

Social media's untapped potential in English language teaching and learning at a Vietnamese university

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This study investigates the use of social media in English language teaching and learning in a Vietnamese university and the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards its educational potential in this context. A mixed-methods design was employed, involving surveys administered to 16 teachers and 315 students, as well as qualitative data collected through interviews with five teachers and ten students. Results show that social media is used by both teachers and students, albeit mainly for non-study purposes. *Facebook* and *Google Docs* were the most popular platforms used for teaching and learning English, particularly for input skills such as vocabulary, grammar and reading. However, speaking and listening skills were less commonly taught using social media. Both teachers and students agreed that social media offers significant opportunities as an effective learning platform. To support the use of social media in language teaching and learning, the study recommends improving access to reliable technological resources, providing pedagogical training to teachers, and reflecting these reforms in university and departmental policies, funding and leadership.

Introduction

Social media refers to a collection of Internet-based platforms and technologies designed to enable users to create, share, and exchange user-generated content within virtual communities and networks. These platforms serve as interactive spaces where individuals can connect, communicate, and collaborate with others by sharing text, images, videos, and links (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mao, 2014). Based on the works by Boyd & Ellison (2007), Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), and Mao (2014), social media can be classified into categories summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Categorisation of social media and tools that may be used for social purposes

Category	Examples
Social networking sites	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok
Synchronous video conferencing	Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom
Learning management systems	Moodle, Edmodo
Document sharing	Google Docs
Virtual worlds and gaming environments	WeeWorld, Playstation Network, World of Warcraft

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of young people in countries worldwide. In the United States, 73% of teenagers used social media in 2008 (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010) and 83% of Internet users aged 18-19 years were likely to use a social networking site in 2012 (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). As of 2022, social network penetration in the US had reached 90% (Dixon, 2023). In Australia, 65% of young people aged 9-16, who used the Internet, had a profile on a social media site in

2011 (Green, Brady, Ólafsson, Hartley & Lumby, 2011). In 2012, 97% of Australian young people aged 14-15 years and 99% aged 16-17 years used social media (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2013). The most recent statistics show that as of 2023, social media use among the Australian population is at 81% (Guzman, 2023). In Vietnam, the number of social media users is expected to increase gradually from 65.8 million in 2019 to reach 82.92 million in 2028 (Degenhard, 2023).

The prevalence of social media among the population in Vietnam has prompted the question of how to effectively incorporate it into English language teaching and learning, given the importance of information and communications technology (ICT) in education in the country. Both ICT and English proficiency are crucial for Vietnam's participation in the globalised world, and therefore, policymakers and researchers have prioritised the use of ICT in English language education. Despite the growing number of social media users in Vietnam, limited research has explored the potential of this resource in English language teaching and learning. Consequently, there is a pressing need for the researcher to conduct this study to address this gap.

Research objective

The objective of this study was to determine the feasibility of utilising social media as a tool to assist Vietnamese teachers and students in their English language teaching and learning. The researcher aimed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which social media was integrated into the teachers' and students' daily lives by examining their familiarity with various social media platforms, the frequency of usage, and the purposes for which they used them, both for study and non-study purposes. This knowledge could potentially provide valuable insights for educators to leverage students' interests and preferences to enhance their learning experiences. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the current level of social media usage among teachers and students?
2. How do teachers and students perceive the potential of social media in the context of English language teaching and learning?

Literature review

Potential of social media in education

In today's digital age, there has been a transformation in the way learners approach education, with the emergence of new types of learners such as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), the "net generation" (Hsu, 2013), or "generation Y" (Davis III, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar & Gonzalez Canche, 2012). Recent studies have shown that this digital generation of students learns differently from the previous generation, relying heavily on the Internet for information gathering and communication (Benson & Avery, 2009). Social media, according to Selwyn (2012), have contributed to the emergence of new types of learners, new types of learning and new models of higher education. Selwyn suggests that social

media reflect the multitasking tendencies of young learners who are more socially self-reliant and accustomed to networking and collaborating via the Internet. Further, social media have changed learners' relationship with knowledge and information. They have created a new culture of learning as knowledge consumption and knowledge construction are based on collective exploration, play and innovation rather than individualised construction. Thus, many educators believe that social media can effectively support student-centred learning experiences (Goodyear & Ellis, 2008). Students of the digital age are drawn to the opportunities that social media provide to engage, interact and collaborate in learning activities which promote the learning process and enhance the overall learning experience (Mondahl & Razmerita, 2014).

Many researchers have recognised the value of social media and mobile computing devices in education. Gikas and Grant (2013) identified three themes emerging from research that highlighted the benefits of social media usage: promoting constant connectivity, fostering collaborative learning, and enabling authentic learning on the move. Faizi, El Afia and Chiheb (2013) noted several educational advantages of social media that allow for instant contact between students and teachers. First, social media provide communication channels that can instantly bring students and teachers into contact. This is critical as social media can help teachers to understand students' learning difficulties and foster more successful learning experiences. Social media also facilitate peer-to-peer support as students can use these platforms to share learning problems and experiences with each other. Second, social media can function as engagement tools, attracting students who may find traditional learning methods boring or feel too shy to participate. Social media platform such as *Google Docs*, wikis, and blogs can encourage students to take part in learning. Third, social media can be effective collaborative platforms, as Faizi et al. (2013) noted, "another vital benefit of social media is that they foster collaboration" (p. 52). Publication in social media enables students to revisit and revise their ideas and discuss them with friends. Mondahl and Razmerita (2014) held that "collaborative learning processes that are embedded in a social media enhanced learning platform are supportive and conducive to successful problem-solving which leads to successful adult foreign language learning" (p. 339).

Higher education has identified the potential advantages provided by Web 2.0 technologies to improve student engagement, academic performance, the college experience and pedagogical practices, and has supported innovations and changes to maintain currency with the changing education market. Social media platforms offer transformative opportunities to make teaching and learning practices more social, open and collaborative. In particular, social networking tools facilitate the process of knowledge building by promoting connections, networks, and social interaction (Dron & Anderson, 2014). Social media can also support students in the learning process (Syafrial, Rumadi & Fatimah, 2019; Ulla, Perales & Tarrayo, 2020).

The need to incorporate social media into teaching and learning practices in higher education to enhance student engagement and pedagogy has been a primary concern for many educators. "Many higher education institutions (and educators)" Selwyn (2012) asserted, "now find themselves expected to catch up with this world of social media

applications and social media users” (p. 1). According to Moskaliuk, Kimmerle and Cress (2009), universities are well-positioned to use social media practices to help students and the wider community collectively create knowledge. In fact, many universities are exploring ways to support these new forms of learning using social media (Davis III et al., 2015; Moran, Seaman & Tinti-Kane, 2011; Selwyn, 2012).

Potential of social media in second language acquisition (SLA)

Numerous researchers have acknowledged the value of incorporating social media in language teaching and learning. For instance, Karim, Mondal, Hussain, Alam & Nazarieh (2022) conducted a study that investigated the impact of social media on undergraduates' English skills in multiple colleges in India. The results demonstrated that social media usage had a positive effect on the participants' proficiency in all aspects of English. Indeed, L2 learners are currently enjoying unprecedented autonomy in exploring digital resources and documents, which serve as powerful frameworks for various aspects of SLA, including oral, written, and reading competence enhancement (Pikhart & Botezat, 2021).

Social media have potential affordances in promoting writing for L2 learners because, when writing via social media, students can access communicative opportunities to practise in an authentic and motivating way (Zheng, Yim & Warschauer, 2018). Zou et al. (2016) reported that students had positive attitudes when using wikis for collaborative learning and they believed that the collaboration was beneficial for them in developing their writing. Students enjoyed correcting language errors for each other on a wiki, and the results suggest that their writing skills improved. Similarly, Hudson (2018) reported that most of the students in her study found wikis helpful for developing writing and English language skills. *Facebook* has also been shown to be effective to enhance students' writing performance (Ahmed, 2016; Shukor & Noordin, 2014; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Yunus & Salehi, 2012). Facebook's affordances provide a platform for students to engage in discussion, provide feedback, and comment both synchronously and asynchronously, which can help to enhance their writing skills (Yu, 2014). Google Docs has been identified as a beneficial platform for collaborative writing (Hedin, 2012; Jeong, 2016; Zhou, Simpson & Domizi, 2012). Studies have demonstrated that students' use of Google Docs has resulted in better writing performances and higher writing scores (Alsubaie & Ashuraidah, 2017; Setyawan & Rochsantiningsih, 2014; Zhou et al., 2012).

Several studies have highlighted the potential of social media as a platform to foster increased engagement in self-directed language learning and real-life language use among students, extending beyond the confines of formal classroom activities (Alfahadi, 2017; Chaiwiwatrakul & Sangarun, 2016; Hamat & Abu Hassan, 2019). Chaiwiwatrakul & Sangarun (2016) demonstrated that students can create their own learning environment through social media platforms, leading to significant learning outcomes even without direct teacher intervention. In a study by Hamat and Abu Hassan (2019) focusing on Malaysian university students, Facebook was predominantly used for non-study purposes, yet advanced students were observed to frequently switch to the language they were studying (L2) during their interactions. Additionally, students acknowledged the usefulness

of employing Facebook for language learning, as it provided them with opportunities to practice the target language in authentic real-life settings. Alfahadi (2017) concluded that integrating social media into English as a foreign language (EFL) syllabi can facilitate social learning beyond the traditional classroom setting, thus serving as valuable teaching and learning aids.

Current social media adoption in higher education

Although social media are widely available and offer numerous potential benefits, its use in higher education remains low. Many teachers and faculty members are hesitant to use social media in teaching (Crook, 2012). In a more recent study on the potential and barriers to social media use for teaching in higher education, Manca and Ranieri (2016) concluded, "social media is far from being currently used in academic contexts for teaching" (p. 226). The findings of their study showed a low level of faculty adoption with just over 40% of academics using at least one tool for teaching on a monthly basis and less than 40% finding social media useful for teaching purposes. Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008) revealed in a study on teacher awareness of social media pedagogical affordances that while most teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of social media in teaching, very few actually used these tools or planned to do so. Rogers-Estable (2014) also found that the reported benefits of social media use in higher education did not match the actual use of the tools by the teachers.

While research shows teachers' low adoption of social media for teaching, empirical studies of university students' social media use have highlighted a lack of sophisticated or advanced use of social media applications (Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno & Gray, 2010). In a study of U.K. students' use of Facebook, Selwyn (2009) suggested that a large percentage of students' interactions (about 95%) were completely unrelated to their university studies. Similarly, Mao (2014) revealed that there is inconsistency between students' positive attitudes and beliefs about social media in education and their actual adoption. While they are positive about using social media, they are not well aware of social media as a means for formal learning in a school environment.

There are various factors that could contribute to the slow adoption of social media for educational purposes. Buchanan, Sainter and Saunders (2013) found that low perceived usefulness and negative conditions were associated with low usage rates. Cao, Ajjan and Hong (2013) discovered that perceived usefulness, external pressures and task-technology compatibility had a positive impact on social media use, whereas concerns about the risks associated with technology use discouraged its utilisation. Additionally, according to Ravenscroft (2009), teachers tend to prefer pedagogical methods that align with teacher-centred technology they are accustomed to.

Manca and Ranieri (2016) identified three key obstacles that hinder the use of social media in teaching practice. The first obstacle is related to cultural and social factors, including the erosion of teachers' traditional roles, the management of relationships with students and the problem of privacy threats. These factors restrict the use of social media in teaching. The second obstacle is pedagogical in nature as some studies have suggested that

face-to-face instruction is more effective than online teaching. Both faculty and their students prefer face-to-face instruction. The final obstacle pertains to administrative and institutional issues. Sufficient investment in technical infrastructure and support for creative teaching practices and educational services are critical. Therefore, the perceived usefulness of social media is an essential factor that promotes their use in higher education teaching, while perceived risk can negatively impact attempts to use them.

According to Inayati's (2015) report, Indonesian teachers recognise the potential pedagogical benefits of using social media technology in ELT. However, their willingness to incorporate it into their teaching practice remains low. One possible explanation for this is the challenges associated with using social media as a teaching tool such as technical difficulties, student distraction, and unethical behaviour.

From the aforementioned points, it is evident that social media plays an important role in the digital age in which learners are “born into a world of woven from cabled, wired or wireless connectivity” (Bauman, 2010, p. 7). Social media not only serve as a means of communication and social interaction, but also allow for the creation of personal learning environments and have the potential to transform education (Henderson, Snyder & Beale, 2013). Nevertheless, despite the widespread availability of social media, its adoption for educational purposes by teachers and students remains low. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the current use of social media by teachers and students at a Vietnamese university and their perceptions of its potential for language teaching and learning.

Method

Design

This research study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach to examine the current use of social media among teachers and students at a university in Vietnam, to explore their perspectives on its implementation, as a component of a broader investigation (Nguyen, 2019). The study was conducted in two distinct phases (Figure 1). During the initial phase, online surveys were administered to both teachers and students to obtain quantitative data that addressed both research questions. In the subsequent phase, interviews were conducted with the participants to collect qualitative data, which provided valuable insights into their perspectives on the utilisation of social media in teaching and learning.

Participants

This research project involved 16 English language teachers and 315 students from a university in Vietnam. Of the 16 teachers who participated, 14 were female and two were male. Their ages ranged from 31 to 50 years and all had a Master of Arts degree. The teachers' teaching experience varied, with three having more than 15 years of experience, while seven had 10 to 15 years and six had 5 to 10 years of experience.

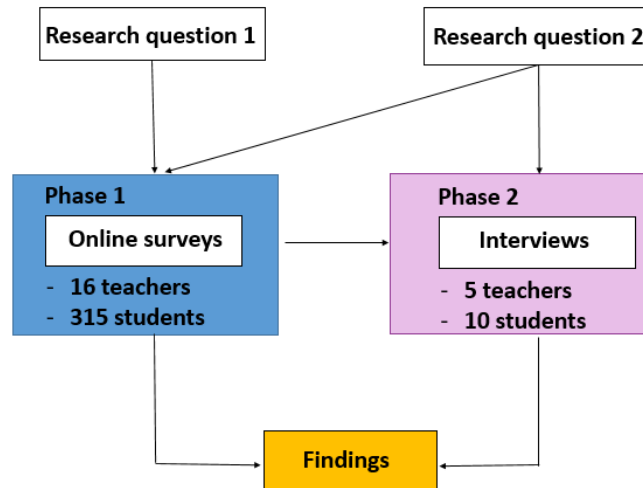


Figure 1: Research design

Out of the 315 participants in this study, 87% were male, and only 13% were female. The age of the students ranged from 18 to 27 years old, with the largest group being 19-year-olds (64%). The students were enrolled in various majors, including software engineering, electronics communication, information security, business administration, finance and banking, graphic design, English language, and Japanese language (Figure 2). However, software engineering was the most popular major, with 76% of the students enrolled in it. The majority of the students were in their first year of university (94%), while a small percentage were in their second year (5%) or fourth year (1%).

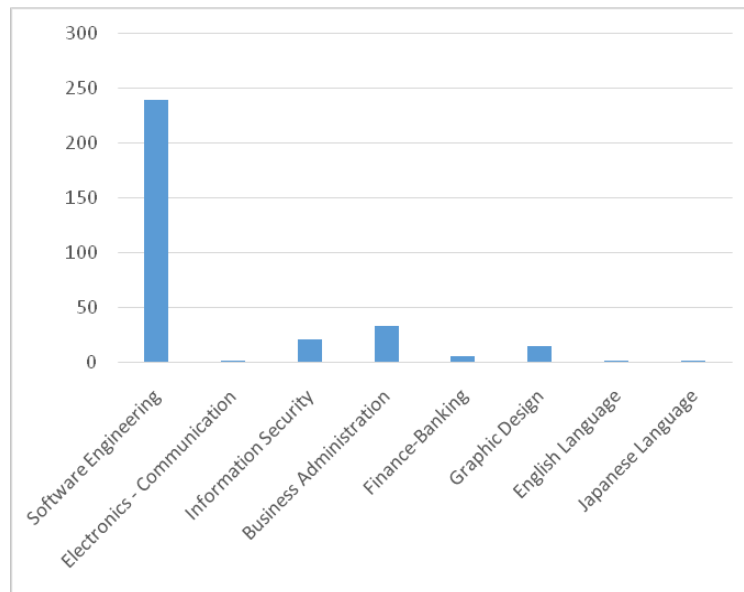


Figure 2: Students' major (undergraduate program) (N=315)

Instruments

The researcher administered two online surveys to English language teachers and students at the university. The surveys collected participants' demographic information and data on their social media usage, including the types of applications used, frequency of use, purposes of use, and attitudes towards the use of social media in teaching and learning. Furthermore, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions held by the participants, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with five teachers and ten students. These interviews were designed to elicit in-depth information and insights into the use of social media in teaching and learning.

Procedure

The present study was conducted with the approval of the university's Vice Dean, following a request for permission to use the university as the research site. English language teachers were contacted via email after receiving permission, and were invited to participate in the online Qualtrics survey. Additionally, the teachers were asked to assist in disseminating the email invitation to their students for participation in the survey. The sample population consisted of 16 English language teachers and 1,064 students currently enrolled in English language classes. A total of 16 teachers and 315 students opted to participate in the study, with all completing the survey in its entirety. The surveys also included inquiries regarding participants' willingness to participate in interviews. Based on their voluntary participation, five teachers and ten students were selected to partake in the subsequent interviews.

Data analysis

In the present study, quantitative data analysis was performed using Excel, with the collected survey data being presented descriptively through charts. Qualitative data was analysed using a transcription-based approach, following the "three Cs" of data analysis framework proposed by Lichtman (2013). Specifically, the transcribed data from interviews with five teachers and ten students were subjected to coding, categorisation, and conceptualisation to identify recurring themes and patterns within the data.

Results

Research question 1: Current use of social media

Students' use of social media

Based on the preliminary study conducted by Nguyen (2019), the participating students demonstrated a notable adoption of ICT with a substantial percentage owning laptops (98%) and primarily accessing the Internet through the university Wi-Fi (96%) and home Internet (57%). Given this high level of ICT ownership, the survey aimed to explore the usage patterns of popular social media applications among these students and the frequency at which they used them.

The results are presented in Figure 3, which shows that 97% of the students used Facebook, making it the most commonly used social network. Google Docs, iMessage/FaceTime, and Skype were also popular, with 50% to 60% of the students using them. Wikis and Viber were used by fewer students, with only 29% and 16%, respectively. Even fewer students used Google Hangouts, blogs, and Line, with 13% and 11%, respectively. WeChat, Snapchat, and Tango were the least frequently used, with only 3% to 5% of the students using them.

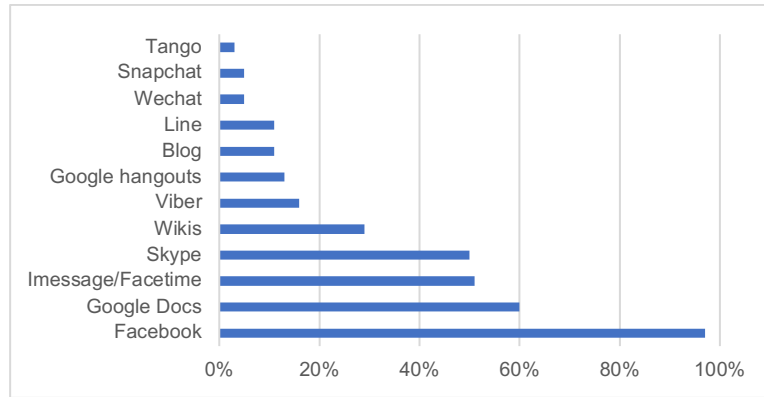


Figure 3: Students' social media use (N=315)

Figure 4 shows the frequency of use of such social media by the students. Facebook was used the most frequently used social media platform, with 91% of the students reporting daily use. With 23% of the students reporting using it every day, iMessage/FaceTime ranked second. Skype, Wikis, and Snapchat were used with low-frequency, with only 6%, 3%, and 2% of students using them daily, respectively. Use of the remaining social media was at extremely low levels. Only 1% used Viber, Google Hangouts or blogs every day. WeChat and Tango were not used regularly by any students.

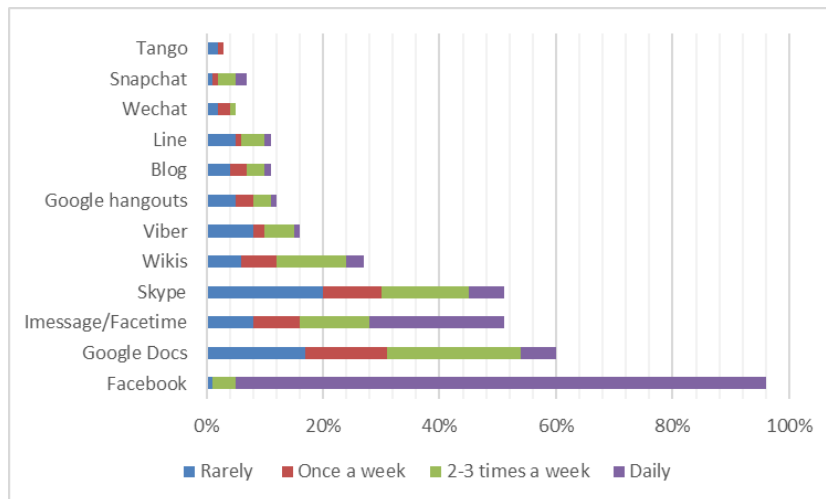


Figure 4: Students' frequency of social media use (N=315)

The reasons for students using social media are presented in Figure 5. The majority of students used social media for non-study purposes. Specifically, 86% of the students used Facebook for non-study purposes, while only 57% used it for study purposes. In contrast, Google Docs and wikis were primarily used for study purposes. 48% of the students used Google Docs and 23% used wikis for study purposes, while only 24% used Google Docs and 13% used wikis for non-study purposes.

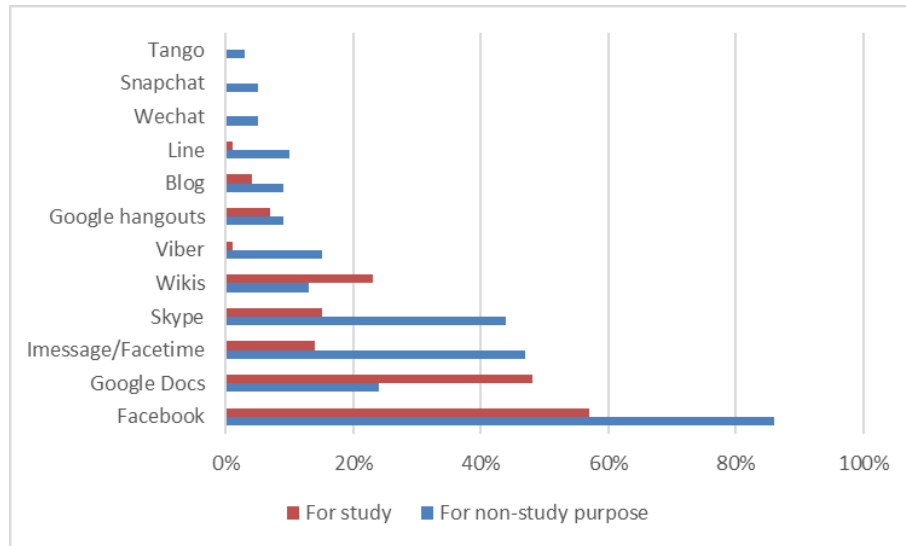


Figure 5: Students' purposes of social media use (N=315)

The use of social media by students to learn English language skills is presented in Figure 6. The most commonly used platforms were Facebook and Google Docs. Of the students, 51% used Facebook to learn vocabulary, 44% for reading, and 39% for grammar. For listening and writing skills, 31% and 28% of students respectively used Facebook, while only 13% used it for speaking skills. Google Docs ranked second, with 28% of students using it for learning writing skills. Between 18% and 22% used Google Docs for learning grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Although Google Docs is mainly used for collaborative document work, 10% of students used it to learn listening skills, and 7% used it for speaking skills.

Teachers' use of social media

Figure 7 displays the social media used by the teachers for different purposes and at varying frequency levels. All teachers used Facebook, making it the most commonly used social media. Google Docs was the second most popular, used by 12 teachers, followed by iMessage/Facetime (10 teachers) and Viber (eight teachers). Six teachers used Wikis, while five used Skype. Google hangouts and blogs were the least popular social media, with only one teacher using them.

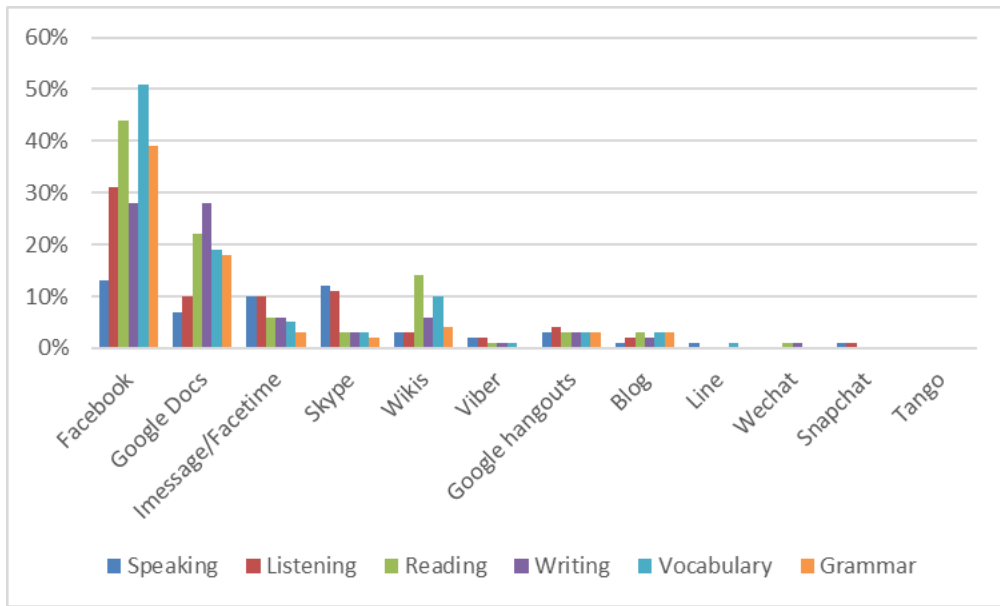


Figure 6: Students' social media use in learning English language skills (N=315)

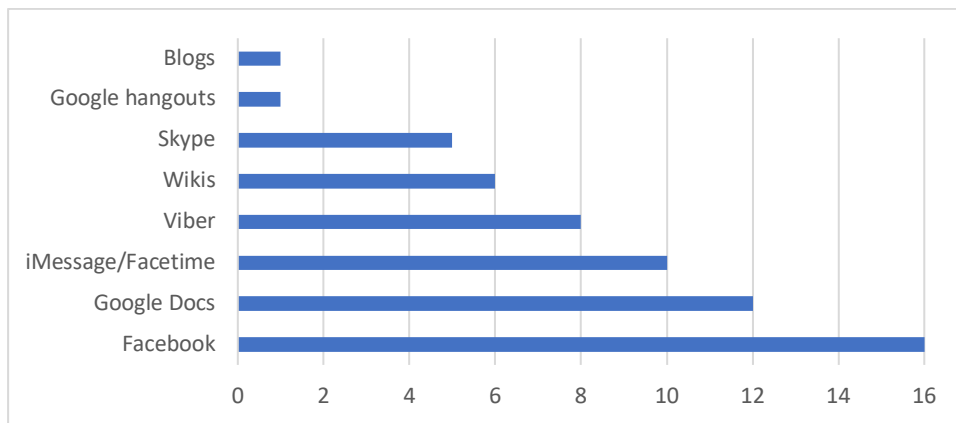


Figure 7: Teachers' social media use (N=16)

Figure 8 demonstrates the extent of teachers' use of social media. Facebook was the most widely used when it was regularly used by 13 out of 16 teachers. While iMessage/Facetime ranked second in terms of usage frequency, there were only three teachers using it. In terms of user number, Google Docs ranked the second most popular application, but it was used at lower frequency than Facebook. It was used once a week by seven of the 12 teachers who used Google Docs, but only two used it 2 or 3 times a week. None of the teachers used the other social media daily.

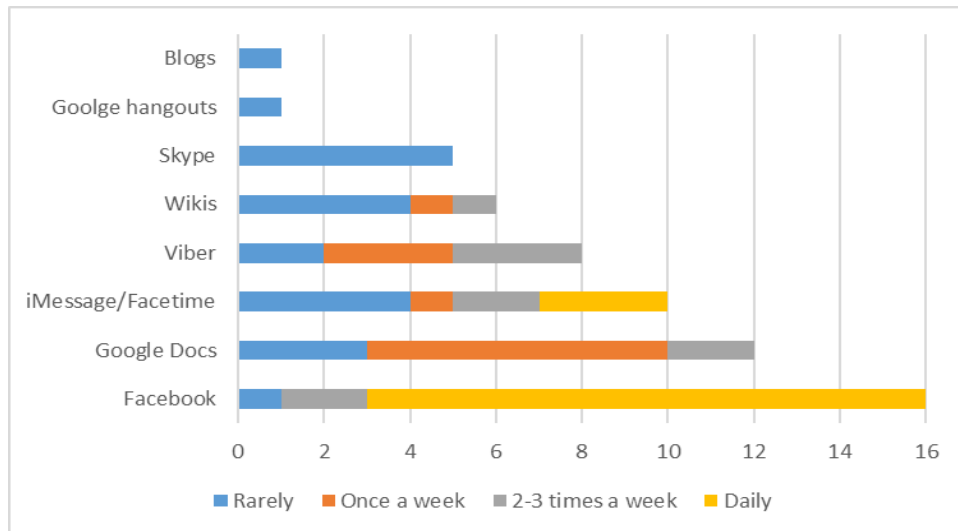


Figure 8: Frequency of teachers' social media use (N=16)

Figure 9 shows the purposes of the teachers' use of these social media. Nine teachers reported using Facebook for non-teaching purposes while seven teachers used it for both non-teaching purposes and for teaching English. For non-teaching purposes, only two teachers used Google Docs. This figure was lower than the number of teachers (seven teachers) who used it to teach English. For both purposes, only three teachers used Google Docs. Of the ten teachers who used iMessage/Facetime, the vast majority of nine used it exclusively for non-teaching purposes while only one used it for both non-teaching and English teaching purposes. All the teachers used Viber, Google hangouts and blogs for non-teaching purposes only. Two teachers used Wikis for teaching English only and a further two used it for both purposes. It is noteworthy that Skype and Viber are used differently despite having similar features. Two teachers used Skype for both non-teaching purposes and teaching English while no teachers used Viber for teaching English.

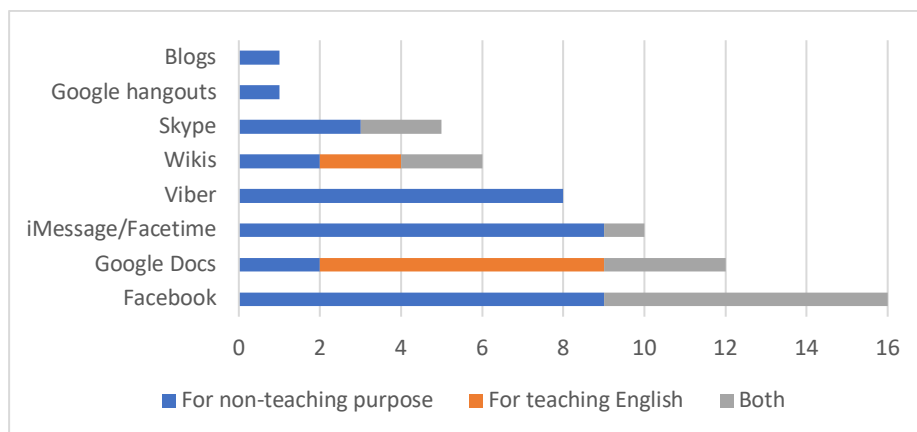


Figure 9: Purposes of teachers' social media use (N=16)

Figure 10 demonstrates the use of social media to teach specific English skills/subskills among teachers who mentioned using these to teach English. It shows that teachers used these social media to teach writing skills the most. Six teachers used Facebook, 10 teachers used Google Docs, one teacher used Wikis and another used Skype. The numbers of teachers who taught reading, vocabulary and grammar using these social media were close. It appears that teachers rarely used these social media for teaching speaking and listening.

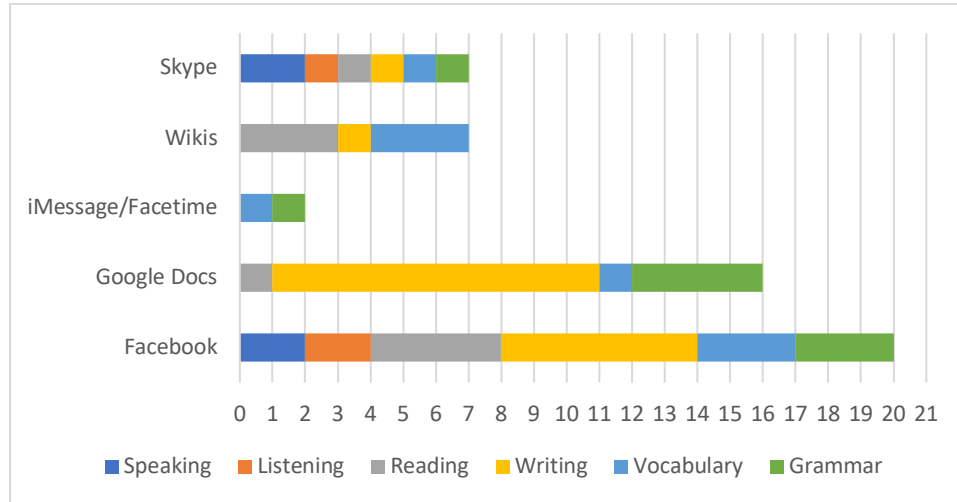


Figure 10: Teachers' social media use in teaching English skills/sub-skills (N=16)

Research question 2: Perceptions about social media use

Teachers and students generally had positive attitudes about using social media. As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3, both teachers and students highly valued the advantages of social media for non-study and non-teaching purposes. Ninety four percent of the students and 100% of the teachers agreed that social media helped them to stay in touch with others quickly. Moreover, 89% of the students and 81% of the teachers said that social media helped them to get updated information. The teachers claimed that social media also helped them to stay up to date with current matters in their office. Viewing entertaining videos to reduce stress was another benefit perceived by 92% of the students and 88% of the teachers when using social media.

In terms of using social media for teaching and learning purposes, both teachers and students had positive attitudes. Eighty seven percent of the students thought that it would be motivating to study via social media. One student when interviewed said that:

It would be convenient to use my favourite social network like Facebook in study. For example, when my teachers post an assignment on my class Facebook groups, I will receive it right away. If I am not sure about anything, I can post questions there to ask my teachers and friends and I will be assisted more quickly. Therefore, I feel more motivated to learn.

This advantage was clear when 56% of the teachers often used social media to post assignments for their students. The majority of the students also thought that social media helped them to connect with their teachers and collaborate with their friends easily, especially when they had to do group tasks. In general, two thirds of them agreed that social media was potential in helping them to improve their English skills. For the teachers, social media was useful for half of them to stay updated with current issues in English teaching. Moreover, social media also helped them to facilitate class discussion in a convenient way and assisted them to provide academic support for their students.

Table 2: Students’ perceptions about the potential of social media (N=315)

For non-study purposes	Social media helps me to stay in touch with others quickly	94%
	Social media helps me get updated information	89%
	Social media helps me view entertaining video to reduce stress	92%
For study purposes	It is motivating to study via social media	87%
	Social media is able to help me to improve my English skills	68%
	Social media helps me to collaborate with my friends quickly to do our group work	75%
	I use social media to give feedback to my friends	63%
	Social media helps me to connect with my teachers	86%

Table 3: Teachers’ perceptions about the potential of social media (N=16)

For non-teaching purposes	Social media helps me to stay in touch with others quickly	100%
	Social media helps me get updated information	81%
	Social media helps me view entertaining video to reduce stress	88%
	Social media helps me to stay updated with current matters in my office	94%
For teaching purposes	Social media helps me to stay updated with current issues in English teaching	50%
	I use social media to post assignments for my students	56%
	Social media helps me to facilitate class discussion	81%
	Social media helps me to provide academic support for my students	69%

Although teachers and students recognised the potential of using social media in teaching and learning, many seemed reluctant to do so. The reasons that many students gave as excuses for their resistance to using social media in learning were related to privacy concerns, distractions, and problems with IT infrastructure. Regarding privacy concerns, some students revealed that when they worked with each other on social media with the presence of other people such as their teachers or friends, they did not feel comfortable. For example, one student said:

My teacher asked us to write in group and use Facebook group to discuss with each other. However, I don’t feel comfortable when everything we discussed was observed by our teacher.

Moreover, the students admitted that when using social media, they felt easily distracted and liable to lose focus on their study. One more problem was that the Internet at the university was not reliable, often very slow. As for the teachers, various perceptions

refrained them from using social media in teaching. Most of the teachers claimed that it was really time consuming when integrating technology in teaching. In order to apply technology in teaching, they had to spend more time preparing lessons and following up students after each lesson. Furthermore, the biggest concern for the teachers was the risk of students engaging in dishonest practices. For instance, during interviews, teachers expressed concern that their students may commit plagiarism while using social media as a learning tool. Regarding this problem, one teacher said:

One of the biggest challenges I face when my students use social media platforms such as Facebook for learning is that they tend to get distracted by other content online instead of focusing on the assigned learning activities. Additionally, I have observed that students often resort to copying ideas from the Internet when they are permitted to use it.

Discussion

Research question 1: What is the current level of social media usage among teachers and students?

The study investigated participants' use of various social media platforms and found that Facebook was the most popular choice, with 97% of students and 100% of teachers using it. This aligns with previous studies (Inayati, 2015; Bexheti et al., 2014) that also identified Facebook as the most frequently used social media technology. Remarkably, most of the teachers (9/16) and students (86%) used Facebook for non-educational purposes, which is consistent with previous research (Inayati, 2015; Bexheti et al., 2014) indicating that social media is primarily used for personal reasons, and that teachers are hesitant to incorporate it into their classroom practices.

Furthermore, the study found that teachers primarily used Facebook to improve students' writing skills. This finding is supported by previous research (Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Shukor & Noordin, 2014) demonstrating that Facebook can be a helpful tool in enhancing writing skills. Similarly, Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi (2012) showed that Facebook can be an effective platform for discussing grammar and writing.

Another finding is that students primarily used social media for improving their reading, vocabulary, and grammar skills. This outcome aligns with the results reported by Pitaloka et al. (2021), who found that social media usage had a significant impact on the development of English skills, particularly vocabulary. However, students tended to utilise social media less for enhancing their speaking and listening abilities, which is contradictory to previous studies (Mustafa, 2018; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019) which revealed that social media assists university learners to improve their listening and speaking skills.

Research question 2: How do teachers and students perceive the potential of social media in the context of English language teaching and learning?

The study found that both teachers and students held positive attitudes towards using social media in English teaching and learning. Specifically, 87% of students found studying with social media to be motivating, 86% felt that social media helped them

connect with their teachers, and 75% believed that it facilitated quicker collaboration in group work. Similarly, 81% of teachers reported that social media helped them facilitate class discussions, and 69% believed that it provided academic support for their students. These results match those observed in earlier studies (Pitaloka et al., 2021, Rezaei & Meshkatiyan, 2017) which confirmed that participants had positive attitudes and believed social media offered benefits for learning English.

Despite recognising the benefits of using social media, teachers and students were hesitant to fully incorporate it into their teaching and learning practices. For students, concerns about distractions when using social media group and unreliable Internet connections were factors that contributed to their reluctance. This finding corroborates the ideas of Ghimire (2022) who revealed that students' limited access to the Internet was one of the main barriers. Teachers cited time constraints and concerns about students' dishonest practices as hindrances to adopting social media in the classroom. This finding is in agreement with Inayati (2015) who showed that teachers were concerned about students' being attracted to other online activities rather than learning, and the potential for plagiarism as well as other types of dishonesty when working online.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how social media is integrated into English language teaching and learning at a university in Vietnam, and to explore the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding its use. The study revealed that while teachers and students utilised various social media platforms in their daily lives, their primary purposes were typically non-study related, such as communication and entertainment. Despite recognising the potential benefits of social media in language learning, such as enhanced motivation, immediate access to others, and exposure to real-life situations and native speakers, its use for academic purposes remained limited. To encourage and support the use of social media in language learning, the study suggests improving access to reliable technology resources for teachers and students, providing pedagogical training for teachers, and incorporating these reforms into university and departmental policies, funding, and leadership.

Implications

This study has significant implications for pedagogy in the digital age, highlighting the potential benefits of information and communication technologies, particularly social media, as practical tools to facilitate teaching and enhance student learning. However, to effectively promote the use of social media, it is essential to first ensure teachers' and students' access to ICTs. Universities have a responsibility to provide adequate resources, including reliable Internet connections in key locations such as the library, classrooms, and across the campus. Additionally, policies promoting teachers' and students' ownership of ICT devices, such as laptops, smartphones, or tablets, should be implemented. Furthermore, regular ICT training programs should be conducted to improve teachers' technological and pedagogical knowledge, enabling them to better integrate social media into their teaching practices.

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