

## Using Facebook to Promote Students' Engagement in Learning English

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**Abstract:** Learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia is not easy for many students, not only junior and senior high school students but also college/university students. It often makes them unable to be active in the teaching and learning process and have low motivation and false attitudes toward learning English. As a result, they would get low achievement in English. Considering the case, teachers need to think of ways to make students enjoy learning English both inside and outside the classroom. This study aims at elaborating on Facebook as one of the online social media that can be used to attract students' active engagement in English teaching and learning process. This study employed a literature research methodology (Lin, 2009; vom Brocke et al., 2009) by using qualitative analysis. The findings showed that Facebook, which most people, especially in Indonesia, usually use it only for fun, can also be used as a medium to get students involved in the teaching and learning process. By using Facebook, students are able to participate in learning English whenever and wherever they are. Besides, teachers can monitor, facilitate, and evaluate students' participation by commenting on the student's responses in unlimited space and time. Based on some research findings, Facebook can be used to enhance learning. Finally, Facebook has many benefits for students if it is used and managed well.

**Key words:** Active participation, Facebook, learning English, online social media

### INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English has a status as a foreign language. It means that it is taught only as a compulsory subject to students from junior high school to the university level. Since it is mostly only taught formally at school, the result of the teaching and learning process is often still dissatisfying. This can be seen from some lecturers' experience when teaching English in some classes at a public university in Indonesia. Many students from English programs and most students from other study programs like science, Economics, and Bahasa had low capabilities in English. They also have low motivation to learn English. The lecturers needed much time to have them come to the front class just to describe themselves in English, and many of them could not answer simple questions. Whereas they have studied English since junior high school or even some have studied it since primary school. According to Bernat and Gvozdenko in Jamshidnejad (2011, p. 5) "false attitudes toward language learning can result in negative feelings of self and performance among EFL language learners". Besides, according to language scholars, there is a direct relationship between erroneous, unrealistic beliefs and frustrating, anxiety-inducing experiences of language use (Jamshidnejad, 2011).

There are many possible causes of the problems of students in learning English. First is the limited exposure to English. This might be seen by the fact that the students learn English only four teaching hours/week at school. In university, students study English for two or three credits only. Second is the number of students in a class. Commonly the number of students in

a class is big. It can be more than thirty students, each of which has a different level of English and different strategies and styles in learning English. Next is the method used by teachers. Teachers might use one method of teaching which is appropriate only to certain students and might not use engaging media when teaching English. Finally, there are persistent issues with motivation since kids may get disinterested in studying due to their routine at school as well as their bad mood, a disagreement with a close friend, and delving further into numerous sources of discouragement, a low grade, or even their exhaustion (Polok & Harezak, 2018).

Considering the case, teachers need to think of ways to encourage students to be active in learning English and make them enjoy learning English inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can use many media to support the teaching and learning process. The media should be able to attract students' interest in learning English and media that students have been familiar with. One of interesting media which fits students in this modern era is social media, in particular, Facebook.

Facebook is one of the social networking which is very popular in the world. In 2012, among hundreds of online social networking sites, this social media became the most widely used online media. The active users reached 955 million monthly. It showed that Facebook has been used extensively worldwide (Mahmud & Ching 2012). Until recently, Facebook has still become one of the most used online social networking sites (85.5%) after YouTube, Whatsapp, and Instagram (Arifin, 2022).

In Indonesia, Facebook users have increased significantly. Based on data from Dixon (2022), by January 2022, Indonesia has become the third most Facebook users in the world after India and United States. People usually share their feelings, photos, and links on Facebook. Besides, they also often use it to promote goods and ideas and even ask for money for charity by using Facebook. It is in accordance with what has been stated by Stelter in Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) that on this site, users are allowed to post information, chat with others, and collaborate within the system.

Facebook is generally considered the leading social networking site among college students. They can access it by computers, laptops, and mobile phones. Unfortunately, many of them just use Facebook for fun, for example, to share their feelings, update statuses, and see and/or comment on others' statuses. This is in line with what has been stated by Polok and Hareżak (2018) that Facebook is a very time-consuming source, where many users deliberately give up a lot of their time to use it for their own arbitrary goals. From this vantage point, Facebook should only be viewed as an enjoyable hobby. Considering the case, teachers can take benefit from this site which is to promote students to get involved actively in learning English by using Facebook.

This study aimed to explore the use of Facebook in education, particularly in relation to its contribution to the teaching and learning process. The information gathered through this study might be an insight for teachers about the advantages of Facebook in education, particularly in teaching English. This study showed how Facebook has provided opportunities for its users to establish social relationships and improve students' engagement in the teaching and learning process. In addition, this study also offers a guideline on how to maximize the use of this online social media to attract students' engagement in learning English.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a literature research methodology. This methodology plays a very significant role in research since science is still primarily a cumulative effort “as new knowledge is often created in the process of interpreting and combining existing knowledge” (vom Brocke et al., 2009, p.1). This study was conducted by examining articles regarding Facebook as one of online social media sites which are also used as a learning medium in education. The steps of conducting this study involved accessing information, collecting, reading through, and sorting literature to identify and analyze the important attribute of the topic being discussed (Lin, 2009). To begin with, this study elaborates on a brief history of the existence of Facebook as an online social media and how Facebook has been used widely in the world. Afterwards, the use and the contribution of Facebook toward English language teaching and learning were examined. Finally, the result of the qualitative analysis of the findings was reported.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site launched by Mark E. Zuckerberg and others in 2004. Mark E. Zuckerberg has been recognized as the founder of this site when he was a student at Harvard University. Firstly, the site was restricted only to Harvard students. At that time, this site aimed to make students know each other and make new friends (Markoff, 2007). Later the privilege was extended to high school students and later to everyone that is 13 years or older (Boyd in Edosomwan et al., 2011).

When people join Facebook, they can provide information to other Facebook users. The basic information can include a user name, hometown, gender, status, birth date, occupation, interest in (e.g., a man or a woman), looking for (e.g. friendship, relationship, and networking), hobbies, political views, religious view, and family members. Besides, they can also provide information about their educational history, study specialization, and work experience. On contact information, they can provide their email address, personal website/blog, instant messaging screen names, home address, and mobile and home phone number. Facebook has been used for establishing social relationships and increasing economic activities. According to Helmond et al. (2019), numerous businesses throughout the world have linked their technologies and business models with Facebook over the past ten years.

Furthermore, Facebook has also been integrated with education. Means (2019) stated that Facebook gives students access to tools that enable involvement outside of the classroom, such as online collaboration and the ability to work on many assignments or topics at once. It offers extensive teaching and learning techniques for casual learning environments. Facebook enables easy communication between students and teachers outside of the classroom. Some studies have reported that Facebook has many benefits for students. According to some previous studies, Facebook is able to enhance not only language competence but also build positive attitudes of students. Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi (2012), who conducted an experimental study focusing on using Facebook for teaching English grammar and writing to low- intermediate students in Thailand, reported that Facebook had a significant effect on improving students' English grammar and writing. The finding revealed that students' scores for grammar and writing in the post-test increased significantly after they learned grammar and writing using Facebook. They could discuss sentence structure on Facebook. That activity might be one of the reasons that helped them improve their writing competence. Besides that, students' responses toward the use of Facebook in learning grammar and writing were

positive. They thought that Facebook was an alternative learning tool, providing them with a convenient and attractive means to engage in discussions with the teacher and other students with better grammatical knowledge. This finding is in line with Celebi (2018) that his research participants (students and lecturers) were satisfied with the use of Facebook integrated with the Recreational Leadership subject.

Another study by Shih (2011) also revealed that Facebook-integrated blended learning was effective for ESL students. In his findings, all of the students who became the subject of his research had significantly higher scores in the post-test. The students made improvements in paragraph organization, content, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. Besides, they also had positive attitudes toward the instruction. They stated that they were motivated to have more participation in learning by using Fb because it was convenient and popular for them. As another piece of evidence, Mahmud and Ching (2012) conducted a study to find out whether Facebook really works for L2 learners. They conducted a study with a survey approach. A survey questionnaire was distributed to a particular group of transfer students at the tertiary stage. Before distributing the questionnaire, they asked the students to carry out several stages of activities explicitly entrenched for the English subject that they enrolled in during the summer semester. The result showed that students professed that the use of Facebook had significantly increased their L2 skills such as reading and writing, expanded their social circles, improved their communication skills and minimized their apprehension when learning and using the language among peers. Based on the finding, the researchers argued that Facebook could be beneficial for students. The findings of the two previous studies corroborate with another study by Lirola (2022), which also conducted an experimental study about the effect of integrating Facebook in teaching writing. Her study showed that students were motivated to have discussions on Facebook. As a result, it helped them to use their English more frequently. Although their writing contained many errors at first, those errors helped the teacher to determine aspects of grammar that needed to be reinforced for the students. By using drilling exercises and giving more chances to students to have written discussions without time restrictions, students were able to improve their writing skills.

Besides improving students' writing skills and grammar, Facebook has also been reported as a social medium beneficial to increasing students' English communication skills. Dweikat (2016), who conducted an experimental study to examine the effect of Facebook use on students' speaking skills, revealed that the experimental group, treated with face-to-face lectures integrated with Facebook, gained better achievement compared to the control group. Dweikat's study is in alignment with Shraim (2014), whose findings showed that learning using Facebook provided students opportunities to communicate and personally engage, do collaborative work and develop autonomous learning and life skills by having social interaction more intensively.

Some other researchers also pointed out the advantages of using Facebook in education. Students reported that they were 'comfortable' with the faculty on Facebook and wanted regular online discussions with faculty (Munoz, 2009). Faryadi (2017), who conducted a case study about the effectiveness of Facebook in learning English, reported that Facebook had helped students in improving their engagement in the teaching and learning process, satisfaction, comprehension skills and test scores. Besides, Facebook was also believed to be able to improve students' critical thinking. Data from his classroom observation and questionnaire indicated that students, as the participants in his study, very much enjoyed learning using Facebook.

The ability of the students to take part in the learning process by using Facebook might be caused by several things. First, using Facebook allow them to participate without face-to-face interaction. It reduces the feeling of shyness, fear of making mistakes, and nervousness. Second, they have more time to think of words or utterances they want to write on Facebook and also have more time to check the meaning of difficult words they read on Facebook. Next, they have more flexible time to participate in the learning interaction on Facebook, for example, when a teacher/lecturer introduces a topic to be discussed on Facebook. According to Hamman and Wilson in Munoz (2009), "students who participated in a web-enhanced class outperformed those students in a traditional class lecture."

Using Facebook as a medium in the teaching and learning process gives benefits not only to students but also to teachers. Using interesting and familiar media like Facebook might create a good relationship between students and teachers. It does not mean that the students may see the personal life of the teacher, but the teacher can show that he/she is responsible and care about the students by monitoring things happening on Facebook concerning the teaching and learning process. By doing this, students can really feel the function of a teacher/lecturer as a mentor, facilitator, and evaluator. Using social media like Facebook is one of the trendiest ways for teachers to engage students to be active in the teaching and learning process. As stated by Russel et al. in Munoz and Towner (2009) that "teachers who engage with a technological medium are more likely to value that technological tool in their teaching." It might also give a positive image of the teacher/lecturer. The perspective can motivate students to learn more. Besides that, the teacher will get more sense of students' understanding and help teachers prepare for class, for example, when a topic to be discussed is introduced on Facebook and get students to comment on it before coming to class (Mobrand, 2011). He/ she can have flexible time to check students' questions and/or comments about material that has been discussed or will be discussed in class or to give feedback on students' work. Finally, by using Facebook, a teacher/lecturer will be able to prepare students to be more well prepared in learning and accommodate students who have both low and high ability in English.

Furthermore, Facebook has also helped teachers in conducting classroom assessments. Shih (2013), investigating the effect of blended learning using Facebook on students' English ability for the course instruction of business communication, revealed that peer assessment on Facebook could be a valuable tool for helping students acquire grammatical concepts like tense and sentence construction, as well as to increase their motivation to learn about such a challenging professional subject. His study suggests that adding Facebook into an ESP course can significantly help college students learn business communication English. Through Facebook peer evaluations as well as classroom instruction, students can advance their professional knowledge. The blended learning strategy can significantly increase the motivation and interest of the students in their education.

### **Facebook Features to Enhance Learning**

Some features available on Facebook can be used as a medium for increasing students' participation in learning English. Among others are Facebook wall, Facebook notes, Facebook chatting, Facebook share, Facebook quiz, messages and inbox (Facebook, 2022). On the wall, a teacher/lecturer can give announcements or information about things students should do. Current issues or topics can be written down there to be discussed by the students. The Facebook note can be used to write some notes or materials/handouts. Meanwhile, Facebook



chat can also be used by the teacher/lecturer to discuss something or can be used by students to discuss each other about a topic or assignment they need to complete. Facebook share is useful for teachers and students to share useful links for learning, for example, a link to open a video that students can use to practice listening, a link to open an electronic book, etc. Messages and inbox features on Facebook give benefits to students when they need to ask specific questions or comment that he or she thinks other classmates do not need to know. This feature gives more space for students to be free to express what he/she knows and what he/she does not understand about materials. This will help them to avoid the feeling of shyness or being underestimated by other classmates. Other features on Facebook are also useful for education. Facebook facilitates users to upload/download pictures and videos. Using the facility, teachers/ lecturers may upload syllabi and materials for students.

According to Barczyk and Duncan (2011), teachers who want to include social media in their lessons are advised to think about creating institutional and/or individual rules. Teachers can harness the benefits of social media-based learning while lowering their risk of legal liability. To make the teaching and learning process using Facebook runs smoothly, teachers should consider several things. First, a teacher may create a Facebook group for all members of his/her class. All members of the class are required to create their own accounts. Each student in the class has to make friends with each other and the teacher/lecturer. The teacher/lecturer may use the Facebook group only for educational purposes. So, it should be separated from his/her personal Facebook. By doing this, the teacher/lecturer can maintain the educational atmosphere on Facebook and keep it for professional use only. Then, the teacher/lecturer should give a clear description of how to use Facebook for learning and remind the students to keep on the right track. Nowadays, social media plays a significant role in how young people communicate, and they must learn how to utilize the information carefully in class. When sharing data, images, and videos of themselves or others, they had to take into account the terms of use and privacy policies. In their study, Wang et al. (2012) concluded that privacy and online safety are significant issues that should be taken into account in social learning environments. This is so important that the students are aware of things they should do and avoid when using Facebook since Facebook can also lead to negative behaviour. For example, students may waste their time commenting on other statuses, just looking at photos, catching up with friends, etc. (Wang & Chen, 2011). Next, the teacher/lecturer should demonstrate how to use Facebook to the students and invite students to practice it in the classroom before the real online interaction takes place. Finally, the teacher/lecturer should monitor the students who are participating in learning via Facebook. Besides monitoring, he/she also should evaluate the students' participation or give feedback to the students in order that the students can maintain or even increase their motivation to be active in the teaching and learning process.

## CONCLUSION

As described at the beginning of this article, English as a foreign language is not an easy subject to teach. Many problems occurred in the process of teaching and learning this skill. Therefore, teachers/lecturers need to be creative in designing the materials and use interesting media to engage students actively in the teaching process. One of the interesting media in this digital era is social media, in particular, Facebook. Basically, Facebook was created for fun, to

build social networks informally. Besides, Facebook has been recognized as a very time-consuming source, in which many Facebook users deliberately give up a lot of their time to use it for their arbitrary goals. In this study, I explored the use of Facebook in education, especially for teaching English.

Based on the data analysis from many sources, it is found that besides for fun, Facebook, in fact, has many advantages for teachers and students. Facebook can be used for motivating and building positive attitudes of students in learning. It also contributes to developing students' learning autonomy. As a result, Facebook is able to help students to get better achievement in learning. Finally, the success of Facebook usage in education needs teachers' creativity in creating the rules of using Facebook and monitoring and evaluating students' involvement on Facebook. If Facebook is managed well, positive effects will be gained.

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