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Utilizing Social Media as a Supporting Medium for Enhancing English Literacy Among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the use of social media as a supporting medium in improving English literacy among adolescents. Using a qualitative approach and library research method, this study collects and analyzes various relevant scientific sources, such as journals, books, and previous research reports. The results of the study show that social media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter have great potential in supporting informal English learning. The interactive features and high accessibility of social media allow adolescents to be exposed to the vocabulary, language structure, and authentic communication context in English. In addition, regular interaction with English-language content can increase users' motivation, interest in learning, and confidence in using English. However, this study also highlights the need for mentoring and digital literacy so that the use of social media is not only entertainment, but really supports the learning process. This research contributes to the development of English learning strategies that are relevant to the development of technology and the habits of today's adolescents. It is hoped that these findings can be a foundation for teachers, parents, and policymakers in integrating social media wisely and effectively in the language education process.

KEYWORDS

Social Media, English Literacy, Adolescents, Literature Studies, Digital Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has significantly changed the landscape of language learning, especially English, in the last decade (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). One of the most striking phenomena is the increasing use of social media by adolescents in their daily lives, which is not only a means of entertainment, but also potentially as a learning aid (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). In the Indonesian context, the high penetration of social media users among the younger generation creates new opportunities in supporting English literacy informally and contextually (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2023).

English language literacy, which includes reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, is an important aspect of global education. However, many students at the secondary level in Indonesia still face difficulties in mastering these skills optimally (Rohmah, 2012). This is where social media can play a role as an additional means of being flexible, interactive, and relevant to the world of teenagers (Türel, 2015). However, there have not been many studies that specifically examine how social media is consciously used as a medium to support the improvement of English literacy among Indonesian adolescents.

Previous research has focused more on the effectiveness of social media in increasing learning motivation (Zou, 2020), online collaboration (Wang & Vasquez, 2012), and improving speaking skills through vlogs or short videos (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). However, studies that integrate various social media platforms as a comprehensive English literacy strategy through a literature study approach are still limited. This shows that there is a research gap that needs to be filled.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of developing English learning methods that are adaptive to technological changes and learning preferences of the younger generation (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012). In the digital age, adolescents tend to be more responsive to social media-based learning compared to conventional approaches in the classroom (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Therefore, a systematic literature mapping is needed on the role of social media in supporting adolescent English literacy.

The novelty of this research lies in the holistic approach in evaluating the potential of various types of social media—both text, image, and video-based—as a medium to support English literacy. This study also emphasizes the importance of digital literacy as a supporting element in the effective use of social media (Ng, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the contribution of social media as a supporting tool in improving adolescent English literacy based on findings from the relevant literature. The benefit of this research is that it provides theoretical insight for the development of more contextual English learning strategies, as well as a practical reference for teachers, parents, and policy makers in designing learning approaches that are integrated with social media.

Social Media as a Source of Authentic English Exposure

Social media provides a wide range of content in English that is authentic, actual, and relevant to the daily lives of teenagers. Content such as captions on Instagram, short videos on TikTok, vlogs on YouTube, and discussions on Reddit or Twitter allow users to be naturally exposed to vocabulary, sentence structure, and everyday expressions in English. This exposure is very important in the language learning process because it provides real context and helps build language intuition. When teens access English-language content consistently,

they unconsciously develop a deeper linguistic understanding, especially in the aspects of reading and listening.

Social Media as a Means of Language Practice and Production

Apart from being a source of input, social media also allows teenagers to actively practice and produce English. They can make posts, leave comments, discuss on forums, or create videos and podcasts in English. This activity not only trains writing and speaking skills, but also strengthens confidence and motivation to learn. Language practice in the context of social media is also more flexible and less stressful as in formal classroom learning, thus encouraging more participatory and fun learning.

Social Media as an Interactive and Collaborative Tool in Digital Literacy

The use of social media in language learning also strengthens the dimension of digital literacy. Adolescents are required to be able to select information, understand the context of online communication, and interact ethically and productively in the digital space. In this process, they become not only consumers of information, but also producers of knowledge. Collaboration in language projects such as writing challenges, online discussions, or educational content creation can hone critical thinking and intercultural communication skills. Thus, social media not only supports linguistic aspects, but also social and cognitive competencies in English literacy as a whole.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of literature study research (library research). Literature studies were chosen to gain a deep understanding of the use of social media as a medium to support English literacy among adolescents through tracing and analyzing various relevant scientific sources (Zed, 2008). The focus of this research is on critical analysis of theories, empirical findings, and conceptual discussions that have been published in scientific journals, academic books, research reports, and other relevant documents available online and in print.

The data source in this study is in the form of secondary data obtained from national and international scientific publications that discuss the topics of social media, English language learning, digital literacy, and adolescent learning behavior. The articles reviewed were selected based on the criteria of relevance to the research topic, novelty (published within the last 10 years), and credibility of the publisher or journal in which the article was published (Booth, Papaioannou, & Sutton, 2016). The data collection technique was carried out through systematic searches in various academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and ResearchGate using keywords such as social media, English literacy, adolescents, and language learning.

The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis, which is by identifying, categorizing, and interpreting information contained in literature texts to find patterns, themes, and research gaps (Krippendorff, 2018). The researcher conducts a data reduction process to filter relevant information, present data in thematic form, and draw conclusions inductively based on the synthesis of the literature that has been analyzed. With this approach, the research aims to produce conceptual mapping that can contribute to the development of social media-based English learning theory and practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following data are the results of the selection process for a number of national and international scientific articles relevant to the topic of the use of social media as a tool to support English literacy among adolescents. From dozens of articles found through searches on databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ERIC, 10 articles were selected that met the criteria of up-to-date (published in the last 10 years), topic relevance, and methodological quality. The articles were analyzed to identify the main contributions, research focuses, methods used, and their relevance to improving English literacy through social media.

Table 1. Summary of Literature Data Related to Social Media and English Literacy

Author & Year	Article Title	Key findings
Kabilan et al. (2010)	Facebook: An Online Environment for Learning of English	<i>Facebook is effective for informal English language practices.</i>
Wang & Vasquez (2012)	Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning	Social media encourages collaboration and language interaction.
Manca & Ranieri (2016)	Social Media for Teaching in Higher Education	Social media supports communication and digital literacy.
Alhabash & Ma (2017)	Motivations and Uses of Social Media	Teens actively use social media for the consumption of English content.
Zou (2020)	Mobile Apps for English Learning	<i>Social media-based apps are effective for vocabulary.</i>
Sari & Wahyudin (2019))	YouTube Video Project for Speaking	<i>The use of YouTube boosts students' confidence.</i>
Cahyani & Cahyono (2012)	Teachers' Attitudes Toward Tech	<i>Teacher support is important in social media integration.</i>
Türel (2015)	Mobile-Assisted Vocabulary Learning	<i>Social media increases student vocabulary retention.</i>
By (2012)	Teaching Digital Literacy	<i>Digital literacy is needed in the use of social media.</i>
Rohmah (2012)	English in Islamic Contexts	<i>Exposure to English outside of the classroom is important for competence.</i>

This table is the basis for compiling a literature synthesis, finding patterns of social media use in supporting English language learning, and showing the urgency of integrating digital approaches in adolescent language education practices.

The results of the literature review show that social media has developed into one of the potential alternative media in supporting English language learning, especially among adolescents. From the articles reviewed, most concluded that social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Web 2.0-based platforms can provide an authentic, interactive, and flexible learning environment. For example, Kabilan et al. (2010) emphasize that Facebook provides a space for learners to engage in the informal and natural use of English, while Wang & Vasquez (2012) point out that the collaborative features of Web 2.0 platforms are helpful in improving language skills through real interactions.

In addition to providing exposure to English directly, social media has also been proven to be able to increase students' motivation and confidence in using the language. Findings from Sari & Wahyudin (2019), for example, show that YouTube-based video projects help students develop speaking skills while building confidence. This is in line with Alhabash & Ma (2017) who explain that adolescents are more interested in exploring English through social media compared to conventional methods, because they feel more free and motivated when learning in a context of their own choosing.

Further interpretation shows that social media not only provides advantages in the linguistic aspect, but also strengthens the digital literacy aspect. Ng (2012) emphasized the importance of digital literacy skills so that students can filter and understand the content they consume, and interact wisely in the digital space. This shows that the successful use of social media in English language learning is highly dependent on students' ability to manage technology effectively and ethically. Therefore, learning English literacy through social media must also be accompanied by strengthening digital skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, teacher involvement and support for the use of technology also play an important role. Research by Cahyani & Cahyono (2012) underlines that teachers' positive attitudes towards technology are one of the key factors in the successful integration of social media into language learning. Teachers who are open to technology tend to be more creative in designing social media-based learning activities, thereby providing a learning experience that is more relevant to the needs and characteristics of today's students.

However, not all studies show uniform results when it comes to social media effectiveness. Some articles such as Manca & Ranieri (2016) and Zou (2020) show the effectiveness of social media at a moderate level, depending on the type of platform used and the context in which it is used. This means that social media cannot be seen as a single or instant solution, but rather as a complement to a broader learning strategy. Variables such as the availability of devices, technological literacy, and learning environment support also affect the success of the use of social media in language learning.

Overall, the interpretation of the analyzed literature shows that social media has great potential as a tool to support adolescent English literacy, especially in improving language exposure, learning motivation, and practical language skills. However, to maximize this potential, the right pedagogical strategy, adequate digital literacy support, and conscious and targeted use of social media in the educational environment are needed. Therefore, the

integration of social media in English learning must be carried out systematically and continuously in order to provide optimal results for the development of adolescent literacy.

Discussion

The rapid development of social media today has changed the way teenagers access information, communicate, and form more flexible learning patterns. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter are not only used as a means of entertainment, but also as a space for informal learning, including in the development of English literacy. Findings from literature studies show that social media provides unlimited access to English-language content, so that adolescents can be exposed to various forms of contextual, actual, and authentic language use.

Conceptually, this is in accordance with the theory of the Input Hypothesis from Krashen (1985) which states that exposure to a second language in a meaningful context is very important in learning. Social media, in this case, becomes a rich and varied source of linguistic input that can be accessed at any time. Kabilan et al. (2010) show that platforms such as Facebook provide opportunities for learners to use English naturally in everyday interactions. This shows that social media not only supports reading and listening literacy, but also encourages tangible language practices.

More than that, the Sociocultural Learning theory from Vygotsky (1978) is also relevant to understand how adolescents build language competence through social interaction in digital media. Social media allows collaboration between individuals in the form of comments, discussions, and even joint content creation. This activity creates a zone of proximal development where students can learn from peers or other more advanced users. Findings from Wang & Vasquez (2012) and Sari & Wahyudin (2019) support this claim, stating that interactions that occur on social platforms encourage improvement in speaking and writing skills.

In the current context, many Indonesian teenagers actively use YouTube and TikTok to watch English-language videos, ranging from tutorials, vlogs, to educational videos. This phenomenon reinforces the results of Zou (2020) and Türel (2015), who affirm that mobile application-based social media plays a role in improving vocabulary mastery and language understanding. In fact, many students learn accents, idioms, or sentence structures through short videos, showing that the learning process now does not depend solely on formal classes.

However, the results of the literature also show that the effectiveness of the use of social media in learning is highly dependent on students' digital literacy skills. This is reinforced by the findings of Ng (2012), who emphasized the importance of equipping students with the skills to filter information, understand digital contexts, and communicate ethically in online spaces. In practice, many teenagers still use social media passively without using it for meaningful learning. Therefore, digital literacy is the main requirement for social media to truly support the language literacy process.

Apart from the student side, the role of teachers in the social media integration process is also very important. Research by Cahyani & Cahyono (2012) highlights that teachers' attitudes towards technology affect the extent to which social media can be applied in teaching and learning activities. Teachers who are adaptive to technology tend to be more innovative and able to facilitate social media-based learning effectively. On the other hand, the limitation of

digital knowledge and resistance to change are obstacles in implementation in the school environment.

The author argues that the use of social media to support English literacy is not just following trends, but a pedagogical approach that adapts to the characteristics of the digital generation. Today's teens tend to have a visual, fast, and interactive learning style—characteristics that are very compatible with social media features. Therefore, the learning approach must be able to accommodate this learning style so that the results are more optimal and sustainable.

However, the author also underlines the need for clear limits and directions in the use of social media so that it does not shift towards entertainment consumption alone. For this reason, the involvement of schools, teachers, and even parents is important in providing guidance and supervision. The English literacy curriculum should also start considering the integration of social media as a medium to support learning, not just as an informal means, but as part of a structured approach.

As a practical implication, schools can start developing digital project-based learning programs such as content creation, digital storytelling, or online discussions in English. This activity can motivate students to practice the language while improving critical thinking skills and digital collaboration. In addition, digital literacy training and social media pedagogy for teachers also need to be improved so that they are able to guide students optimally.

Overall, the findings from the literature study show that social media has great potential in supporting the development of English literacy among adolescents. However, in order for this potential to be maximized, there needs to be an integration between the informal approach offered by social media and a systematic formal learning strategy. The combination of the two can create a more contextual, relevant, and fun learning environment for today's digital generation.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that social media has a significant role as a supporting medium in improving English literacy among adolescents. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Web 2.0-based applications are able to provide authentic, interactive, and flexible learning spaces. Exposure to English in a natural social context through social media encourages the improvement of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in a more meaningful and enjoyable way.

In addition, the use of social media in English learning has also been proven to increase students' motivation to learn, confidence, and active involvement in the learning process. However, this effectiveness is greatly influenced by students' digital literacy levels, support from teachers, and the existence of planned and directed learning strategies. Therefore, the integration of social media in formal education needs to be accompanied by strengthening digital literacy competencies and technology-based pedagogical training for educators.

As a recommendation, further research is recommended to conduct empirical studies with a qualitative or quantitative approach to examine more deeply how social media is used specifically by adolescents in the context of English language learning. Future research may also explore the effectiveness of certain social media on specific language skills, such as writing or speaking, as well as examine the role of teachers and educational institutions in

guiding the optimal use of social media in the context of learning. Field research in schools or youth communities is also very relevant to strengthen the results of this literature review.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

This article is the result of a literature study independently compiled by the author in the context of developing innovative discourses related to the use of social media in English learning in the digital era. The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest associated with the writing of this article. All data used are sourced from valid academic publications and can be scientifically accounted for. The author is open to constructive criticism and advanced research collaborations related to the topics of digital literacy, language education, and technology integration in learning.

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