorporate social networks into the teaching-learning process, it is crucial to understand the current use of SNS, as well as the experiences and attitudes of students regarding its instructional use. In the Indonesian context, such information has not been documented in the literature. Consequently, the current study evaluates the experiences and attitudes of Indonesian higher education students using specialized SNS for collaborative learning activities outside the classroom. This finding of this study will assist designers, researchers, and educators in comprehending the present use and acceptance rate of SNSs among students, hence facilitating the development of action plans for the use of such technologies in educational contexts.

Method

The study was participated by 29 female students and 17 male students, ageing from 18-20 years old. A synchronous web-based written interview study was used for this study to investigate a detailed and in-depth analysis of the use of social networking sites in English language learning by students of the English Study Program in Indonesia. Because it was impossible to meet for face-to-face interviews with research participants during the pandemic, an online interview was conducted using Google Docs (Opara, Spangsdorf, & Ryan, 2021). It also allows access to 'hard to reach' groups and individuals due to geography (Madge and O'Connor, 2002), as the participants were drawn from five Indonesian universities. This current study included 46 volunteers from the fourth semester of the English Study Program.

The student participants visited the social networking sites on average seven days a week. When they visited the website, they stayed on the site for approximately more than one hour. The average time of visiting the SNS was 5 to 10 times a day, and the student participants visited the SNS almost every day, seven days a week.

This current study adopted a qualitative study to interpret and refine data. Integrating both types of data could provide a deeper understanding of the research problem and answer the research question: "How do Social Network Sites/SNS(s) practices affect English language learning experiences of Indonesian higher education students?"

The qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with 46 undergraduate EFL learners. They were identified by *STD 1, STD 2, STD 3, STD 4, STD 5, STD 6, STD 7, STD 8, STD 9, STD 10, STD 11, STD 12, STD 13, STD 14, STD 15, STD 16, STD 17, STD 18, STD 19, STD 20, STD 21, STD 22, STD 23, STD 24, STD 25, STD 26, STD 27, STD 28, STD 29, STD 30, STD 31, STD 32, STD 33, STD 34, STD 35, STD 36, STD 37, STD 38, STD 39, STD 40, STD 41, STD 42, STD 43, STD 44, STD 45, STD 46*. The analysis of the open-ended questionnaire transcripts identified four main themes:

- SNS(s) provide convenience and comfort
- SNS(s) provide easiness to learn English language;
- SNS(s) supports social interaction and collaboration among EFL learners
- SNS(s) is helpful and useful to learn English language

Findings and Discussions

Findings from the analysis are detailed into four themes: 1) SNS(s) provide convenience and comfort, 2) SNS(s) provide easiness to learn English language, 3) SNS(s) supports social interaction and collaboration among EFL learners, and 4) SNS(s) are helpful and useful to learn English language.

SNS(s) provide convenience and comfort

The participants shared that they encountered convenience and comfort in enacting SNS(s) for learning English. It is depicted in the interview with STD 14 and STD 10:

SNS(s) give us much more affordable freedom, and the ability to find the right online English course for you without the expense of travel and accommodation. Studying online also saves you from having to take time out of your busy life to commit to a class timetable (STD 14, Male, May 25th, 2022).

I can learn through social network sites anytime and anywhere depending on that I want (STD 10, Male, May 24th, 2022).

SNS(s) provide easiness to learn English language

All 46 students indicated that SNS(s) give them easiness to learn English language. This idea is seen in the interview with STD 19 and STD 9:

It's easier to find knowledge about it (STD 19, Male, May 24th, 2022).

I like to learn English through social networking sites because it really interesting thing and easy for me to understand with the entertainment and fun tools (STD 9, May 24th, 2022)

SNS(s) supports social interaction and collaboration among EFL learners

In light of other findings, in this case, the participants contend that they experienced interactions and collaboration with other EFL learners when using SNS(s). It is depicted in the interview:

We can learn English through social network sites, which is very useful and we can get friend with a stranger and make relationships as a friend (STD 17, Female, May 24th, 2022)

SNS(s) are helpful and useful to learn English language

In the interview with STD 44, SNS(s) was said to be useful and helpful in terms of developing participants' English skill. This is shared in the interview as follows:

I really like to learn English through social network sites because they are easily accessed, and I can learn from various platforms. Those social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others really helped in developing my English skills, which I am capable of learning how to easily pronounce English words from English accents. Various idioms and up-to-date English words are provided on those social network sites because most people are super creative to create English learning activities through videos well. Therefore, social networking sites are useful for all English learners to expand their own English knowledge, which the learning process is fun and easily caught up (STD 44, Male, May 30th, 2022)

Conclusions

According to the Harpercollins website (2010), 375 million people worldwide aspire to study a language, and the market is currently projected to be worth more than \$80 billion. Given this enormous demand, it is probable that SNSs for language learning will expand in size and number in the near future, as well as spread onto new platforms as smartphones become more advanced.

Regarding the data and discussion of this study, it can be argued that Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook are often used by students for English language learning. Instagram is the social network most frequently utilized by students learning English. In Indonesian colleges, students use social networking sites to learn English when they have free time at home or when their professors permit it, particularly for group discussions. Students' English skills are enhanced by the site's material, which is more diverse and thus stimulates their use of social network sites for language learning.

In addition, the positive effects of social media on the English language acquisition of students should be recognized. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) university student, the integration of social media must be considered in order to improve the students' language skills through the use of relevant social media in English language teaching and learning.

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Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing in the Hungarian Higher Education in Economy

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Abstract

In our study we focus on the mental health of first-year students in higher education in economics, which is a relevant topic worldwide and also in Hungary. University is the gateway to a new world for the 18-20-year-old students: many of them consider the successful admission and the start of their university studies as one of the most important moments in their lives. Young people leaving secondary school enter a new phase in their lives. It is also an important stage in the journey to adulthood, which is not experienced in the same way by all young people. The process of becoming independent from the family will accelerate and an independent self-image will emerge. The familiar friends and peers from secondary school no longer provide security: new relationships and alliances are formed in a new, unfamiliar environment, and a new way of life becomes dominant.

In our study, we present the situation of Hungarian higher education in the field of economics, and then based on literature sources we identify the most important characteristics of the age group under study.

Having university websites analysed, we explore the network of mental health, life management and psychological counselling services in Hungarian higher education institutions and also introduce the programmes they offer to support students' mental health.

Keywords: *Mental health, Hungarian higher education in economy, Life management and psychological counselling services, Emerging adulthood*

1. Introduction

University years can be extremely busy and demanding for students in general. They spend almost half of their waking hours studying and preparing. In addition, the most motivated students participate in scientific student conferences, national and international competitions and extend their professional experience.

Therefore, the time spent at university has an impact not only on the students' knowledge and competences, but it also has a significant one on their self-esteem and self-image. From a different perspective, this influences their life satisfaction and happiness which, in turn, can have a great influence on how their lives develop later.

In 2019 The COVID-19 epidemic turned life upside down in all walks of life including education. Online and then hybrid education started, making universities face a new challenge. This study though does not examine the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic in detail due to space limitations, but only draws some conclusions about the mental health counselling provided by universities.

This paper presents the preliminary results of a comprehensive study at higher educational institutions which offer business education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Presentation of students at higher education institutions of economics

In order to get a full picture of whom universities provide mental health and life skills counselling to, it is important to briefly describe the current generation of university students, the so-called Generation Z. In public discourse, it is if often heard: ‘The youth of today...’ or ‘Back in my time...’ This might lead us to think that the generation of university students is a very problematic age group. But this is not a new perception among older generations. Socrates wrote as early as the fifth century BC (quoted in Thuma 2016): ‘Our youth [...] is ill-bred, disdainful of authority and shows no respect for the elderly. Nowadays our sons [...] do not stand up when an elderly person enters the room, they talk back to their parents and chatter instead of working. They're just insufferable.’

Researchers define the different generations by the date of birth. Generations change every 15-20 years. People belonging to the same generation own the very same characteristics: they are at a similar stage in life; they have been exposed to the same events and have developed a different set of values from other generations. (Mannheim, 1969, Tari, 2010, Tari, 2011, Thuma, 2016, Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2019)

Generation Z is the most relevant generation for this study and will be discussed more detailed below. As we are already used to it, researchers are at the forefront of using new concepts. Some call them the net generation (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005), others the Facebook generation or digital natives (Prensky, 2001).

Generation Z is also discussed by several authors (Pais, 2013, Thuma, 2016, Tari, 2011). Their most prominent findings are as follows:

- Personal freedom is very important to them.
- Their social life is constantly shared with the public.
- Their social life is constantly shared with their peers.
- They live at a much faster pace than their predecessors.
- They are not afraid of change because they are used to it, they are born into it.
- They are less loyal consumers.
- They trust themselves rather than the world around them.
- They are clever rather than wise.
- Less willing to follow rules.
- They live their lives mainly on Google, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia.
- Compared to previous generations, they live in families where:
 - the parents are rather old,
 - divorce rates are the highest,
 - the fewest siblings are.

After a general overview of the characteristics of Generation Z, let us briefly look at the most important features of university students’ new life situations.

For first-year students, university is the gateway to a new world: many of them see the successful admission and the start of their university studies as one of the most defining moments of their lives. Young

people leaving secondary school enter a new phase in their lives. This is also an important stage in the journey to adulthood, which is not experienced in the same way by all young people. As with all life transitions, the period after leaving secondary school can be a time of crisis (Peter Pan syndrome, also known as the quarter-life crisis).

Generally speaking, the process of becoming independent from the family is accelerated and an independent self-image is formed. Friends and peers from secondary school no longer provide security: new relationships and alliances are formed in a new, unfamiliar environment, and a new way of life becomes dominant (Tari, 2011, Nagyné Kricsfalussy, 2017, Leist Balogh and Jámbori, 2016).

Some people become anxious in unfamiliar surroundings, unable to cope with the seemingly limitless freedom. They feel lost in the vast organisation. The transparent and manageable classroom community is replaced by immense classes.

University lecturers no longer know the students personally, teaching becomes impersonal and difficult to bear. During a semester a lecturer meets hundreds, sometimes thousands of students, so the time spent on a student is reduced to a minimum.

During lectures, exams and at student services, students are no longer registered by name but by their Neptun code. They become a tiny screw in the vast university machine (Vasa et al., 2014, Kárpáti-Daróczi and Karlovitz, 2020).

For higher education in business, the number of state-funded places has fallen remarkably, so a significant proportion of students have to find the resources to support themselves while studying. Consequently, there will be new entrants to higher education and to the labour market at the same time, so these students will have to perform well in both areas simultaneously. This could again create a serious crisis for young people. I have already mentioned above the gate-opening crisis, which can start at this stage of life causing a serious crisis for students. The many changes, the need to fit into many places at the same time, the start of independent life all coinciding, can cause considerable amount of anxiety for young people, who mostly start their independent lives at this point.

It's often heard from students: will my life always be like this from now on? Study, work and work again?

The realisation can come as a huge shock to a young person. It can be compounded by a failure to perform at the level expected of themselves at university and in the world of work. This can be a strait path to youth burnout.

If it happens, young people will not find their place either at university or at work. In such cases, for example, students may leave university and completely change their lives, often to the dismay of those around them. Some students flee abroad to start a 'new and better life', others try their luck in a completely different field.

For some young people another mental burden is that university life is accompanied by an infinite sense of freedom. Unlike in secondary education there are no strict obligations during the academic year. There are no assignments, and lectures are not obligatory. This can be an intoxicating experience for them at first with the added lack of parental control and the ecstasy of endless parties.

In this case, a new problem, the question of addictions may arise: alcohol and drugs to relax and pills to get through the day or prepare for exams. The majority of students successfully complete university and a well-established mental health and life skills counselling system can effectively support this (Vágány, 2021).

3. Methods

The Hungarian Government Decree No 51/2007 (26.III.) defines the student allowances provided by the state budget. This includes mental health and guidance counselling (Article 10(6)(a)). The Regulation therefore requires universities to provide some level of guidance, mental health or psychological counselling.

Before conducting the research, nine support professionals (psychologists, mental health professionals) from higher education institutions in the field of business education were interviewed. We concluded that higher education institutions differ greatly how their mental health and life coaching is supported on their premises.

Based on the interviews, we found that there are institutions where a complete network of support for students and staff was established. Other institutions provided only the mandatory minimum service for their students.

Following the interviews, the websites of seventeen higher education institutions in the field of business education were studied to find out what information was available regarding life coaching, mental health or psychological counselling activities offered by the institutions.

First, we listed the higher education institutions offering business education from the homepage of felvi.hu.

Subsequently, a targeted search and content analysis was carried out on the websites of the selected institutions. We examined the information available under the headings 'life guidance', 'psychological counselling' and 'mental health counselling'. Where information was not readily available on the website, a Google search was conducted to see if there were any results for the higher education institution and the three terms.

The results and the information obtained were summarized in an excel sheet to provide information on available options concerning solutions to students' mental health problems or improve their mental health, according to the information on the institutions' websites. The first research was carried out between 1 February and 31 March 2020 and the second one between 1 February and 31 March 2022. In addition, the mental health professionals or psychologists listed on the websites of the same seventeen universities were asked nine written questions about specific activities at those institution (these questions were answered during the first research period). The results of these surveys are presented in this study.

According to the latest Hungarian statistics higher education in business is the most popular among applicants. For the academic year starting in September 2022 the most popular fields of study by choice are: economics (22%), humanities (12%), engineering (11%), teacher training (9%), medicine and health (9%), computer science (8%). (felvi.hu, 2022)

4. Results

The selected institutions differ in size, their training offered, location or the number of students, but they all have training in economic.

It was assumed that the historic universities of sciences, which have a varied and multidisciplinary training structure and also offer training in 'humanities' (teacher training, psychology, etc.), would pay particular attention to life coaching, mental health or psychological counselling. We hypothesized, that the above would be also highlighted on their websites.

Content analysis was carried out during the research. The data was collected in an Excel spreadsheet. A substantial extract of this spreadsheet is presented in text form below. Results regarding the two research phases are presented jointly.

4.1. Departments providing life coaching, mental health and psychological counselling

The majority of the higher educational institutions surveyed provide counselling services within the framework of Career Offices, Student Counselling Centres, Student Services or Life Skills Counselling Centres.

4.2. Number of helpers or advisers listed on the website

University websites listed the names of 1-4 counsellors (mainly psychologists). However, some refreshing exceptions were noted. In cases where psychological, mental health or life guidance counselling was provided by the Student Counselling Centres, the names of peer student counsellors were also listed on the website.

Based on the interviews with the helpers and the responses from the professionals who answered the written questions sent to the addresses on the websites, it can be concluded that the student counsellors are extremely overworked. There is a significant demand from students for support and life coaching. Thus, the number of students per advisor is high. The average session time per student is 45-50 minutes.

Some universities also offer training for psychologists. In these cases, psychology students are also involved in counselling, taking a significant burden off an overloaded care system and the obvious differences are well-reflected on their websites.

4.3. Tasks completed, problems addressed, and skills developed

The most significant difference between universities is in the activities and services provided. Let us look at some good examples.

- Free psychological and mental health counselling for university staff as well as for students
- Free group sessions in Hungarian and English for students and staff: e.g. 10 and 12 weeks of autogenic training
- Development of self-awareness or other social skills in small groups of 8-15 people. Some universities work with larger groups up to 25 people.
- Self-help modules: students can get feedback on their current situation and possible difficulties after completing a symptom-assessment questionnaire on a specific topic. In addition, they can also read various life coaching tips regarding each topic which will help them in skills and self-awareness.
- Online counselling and Skype consultations when meetings in person are not possible, for example when students study abroad.
- Since January 2018 one of the universities in Budapest, counselling has been provided via consultation system of six sessions. This is considered to be the most appropriate in the given context, taking the high level of interest into account. For the client this consultation means a commitment of about one and a half month. However, it is pointed out that cancellations can set the consultation process back and slows down the management of waiting lists, causing other students in need of help to get later appointments. Therefore, they urge everyone to apply for counselling only if they can commit to attending weekly consultations!
- This consultation system is in practice at several universities.

Generally speaking, the information on the websites suggests that individual preferences (a one-to-one or group situation) should be taken into account.

Individual counselling is generally recommended when a problem needs to be explored in greater depth (e.g. dealing with a loss).

Group counselling is useful if students rather wished get feedback from peers or observe peers' behaviour to help them solve their own problem (e.g. developing assertiveness).

Several universities point out that life coaching is not therapy.

4.4. Problem solving, life coaching

Problem-solving and life coaching at universities focus mainly on the following areas:

- Doubts about their chosen career
- Adjustment difficulties
- Difficulties in fitting in
- Illness
- Family and relationship problems
- Depression
- Decision-making difficulties
- Blockages
- Life planning issues
- Difficulties with emotions and emotion regulation
- Unresolved events
- ‘Strange habits’ that cannot be broken,
- Mood disorders
- Homesickness
- Identity problem
- Relationship formation problems
- Gate-opening panic
- Coping with critical life situations
- Dealing with mental, personal or university-related problems
- Coping problems
- Lack of motivation
- Conflicts at work
- Superficial relationships due to language difficulties
- Self-esteem problems
- Suicidal thoughts
- Fear of something that is indifferent to others,
- Substance abuse issues
- Anxiety problems
- Persistent depression
- Dealing with loss
- Behavioural disorders (eating, sleeping or sexuality)
- Loneliness
- Crises
- Grief
- Quarantine lifestyle
- Cyber relationships
- Emotional and physical abuse
- Zoom fatigue²

4.5. Organised programmes

Universities organise varied programmes for their students. They offer a wide range of programmes, including skills trainings, group activities and educational lectures. Here are some of the programmes offered by universities.

² The term refers to the exhaustion caused by spending excessive amount of time in front of a screen participating in online meetings. According to the authors (Peper, et al., 2021), the lack of facial expressions and physical feedback is also a major contributor to Zoom fatigue.

4.5.1. Skills development trainings

- Assertiveness training
- Emotional intelligence training
- Time management training
- Communication development workshops
- MBTI based self-awareness training
- Self-awareness issues in career planning
- Self-awareness training along behavioural types
- Presentation workshops
- Resilience training
- Stress management training
- Learning support training
- Leadership skills training

4.5.2. Group sessions

- Identity and ConnAct board games
- Relationship focus group
- Self-awareness, social skills group
- Psychodrama group
- Loss and Grief Support Group
- Studying during an epidemic
- Quarantine lifestyle advice

4.5.3. Educational lectures

- ‘Am I using you or are you using me?’ - lecture on mobile addiction
- Financial awareness in everyday life
- ‘Can I get my mother to be climate conscious? - The family slip-ups of a lifestyle change’
- Environmental awareness - dilemmas in environmental psychology

4.5.4. Other programmes

- Mental Health Film Club
- Mental Health Café

4.5.5. Book recommendations

Books on problem solving and life skills regarding the topics listed in chapter 4.4.

5. Conclusions

Universities are advised to pay increasing attention to students' mental health in the future. A large body of research shows that high performance is associated with high mental health indicators not only in sport, but also in learning and at work (Reinhardt et al, 2019).

The research findings demonstrate that universities have very distinct mental health and life skills advisory networks and treat the issue of mental health of students and faculty members very differently. It is certainly fortunate that general well-being and raising awareness are in focus (Boda, 2021). Increasing competition in higher education and the changing environment make it clear that the mental health protection and the psychological well-being of students and staff will be essential to ensuring long-term satisfaction.

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